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## Tehran hosting 13th Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Committee meeting

**TEHRAN** – The 13th meeting of Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Committee kicked off in Tehran on Monday and will be wrapped up on Tuesday, the portal of the Iranian Energy Ministry (known as Paven) reported.

Attended by senior officials from both sides, the event is chaired by Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian and Minister of Energy and

Water Resources of Tajikistan Usmonali Uzmonzoda.

Speaking in the meeting's opening ceremony, Ardakanian mentioned the positive relations between the two countries, saying "Relations between the two sides have entered a new phase, the two countries should use the existing capacities for further development of all-out ties." **→4**

## Iran's embassy in Britain reacts to claims against ambassador

**TEHRAN** — Iran's embassy in London, in an official tweet on Monday, said Tehran's ambassador to Britain has never threatened anybody.

"The allegations against the ambassador of Iran to the UK issued by the Reporters Sans Frontiere (RSF) and carried by some Western media are categorically false and rejected.

Ambassador Baeidinejad has never threatened anyone, let alone any journalist," the embassy said on its official Twitter account.

Following recent unrests in Iran and propagandistic supports provided by the BBC Persian, VOA, Manoto TV and Iran International Television for the rioters, **→3**

## Perry ends final day as U.S. Energy secretary

Rick Perry concluded his final day as President Trump's Energy secretary on Sunday, thanking his family and the American people in a tweet for allowing him to serve at the agency.

Perry tweeted Sunday that it had been "the honor and privilege of a lifetime to serve in the @realDonaldTrump Administration," adding in a video message attached to the tweet that it had been

a "wonderful, fabulous trip" to serve at secretary.

"Well, today's December the first and my last day as the secretary of Energy," Perry said. "I want to tell everyone what a wonderful, fabulous trip it's been for me and my family, and hopefully for the American people as we've become the number one oil- and gas-producing country in the world." **→13**



### PERSPECTIVE

**Hanif Ghaffari**  
Head of the Tehran Times  
Politics Desk

## NATO at zero point!

The NATO summit in London shows clearly that the North Atlantic Treaty is in serious crisis for its survival. In recent days, Western analysts have analyzed and evaluated various aspects of the tensions and challenges among NATO members. The majority of NATO members are European countries.

The reality is that the crises facing the United States and NATO members will not end soon. At least until the arrival of Trump at the White House, these concerns will remain. On the other hand, the foreseeable future of the president of the United States will face Western actors with serious dilemmas.

US President Donald Trump continues to insist on increasing NATO defense spending. On the other hand, French President Emmanuel Macron's recent remarks about NATO's brain death show that some European NATO members are also aware of the White House's negative approach to the North Atlantic Treaty.

Relations between Russia and NATO are now at the worst condition after the Cold War. "Mikhail Gorbachev", the last Soviet President, had warned about the re-start of Cold War between the White House and the Kremlin before. But now Russian officials believe that the constant and extensive conflicts between Moscow and the West leads them to much more complicated conditions than that of the Cold War time.

The recent NATO summit in London will not only bring the North Atlantic Treaty Organization closer together, it will also strengthen the existing crises between the US and Europe.

Finally that One of the issues that has led to the frustration of European citizens from this collection is the European Union's dependence on the United States. While U.S. former National Security Advisor John Bolton and Trump have repeatedly expressed their opposition to the existence of the European Union and the Eurozone, Europe has not taken any steps towards independence from the United States. European officials have made mistakes in their calculations and attitudes toward the US government. This big mistake could lead to the loss of the European Union and the Eurozone. Undoubtedly, people like the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron once realized their mistake will be too late. Can European authorities be able to understand this real danger?

## Yemeni Ministry of Interior: Two Saudi intelligence cells arrested for sabotage

The Yemeni interior ministry announced that the security services had seized two main cells "which were under the direct responsibility of Saudi intelligence officers," entrusted with the task of "carrying out acts of sabotage preceded by media campaigns and rumors."

The Yemeni Interior Ministry explained that the Saudi intelligence "entrusted to mercenaries at home the task of carrying out acts of sabotage preceded by media campaigns and rumors, having formed them and their duration with money and logistical support."

In detail, the cells were tasked with "infiltrating various state institutions as a number of them are still in their working staff, seeking to sow discord between their functional levels and making illegal and provocative



ing to sow discord between their functional levels and making illegal and provocative

decisions to provoke the street," the Interior Ministry statement said.

The ministry said that Saudi aggression countries "seek to compensate for their military failure by trying to penetrate the home front and destabilize it," stressing that "the security services will spare no effort to repel any attempt to destabilize security and disturb the public tranquility in Yemen."

She added: "The security services are tracking the movements of cells of the aggressive countries very accurately and high vigilance," stressing that they will work to "thwart all plans and plots aimed at the security and stability of the homeland."

(Source: Almayadeen)

## Sanders: Scripture calls for renewed focus on justice in U.S.

As he vies for the chance to replace President Donald Trump, Democratic candidate Bernie Sanders said Sunday that he is running a campaign that, like Scripture, calls for a renewed focus on justice in the way all people should be treated.

It's a broad-based approach that the Vermont senator said he believes will mean victory in his pursuit of the nomination, as well as in next year's general election.

"When we read from the Scriptures, the calling for the moment now is for nothing less than justice," Sanders told a congregation at Reid Chapel AME, a black church in the heart of Columbia's historic Greenview neighborhood. "It is not justice when so few have so much, and so many have so little."

Stressing what he calls equal treatment on a

number of issues, including health care, wages, education access and criminal justice, has been at the heart of Sanders' 2020 campaign.

It's a message that has been well-received as Sanders, whose struggles with black voters helped cost him the 2016 nomination, has campaigned in South Carolina. The state hosts the South's first primary vote and is a place where support among the heavily black Democratic electorate is crucial for a candidate's success.

Former Vice President Joe Biden has traditionally led the candidate field in the state, both overall and among black voters. A recent Monmouth University poll shows Biden earning support from about 4 in 10 black South Carolina voters, while Sanders and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren trailed with 11% each.

Like some of his fellow presidential contend-

ers, Sanders has rolled out endorsements from a number of black state lawmakers. Many of the Democratic candidates often campaign in South Carolina's black churches while making weekend visits to the state.

"Justice says that black women should not die in childbirth at three times the rate as white women," Sanders said Sunday, to frequent applause and affirmations from the congregation. "Brothers and sisters, in this difficult moment, we need leadership in this country which does not lie every single day."

During an interview later with The Associated Press, Sanders said he sees his path to victory as based on the broad appeal of what he calls his justice-themed campaign, again relating biblical teachings to his outlook on what the country needs.

(Source: AP)



### PERSPECTIVE

**Mohsen Zanganeh**  
Independent economic  
analyst

## Failed attempt of engineering a 'crisis' in Iran

For over a year now, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been grappling with severe economic crisis following the unilateral withdrawal of the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear deal and re-imposition of crippling economic sanctions. The failure of the European Union to uphold its commitments under the deal have made the matters worse.

In the wake of U.S. 'maximum pressure' campaign, more than 1.5 million barrel oil per day have been lost in the international market. Iranian oil exports have dwindled from 2 million barrels to 500,000 barrel per day. Besides, in recent months, it has dropped as low as 200,000 barrel per day, a cause of grave concern.

The Iranian government's budget is heavily dependent on oil revenues and low oil prices in the international market and decrease in exports has widened government deficit amounting to nearly two-third of the yearly \$45 billion budget. It has pushed inflation more than 40% over the past year, putting a heavy burden on common man.

The hike in gasoline price by 200 percent came without a warning. People were evidently taken aback. They feared high inflation and worse economic situation. The sudden and unanticipated announcement led to frustration among people, especially those in the lower-middle class domain. At the same time, we have to look at the larger picture too.

It should be noted that oil prices in Iran are one of the lowest in the world. Besides, far lower than the neighboring countries, which has prompted smuggling of Iranian oil more than 10 million liters on daily basis. On the other hand, oil consumption has skyrocketed and reached 96 million liters per day which has raised concerns that Iran will become an importer of oil in the next year if immediate and concrete actions are not taken.

Pertinently, another reason behind the hike in oil prices are the draconian U.S. sanctions which have primarily affected the lower-middle class of the society and the government sought to provide some relief to them through this measure, according to people privy to the development. **→13**

## Iran celebrates National Exports Day

**TEHRAN** — During a ceremony organized by Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) and attended by a number of senior officials including First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri the country celebrated its National Exports Day on Monday.

Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani, TPO Head Hamid Zadboum, and Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie were also present in the ceremony.

While October 21 is named as the National Day of Exports, this year the ceremony to mark the day was postponed to December 2. **→4**



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## New UN nuclear agency chief: “firm and fair” stance on Iran

**VIENNA (AP)** — The incoming head of the UN’s atomic watchdog agency said Monday he will take a “firm and fair” approach toward inspections of Iran’s nuclear facilities, and plans to visit Tehran in the near future.

Argentine diplomat Rafael Mariano Grossi’s comments came after he was confirmed as the new director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency unanimously at a special session. His four-year term begins on Tuesday.

The 58-year-old succeeds Yukiya Amano, who died in July, and takes over at a time when the nuclear deal between Iran and world powers is unraveling.



The landmark 2015 deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action promised Iran economic incentives in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. The IAEA’s role has been to inspect and verify Iran’s compliance with the deal.

With the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the agreement last year and the imposition of new American sanctions, Iran’s economy has been struggling. So far, the other nations involved — France, Germany, Britain, China and Russia — have been unable to

offset the effects.

Tehran is continuing to provide IAEA inspectors access. Grossi told reporters he expected to travel to Iran himself in the “relatively near future” to meet with leaders there.

“It is really a priority,” he said of the situation in Iran, adding that his philosophy on inspection safeguards was to be “firm and fair.”

Those “two guiding principles” apply not just to Iran, but to how the IAEA deals with everybody, though “different cases demand different approaches,” he said.

“An inspector is not a friend. He’s someone who comes and needs to ascertain the facts without bias, without agenda, in an objective and impartial way,” Grossi said. “This has to be done in firmness, but in fairness as well.”

Grossi became Argentina’s ambassador to the Vienna-based IAEA in 2013 and was previously the IAEA’s chief of cabinet under Amano.

## Iran deports 28 more illegal Pakistani migrants

**ISLAMABAD (IRNA)** — Iranian security forces have deported 28 more Pakistani nationals who illegally crossed the Iranian border, local media reported.

According to the Dunya newspaper, these 28 Pakistani nationals were trying to go to Europe illegally via Iran.

The migrants were later handed over to the Pakistani authorities at the Iran-Pakistan Taftan border crossing.

After completion of formal procedures, the Levies force gave the custody of illegal migrants to the Federal Investigation Agency for further investigations. Six children and five women were also among the deportees.

Last Tuesday and Thursday Iran had also deported 116 illegal Pakistani migrants.

Iran and Pakistan are already engaged in strengthening co-operation to stop the illegal movements of immigrants.

## Israeli PM cries fouls as more EU states join Iran trade system

**PRESS TV**— Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu slammed European countries for joining a new mechanism aimed at maintaining trade with Iran despite U.S. sanctions.

In a video released on Sunday, Netanyahu said European countries “should be ashamed of themselves” for pursuing trade with Iran, claiming that they were enabling Tehran “to develop nuclear weapons.”



Last week, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden announced that they would join a non-dollar trade mechanism with Iran.

Britain, France, and Germany announced the establishment of the system, officially called the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), in January.

The apparatus is expected to circumvent the sanctions that the United States began re-imposing against Iran after leaving a nuclear deal with Tehran, the European trio, and Russia and China.

Hours after his statement, Netanyahu spoke with U.S. President Donald Trump on the phone and discussed the alleged “threat from Iran.”

Iran was in compliance of the 2015 international agreement until the U.S. pulled out of the deal in May last year and re-imposed economic sanctions.

European signatories to the deal have sought to find ways to help Tehran evade the U.S. restrictions. Iran is increasing the pressure on Europe to do so, by gradually walking away from its nuclear commitments.

The decision by the six European countries was apparently taken to pacify the Islamic Republic which has said its patience is over after a year of living under the U.S. sanctions.

In May, Iran initiated a set of countermeasures against Washington’s withdrawal from the nuclear agreement, and the Europeans’ failure to guarantee Tehran’s business interests under the accord.

The countermeasures have seen Tehran surpass the 3.67-percent cap set by the deal on the level of its uranium enrichment, and the 130-tonne ceiling placed on its heavy water reservoir.

Iran had accepted the limits voluntarily as part of the deal, despite not being obligated by the UN nuclear agency to commit to any such restrictions.

Iran says it hopes that more European states’ participation in a non-dollar trade mechanism with Tehran will breathe new life into the instrument.

Tehran has vowed to reverse all its nuclear responses as soon as the other JCPOA signatories begin fully implementing their nuclear obligations.

# Iran, Oman consult on Hormuz Peace Endeavor

Shamkhani says regional coalitions guarantee security

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian foreign minister and his Omani counterpart, in a meeting in Tehran on Monday, conferred on key international issues, bilateral ties and Tehran-initiated Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE).

The Hormuz Peace Endeavor was the main core of talks between Mohammad Javad Zarif and Yusef bin Alawi.

Iran put forward the proposal after two series of suspicious attacks on commercial ships in the Gulf of Oman near the Strait of Hormuz in May and June.

Addressing the UN General Assembly late in September, President Hassan Rouhani unveiled Iran’s new initiative for the establishment of peace and security in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

“The goal of the Coalition for Hope is to promote peace, stability, progress and welfare for all the residents of the Strait of Hormuz region, and to enhance mutual understanding and peaceful and friendly relations amongst them,” Rouhani told the delegates at the UN.

“This initiative includes various venues for cooperation, such as the collective supply of energy security, freedom of navigation and free transfer of oil and other resources to and from the Strait of Hormuz and beyond,” he added.

“The Coalition for Hope is based on important principles such as compliance with the goals and principles of the United Nations, mutual respect, equal footing, dialog and understanding, respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, inviolability of international borders, the peaceful settlement of all disputes, and more importantly, the two fundamental principles of non-aggression and non-interference in the domestic affairs of each other. The presence of the United Nations is necessary for the creation of an international umbrella



Oman’s FM Yusef bin Alawi (L) held talks with Ali Shamkhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council.

in support of the Coalition for Hope,” Rouhani underlined.

Zarif has already invited all regional states to join the peace initiative for securing the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

In a tweet in September, Zarif said the initiative entails “dialogue, confidence-building, freedom of navigation, energy security, non-aggression, and non-intervention.”

In a post on his Twitter account on October 15, Zarif renewed Iran’s call to all countries bordering the Persian Gulf to join Tehran’s initiative to “forge a blueprint for peace, se-

curity, stability, and prosperity” in the region.

In a press briefing on November 25, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said so far three regional states have decided to join the peace plan. He did not name them.

### ■ Friendly ties

Bin Alawi’s recent trip to Tehran is the third one of its kind over the last nine months.

In their talks on Monday, Zarif and bin Alawi also discussed ways to expand ties between the two friendly countries.

Iran and Oman have been enjoying good political and economic relations from old times.

## Oman’s chief diplomat says reaching long-lasting security in the region entails agreement among the regional countries.

## ‘China, Iran have reached a broad consensus on nuclear deal’

By staff and agency

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said on Monday that China and Iran have reached a broad consensus on the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA.

“China and Iran agree to expand cooperation for a complete and effective implementation of the deal in order to safeguard international order based on international law,” she said, according to China Radio International.

She also said, “United States withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal and the extreme pressure on Iran led to an increasing strain of the situation, which could cause the final breach of the contract.”

During a joint press conference with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu in Beijing on Sunday, Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi said that the JCPOA is an international agreement and the world is responsible for implementing it.



“The JCPOA is an international achievement and the countries in the world are responsible for respecting,

implementing and preserving it,” he said.

Ma said that multilateralism and rule of law are required to preserve the JCPOA.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions on Iran.

After waiting for a full year, Iran said its “strategic patience” is over and started to gradually reduce its commitments to the nuclear deal in response to the U.S. moves.

So far, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has taken four steps to cut back commitments in accordance to paragraph 36 of the JCPOA which “allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of compliance.”

Iran has repeatedly said if the European parties to the nuclear deal shield its economy from the U.S. sanctions it will reverse its decisions.

## Iranian envoy takes new important responsibility in IAEA special conference

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the International Organizations in Vienna was on Monday selected as the vice president of the special conference tasked to nominate director general for the IAEA.

Kazem Qaribabadi was appointed for the new position as the representative of South Asia and the Middle East group in the International Atomic Energy Agency.

In the meantime, Mikhail Ulyanov,



the Russian envoy to the IAEA, wrote on his Twitter account on Monday that Rafael Mariano Grossi took office as the IAEA director general for three years.

## Araqchi attends international summit in Tokyo

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araqchi visited Japan on Monday to participate in the 1st Tokyo Global Dialogue Summit.

Araqchi is also scheduled to partake in the 28th session of Iran-Japan political-consultative committee for talks with senior Japanese officials on how to strengthen mutual cooperation.

The 1st Tokyo Global Dialogue Summits is held on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA).



Araqchi is to deliver a speech at the summit’s exclusive panel over measures by the key powers in the Middle East and their effects on global security.

## British diplomat says surprised over reactions to EU trio statement on INSTEX

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — British Ambassador to Tehran Rob Macaire has expressed surprise to reactions to a statement by the European Union trio in which they welcomed six new European countries joining the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX).

“Surprised by the tone of some reactions to this statement,” Macaire tweeted on Monday.

The ambassador did not refer directly to any particular country or official but the U.S. and Israel have shown their indignation as Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden issued a joint statement on Friday announcing becoming shareholders of INSTEX established by Britain, Germany and France for non-dollar trade with Iran.

In a video released on Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said European countries “should be ashamed of themselves” for pursuing trade with Iran, claiming that they were enabling Tehran “to develop nuclear weapons.”

Also in a tweet on Saturday night the U.S. ambassador to Germany, Richard Allen Grenell, slammed the new European

countries joining the financial mechanism.

Ambassador Macaire said, “We continue to express concern about the human rights situation in Iran. But INSTEX shows we will work to support trade — which benefits all Iranians — as long as the JCPOA continues.”

Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden issued a joint statement on Friday announcing becoming shareholders of INSTEX.

In their statement the six countries said, “In light of the continuous European support for the agreement and the ongoing efforts to implement the economic part of it and to facilitate legitimate trade between Europe and Iran, we are now in the process of becoming shareholders of the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) subject to completion of national procedures. INSTEX was established by France, Germany and the United Kingdom in January 2019.”

It added, “The nuclear agreement was unanimously endorsed by the UN Security Council and is as a key instrument for the global non-proliferation regime and a major contribution to stability in the region.”

France, Germany and the United King-



dom issued a statement on Saturday welcoming the decision by the six countries.

“As founding shareholders of the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), France, Germany and the United Kingdom warmly welcome the decision taken by the governments of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, to join INSTEX as shareholders,” read the statement published by website of the UK Foreign Ministry on Saturday.

It added, “This step further strengthens INSTEX and demonstrates European efforts to facilitate legitimate trade between Europe and Iran and is a clear expression

of our continuing commitment to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).”

The statement also noted that full and effective implementation of the JCPOA is of the utmost importance.

In a tweet on Friday, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian welcomed the move.

He said that the six European countries made an important decision to join INSTEX.

The foreign minister also said that the Europeans are strongly committed to support the nuclear deal.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has also welcomed decision by the six new European states.

INSTEX has been designed to facilitate legitimate trade with Tehran. It was introduced on January 31.

It was introduced long after the U.S. imposed sanctions on Iran and threatened to punish any country or company that does business with Iran.

On March 20, Iran’s central bank governor Abdolnaser Hemmati announced that a mechanism similar to INSTEX has been registered in Iran, officially called the Special Trade and Finance Institute (STFI).



# Raisi urges govt. to compensate human, financial losses caused by riots

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi on Monday highlighted the necessity of compensating the human and financial losses caused by the recent unrest, calling on the administration to take measures to that end.

“We ask the authorities, especially the administration to take measures to compensate the losses,” ISNA quoted Raisi as saying.

He said the Judiciary will also follow up on the issue, assuring the victims of the unrest of legal support by the country’s justice system.

Raisi also said the Judiciary is pursuing the cases of those who were arrested during the riots.

“The cases of individuals, including rioters and those affiliated with foreigners, who were handed over to the Judiciary by police, the Intelligence Ministry, the Guards and other bodies are under fair and legal investigation,” he stated.

“Inshallah, the people will be soon informed about the handling of these cases,” he added.

Protests erupted in Iran on November 15 after the government announced an increase in the price of gasoline, a subsidized commodity that is still cheaper in Iran than other countries in the world.

The proceeds from the price increase are paid in the form of cash subsidies to 60 million Iranians, who account for about 75 percent of the population.



The rationed gasoline, which is 60 liters per month, is priced 1500 toman (35 cents) and any amount beyond that is 3000 toman (70 cents).

The calculation is based on the official rate of 4200 toman per dollar. However, the value of the dollar, due to the U.S. president’s strategy of “maximum pressure” against Iran, is almost 2.5 times higher in the free market.

Rioters damaged public and private property and put banks, gas stations, and state buildings on fire.

Commander of the Tehran division of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Mohammad Reza Yazdi, said on Sunday investigations are underway to clarify the cause of death of those who lost their lives during the unrest.

“In the same way that people diverge

from rioters, those who innocently lost their lives also diverge from those who wanted to damage public property,” Yazdi said.

Meanwhile, the way the price hike was implemented has been widely criticized by many Iranian figures.

In his remarks on Monday, Raisi said there were some problems with the government’s implementation of the policy, emphasizing that not gaining public trust or forming a consensus led to the protests.

The protests should be heard, he stressed.

The Judiciary chief also said rioters and foreign enemies harnessed the power of the protests in order to reach their objectives.

Also on Monday, Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said the Iranian nation gave an appropriate response to those who tried to foment insecurity in the country.

“I hope that we can pay special attention to the security of the people via expanding coordination,” he said.

He said despite all the problems, the Iranian people still support the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic.

Rahmani Fazli also criticized those who take advantage of the unrest in order to further their political agenda.

“This is a national issue which is related to the country’s security. Therefore, it should not be exploited because of political competitions.”

## Armed forces trained to counter enemy’s sedition, says Army chief



**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Army Chief Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi says the armed forces have been trained to counter the enemy’s sedition in Iran.

“The necessary training has been given for the

forces, and of course the necessary preparedness has been attained,” General Mousavi said on Monday, Mehr reported.

“Sedition at different branches, dimensions and shapes threaten the Islamic Iran,” he said, adding that the armed forces, backed by the people, should fight and defeat Iran’s enemies.

The general said the armed forces have recognized the measures which must be taken in order to counter the enemy’s sedition.

He pointed to the recent unrest across the country, saying the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei acted as a guard against the enemies in order to preserve security.

On November 15, protests erupted in some cities in Iran against increasing gasoline price. In certain cases, the protests turned violent as some rioters clashed with police, using knives and guns.

Rioters damaged public and private property and put banks and state buildings on fire.

The protests lasted just for a few days.

Early estimates of an intelligence body showed that a sum of nearly 87,000 protesters and rioters had taken part in protest rallies and gatherings when the price increase went into effect.

A large number of protesters, that over 93% of them were men, had only been present in the gathering centers and avoided joining the rioters.

The Intelligence Ministry announced in a statement last week that it had identified several rioters who misused the protest rallies.

“The main culprits behind the riots... have been identified and proper measures are being adopted and the honorable nation will be informed about its result later,” the statement said.

Soon after the protests erupted, Ayatollah Khamenei supported the government’s decision, putting an end to doubts and possible moves to reverse the decision.

The Leader said he had previously announced that since he was not an expert on the issue, he would support any decision made by heads of the three branches of government and the experts.

In his remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei urged the authorities to take good care of the affected people and assuage the hardship caused by the move.

He also called on the people to take note of the enemies’ plots to disrupt security and take a separate path from the rebels that try to foment insecurity in the country.

## Enemies cannot harm Iran’s maritime security: Navy chief

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Chief of the Iranian Navy says presence of naval forces of the United States and other foreigners cannot harm Iran’s maritime security.

Speaking in a meeting with military attaches of different countries in Tehran on Sunday, Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi said Iran’s waters are safe thanks to its naval forces.

“The military presence of the global arrogance led by the U.S., Britain, and the Israeli regime will not undermine Iran’s security,” he said, Mehr reported.

Referring to the U.S.-led maritime coalition in the Persian Gulf, Khanzadi said it is time for foreign powers to withdraw their military forces from the region.

The Navy chief further said that the awakened nations will not agree to join the global arrogance’s coalitions.

Khanzadi said Iran has dispatched as many as 64 fleets over the past 10 years to the Indian Ocean, Red Sea, Gulf of Aden as well as all other international waters to secure Iran’s maritime



trade and fight against piracy.

He pointed to the achievements in the field of building

various kinds of naval equipment such as destroyers and submarines, including Jamaran, Damavand, Sahand, Ghadir, Fateh, torpedoes, UAVs, saying the Iranian naval forces have been able to have a constant presence in international waters.

Khanzadi also described the Iranian Navy as a “strategic force”.

He underlined that Iran’s security in the sea is not dependent on the outside world, unlike many other countries, saying that all of the Navy’s capabilities are indigenous.

Over the weekend, the Iranian Navy unveiled four homegrown military equipment, with the aim of boosting the force’s defense power.

In a ceremony on Saturday attended by Khanzadi, the Navy officially unveiled the unmanned aerial vehicle “Pelikan 2” and the naval mine “Sadaf 2”.

The navigation system “Soren” and the precision guided bomb “Balaban” were also unveiled during the ceremony.

## Economic terrorism kills, Zarif tweets

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has urged the European parties to the 2015 nuclear agreement to carry out their “minimal human duty” of selling pharmaceuticals to Iran.

“Instead of arrogant threats or hollow paper promises, E3/EU—and future INSTEX shareholder Sweden—should start with something very simple; a minimal human duty: Ask @molnlycke to SELL products enabling Iranian kids with EB to cover their wounds,” Zarif tweeted on Monday.

“#EconomicTerrorism kills,” he added.



In another tweet, Zarif mentioned U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, saying, “@SecPompeo once again admits that US #EconomicTerrorism on Iran is designed to starve, and in the case of medical supplies, kill our innocent citizens.”

President Donald Trump withdrew Washington from the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, in May 2018 and restored the previous sanctions against Iran and ordered new ones. Trump has described his government’s sanctions against Iran as “economic war”.

Tehran says sanctions on the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) will prevent it from providing food and medicine to ordinary Iranian people.

Zarif said last month that the United States’ sanctions and economic war on Iran have targeted the ordinary people’s health and livelihood.

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

## Intelligence Ministry: 79 rioters arrested in Khuzestan province

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Head of the Intelligence Ministry’s anti-terrorist department announced on Monday that 79 individuals were arrested in Khuzestan Province.

He said they were the main elements behind attacks on public and private property as well as military centers in the province during the recent widespread riots.

He explained that the culprits were arrested both during and after the riots, Mehr reported.

Security forces arrested three terrorist teams, which were backed and trained by a Persian Gulf country, he added.

The ministry official also said 13 weapons were confiscated in the arrests.

Protests erupted in Iran on November 15 after the government announced an increase in the price of gasoline, a subsidized commodity that is still cheaper in Iran than other countries in the world.

Rioters damaged public and private property and put banks, gas stations, and state buildings on fire.

## New EU chief diplomat says nuclear deal must survive

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Josep Borrell, new European Union foreign policy chief, has said that the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, must survive.

“We have greatest interest in preserving the nuclear deal and its surviving. We want the Iranian officials to do whatever they can to keep the agreement alive,” Borrell told the Spanish daily El Pais on Sunday, IRNA reported.



He also noted that killing the nuclear deal will be a “big mistake”. U.S. President Donald Trump quit the multilateral nuclear pact in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions on Iran.

After waiting for a full year, Iran started to gradually reduce its commitments to the nuclear deal in response to the U.S. and an inaction by the remaining parties, especially Europeans, to shield Tehran from sanctions effect.

So far, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has taken four steps to cut back commitments in accordance to paragraph 36 of the JCPOA which “allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of compliance.”

Iran has repeatedly said if the European parties to the nuclear deal protect its economy from the U.S. sanctions it will reverse its decisions.

Abbas Araghchi, Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs and nuclear negotiator, told a press conference in Beijing on Sunday that the international community has a responsibility to save the nuclear accord.

## Iran’s embassy in Britain reacts to claims against ambassador

**1 →** Baeidinejad announced that he will file a complaint before the official institution for monitoring broadcast-ing networks in Britain against those media outlets that embarked on biased distortion of recent developments in Iran and inviting the people to resort to widespread violence against the country’s civil institutions.

“They have put Iran in danger by trying to portray the rioters, who are murderers and arsonists, as political dissidents,” the Iranian ambassador’s tweet said at the time, according to RSF’s statement.

In a statement released on November 26 on its official website the Reporters Without Borders (the Reporters Sans Frontiere) claimed, “Ever since Hamid Baeidinejad, the Iranian Foreign Ministry’s former director of political affairs and international security, took over as the Islamic Republic’s ambassador in London, he has been threatening these media and journalists on Twitter.”

However the embassy stressed, “Merely stating that some self-exiled Iranians, who may or may not be employed as journalists by foreign-backed networks, are activists working to undermine the system of government in their homeland, is not a threat: it is a fact.”

On November 15, the government increased the gasoline price. However, the legitimate public protests against the price increase were directed at sowing chaos through

targeted attacks on public and private properties, forcing law enforcement forces to step in to stop saboteurs.

Early estimates of an intelligence body showed that a sum of nearly 87,000 protesters and rioters had taken part in protest rallies and gatherings since November 15, when the increase in gas price went into effect.

A large number of protesters, who over 93% of them were men, had only been present in the gathering centers and avoided joining the rioters in sabotage attacks, the intelligence report said.

“The identical methods of the main core of violent rioters discloses that they are fully trained individuals who have been prepared and looking forward to the situation to riot, unlike most people who have been taken off guard by the sudden hike in gas price,” the report said.

The report showed that gatherings had been comprised of 50 to 1,500 people in 100 places in the country out of a number of 1,080 major towns and cities.

It added violent raids and damage inflicted on properties are larger than what happened in the February 2018 unrest.

It also said most cases of damage to properties had happened in Khuzestan, Tehran, Fars and Kerman provinces.

The report said most casualties had resulted from



armed attacks on gas stations and military centers, adding that a number of police and Basiji forces were martyred in the attacks.

On November 25, people poured into Tehran’s main streets in very large numbers to deplore rioters who misused the peaceful protests against increase in gas price to commit acts of violence.

Prior to Tehraners’ rallies against rioters and hooligans, hundreds of thousands of people in other cities across the country took to the streets condemning violent acts.



STOCK MARKET	
TEDPIX	320194.8
IFX	4117.76

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES	
USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,284 rials
GBP	54,242 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

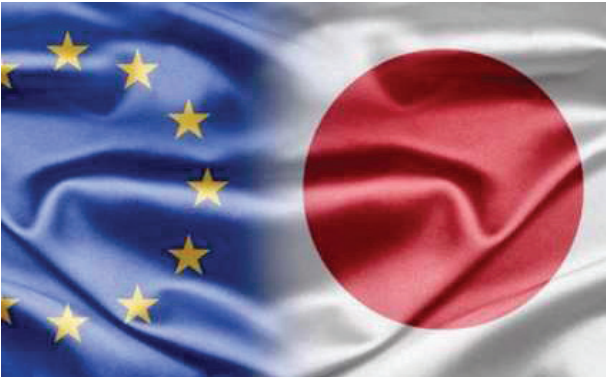
COMMODITIES	
Brent	\$61.96/b
WTI	\$56.54/b
OPEC Basket	\$63.94/b
Gold	\$1,459.65/oz
Silver	\$816.94/oz
Platinum	\$896.70/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

## Why the UK should upgrade the EU trade deal with Japan

By Hosuk Lee-Makiyama

It is definitely in the interest of UK businesses to replicate (or “roll-over”) as many of the EU’s trade deals as possible after Brexit. But some relations are so economically vital that they require some thought. One of them is Britain’s relationship with Japan. With more than 1,000 Japanese companies operating in the UK, employing nearly 100,000 people (up since June 2016) — Japan is a crucial contributor to the UK economy. Among non-EU countries, Japan is the second-largest investor in the UK — which as of 2016 stood at £60bn.



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has maintained that copy-and-pasting the EU deal would make little sense on the Japan-UK relationship. The UK should heed his call. In fact, the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement is not the best fit for the UK. The UK exports much less ham, cheese and luxury sedans than France or Germany. Naturally, the EU agreement with Japan produced considerably fewer gains for the services and investment-oriented UK economy. In a report released on Monday which I co-authored for the Initiative for Free Trade, we estimate that the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement only affords half the gains enjoyed by the other EU countries. ■ **Negotiating market openings** Brussels prioritized negotiating market openings for farming products that absorbed much of Japan’s concessions, whereas the UK may be more interested in developing new rules for e-commerce and services industries, or facilitating incoming investments from Japan. In particularly thorny negotiation areas, the UK’s position is more aligned with Japan than with the EU. For instance, the EU could not agree to curb unjustified blockage of lawful transfers of data. As both Japan and the UK embraces the opportunities of digitalisation, they do not need to repeat past mistakes. Japan also wanted more comprehensive and cost-effective rules to protect foreign investments. Although no Japanese investor has filed a dispute against a government, they seek reinforced assurances. The increasingly unstable political environment (not least due to populism in Europe) could very well lead to discrimination of foreign investors. As the world’s second-largest source of foreign capital, investment protection is Japan’s number one negotiating priority. Japanese multinationals are also much more interested in building plants overseas than selling us cars made in Japan. However, Brussels was constitutionally prohibited from engaging in comprehensive negotiations on investment rules. Japan also matters for geopolitical reasons. It is not just the principal champion of a liberal rule-based order, and arguably the only adult in the room at G7 summits: Japan is in the driving seat of Asia’s key regional trade agreements — CPTPP and RCEP. ■ **The backbone of supply chains** Japanese capital forms the backbone of the supply chains in the world’s fastest-growing economies including south-east Asia and China. And when it comes to the UK seeking CPTPP membership, negotiations with Japan are effectively a pre-requisite. An upgraded Japan-UK agreement will also act as a “down-payment” for further regulatory cooperation with Japan in future, not least for equivalence decisions in banking. In other areas, it may be challenging for the UK to improve on the EU-Japan Economic Partnership. Immigration policy is one of the worst barriers to trade — visas restrict business visits, internal corporate transfers and overseas projects. The EU allows not just Japanese service providers and corporate transferees to enter each others’ markets, but also their spouses and children to accompany them. And Tokyo expects no less from the UK. The UK paid a high price to shape its own trade policy according to its interests. Japan is a typical example of how the UK must use its new policy space. In areas that matter for the UK economy — like e-commerce and investments — it can make incremental, yet significant, improvements on market openness where before, internal compromises with France and Germany constrained it.

(Source: cityam.com)

# Tehran hosting 13th Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Committee meeting

➡ The official criticized the current level of trade between the two countries, and noted that the volume of bilateral trade is currently not at a satisfactory level and is far from the two governments’ stated goals, especially after the constructive meeting of the two countries’ presidents on the sidelines of the Fifth Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Dushanbe back in June. He further underlined banking and

educational cooperation, facilitating the activities of Iranian investors and traders in Tajikistan, and completing the Independence Tunnel project as some of the important issues in the two countries’ economic relations, and called for more serious cooperation and determination of Tajikistan’s executive bodies. Elsewhere in his remarks, Ardakanian mentioned agriculture, health, joining the two countries’ electricity networks, water, education, communication and

## Iran celebrates National Exports Day

➡ The day, which has been celebrated over the past 22 years, is aimed at promoting the country’s exports status, according to TPO Head Hamid Zadboum. “Every year, this day is celebrated to honor the Iranian exemplary exporters in a bid to promote the culture of exports throughout the country”, the official has previously said. Addressing the Monday ceremony, Zadboum appreciated the efforts made by the exporters in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019) because they were faced many limitations and challenges in that year due to the difficulty in foreign trade [under the sanctions

condition], IRNA reported. He said 44 exemplary exporters have been selected among over 300 applicants, of them nine exporters are active in the agriculture sector, nine in services sector and the rest in industry and mining sector. Addressing the same ceremony, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani announced that Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) will be tasked with organizing the National Exports Day ceremony as of the next Iranian calendar year, because the government aims to pay more attention to the unions and associations.

## Car output at nearly 395,000 in 7 months

➡ **ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iranian carmakers manufactured 394,400 vehicles during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22), IRNA reported citing the data released by Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry. The ministry’s data show that car manufacturing in Iran has fallen 35.8 percent in the seven-month period of this year compared to the same period of time in the previous year. Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani has said that the policy of domestic manufacturing of auto parts should be seriously followed up and in this due capable manufacturers should be supported. In mid-May, Rahmani issued a directive on “strengthening domestic manufacturing of imported auto parts”. Addressing two of his deputies, Farshad Moqimi, deputy for industrial affairs, and Mohammad-Baqer Ali, the board chairman of Iran’s Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO), the minister put emphasis on using the highest potential of human resources for



strengthening domestic manufacturing of auto parts which are currently imported to the country. Highlighting the orders of the Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei on supporting production in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21), which is named the year of “Pickup in Production” by the Leader, Rahmani stressed that cooperation among all car makers, auto part manufacturers, knowledge-based companies and enterprises is vital for strengthening domestic manufacturing of imported auto parts. This movement should be all-out promoted to combat sanctions and also prevent from exit of foreign currency from the country, the minister noted.

# Germany’s hawkish monetary policy no longer a point of consensus

While the German nominee for the European Central Bank (ECB) executive board Isabel Schnabel favors expansionary policy, Bundesbank President Jens Weidmann sticks to a traditional position of budget surpluses. On Friday, German economist Isabel Schnabel that is expected to join the European Central Bank’s board in January argued that the eurozone economy depends on monetary policy assistance, including negative rates and bond purchases. “Given lower inflationary pressure, these decisions can be justified by current inflation data as well as the outlook for inflation over the medium term, which is not yet converging to the objective of below, but close to, 2%,” Schnabel said.

The ECB announcement of the second wave of quantitative easing in September triggered a German and Dutch pushback, culminating with the resignation of German board representative Sabine Lautenschlaeger. That resignation was becoming something of a tradition. Lautenschlaeger was the third consecutive German board member to resign. Juergen Stark, resigned in 2011 objecting to the original bond-buying program and Joerg Asmussen quit to become deputy labor minister in the German government. The latest member of the board is not aligned to Weidmann’s position. Bundesbank President Jens Weidmann opposed the second wave of quantitative easing program, as he had opposed the



Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian (L) and Minister of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan Usmonali Uzmonzoda attended the opening ceremony of the 13th Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Committee meeting in Tehran on Monday. information technology, transportation and trade as some of the potential areas for mutual cooperation and expressed hope that, given the determination of the two governments, obstacles and problems in the way of expansion of economic relations between the two neighbors would be removed.

## Iran, Iraqi Kurdistan discuss expansion of trade ties

➡ **ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Tehran, on Sunday, hosted a business forum between Iranian businessmen, entrepreneurs and producers and a delegation from Iraqi Kurdistan region, in which the two sides explored potential areas for expanding economic relations. Speaking in the event, Mostafa Abdulrahman Abdullah, president of the Importers and Exporters Union of Iraqi Kurdistan region, praised the ever growing economic cooperation between the two sides and noted that annual trade turnover between Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan could exceed \$6 billion. He expressed hope that Iranian investors would form joint ventures with

Iraqi counterparts and collaborate in establishing joint production units in Kurdistan region. As a representative of the Iraqi government, he further expressed his government’s readiness for complete cooperation with Iranian exporters and businessmen for doing business in Kurdistan. Abdulrahman further stressed the important role of embassies and consulates in preparing the ground for economic cooperation, saying introducing businessmen by the consulates will make business easier. Focusing on foodstuff and supermarket items, the Iran-Iraqi Kurdistan business forum will wrap up on Monday at Parsian Azadi Hotel in Tehran.

## Iran allowing air taxi services for first time amid sanctions

Iranian authorities say air taxis would be allowed for a first time in the country as demand for short-haul, on-demand services increase amid American sanctions that have affected the aviation industry, An official in Iran’s Civil Aviation Organization said on Sunday that several companies had obtained initial permits for launching air taxi services across the country. Morteza Dehqan said that regulations over the issue had been eased to allow import and operation of commercial aircraft capable of carrying 10 to 15 passengers. He said the new laws are also meant to prevent major Iranian airlines and aviation companies from creating a monopoly in the provision of air taxi services. “If someone wants to launch a company solely for air taxis, he would not need to have a fixed capital, technical and commercial structures and other requirements like a full-service airline,” Dehqan told the ISNA agency. The official rejected claims that the launch of air taxi services in Iran would face serious difficulties because of the sanctions imposed on the country. “There is no problem for the import of



various aircraft including private jets,” he said, adding, “The companies and individuals would import the aircraft under any circumstances and even at the current difficult situations.” The launch of air taxi services comes as many Iranian airports are currently running at low capacity. Officials say more than 90 percent of domestic flights are processed via 15 major airports and 60 more airports are operating at super-low capacity. The new services could also be seen as a bid to offset the impacts of the American sanctions on Iran’s aviation industry as Washington keeps preventing major global plane manufacturers to deliver aircraft ordered by Iran over the past few years.

(Source: Press TV)

# Solid China economic data helps Asian markets creep higher

Asian markets advanced Monday after a couple of economic reports showed some signs of promise for China’s manufacturing sector. Manufacturing in China grew at its strongest pace in nearly three years, according to private survey data released Monday by the media group Caixin and research firm Markit. The Caixin/Markit purchasing managers’ index edged up from 51.7 in October to 51.8 in November — a sign of modest improvement. Japan’s Nikkei 225 (N225) rose 1% on Monday, while Hong Kong’s Hang Seng Index (HSI) rose 0.4%. South Korea’s Kospi (KOSPI) and China’s Shanghai Composite (COMP) each added 0.1%. Over the weekend, China released official PMI data that showed an increase to an eight-month high of 50.2 in November, up from 49.3 in the previous month, according to government statistics. It was better than what the market expected, according to Refinitiv data.



This was also the first time the reading returned to the expansion territory since April. A PMI reading above 50 indicates expansion, while any figure below 50 signals contraction. But the good news might be short lived, according to analysts who pointed out that China still faces some major

economic hurdles — including weak domestic demand and uncertainty over the U.S.-China trade war. “We do not think such a rise suggests a bottoming out of the economy,” analysts from Normua wrote in a research note Monday, adding that China is still contending with a cooling property sector, too. They expect Beijing to find more ways to prop up the economy in the future. Analysts from Macquarie, meanwhile, said the most recent data is a sign of “short-term stabilization.” But they added in a note that the “worst is yet to come.” Even a “phase one” deal between the United States and China would likely be little to help, they said, adding that such an agreement is “mainly about preventing things from getting worse, instead of making things significantly better.” U.S. futures rose during Asian trading hours Monday, too. The Dow (INDU), S&P 500 (SPX) and Nasdaq (COMP) were up between 0.3% and 0.4%.

(Source: edition.cnn.com)



# ‘NIOC announces expected discovery of a new oil field’

**E N E R G Y** **TEHRAN** — The director of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC)’s Discovery Department said the company may discover a new giant oil field in southwestern Iran and the discovery operations will be finalized by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2020). “We expect the discovery of a new oil field to become certain by the year-end and we would be able to deliver the good news to people,” Saleh Hendi told Tasnim news agency.

According to the official the potential field which is very similar to the recently discovered Namavaran reservoir, could be placed between Ab-Teymour and Sepehr fields. Hendi further noted that this field is going to be a completely new one and it is not part of the already discovered fields or reservoirs.

Back in November, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announced the discovery of a major oil field with an estimated in-place reserve of 53 billion barrels in southwestern



Khuzestan province. Later on, Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh briefed the press on the

details of the newly discovered reservoir in an unveiling ceremony in Tehran. According to Zanganeh, the reservoir

called Namavaran was the second biggest oil reserve discovery in the history of Iran’s oil industry.

Namavaran reservoir covers 2400 square kilometers of land and is placed nearly 3.1 kilometers beneath the ground surface and the thickness of the oil layers is estimated to be about 80 meters, the official explained.

The area which this oil reservoir covers includes several already discovered oil fields such as Darkhovin, Jofair, Sepehr, Mansouri, Sousangerd and Ab-Teimour, with a total in-place reserve of nearly 31 billion barrels, so the new discovery, in fact, adds nearly 22 billion barrels to the country’s in-place oil reserves, he elaborated.

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

## Oil jumps above \$61 on talk of further OPEC+ supply curbs

Oil jumped above \$61 a barrel on Monday, supported by hints that OPEC and its allies may agree to deepen output cuts at a meeting this week and as rising manufacturing activity in China suggested stronger demand.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allies including Russia are expected to extend output cuts this week and could increase the size of the curb by at least 400,000 barrels per day, two sources said.

Brent crude, the global benchmark, rose \$1.20 to \$61.69 a barrel by 0825 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude added \$1.05 to \$56.22.

The so-called OPEC+ group has coordinated output for three years to balance the market and support prices. Their current deal to cut supply by 1.2 million bpd that started in January expires at the end of March 2020.

“Any sign of discontent between the producers will send out negative signals and will put significant downward pressure on the oil price,” said Tamas Varga of oil broker PVM. “We believe this is unlikely to happen.”

OPEC’s ministers will meet in Vienna on Thursday and the wider OPEC+ group will gather on Friday.

On Friday, Brent and U.S. crude both fell on concerns that talks to end the trade war between the United States and China, the world’s two biggest oil consumers,



would be disrupted by U.S. support for protesters in Hong Kong.

Oil also rose on Monday due to an unexpected return to growth in Chinese factory activity in November as domestic demand picked up on Beijing’s accelerated stimulus measures. That is supportive of the oil demand outlook.

But U.S. production keeps rising led by shale oil, filling the gaps left by OPEC, with output in September increasing to a new record of 12.46 million bpd, the U.S. government said in a monthly report on Friday.

It is not certain that OPEC+ will agree this week to deepen its curbs. Some in the group are wary of encouraging more U.S. production by measures to support prices.

A “Deeper cut could boost prices, which would bring on more shale output and not help,” the OPEC source said. “If WTI goes up to \$60, there will be more shale.”

(Source: reuters.com)

## Petronas says third floating LNG vessel possible

Petroleum Nasional Bhd (Petronas), which is the only company to own and operate two floating liquefied natural gas (LNG) vessels, said a third one is possible if there is a demand.

Petronas’ two floating LNG units are PFLNG Satu and PFLNG Dua.

“If there is a reservoir with a sizeable amount of reserves and the right gas – a composition that it is economically viable – it opens up a case for another floater,” said the company’s Gas and New Energy Business executive vice-president and chief executive officer, Adnan Zainal Abidin.

Nevertheless, it did not need to be for offshore usage alone, he told Bernama and TV3 in an interview here.

The “FLNG vessel can also be built near shore (to extract LNG from an onshore reservoir), especially in politically sensitive countries.

“In case there is a need to move out, you can have the plant moved away,” he said in jest.

Adnan said more companies have been seen coming on board with the idea of an FLNG vessel.

“Thus, we are hoping it will open up opportunities for us, not only in Malaysia but also overseas,” he said, adding Petronas was exploring it in a number of overseas countries such as Mexico, Brazil and West Africa.

“Whenever we find gas we have the option to monetize it. So, this gives us a



new play to remain relevant in the LNG market,” he said.

Petronas’ FLNG chief executive officer Abang Yusuf Abang Puteh said a third floating unit would be more competitive than PFLNG Dua.

“We have over 40 years of experience in the LNG business and were involved in the FLNG designing, construction and operations. Through MISC, we also have expertise in LNG carriers.

The “floating facility is a combination of both, which is literally putting an LNG plant on a barge. We have extensive experience, so we know the tricks, and therefore a third FLNG will be more competitive than the first two,” he said.

Petronas is in a better position to take that leap of

faith to go to the next challenge, which is what we did with PFLNG Satu, Adnan added. “If the situation warrants it, we will take it. Game on,” he said.

(Source: freemalaysiatoday.com)

## The strange disconnect between energy stocks and oil prices

In the energy sector, the most common of those is that energy stocks follow the price of oil. Without a significant rise in oil prices, conventional wisdom says, there will be no recovery in energy. Could it be, though, that that logical assumption is wrong, and we are about to see a period when energy stocks move higher, independent of oil prices?

Take a closer look around the beginning of June though. What you will see is that energy stocks bottomed out on May 31st, a couple of weeks before WTI turned positive. In that case, positive sounding news on trade and interest rates caused stocks generally to bounce, dragging the energy sector with them, even though the more skeptical oil market continued lower.

If conditions are right, oil stocks can show gains, even if oil prices are falling. I don’t necessarily think that oil prices are going to fall in any dramatic fashion over the next few months, but then neither do I think they are about to roar higher. Since that action in June, oil prices have been basically range-bound, and that is unlikely to change soon.

What could change, though, is how energy stocks move in the context of steady oil. There is good chance that oil stocks will move higher soon, regardless of what happens



in WTI future. There are two main reasons for that.

### Investors looking for value

Firstly, with the broad U.S. stock market at record highs, investors will be looking for value as the year draws to a close, and value is now a scarce commodity. Even financials, the other S&P 500 sector that lagged the index for quite a while has now begun to catch up, leaving energy as the lone standout with much lower than average P/Es. Those low multiples have also led to high yields. XLE

currently yields 3.7%, well above the roughly 2.75% available from 10-Year U.S. Treasuries. There is a general feeling among Wall Street analysts that while stocks could continue higher from here, the move up will be a steady grind, which would bring yield into focus and make energy an attractive proposition.

The other factor is that energy stocks have dropped in relation to the price of oil. However, if you stretch that same chart out to a 5-year period, you can see that the opposite is true. Stocks have outperformed the price of oil quite significantly.

As a rule, longer term trends are a more reliable indicator of the natural order of things than short-term, and in this case, there are good reasons why that would be so.

The aforementioned yield is a factor, as is the fact that energy companies have shown a remarkable ability to adapt to lower prices and remain profitable. It is therefore only logical to assume that that performance gap between WTI and energy stocks will close at some point before too long.

That and the rare low P/Es in the sector make it likely that oil and energy stocks will recover over the next couple of months, even if oil doesn’t show any significant gains.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## Huge surge in number of companies targeting 100% renewables by 2030

The report reveals that RE100 membership grew by one-third to surpass 200 businesses for the first time in 2019, with new additions over the past year having included JD Sports, Intu, The City of London Corporation, Gap, Virgin Media, 3M and Barclays.

It also confirms the addition of four more companies to the commitment: Fashion giant Ralph Lauren Corporation, Taiwanese health food manufacturer Grape King, U.S.-based Toy Company Radio Flyer and Japanese construction firm Hazama Ando Corporation.

Ralph Lauren is notably aiming to set approved science-based targets in 2020, while Radio Flyer has already gained approval for its 2C-aligned targets.

When analyzing the RE100 cohort as a whole, The Climate Group found that the average target-date stands at 2028 and

that one in three partaking companies are already using renewables to meet more than 75% of their annual energy consumption.

But the international non-profit also found that member companies are beginning to struggle with price rises in markets such as China and Russia.

Nonetheless, The Climate Group believes RE100 members are keen to seek opportunities rather than being deterred by challenges. Its analysis, conducted in partnership with CDP, found that half of RE100 members plan to use their influence to push stakeholders including policymakers, regulators and utilities for a faster transition to a clean energy system in 2020. These businesses include the likes of management services firm Iron Mountain, lighting giant Signify and electronics manufacturer Philips.

“At a time when UN research has said countries are underdelivering on climate action, leading businesses are stepping into the void left by national governments and accelerating the clean energy transition,” The Climate Group’s chief executive Helen Clarkson said.

### Rising demand for renewable energy

“With ten years left to halve greenhouse gas emissions, it is vital that governments respond faster to rising demand for renewable energy. Without decisive action, countries and the energy sector risk losing out on billions of U.S. dollars in investment from RE100 companies.”

As of November 2018, 155 companies across 140 global markets had joined the RE100 initiative, with the group collectively sourcing 188TWh of clean power annually. RE100 members leveraged a combined

annual revenue of \$4.5trn or 5% of global GDP, making the group a powerful source of financing for clean energy infrastructure.

The Climate Group’s new report provides an update to these figures, stating that RE100’s 216 members now leverage a combined annual revenue of \$5.4trn and are on track to have collectively procured 228TWh of clean power by the end of 2019. In context, this is around the same amount of energy used across South Africa on an annual basis.

More broadly, Bloomberg New Energy Finance (BNEF) is predicting a year-on-year rise in business renewable sourcing through power purchase agreements (PPAs) in 2019. In 2018, BNEF tracked 13.4GW of clean power procured in this way – almost double the amount tracked in 2017.

(Source: edie.net)

## The energy sector’s carbon emissions are rising, not falling. Can COP25 turn it around?

By Rob Bailey

This year’s UN Climate Change Summit, known as COP25, was to open on Monday in Madrid against a backdrop of mounting urgency. In the last 12 months, the UN’s climate science body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), has issued two special reports raising stark warnings of the risks climate change poses to food security and the oceans.

Globally, public concern about climate change is increasing and has generated new forms of protest movements in some countries, most notably Extinction Rebellion, which has groups in 72 countries. Its tactics of nonviolent civil disobedience to galvanize engagement with the climate emergency mark a departure from the environmental protests of recent years.

The participation of millions of school children in organized “climate strikes” is equally remarkable. On the second global strike in September 2019, children were joined by adult workers; organizers estimated that protestors numbered four million from 163 countries.

Meanwhile, a quiet revolution has been taking place within the energy sector. When governments gathered 10 years ago for their first (unsuccessful) attempt to secure a global climate deal at COP15 in Copenhagen, there was only 25 gigawatts of solar power capacity worldwide.

Today, that number has grown twenty-five times to 638 gigawatts. Globally, more renewables have now been installed than fossil fuels.

The march of renewables began with governments subsidizing wind and solar energy to help decarbonize their power sectors, and it gained further momentum as awareness of coal’s impacts on air quality and public health have grown.

### Renewables’ growth

Renewables’ growth is a simple case of economics. As wind and solar energy have been deployed at ever greater scale, their costs have fallen precipitously. According to Bloomberg New Energy Finance, the all-in costs of solar photovoltaics (PV) have fallen more than 80 percent since 2009; onshore wind costs have dropped by almost half. This means that two-thirds of the world’s population now live in countries where new renewable generation should be cheaper than new fossil fuel generation.

This progress is borne out in the results of the 2019 World Energy Trilemma Index, a collaboration of the World Energy Council with Oliver Wyman, which measures countries’ progress on improving the security, equity and sustainability of their energy systems. At the global level, sustainability has improved markedly faster than either security or equity over the last decade.

This suggests that the Copenhagen summit, at the time viewed as a huge disappointment, may not have been the complete failure many supposed. Although the conference failed to deliver a new international climate accord – we had to wait six more years, until COP21 in Paris, for that – it did lead to governments tabling new emissions reduction pledges and starting to implement accompanying policy measures.

However, as governments return to the climate negotiating table in Madrid, they cannot afford to be complacent.

While the collapse in the cost of renewables means the trade-off between equity (affordability) and sustainability is becoming more manageable, it has yet to disappear completely. As intermittent renewables become more dominant, other “system” costs increase – notably the costs of balancing grids and connecting the new sources of generation.

For example, Sweden and Denmark, which have some of the highest rates of renewables penetration and are among the top-performing countries on sustainability, have much less impressive equity scores. Managing this tension will be a priority for governments as the energy transition proceeds.

While the progress of the last decade has been remarkable, it has not been remarkable enough. Power sector emissions have continued to climb since 2009, despite the pivot to renewables. In transport, the shift to electric vehicles has just begun, and transitions for heavy industries and heating have barely begun. Overall energy sector emissions are likely to close the decade around 17% higher than they were in 2009.

In aggregate, countries’ targets to reduce emissions are clearly insufficient to halt global emissions growth. Even if fully implemented, they would still have global emissions increasing in 2030.

To keep global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius – the goal of the Paris Agreement – global emissions need to peak immediately and decline rapidly to net zero by around 2070. To keep temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius – the threshold needed to avoid the most dangerous impacts of climate change – net zero must be reached by mid-century.

Closing the gap between what governments have pledged and what is required to meet the Paris Agreement’s goals will be a key concern of negotiators as they gather in Madrid.

### Global energy

The top ten emitting energy sectors account for almost three quarters of global energy emissions. Unfortunately, sustainability scores among this group are not especially high. In 2019, only the European Union, United States and Japan had sustainability scores higher than the average country.

It is more encouraging to look at the largest emitters’ recent progress. Over the last decade, most have managed to improve their sustainability scores by more than the average country (see chart below). Particularly notable is China, which is not only the world’s largest emitter, but also the world’s leading market for renewables investment.

However, the latest data on renewables investment indicate that this progress is slowing.

Renewables investment in the ‘big three’ markets of China, the U.S. and EU has declined in 2019, a consequence of renewables’ increasing competitiveness leading to the withdrawal of subsidies.

All of this spells uncertainty for the energy sector. The growing emissions gap and slowdown in renewables investment implies that government policy will need to tighten, yet in the largest energy sectors, policy seems to be heading in the opposite direction.

Will governments implement new policies to reverse the slowdown in renewables investment, close the emissions gap and get on track for 2 degrees Celsius? And if so, will this happen in a coordinated fashion, with clear policy signals and well-planned interventions? Or could mounting climate impacts and public concern reach a point where governments are forced into more drastic interventions that end up increasing costs and stranding high carbon energy assets?

The energy transition must continue, but whether it will be smooth or more disorderly remains to be seen.

(Source: brinknews.com)



# East Asia at the glance

Trump will think carefully before using Hong Kong bill against China in the future



The US is trying to disrupt the calm in the South China Sea, which further points to the need of maintaining regional stability there. Recently, countries in the South China Sea have made new progress in regional cooperation. By the end of October, China and the Philippines convened the first meeting of China-Philippines Inter-Governmental Joint Steering Committee on Cooperation on Oil and Gas Development, taking another solid step toward the two countries' joint maritime development. During the 22nd China-ASEAN (10+1) leaders' meeting on November 3, all parties felt encouraged by the progress in talks on the Code of Conduct for the South China Sea.

During the ASEAN-US ministerial meeting of the annual ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting-Plus on November 17, US Defense Secretary Mark Esper warned bloc members not to allow the guidelines of the Code of Conduct for the South China Sea "to be manipulated" by China. After meeting Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on November 19, Esper said that the US-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty applies to the South China Sea.

While the current situation in the South China Sea is largely stable and most countries in the region are focusing on cooperation, the US is showing off its military might in the region and hyping up the so-called China threat theory. It is clear which country is maintaining stability and promotion cooperation, and which country is provoking confrontation.

Washington aims to instigate countries in the region to oppose China and to respond proactively to the US Indo-Pacific Strategy. Thus, what the US wants is to turn these countries into pawns to contain its so-called rival, and turns the South China Sea into an area of confrontation.

Countries should cooperate instead of compete in the South China Sea. Maintaining peace and stability in the water depends on joint efforts of countries in the region, and these countries are the biggest beneficiaries of the region's long-term security. Thus, certain countries in the region should get rid of their Cold War mind-set, say no to the interference by extraterritorial powers and jointly protect the hard-won stability in the South China Sea.

On the basis of consultation based on equality, countries in the region should improve regional governance mechanism and promote cooperation in various fields including energy exploitation and maritime rescue, so as to improve the well-being of all.

**■ What's behind the fear to criticize the U.S.?**

If you have never been to northeastern Guangzhou, capital city of South China's Guangdong Province, you may have not heard of the Imperial Springs hotel that has a conference center where the Imperial Springs International Forum was held on Sunday and Monday.

I have been invited to the annual event thrice. This year, participants included 30 former heads of state and government and leaders of international organizations, together with 40 scholars and business leaders as well as over 300 well-known participants.

The theme of this year's forum was "Multilateralism and Sustainable Development." All participants believe multilateralism is the future of mankind and people should have mutual trust, cooperate and open up to one another. I didn't doubt the sincerity and concern of participants who are globalists, as the international community is unprecedentedly anxious due to the prevailing environment of unilateralism and protectionism that threaten multilateralism.

But we need more pragmatic steps than mere lip service. In the past year or two, I have participated in over 10 multilateralism-themed international forums, where I got fed up with the lip service that couldn't get the point. Therefore, at the Sunday afternoon breakout session focusing on United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and impetus for new era of globalization, I was outspoken in my keynote statement.

I asked, "Why does no one dare to criticize

the US, which is the main country engaging in unilateralism? Why is the international community at its wits' end after the US has pulled itself out of various treaties and organizations? Why doesn't the international community jointly rein in the US international power?"

My three questions surprised many of those present and added a tinge of excitement to the tedious breakout session. Then, I continued, "The 2030 agenda that sets out to achieve the 17 goals including 'no poverty' and 'zero hunger' needs clear and feasible mechanism rather than just empty talk."

First, there should be an incentive mechanism. The international community should award the countries that have made progress in achieving the 17 sustainable development goals. For instance, China has been leading the world in poverty alleviation, but no Chinese scholar or research fellow engaged in working on the goal was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences this year, which was instead shared by two economists with MIT and one with Harvard "for their experimental approach to alleviating global poverty."

Second, for the countries that have done damage to the 2030 agenda, the international community should set up mechanisms to hold them to account. For example, after the 2008 global financial crisis broke out in the US, it led to the bankruptcy of millions of people worldwide; the US policy has made millions of Syrian refugees go into exile; "Leaked Pentagon files obtained by the Guardian contain details of more than 100,000 people killed in Iraq following the US-led invasion," reported The Guardian in October 2010; US troops have caused heavy casualties in Afghanistan... Why is there nobody that holds the US to account? When I made these points at the forum, former Afghan president Hamid Karzai, who sat opposite me, expressed his gratitude.

Third, there should be mechanisms for penalizing violators of the goals. The international community should have punitive measures in place for Western media outlets that file inaccurate reports or even create rumors about the progress of the 2030 Agenda. Most Western media outlets we read are responsible for their negative reports on China. I am worried that when future historians look at Western media's reports today, they will find that they ignored and misreported the greatest historical event in the early 21st century - China's development.

Many of my friends praised the view. After the forum, a senior UN official told me privately that I had said what he dare not say for years. A young scholar said my speech was uplifting. Many listeners exchanged business cards with me.

I appreciate these friends' approval. But in the delicate atmosphere of international politics, I seem to be the truth-telling boy in the tale, The Emperor's New Clothes. In fact, it is difficult to tell the truth.

In the US, there are many lovely people and innovations that are worth learning. Its democratic system was once respected. But the US hegemony is like a Sword of Damocles for all globalists. They do not praise the US hegemony, but they are afraid of criticizing it, because if they do so, it may monitor them, sanction them and even destroy them. Is this the international version of George Orwell's dystopian novel 1984?

If there are no moves from the international community to set limits on the US unilateralism, I am afraid all efforts to defend multilateralism will be in vain.

**■ How can SK end its diplomatic dilemma?**

Although South Korea made a last-minute decision to keep in place the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) with Japan on November 22, the country finds its diplomatic relations "besieged" from all sides.

From a wider perspective, South Korea's diplomatic and security problems lie mainly in ties with the US, China, Japan and North Korea. Seoul and Washington have disputes on the sharing of military cost as well as South Korean participation in the Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Tokyo and Seoul have differences over wartime forced labor issue and Japan's removal of South Korea from its white list of preferred trading partners. Moreover, the Beijing-Seoul relationship has not yet come out of the shadows over the deployment of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense on South Korean soil.

South Korea's diplomatic dilemma is a result of changes in the global pattern, and is a common challenge facing all small and medium-sized countries. The US is the major source of this challenge as can be seen from Washington's Indo-Pacific Strategy which is centered on military partnerships. All the US wants is to realize its own national interests. US frequent withdrawals from international organizations and treaties, and its petty moves against its allies have put South Korea, a country trying to maintain the original notion of alliance, in distress.

The rise of unilateralism is shaking the concept of alliance, which was previously based on pillars such as ideology. If it continues like this, despite some US political and military elites' efforts to maintain alliances, further alienation between Washington and its allies is inevitable.

In that case, US alliances will be further weakened or even disintegrate, leaving only certain core allies as US "agents."

US allies like South Korea which lay stress on morality have already begun to be squeezed. And as a primary ally of Washington, Tokyo is currently pursuing a "Japan First" policy similar to Washington's "America First." That being said, hidden contradictions are lurking in ties between South Korea and Japan.

Even so, the diplomatic predicaments faced by South Korea cannot be blamed entirely on external factors. South Korean President Moon Jae-in's administration should push forward a more creative foreign policy.

In the long run, the South Korean government has to keep a watchful eye on changes in US foreign policy. The fetters of South Korea's diplomacy lie mainly in its north, and it is thus fundamentally tough for Seoul to be truly independent in diplomacy. Once unforeseen circumstances emerge, South Korea can hardly reject US requests.

If Washington keeps following its current foreign policy, there will be increasing discontent in the international community, and Seoul will be in trouble for being a US ally. Although South Korea is showing its sincerity to the US as much as possible, it has said "no" in a growing number of cases. If Washington is to build its Indo-Pacific Strategy as a "new NATO," Seoul will by no means take part. And South Korea can hardly accept excessive US demands for the sharing of defense cost. In addition, Seoul will also not budge from its original stance on US desire to increase the deployment of strategic weapons in the Northeast Asian country.

In dealing with Japan, South Korea should also stick to its principles. Since South Korea's top court ruled in November 2018 that Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries must compensate South Korean forced labor during WWII, Tokyo has made clear its strategy to contain Seoul. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's image has taken a beating among South Koreans. Regardless of the renewal of the GSOMIA, Seoul-Tokyo ties will remain strained in the near future. This is an unavoidable pain in reorganizing the regional order and reshaping Japan-South Korea relations.

To get out of the dilemma, South Korea's top priority is to strengthen cooperation with China. Although Seoul has already been aware of Beijing's significance, it has not given enough attention to the country.

It is speculated that after a three-way summit in December between South Korea, China and Japan, President Xi Jinping may visit South Korea in 2020 when the time is ripe. Seoul should be committed to building a new type of bilateral ties with Beijing.

The two sides can achieve a win-win outcome if they join hands to strengthen cooperation and contribute to regional prosperity and peace. If the two countries can establish new partnerships

related to not only the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue but also the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and the South Korea-proposed New Southern Policy, as well as other multilateral platforms, a new type of China-South Korea ties can be built.

**■ Spy case flip-flop reveals anti-China bias**

Wang Liqiang, a self-claimed high-level Chinese spy who defected to Australia, seems to have been having trouble backing up his story. According to the latest news, Australian security agencies concluded that Wang might be at most "a bit player on the fringes of the espionage community." Some Australian media outlets even described this case as a "spy farce."

Over a week ago, Wang shocked Australians and Western public opinion. Wang claimed that he had "infiltrated the student movement in Hong Kong" and "interfered with elections in Taiwan." His words seemed customized for the current political situations. Many political forces felt as if they had hit the jackpot, and a whirlwind blew up.

How could a 27-year-old participate in a series of espionage activities? It sounded like Wang was a liar. China soon released a courtroom video of Wang's conviction for fraud in 2016. Many of his misdeeds were exposed. It seems that the farce with which Wang showed his loyalty to Australia's anti-China forces and the latter utilized him to fuel anti-China opinions could not continue anymore. This case revealed the lack of morality of quite a few Australians in the intelligence community and press circles. They should not have been fooled by Wang.

However, they fell into the trap willingly, taking advantage of Wang regardless of the consequences. Wang's case helped the Hong Kong opposition win the district council elections. And Tsai Ing-wen's authority hyped this case and detained the alleged leaders of a so-called Chinese mainland intelligence agency based in Hong Kong as claimed by Wang. However, the case collapsed promptly.

But the Chinese people should by no means believe that the Australian intelligence community and media outlets will be ashamed and restrain themselves from discrediting China. Their mentality has already been extremely ideological. In terms of throwing mud at China, they only focus on the effects it can produce, rather than whether it is right or wrong. No matter what setbacks they have suffered, they can always be forgiven and continue their smears against China fearlessly.

Recent accusations made by Western public opinion against China, which were over-exaggerated and full of loopholes, as well as their overt double standards, have shocked the Chinese people over and over again.

Reform and opening-up has offered Chinese more access to Western public opinion. We once believed in the "objectivity" and "fairness" of Western public opinion institutions, but gradually, Chinese people have realized that they are far from perfect as we used to believe. In the past two years, we have witnessed all kinds of unscrupulous and ugly performances.

Some Western media outlets have established standardized production lines of China reports, which prioritize value and standpoint.

For a long time to come, China will be unable to change this paranoia of Western public opinion. But fortunately, the Chinese have clearly observed the Western media's serious prejudice and hostility toward China. The previous positive image of the Western media among the Chinese public has collapsed. It is hard for them to affect Chinese society as they did in the past. They are marginalizing themselves in Chinese society.

China needs to make efforts to dismantle the influence of the West's China-related reports worldwide. The work will be tough, but worthwhile to pursue. Only by gradually achieving this task can China's soft power make a necessary breakthrough.

**■ U.S. again scuppers international cooperation on women's rights**

Thirty-seven Asia-Pacific countries on Friday voted to adopt the Asia-Pacific Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+25 Review, an outcome that was hoped to be a consensus document but received last minute objections from the US. A self-proclaimed human rights defender, the US has flaunted its efforts in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment but has finally stood against the world by refusing to vote in favor.

"The US wanted to remove any reference to sexual and reproductive health rights, particularly abortion, which it said it does not recognize as a form of family planning," the Philippine-based ABS-CBN reported.

The US move surprised many, including its allies Australia and New Zealand, which expressed their disappointment publicly. However, if we thoroughly look back to what the US has done in allegedly promoting women's rights, we find the move in line with the country's real values.

In the past year, lawmakers in states across the US hypocritically legislated to protect fetal rights and restrictively banned abortion at any stage of pregnancy, with the only exception for a serious threat to the health of the woman. Just as the author of a New York Times article headlined "A woman's rights," wrote: "More and more laws are treating a fetus as a person, and a woman as less of one..."

The absurdity reflects how conservative US forces represented by the Republicans have torn off their disguise of neoliberalism and showed what they really are: a group of evangelical elites who want to achieve moral satisfaction. The result is that US women are subject to long-term, systematic, extensive and systematic discrimination, which is quite shocking. ➔



# Profiles in absurdity: Remembering the ‘Terror’ Wars

By Maj. Danny Sjursen

**ANTIWAR** — Series note: It has taken me years to tell these stories. The emotional and moral wounds of the Afghan War have just felt too recent, too raw. After all, I could hardly write a thing down about my Iraq War experience for nearly ten years, when, by accident, I churned out a book on the subject. Now, as the American war in Afghanistan — hopefully — winds to something approaching a close, it’s finally time to impart some tales of the madness. In this recurring, semi-regular series, the reader won’t find many worn out sagas of heroism, brotherhood, and love of country. Not that this author doesn’t have such stories, of course. But one can find those sorts of tales in countless books and numerous trite, platitudinal Hollywood yarns.

With that in mind, I propose to tell a number of very different sorts of stories — profiles, so to speak, in absurdity. That’s what war is, at root, an exercise in absurdity, and America’s hopeless post-9/11 wars are stranger than most. My own 18-year long quest to find some meaning in all the combat, to protect my troops from danger, push back against the madness, and dissent from within the army proved Kafkaesque in the extreme. Consider what follows just a survey of that hopeless journey...

It was, at heart, a nice gesture. Much of that was lost in all the (some of it fair) controversy about Trump’s surprise Thanksgiving visit with the troops in Afghanistan. Whether a war is right or wrong — and this one is emphatically the latter — it is the president’s job to both review and stiffen the morale of the nation’s deployed soldiers. Especially in year nineteen of a ludicrous, endless, war. Nevertheless, to use the parlance of our post-millennial times, you could say I was “triggered” by Trump’s Turkey Day Afghan visit.

Watching the whole trip on television conjured nightmare visions of the countless times that then Captain Sjursen hosted general after general at the forward edge of American “freedom,” deep in the Arghandab Valley of rural Kandahar in 2011-12. Such VIP stopovers were — as per kiss-ass army conventions — inevitably absolute dog-and-pony shows. And God help me if they weren’t the bane of my existence. I still have nightmares, quite literally, in which a young soldier from my tactical operations center (TOC) wakes me with the news that my squadron commander is on the phone, and (yikes), gives me twelve hours notice that some senior colonel or — worse still — a general officer would be visiting my humble sandbagged version of the Alamo.

Few without insider knowledge of military deployment culture know just how much useless labor goes into preparation for such a visit, or, quite how dangerous the events themselves can often be. First off, every one of your exhausted soldiers must go on alert to perform such worthy war zone tasks as sweeping dust off floors essentially made of dust, hiding the inevitably accumulated trash,



changing into “clean” uniforms, and (hopelessly) trying to convince our allied Afghan soldiers to bathe and wear their helmets.

Worse still, senior colonels and most all generals want to join a young captain and his ground-pounding troopers on an “authentic” “combat” patrol during the trip. That way, so they say at least, the senior officers can see the battlefield “situation” and buck up the low-ranking soldiers that slog that perilous terrain on the daily. Secretly, of course, such patrols mainly serve to boost the egos and assuage the office-ridden consciences of the generals themselves. And, not-so-secretly, real combat soldiers don’t give a shit about seeing the generals and find the whole charade to be little more than a needless pain in the ass.

Some of the bother tends towards the cosmetic and annoying. Like the onetime I went on my obligatory two-week leave and then returned to get my butt chewed because apparently while I was gone the brigade commander visited my little base and (say it ain’t so!) found one of my soldiers had shed his blouse — in triple-digit heat — and wore only his issued tan t-shirt. Then there was another instance, when the command sergeant major who advised the general commanding the whole Afghan War, dropped in. As a senior enlisted soldier he was, ostensibly, an up-from-the-ranks kind of fella who should’ve “connected” with the troops. Instead, in the middle of a ceremony where he got the honor of pinning medals for valor on a few of my battle-hardened, bone-tired, soldiers, he too decided to berate one of the awardees for having a bullet-hole through the sole of his boot. When I tried to intervene and explain that the

soldier had miraculously escaped injury in the firefight which produced the hole, and that friends of his were shot that same day, the sergeant major silently fumed. Then, in the vein of a truly “manly” army-style man of integrity, he tattled to my colonel who proceeded to rip my ass the next day.

More often though, the trouble was rather more treacherous. One time, that same brigade commander — a full-bird colonel earmarked for general — decided to tour the new (empty) marketplace we’d been ordered to construct in an all-but-abandoned stretch of still contested scrubland. Which meant, of course, that I had to coax, bribe, and threaten enough area Afghan elders to dig up enough locals and faux merchandise to fill the vacant stalls in time for the boss’ visit. To tell you the truth, the tribal leaders — at least half of whom played both sides in the conflict — did a bang up job. In spite of my strenuous protests to the squadron commander that the area was too dangerous for a bulky patrol that would inevitably include the brigade colonel’s entourage, when the nature walk kicked off, the joint really resembled a flourishing marketplace.

Thus, I felt the terrified — if vindicated — prophet of sorts, when the Taliban soon unleashed a brief but intense barrage of machine gun fire at our unwieldy patrol. It was a closer call than most, but perhaps because no one was hurt, I took significant pleasure in watching my prima donna colonel dive for his life into a dry canal. Who knows, maybe he wrote himself a commendation for valor after the “authentic” experience of muddying the knees of his fatigues just a bit. It all worked out, I suppose. None of us died, and the diva colonel got all he’d ever wanted and made general.

After a few such nightmares, it didn’t take long before I learned to “play-the-game,” in order to appease my immediate boss (who veritably worshipped each visiting general), and still keep my troopers as safe as humanly possible. So, being the geeky historian I was and am, I got to thinking about Potemkin Villages. The term refers to any literal or figurative construction built to deceive an observer that any situation is more favorable than it really is. See, back in the 18th century, as the (likely exaggerated) story goes, Catherine the Great of Russia’s former lover, Grigory Potemkin constructed fake portable villages to impress the empress along the route of her journey to Crimea in 1787. In fact, the fancy, flourishing, structures would be disassembled as soon as she passed, only to be quickly reassembled farther along her route. Even if partly apocryphal, the use of Potemkin villages later in history was quite real and usually employed by totalitarian states. The Nazis built them; so did the Soviets, and North Korean Communists. In fact, just such a village was featured prominently in the controversial, absurd Seth Rogen comedy film about life in North Korea, titled “The Interview.”

What a brilliant, albeit ludicrous, idea, I’d then thought. Why can’t I do that? After all, the big wigs only visited every few weeks, and only for an hour or two at a time at that. It simply wouldn’t be too hard to fool career-obsessed combat voyeurs who were almost never (in my experience) half as smart as they styled themselves. Therefore, when, quite suddenly, my own early and (for the province) unique experimentation with raising Afghan Local Police (ALP) — essentially warlord led militias — to combat the Taliban village by meaningless village, suddenly caught the attention of the military powers that be, I set my plans in motion. It mattered not to these feckless general officers, I realized, that our own “success” with living in muddy villages and arming illiterate young Afghans of questionable loyalty, was having very mixed results, and had alarmingly questionable long-term implications. They wanted to see a “win,” one that they could sell to their bosses, the media, and the American people as proof positive of “success” in a then ten (and now eighteen) year old war.

For about two months at the end of our troop’s tour of duty — by which point three men were dead, thirty or so wounded, many having lost limbs — one, two, and even three-star generals started stopping by my base to observe the miraculous “miracle” of my ALP program in the nearby villages. See, my pilot-program, despite its (should’ve been) obvious inability to turn around a failing war, had produced that which most generals prize most of all: a temporary, statistical, drop in violence. Suddenly, my weathered little cavalry troop was in high demand. Everyone who was anyone, it seemed, wanted to visit our besieged sandbag paradise.

So for two months I pulled off my greatest trick of all: pleasing, whilst deceiving, the star-clad visitors, and saving a few of my soldiers’ lives to

boot. It was a complicated, if theoretically simple, ruse. I’d, with the help of (somewhat) friendly tribal elders, and my subordinate lieutenant accomplices, preemptively, and temporarily, secure a small perimeter around the village in question, fill it with happy Afghans that didn’t really live in the abandoned hellholes, and map out a safe, bomb-cleared route for the expected general’s combat tourism patrol. The vacuous flag officers absolutely loved it. They’d shake hands with happy Afghans, fortuitously run into, and banter with, my more charismatic young soldiers, and witness a thriving village lifestyle straight out of a quaint Central Asian Norman Rockwell scene.

I know, I know. Undoubtedly I was a willing contributor to the illusion of Afghan War progress sold to Congress, the media, and thereby to the public. Don’t you think I knew that?!! My complicity is undeniable; but my conscience can bear as much. I’d spent nine months trying to tell my colonel, his colonel, even generals — anyone who would listen — the truth: we aren’t winning; we can’t win; the whole strategy is preposterous. They silenced me repeatedly. Told me I couldn’t possibly understand the big picture that they (apparently) divined from the safety of their massive secure bases.

With only a few months left to drag as many of my beloved boys back to Kansas — with as many of their limbs as possible — I guess you could say I quit. Maybe a better officer wouldn’t have. Thing is, after fifteen months toiled away in Iraq, and by then nine months suffered in Afghanistan, I knew something civilian observers didn’t: most generals didn’t want the truth anyway. They bought my Potemkin patrols hook-line-and-sinker because they wanted to believe, needed to believe, that the aimless wars, which defined their careers and augured their coveted promotions, could be won. And, surprise: they still haven’t been; and won’t be.

Let’s call the moral of my admittedly tragicomic farce of a story, then, this: in our current world of absurd forever wars, a bit of higher-level deception might just be in order — even if the historical inspiration (oops) derives from absolute monarchies and authoritarian dictatorships. Which leads to yet another of my ubiquitous “modest proposals:” if presidents are going to pretend to think the wars they start and continue are winnable, and if Congress is going to pretend to sanction and oversee them, then the generals — at least those with any conscience left to speak of — ought to pretend to fight them.

Keep the boys on their bases, generals. Send phony reports, produce the requisite PowerPoint slides that no one reads anyway, and put on a theater-level Potemkin show when this, or the next, president decides to make his semiannual visit to whichever of the dozen or so war zones America remains hopelessly immersed in. The kids in the proverbial trenches will thank you. So will their poor mothers. And no one else will even notice...

## East Asia at the glance

**6 →** As the world’s largest economy, the US has failed to protect the rights of women in the economic sphere. They face seriously discrimination in terms of employment, wages and careers. As nearly half of labor in the country, US women suffer higher unemployment than men: Between October 2016 and October 2017, US women lost more than 160,000 jobs while some 106,000 new jobs were added for men. The income gap between the two genders is huge, and due to the problem of social welfare, retired women are more likely to fall into poverty than retired men.

In addition to economic inequality, US women have suffered from sexual harassment and violence in the workplace, school and at home - with black women the biggest victim, 45 percent of whom were physically or sexually abused. In the meantime, African-American women and children face a higher death rate than white Americans.

Gender discrimination is deeply rooted in US society, and patriarchy and a flawed social system have made it hard to be effectively uprooted. US women have struggled for equality for dozens of years but couldn’t even get the right to vote until 1920 - over 100 years after the foundation of the self-professed “most free and democratic” country.

Women’s human rights are indispensable for universal human rights. How women enjoy their rights is an important criterion to measure a country’s human rights situation. A serious violation of women’s rights has not only intensified US society’s inequality but also hindered the cause of international human rights from developing.

The US has been adopting a double standard on human rights. It acts like a clown that swings human rights as a stick to beat other countries, repeatedly revealing its ill-intentioned political motive.

### ■ China’s e-commerce a role model for Africa

Looking at Africa from the perspective of most international media outlets, one gets the picture of a desperate continent. From claims that it is clouded by poverty, illiteracy, insecurity and diseases, one would hardly think of investing in Africa, because in the continent, everything appears hard to crack.

There is little doubt that Africa’s infrastructure has been ailing. It has an inadequate road network that offers poor connectivity, there is paucity of electricity which is costly and ever erratic, while communication networks are still concentrated in urban areas.

The continent’s social infrastructure is no better as its water supply is limited and sanitation and sewerage coverage is poor. However, significant progress is being made in education and healthcare sectors.

The challenges have ended up hurting Africa’s growth prospects. Acknowledging infrastructure is a vital ingredient in its transformation and an enabler for productivity and sustainable economic growth, Africa is investing a huge part of its resources into roads, power connections, water, sewerage

lines, and communications. For example, Ethiopia is building one of Africa’s largest hydroelectricity plants that promises the continent affordable, reliable and adequate supplies for its industrial needs.

By putting significant amount of resources in sustainable infrastructure, Africa knows too well it would get value for money through greater economic activity, enhanced efficiency and increased competitiveness.

As a result, more countries would be eager to do business with the continent. It is worth noting that many African countries have already fixed their infrastructure, while others are speedily working on theirs. South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria, among others, are some of the countries in Africa that have set up stable and friendly platforms for foreign investors to operate from.

No wonder these countries have turned out to be Africa’s business and investment hubs. Initially, Africa lagged globally in the buying or selling of products on the internet, famously referred to as electronic commerce, due to lack of internet access, poverty, illiteracy and poor logistics. However, technological advances, which have given millions of Africans access to internet and mobile payment systems, have made it possible for the continent to shed the beggar tag and embrace e-commerce.

Even with its sluggish growth, e-commerce continues to perform reasonably well. In 2017, Africa did online business worth about \$16.5 billion. This is forecast to go up to \$29 billion by 2022, generating millions of jobs for youth.

But it is the recent coming into force of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement that is likely to turn Africa into an economic nerve center through online shopping. The trade pact, which was signed in Rwanda in March 2018, brings together 54 countries and over 1.25 billion people. It is in this context that China is boosting its economic cooperation in Africa, aided by the high number of mobile devices and mobile-friendly payment systems such as M-Pesa in Kenya.

So as to make it easy for Africans to conduct business on their mobile phones, some Chinese firms have come up with handsets that match the needs of the continent. Transsion, the maker of Tecno mobile phones, for instance, has developed affordable, smart gadgets that seldom experience network fluctuations and have a longer battery life in a region where electricity supply is erratic.

Huawei and ZTE have also not been left behind in this quest to turn Africa into a technology and communications superhighway with the invention of various communications equipment and software. The ultimate goal, it appears, is to see Africa follow China’s footsteps in the e-commerce world. Today, more than 40 percent of the globe’s e-commerce transactions take place in China as compared to 1 percent about a decade ago.

This growth has been attributed to China’s mobile payments revolution. However, there were at least 21 million online shoppers in Africa in 2017 or less than two percent of the world total,

according to reports. There is hope though, as the continent recorded approximately 21 million online shopping transactions two years ago.

Beyond the setting up of a fertile environment for e-commerce, players in the sector are drawing inspiration from their Chinese counterparts such as Alibaba. Already, Jumia, Africa’s upcoming online shopping giant, is seeking commercial cooperation with China to expand sales as recently announced by its management.

Such an engagement and partnership would hasten the digital economy revolution dream in Africa besides enhancing competition that would inspire innovation and lure more Africans to online shopping. The growth of e-commerce would help African countries fight over-reliance on commodities whose prices are prone to market dynamics, generate jobs, help check poverty and ultimately translate to economic growth.

### ■ Can Germany transcend ideological difference to form realistic China policy?

The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) of Germany - the country’s ruling party whose former leader is German Chancellor Angela Merkel - held a conference on November 22 and 23 in Leipzig. The party made decisions on major issues including the candidate selection process and pension reform. Amid complicated international situation and volatile German politics, the CDU conference plays a significant role in German development and clarifies the country’s role in its future internal and foreign affairs.

However, whether Huawei should be allowed to participate in Germany’s 5G rollout was one of the most important issues of the convention. It shows the technological issue has been hyped up into one that concerns geopolitics, national security and ideology. It also shows German politicians have huge divergences on the issue.

The moderates, represented by Merkel, believe that Germany should not rule out any company over political issues, but focus more on objective factors such as whether its technological security and standards meet German requirements. However, some hard-liners make it an ideological issue and believe Huawei should be excluded. The reason they provided is “no Chinese company is an independent company,” adding that Huawei’s involvement is principally “an imminent question of national security.”

Merkel has withstood huge pressure and has not budged from her position in the conference. The CDU approved a motion to debate in parliament the involvement of Huawei in building Germany’s 5G network. But the party also agreed that bidders of German 5G rollout contracts must guarantee the network is free of foreign state influence. This condition is equal for companies from the US, China and all the other countries worldwide. This shows a desire to maintain technological multilateralism.

If a major European mainstream party chooses technological multilateralism and abandons the choices that will further

divide the world, it offers proof of its political maturity. This not only benefits Germany’s interests, but also plays a vital role as a model for other Western countries embroiled in similar issues.

As Merkel said in 2017, Europe has to take its destiny in its own hands. It should not rely too much on the US like it used to. After WWII, the Marshall plan helped Germany’s economic take-off and made it easier to restore social order. Thus, the US was regarded as the “liberator” of Germany. After the German reunification in 1990, the US - the winner of the Cold War - was regarded as the “savior” who helped reunify Germany. In the internet era, the US is regarded as leading country in many technological areas.

After decades of following the US, Germany has somewhat lost the ability to independently decide its development and destiny. But in recent years, the US has been pursuing unilateralism. The export-oriented German economy is affected by not only China-US trade conflicts, but also US threat of imposing tariffs on German products. Thus, it is time for Berlin to stop its fear of threats from Washington and make choices that are in line with its own interests.

Germany can strengthen its innovative development and technological cooperation with China through joint works with Huawei. Berlin could also set 5G technological and security standards with Beijing. This will help Germany offset its short-coming in information and communications technologies and provide foundation for the country’s political security, economic development and social stability.

There are still some German politicians deeply affected by stereotypes and Western media’s negative opinions on China. When they talk about China, these people would think of ideological differences first. Although they understand that trade exchanges, technological cooperation and reciprocal China-Germany relations best fit German interests, they feel politically incorrect if they do not talk about so-called democracy, human rights and freedom of speech whenever China is mentioned. Such a mind-set will undoubtedly increase Germany’s doubts over China and also harm Germany’s own interests.

Disputes between China and Germany in recent years basically stemmed from some German forces’ accusations over China’s internal affairs. Chinese officials have never interfered in Germany’s internal affairs, and never commented on the phenomena like neo-Nazism or the rising wave of anti-Semitism in the country. Instead, China believes the German government and people have the ability to resolve the problems.

Generally speaking, China-Germany relations have a solid and realistic foundation. The two countries can transcend differences in their systems and ideologies, jointly protect multilateralism, set an example of win-win cooperation, stabilize the global situation and bring more hope and benefits to the two peoples and people around the world.



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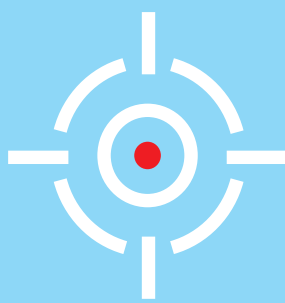
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# Jupiter’s Great Red Spot isn’t dead yet

By Kenneth Chang

Jupiter’s Great Red Spot is shrinking, but that does not necessarily mean that it is dying.

Earlier this year, amateur astronomers caught the red spot seemingly starting to fall apart, with rose-colored clouds breaking away from the storm that is some 15,000 miles wide. In May, giant streamers of gas appeared to be peeling from the spot’s outer rim, blown into the winds circling the planet.

The spot — which is red for reasons not fully understood — has become smaller in recent decades. Some Jupiter-watchers wondered if they were witnessing the beginning of the Great Red Spot’s end.

“We beg to differ with that conclusion,” Philip S. Marcus, a professor of fluid mechanics at the University of California, Berkeley said on Monday during a news conference at a meeting of the American Physical Society’s division of fluid dynamics in Seattle. In essence, Dr. Marcus said, the odd dynamics in the spot are just the result of weather on Jupiter, the solar system’s largest planet.

Robert Hooke, an English scientist, first reported an oval on Jupiter in 1664. The following year, Giovanni Cassini, an Italian astronomer, also observed a spot and he and others continued observing it until 1713. (Cassini died in 1712.) Then astronomers lost track of it for more than a century. That could mean Cassini’s spot disappeared and another one formed later,



or it could mean that no one was looking carefully during that time. The current spot has persisted for at least 189 years, and probably for centuries before that.

The Great Red Spot is an anticyclone — a high-pressure system that, because it is in the southern hemisphere, rotates in a counterclockwise direction. That makes it unlike hurricanes and other large storms

on Earth, which are low-pressure weather systems, or cyclones, that rotate in the opposite direction of anticyclones. Cyclones also exist on Jupiter, but the warm air at the centers of Jovian cyclones often forms wispy clouds, or no clouds at all.

Thus, just looking at the clouds of Jupiter is sometimes misleading, missing the effects of unseen cyclones.

The clouds, at the top of Jupiter’s atmosphere, do not necessarily tell what is going on deep down, hundreds of miles below the Great Red Spot in the vortex that drives the storm.

“You can’t just conclude that if a cloud is getting smaller that the underlying vortex is getting smaller,” he said.

Through computer simulations, Dr. Marcus and his colleagues have been studying the dynamics of the Great Red Spot and other Jovian anticyclones.

The clouds of anticyclones do not always match the boundaries of the underlying vortex. But they also give clues to nearby cyclones.

The simulations indicate a coincidence of two phenomena accounts for the odd dynamics of the Red Spot. Every decade or so, a cyclone comes close to the Great Red Spot and the winds of the two systems collide and deflect at an angle. “It’s like having two fire hoses aimed at each other,” Dr. Marcus said.

At the same time, the storm was merging with a smaller anticyclone, the deflected winds from the collision with the cyclone carved off pieces of the merging anticyclone. That formed the blade-shaped clouds that were seen separating from the spot, Dr. Marcus said.

He added that the event was just part of the normal dynamics of Jupiter. The Great Red Spot, he predicts, will live “for the indefinite future” — likely centuries longer.

“Of course, I probably just gave it the kiss of death,” Dr. Marcus joked, “and it’ll probably fall apart next week.”

## A new, theoretical type of time crystal could run without outside help

A newly proposed type of time crystal could stand alone.

Time crystals are structures that repeat regularly in time, just as a standard crystal is composed of atoms arranged in a regularly repeating pattern in space. Scientists first created time crystals in 2016. But those crystals require periodic blasts from a laser to initiate their rhythmic behavior.

Now, two scientists have sketched out a theoretical blueprint for a new version of the odd state of matter. Their time crystal would persist without any input from the outside world, the pair reports in the Nov. 22 Physical Review Letters.

First proposed in 2012 by theoretical physicists Frank Wilczek of MIT and Alfred Shapere of the University of Kentucky in Lexington, the idea of time crystals was initially controversial. Researchers soon proved a no-go theorem stating that, under typical conditions, time crystals couldn’t exist.

But wiggle room remained: Two situations not included

in the no-go theorem left open the possibility of creating the unusual materials. One exception was systems for which energy is input from the outside, for example, via lasers. That’s what’s known in physics terminology as “driving” the system, and it’s how scientists had created all time crystals until now.

But theoretical physicists Oleksandr Kyriienko of the University of Exeter in England and Valerii Kozin of the University of Iceland in Reykjavik wanted to design a self-sustaining time crystal. “We said, ‘We don’t want to drive the system at all,’” Kyriienko says.

The pair exploited the second exception to the no-go rule — systems that involve very long-range interactions, in which atoms or other tiny particles separated by large distances could influence one another. Such long-range effects don’t typically occur in nature: Two atoms on opposite sides of a room normally don’t exert forces on

one another, for example.

Based on such interactions, the researchers came up with a new time crystal scenario, consisting of a collection of many such particles, each with a spin — a quantum version of angular momentum. Interactions between the particles’ spins would be configured so that particles near and far would influence one another simultaneously, via some unspecified quantum gymnastics in the laboratory. And particles in the time crystal would be highly entangled with one another, meaning they share quantum links that can persist at large distances.

Under such conditions, distant parts of the time crystal could affect one another. The result is that the correlation between the spins — whether neighboring particles’ spins were aligned or not — would endlessly oscillate in time in a regular pattern, producing a time crystal, the researchers say. (Source: sciencenews.org)

## Artificial intelligence-based algorithm for intensive care of traumatic brain injury



Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a significant global cause of mortality and morbidity with an increasing incidence, especially in low-and-middle income countries. The most severe TBIs are treated in intensive care units (ICU), but in spite of the proper and high-quality care, about one in three patients dies.

Patients that suffer from severe TBI are unconscious, which makes it challenging to accurately monitor the condition of the patient during intensive care. In the ICU, many tens of variables are continuously monitored (e.g. intracranial pressure, mean arterial pressure and cerebral perfusion pressure) that indirectly give information regarding the condition of the patient.

However, only one variable, such as intracranial pressure, may yield hundreds of thousands of data points per day. Thus, it is impossible for the human brain to comprehend the resulting millions of daily collected data points from all monitored data. This is why researchers at Helsinki University Hospital (HUS) started to develop an artificial intelligence (AI) based algorithm that could help doctors treat patients with severe TBI. At its best, such an algorithm could predict the outcome of the individual patient and give objective data regarding the condition and prognosis of the patient and how it changes during treatment.

“A dynamic prognostic model like this has not been presented before. Although this is a proof-of-concept and it will still take some time before we can implement algorithms like this into daily clinical practice, our study reflects how and into what direction modern intensive care is evolving,” says Rahul Raj, Adjunct Professor

of Experimental Neurosurgery from HUS and one of the authors of the paper.

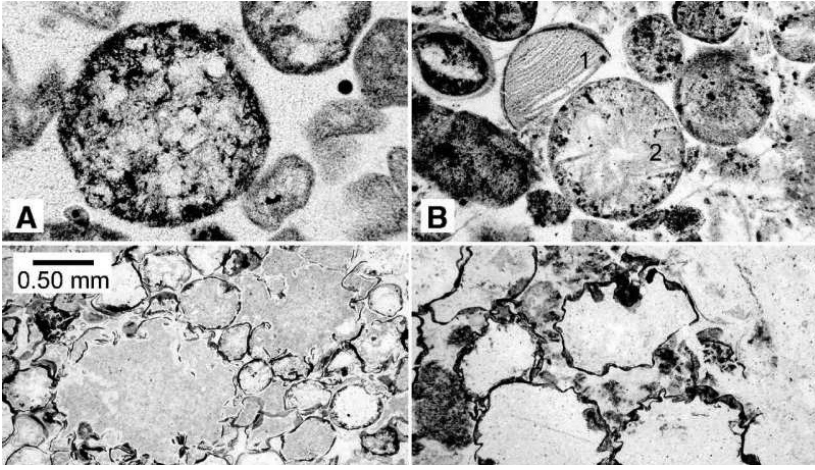
The algorithms can predict the probability of the patient dying within 30-days with accuracy of 80-85%.

“We have developed two separate algorithms. The first algorithm is simpler and is based only upon objective monitor data. The second algorithm is slightly more complex and includes data regarding the level of consciousness, measured by the widely used Glasgow Coma Scale score. As expected, the accuracy of the more complex algorithm is slightly better than for the simpler algorithm. Still, the accuracy of both algorithms is surprisingly good, considering that the simpler model is based upon only three main variables and the more complex upon five main variables”, tells Eetu Pursiainen, Data Scientist from the Analytics and AI Development Department at HUS, one of the authors and main coders of the algorithms.

In the future, the algorithms still have to be validated in national and international external datasets.

“Finland is one of the world leaders in artificial intelligence solutions in specialized healthcare and Helsinki University Hospital, as one of the largest hospitals in Europe, plays an important role in bringing Finnish excellence into the world. Because of this, we think that it is important act ethically and share our algorithms openly and free of charge for further development, both nationally and internationally”, states Miikka Korja, Chair of the HUS Artificial Intelligence Steering Group and Adjunct Professor of Neurosurgery at the University of Helsinki. (Source: eurekalert.org)

## Extra-terrestrial impacts may have triggered ‘bursts’ of plate tectonics



When — and how — Earth’s surface evolved from a hot, primordial mush into a rocky planet continually resurfaced by plate tectonics remain some of the biggest unanswered questions in earth science research. Now a new study, published in Geology, suggests this earthly transition may in fact have been triggered by extra-terrestrial impacts.

“We tend to think of the Earth as an isolated system, where only internal processes matter,” says Craig O’Neill, director of Macquarie University’s Planetary Research Centre. “Increasingly, though, we’re seeing the effect of solar system dynamics on how the Earth behaves.”

Modelling simulations and comparisons with lunar impact studies have revealed that following Earth’s accretion about 4.6 billion years ago, Earth-shattering impacts continued to shape the planet for hundreds of millions of years. Although these events appear to have tapered off over time, spherule beds — distinctive layers of round particles condensed from rock vaporized during an extra-terrestrial impact — found in South Africa and Australia suggest the Earth experienced a period of intense bombardment about 3.2 billion years ago, roughly the same time the first indications of plate tectonics appear in the rock record.

This coincidence caused O’Neill and co-authors Simone Marchi, William Bottke, and Roger Fu to wonder whether these circumstances could be related.

“Modelling studies of the earliest Earth suggest that very large impacts — more than 300 km in diameter — could generate a significant thermal anomaly in

the mantle,” says O’Neill. This appears to have altered the mantle’s buoyancy enough to create upwellings that, according to O’Neill, “could directly drive tectonics.”

But the sparse evidence found to date from the Archaean — the period of time spanning 4.0 to 2.5 billion years ago — suggests that mostly smaller impacts less than 100 km in diameter occurred during this interval. To determine whether these more modest collisions were still large and frequent enough to initiate global tectonics, the researchers used existing techniques to expand the Middle Archaean impact record and then developed numerical simulations to model the thermal effects of these impacts on Earth’s mantle.

The results indicate that during the Middle Archaean, 100-kilometer-wide impacts (about 30 km wider than the much younger Chicxulub crater) were capable of weakening Earth’s rigid, outermost layer. This, says O’Neill, could have acted as a trigger for tectonic processes, especially if Earth’s exterior was already “primed” for subduction.

“If the lithosphere were the same thickness everywhere, such impacts would have little effect,” states O’Neill. But during the Middle Archaean, he says, the planet had cooled enough for the mantle to thicken in some spots and thin in others. The modelling showed that if an impact were to happen in an area where these differences existed, it would create a point of weakness in a system that already had a large contrast in buoyancy — and ultimately trigger modern tectonic processes. (Source: Science Daily)

## Technology to keep lights on could help prevent wildfires

B. Don Russell wasn’t thinking about preventing a wildfire when he developed a tool to detect power line problems before blackouts and bigger disasters.

The electrical engineering professor at Texas A&M University figured he might save a life if his creation could prevent someone from being electrocuted by a downed live wire.

But fire prevention may be his product’s biggest selling point in California and other places that have experienced devastating wildland blazes blamed on electrical equipment.



“If we can find things when they start to fail, if we can find things that are in the process of degrading before a catastrophic event occurs, such as a downed line that might electrocute someone or a fire starting or even an outage for their customers, that’s kind of the Holy Grail,” Russell said.

The technology he bills as a one-of-a-kind diagnostic tool called Distribution Fault Anticipation is now in use in Texas and being tested in California by Pacific Gas & Electric Co. and Southern California Edison. The utilities have been blamed for some of the most destructive and deadliest fires in California.

Texas A&M said the technology will also be tested in New Zealand and Australia, which is currently reeling from destructive wildfires.

The tool detects variations in electrical currents caused by deteriorating conditions or equipment and notifies utility operators so they can send a crew to fix the problems, Russell said.

It can anticipate many problems in their early stages — sometimes years before they cause an outage or present a greater hazard during high winds when utilities are now preemptively shutting off power to prevent sparking wildfires.

Before the technology was developed, electric companies often didn’t know they had a problem until there was a failure or a customer called to report sparks on power lines or a loss of electricity.

“The assumption the utility has to make today is it’s healthy until we get a call that says somebody’s lights (are) out,” Russell said. “By then the fire’s started or the outage has happened or the person’s electrocuted.”

Pedernales Electric Cooperative Inc. that serves about 330,000 customers outside San Antonio and Austin, Texas, began implementing the system after successful tests that began in 2015. The utility serves areas so rural that before the technology was installed, electricity powering a pump on a well could have been off for days before being detected by a farmer.

The devices installed at substations are now trouble-shooting all kinds of problems, said Robert Peterson, principal engineer for the utility.

“We’ve found tree branches on the line. Failing arrestors. Failing capacitors. Failing connections,” Peterson said. “It’s pretty amazing.”

In California, the testing process has just begun and there are no results yet, according to PG&E and SoCal Edison.

In Southern California, the software is running on just 60 of Edison’s 1,100 circuits in the utility’s high-risk fire zone, which accounts for about a quarter of its total circuits.

It’s just one of several tools the utility is testing to continue to modernize its system.

“There is no silver bullet,” said Bill Chiu, managing director of grid modernization and resiliency at SoCal Edison. “This is really more of a preventive measure. ... The important point is this will be one of the suite of technology that will help us better assess the condition of the grid.”

Chiu said the technology was not at the point where it could be used to determine where to shut off power when dangerous winds are forecast during dry conditions. He also said it won’t pinpoint problems but can help dispatch crews closer to the source of equipment that needs to be fixed, saving time that would be wasted patrolling miles of power lines.

One question is whether the technology is economically feasible to deploy across tens of thousands of miles of power lines, Chiu said.

At an expense estimated between \$15,000 to \$20,000 per circuit, it could cost the utility \$22 million in its high-risk fire area and that doesn’t include installation, operation and maintenance costs.

That’s a fraction of what a moderate wildfire sparked by a utility could cost, Russell said.

PG&E, which is testing the technology on nine circuits, was driven into bankruptcy protection this year while facing at least \$20 billion in losses from a series of deadly and destructive wildfires in 2017 and 2018.

SoCal Edison recently agreed to pay \$360 million to local governments to settle lawsuits over deadly wildfires sparked by its equipment during the last two years. That figure doesn’t include lawsuits by thousands who lost their homes in those fires or family members of 21 people killed when a mudslide tore down a fire-scarred mountain. Two other people were never found.

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative found the cost was feasible and has installed it on about a sixth of its circuits for the utility that has about 100,000 customers in Central Texas, said Eric Kocian, chief engineer and system operations officer.

While the system has helped proactively diagnose problems and detect the cause of outages, the university team that developed it can often find problems the utility’s control room operators don’t detect.

Pedernales Coop is working with an analytics company to streamline the analysis of the myriad information the software evaluates to find and fix problems in a day, Peterson said.

Russell said he never had a hint the device his research team created 15 years ago would have fire prevention applications until a series of bad wildfires in Texas in 2011. They were focused on keeping power systems safe and the lights on.

“It’s obvious now in today’s context of the drought that we’ve had in California and other places,” Russell said. “Serendipitously, that’s where we find ourselves today.” (Source: AP News)



## Sisterhood agreement to bring Yazd, Lviv closer

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian city of Yazd and the Ukrainian city of Lviv are slated to sign a sisterhood agreement, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The two historical cities will sign the agreement in a bid to enhance their cultural relations, Ukraine's ambassador to Iran Sergey Burdilyak said on Saturday.

He made the remarks in a meeting with Yazd provincial officials in the central Iranian city, which was name a World Heritage in July 2017.



The envoy welcomed UNESCO decision for designation of Yazd as a World Heritage, saying Yazd's historical texture has remained intact.

Yazd Governor General Gholamali Sefid, for his part, suggested that direct flights to be established between the two cities.

The oasis city of Yazd is wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain ringed by mountains. Its historical structure enjoys a very harmonious public-religious architecture that dates from different eras. With its winding lanes, forest of badgirs (wind catchers), mud-brick houses, atmospheric alleyways and centuries of history, Yazd is a delightful place to stay, referring as a 'don't miss' destination by almost all travel associates in the region.

Also a UNESCO World Heritage, Lviv was founded in the late Middle Ages where a settlement had existed since the 5th and 6th centuries. It flourished as an administrative, religious and commercial center due to its favorable geographical position for trade and political development. Today, the surviving architectural and artistic heritage reflects a synthesis of Eastern European traditions influenced by those from Italy and Germany.

The modern concept of town twinning, conceived after the World War II in 1947, was intended to foster friendship and understanding among different cultures to encourage trade and tourism.

## KLM passengers spend 11 hours in the air going nowhere

A flight from Amsterdam to Mexico was forced to turn around about five-and-a-half hours into the flight due to a volcanic eruption. The plane was reportedly unable to land at another airport because it was also carrying a cargo of horses.

KLM flight KL685 from Amsterdam's Schiphol airport to Mexico City was over Canada when the decision was made to turn around. The Independent reports. The plane returned to the airport it originated from, making this a very long flight that ultimately went nowhere.

The plane was unable to land at its original destination because of volcanic activity from Popocatepetl, an active volcano near Mexico City. The eruption had created "unfavorable flying conditions."

(Source: MSN)



### ROUND THE GLOBE

## Urban historic center of Cienfuegos

Cienfuegos was established in 1819 on the Caribbean coast of south central Cuba. Although located in Spanish territory, many of its first settlers were of French origin from Bordeaux and French colonies such as Louisiana.



A commercial port town, located in the heart of a fertile agricultural region producing sugar, cane, mango, tobacco and coffee, its prosperity was primarily linked to the 19th-century sugar boom. By the 1860s, Cienfuegos was the third most important city in Cuba, by economical wealth.

The city's original center was composed of 25 blocks, laid out in a grid plan with absolute geometric regularity, inspired by the Spanish Enlightenment.

As an example of modern urbanism in Spanish American, this planned town reflected new socio-economic and cultural trends related to urban order, the role of public spaces, and public hygiene requirements for natural light and ventilation.

Buildings dating from the early 20th century followed a more eclectic design but maintained certain proportions, construction materials and stylistic features creating harmony. residential buildings, for example, are one or two storey's in height with plain facades, generally without porches. Masterful metalwork of wrought and cast iron is present in elegant grills, railings and fences.

The inscribed historic center covers 70 hectares surrounded by a buffer zone of 105 hectares that extends south along the eastern side of the port.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Shiraz to be assessed for being a world city of handicrafts

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A delegation of experts and assessors from the World Crafts Council is slated to visit Shiraz for investigating the possibility of naming it a world city of handicrafts.

Evaluators from the World Crafts Council will arrive in Shiraz, Fars province, within the next two weeks in order to closely observe handicrafts and other related activities that are practiced in Shiraz, Fars province's tourism chief Mosayeb Amiri said on Sunday, IRIB reported.

Last year, World Crafts Council-Asia Pacific Region Director Ghada Hijavi paid a visit to handicrafts' workshops and stores in Shiraz, emphasizing that the southern city deserves the title, the official explained.

For the time being, over 40 fields of handicrafts are practiced in Shiraz, the official added.

Back in February, the oasis city of Meybod celebrated becoming a world city for Zilou, a traditional type of floor covering commonly woven across the central Iranian city and its outskirts. The oasis city won the WCC-APR status last October after a delegation of international experts probed the in-house



expertise which has been passed down generations to generations.

So far, the council has granted same titles to several Iranian cities and villages including Abadeh for its art of "Woodcarving" and the village of Khorashad for the craft 'Toebafi' (traditional hand woven fabrics).

Celebrated as the heartland of Persian culture for over 2000 years, Shiraz has become synonymous with education, nightingales, poetry and crafts skills passed down from generation to generation. It was one of the most important cities in the medieval Islamic world and was the Iranian capital during the Zand dynasty (1751–1794).

Iran's handicrafts exports reached \$289 million in the past Iranian calendar year 1397, showing three percent growth year on year, based on data released by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

Traditional ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornaments with precious and semi-precious gemstones are among Iranian exports to Iraq, Afghanistan and Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries

## Assyrian cylinder seals unearthed in Iran

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A senior Iranian archaeologist has announced discovery of dozens of cylinder seals, which once belonged to Assyria, kingdom of northern Mesopotamia that became the center of one of the great empires of the ancient Middle East.

The discovery was made in a prehistorical cemetery at Tepe Sagzabad, a site situated on the Qazvin plain of north-central Iran, which has been excavated during various archaeological seasons since early 1070s, yielded artifacts and other remains dating to the Early Iron Age.

Diggings at a newly discovered Iron-Age cemetery, in the area, led to the discovery of 35 cylinder seals that are believed to belong to local and state Assyrian administrations, said Mostafa Dehpahlavan who led the excavation project, IRNA reported on Sunday.

Based on research on the spheres of physical anthropology, genetic, ancient zoology, and rare burial traditions, we obtained an ample evidence that suggests cultural, political



and economic interactions of the inhabitants with remote areas of the western edge of the Iranian plateau, the archae-

ologist explained.

"In all graves, with no exception, remains of animals such as goats, immature sheep, cows, camels and horses were found, which points to burial of animals alongside the human corpse."

Other objects were also found in the graves, such as cylinder seals, metal ornaments, earthenware and stone containers that date from the Iron Age, Dehpahlavan added.

Assyria, according to Encyclopedia Britannica, was a dependency of Babylonia and later of the Mitanni kingdom during most of the 2nd millennium BC. It emerged as an independent state in the 14th century BC, and in the subsequent period it became a major power in Mesopotamia, Armenia, and sometimes in northern Syria.

The state was finally destroyed by a Chaldean-Median coalition in 612–609 BC. Famous for their cruelty and fighting prowess, the Assyrians were also monumental builders, as shown by archaeological sites at Nineveh, Ashur, and Nimrud.

## Hotel projects worth \$380m underway in northwest Iran

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A total of eight five- and four-star hotels are being built in Iran's northwestern East Azarbaijan province with a total budget of 16 trillion rials (about \$380 million).

Once the projects are inaugurated, 3,100 beds will be added to the accommodation capacity of the province, Morteza Abdar, provincial chief of the cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts department, said on Sunday, IRNA reported.

The under-construction hotels have a total capacity of 961 beds, he said, adding that the projects will create around 2,000 job opportunities.

The capital city of Tabriz, which is well-soaked in history and culture for millennia, embraces several historical and religious sites, including Jameh Mosque of Tabriz and Arg of Tabriz, and UNESCO-registered Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex to name a few.

The number of foreign visitors arriving in Iran surged 30 percent during the first five months of the current Iranian calendar



year (March 21 – August 22), compared with the same period last year, according to data compiled by Iran ministry of tourism. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, the country aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

## Tehran conference to explore women's role in Iranian-Islamic civilization

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A conference titled "Women's Place in Iranian-Islamic Civilization" will be held in Tehran on February 24 and 25, 2020, aiming to discuss women's duties throughout the Iranian history.

Co-organized by Iranology Foundation and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) office in Tehran, the event plans to explore woman's role in various fields such as creative economy, entrepreneurship and social responsibility, family relationships, restoration and promotion of intangible cultural heritage, as well as fertility, creation and progress in prehistoric, ancient and Islamic-era epochs.

Amongst other themes for the conference are: Women in other societies, women's role in preserving sustainable peace and progress based on Iranian and Islamic philosophies, women's self-care and self-confidence, women in media and the internet: opportunities and threats, women's role in future studies of science



and technology both in Muslim-majority communities and other countries.

Scholars and researchers willing to take part in the conference may send their abstract papers to the secretariat by January 5, and full papers by February 4, IQNA reported.

## Hong Kong Airlines given 5 days by government to save company

Hong Kong Airlines bosses given five days to save company, leaving 3,500 employees at risk just weeks before Christmas

Hong Kong Airlines bosses have been given five days to save the company, putting 3,500 jobs at risk just weeks before Christmas.

The government said on Monday the airline needed to find new cash or last-minute investors, or face having its operating license suspended or even revoked.

In the most serious action taken by the government since the carrier's financial woes became public, the Air Transport Licensing Authority (ATLA) concluded that the finances of Hong Kong's third-largest airline, backed by the financially troubled HNA Group, had "deteriorated rapidly", preventing it from meeting the minimum requirements under its permit.

Pressure will be placed upon the airline's controlling shareholder, HNA, to finally invest money, something which sources said it had not done for a considerable period of time, for lack of cash.

Failure to raise new capital would probably lead to the airline's closure, which would make it the second local carrier to go out of business, after the 2008 collapse of Oasis Hong Kong.

"After careful consideration of the financial position of HKA at present, ATLA must take immediate and resolute action to prevent further deterioration of HKA's situation in order to protect public interests," the authority said in a statement.

The beleaguered airline acknowledged the government's ultimatum to raise cash by Saturday.

"Hong Kong Airlines is actively communicating with our shareholders and other stakeholders to meet the new requirements from ATLA as requested," a spokeswoman said. "Our operation is still running normally and we remain committed to flying our passengers to their destinations safely."

The airline was given two new license conditions on Monday



that it must meet by December 7. It must ensure fresh cash is injected into the company at a level set by the licensing body, and continue to raise and maintain its balances as set out by the authority.

After more than 12 months of warning signs for the crisis-hit carrier, its financial fragility has been exposed by months of civil unrest in Hong Kong.

"If HKA fails to improve its financial situation as required by ATLA by the deadline, ATLA will take further action ... which provides for revocation or suspension of license," the statement read. "ATLA will announce its decision by December 7, 2019."

Secretary for Transport and Housing Frank Chan Fan said his bureau had been closely following the airline's financial situation and had held 12 meetings with the company. The Civil Aviation Department also conducted inspections about every two days to ensure aviation safety was not affected.

The authority's demands followed a meeting last Friday of

government officials from the statutory body, the Transport and Housing Bureau and the Civil Aviation Department with senior management from the airline.

In a statement, the bureau said it had "expressed grave dissatisfaction and deep concern that HKA's financial situation had not significantly improved".

It added that the onus was on the airline to prevent the situation from deteriorating, and reminded the carrier to continue to provide services to its passengers in accordance with the terms and conditions of air tickets, before any further decision from the licensing authority was made.

Transport officials acknowledged they had forced the airline to cut back operations "in the hope" the situation could brought under control.

The parlous state of the airline's finances was thrown into sharp relief last week when it was revealed it had not been able to pay all its staff in November, and had cut its in-flight entertainment because it could not afford to pay the vendor.

Hong Kong Airlines has faced increased scrutiny since December 2018, and has faced 180 scheduled and unscheduled inspections, and the aviation department has said it doubts its ability to fulfil its licence obligations.

"The CAD will continue to closely monitor HKA's flight operations and aviation safety, with a view to ensuring that HKA's operations will continue to comply fully with the requirements of relevant aviation laws and regulations," a department spokeswoman said.

Luya You, transport analyst at Bocom International, a brokerage company, said it seemed extremely unlikely that the airline could save itself in the next few days.

"It's no secret that HKA has been struggling with rising costs and dried up financing in the past few years," she said. "We can assume HKA has already pursued all viable options long before now."

(Source: South China Mentoring Post)



By Thomas Harrington

# The Catalan leadership is serious about independence



pendence parties within the region. Right?

Unfortunately for him, and the many others that make similarly blithe statements about pro-union majorities in Catalonia, no such information is forthcoming.

In fact, during the last three Catalan Parliamentary elections (2012, 2015 and 2017) the combined forces in favor of independence have consistently outpolled those in favor of remaining as part of Spain. The numbers — which add up to less than 100% because of the refusal of various leftist conformations generally totaling between 7 and 9 percent of the overall vote to take an unambiguous position one way or another — are the following:

2012: Pro-independence 49.18 Pro-Union 36.63.

2015: Pro-Independence 47.8 Pro-Union 41.68

2017: Pro-Independence 47.5 Pro-Union 43.45

And it must be remembered that the 21 December 2017 vote was taken after the Spanish government had forcibly dismissed the Catalan parliament and imposed a light, but quite palpable version of martial law in the autonomous region, and sought to enhance its intimidatory effects by lodging specious complaint after specious complaint against institutions and media outlets perceived as favoring independence. For example, the central government election board went so far as to ban the use of yellow-colored lighting — yellow as in the yellow ribbons worn by tens of thousands of Catalans to honor the

memory of the exiled and imprisoned members of their dismissed government — in public buildings and fountains in the lead up to the vote on the premise that this would give the independence parties an unfair advantage!

In short, there is nothing approaching a pro-union majority to be found in these figures. Yet, that does not prevent Mr. Navarro from trumpeting this as an unalloyed reality in his article.

Not content with this grossly misleading blanket statement, he also reduces — where he got the number I do not know — the known independence vote to 46%. And needless to say, in peddling this same misinformation he fails to mention the fact, made clear above, that the unionist side has never come terribly close to achieving a level of support commensurate to even this artificially-lowered figure of independence support.

In further describing the Catalan situation, Navarro describes the Catalan independence moment as being led by the “neo-liberal” “Convergència i Unió” (CiU) dominated Catalan politics during during much of the period between 1980 and 2015 and was, when compared to the other parties in Catalonia, rather pro-business, it always ranked pretty far down on the list of Europe’s most strident advocates of savage capitalism. Indeed, its social policies would probably place it well to the left of the Democratic party in the US spectrum of ideological opinions.

But there’s an even bigger problem with Navarro’s description: CiU ceased to exist

4 years ago! In 2015, it was re-founded as PdeCat (Catalan European Democratic Party) in the hopes of both distancing itself from the emergent family financial scandals surrounding its founder Jordi Pujol and better reflecting the rise of independentism within its ranks.

In early 2016, the anti-system CUP party, aware that its votes were crucial to the forming of a stable government in the wake of the fall 2015 elections, refused to accept former CiU president Artur Mas — the consensus candidate of the two much larger groups of their pro-independence configuration, PdeCat and ERC — as the next President of Catalonia. When Mas was finally replaced by his fellow party member Carles Puigdemont they dropped their objections.

The accession of Puigdemont to the presidency of Catalonia immediately generated strong tension within the still young PdeCat. While he had long been a member of the CiU, Puigdemont differed from the party’s previous leaders, Pujol and Mas in very important ways.

While they had long avoided the question of fighting for independence, Puigdemont had embraced it from his earliest moments in public life. And while they were, as we have seen, relatively pro-business and given adducing Catalonia’s Christian heritage (and providing public funds to support its educational mission) Puigdemont was, and is, considerably more progressive and secular in outlook. For him, gaining independence for Catalonia was and is, his first, second

and third concern, and he was willing to work with a broad variety of other ideological tendencies to achieve this goal.

When, as president, Puigdemont pressed ahead on plans for staging the October 1st 2017 independence referendum that was frontally opposed by Spain, many of the holdovers from the old CiU within PdeCat fumed in private, and eventually, in public. Over time, these tensions led to a surprisingly level of alienation between the president and the executive of his own party.

And when the Spanish courts blocked the now exiled Puigdemont from assuming the presidency he had earned in the aforementioned December 21, 2017 elections, his close confidant Quim Torra took over as President and pursued a very similar, independence-first-and-to-hell-with-my-own-party-apparatchiks policy. In other words, the leadership of Puigdemont and Torra is a product of, and catalyst for, a very important and ongoing transformation in the core vision and nature of liberal nationalism in Catalonia.

Should you have any doubts about the profound changes in traditional political alignments in Spain and Catalonia — and the futility of using old paradigms to analyze them — consider the following. A few days back, the Spanish Parliament, responding to a request by the caretaker government of the Socialist (PSOE) Pedro Sanchez, passed a decree that will let the ruling executive shut down any computer network it deems a threat to national security without having to first get an order from a judge.

The new law, which puts the country in the civil rights league of places like China and Turkey, was passed thanks to the abstention of Podemos, that darling party of so-many US and European “progressives”, and over the objections the ERC, the center-right Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) the leftist Basque nationalist party Bildu, the moderate Valencian nationalist party Compromís, and the supposedly dangerous conservative Catalan nationalist party now led by Torra.

That Navarro seeks to obviate all of these important developments within what used to be CiU by using the name of the long-defunct party, with its associated whiff of past corruption, is beyond cynical. I wish I could say that Navarro is alone in recurring to the above-mentioned tricks, but he is not.

There are certain factions of the both the Spanish and Catalan lefts, people who, more often than not, cut their teeth on fairly orthodox conceptions of Marxism, who hold that Catalan nationalism is, and always will be, both the chosen handmaiden and preferred tactical smokescreen of the country’s perpetually greedy bourgeoisie.

As is the case all successfully deceptive political messages, this trope contains important elements of truth. The early Catalan movement was indeed a mostly bourgeois movement propelled, at least in its initial moments, by a desire to protect bourgeois interests. That said, this bourgeois movement has, from its beginning in the late 19th century, always been shadowed by, and in intermittent conflict with, a much more grass roots and artisan-class variant of the nationalist ideology. And in certain periods of history, like the period between 1923 and 1939, and I would suggest 2010 and the present, the outlook of this other, much mor

By Reese Erlich

## What’s next for Bolivia after military coup?

**ANTIWAR** — In 2005, I sat in a lounge off the Senate chamber in La Paz, Bolivia, waiting for an interview. I was wearing my best coat and tie. With my thinning hair and gray mustache, I could pass for a Bolivian of European descent. In fact, numerous people smiled and said “buenos días?”, as if I was a familiar face.

The senators were mostly white men, reflecting the makeup of Bolivia’s political elite at that time. But that changed just a few months later with the election of Evo Morales and his party, Movement Toward Socialism (MAS).

Morales’s government nationalized natural gas and electric companies, defying both the US and the Bolivian oligarchy. So it’s not surprising that those forces now denounce Morales as a dictator and cheer his overthrow.

Bolivia held elections on October 20 this year. Opposition leaders, claiming vote fraud, organized mass, anti-government demonstrations. Sectors of the military and police sided with the opposition. Morales, his vice president and other top government leaders resigned under military pressure. Some went into exile in Mexico.

While the Trump Administration and mainstream media characterized the events as a popular uprising, Senator Bernie Sanders, Independent of Vermont, correctly called it a coup.

“It was the military who intervened in that process and asked him to leave,” Sanders said during the Democratic Party debate in Atlanta on November 20. “When the military intervenes, in my view, that’s called a coup.”

### ■ Some recent history

In 2005, I reported from Bolivia on the popular movements opposed to then President Carlos Mesa. The rich elite who ran Bolivia in those days followed US-inspired neoliberal economic policies

by privatizing government-owned companies, even those providing drinking water and sewage lines. The privatized water utility was owned by a French multinational corporation. It raised the sewage hook-up charge to \$450, roughly eight times the typical monthly income in El Alto, a working-class city located above La Paz.

The people of El Alto sought Mesa’s resignation through mass protests. “We used force because this is an issue facing us and our children,” street vendor Alejandra Arteaga told me when I was writing for the Dallas Morning News. “When there was a strike or a blockade, we went up to participate.”

In June 2005, a new round of mass demonstrations forced Mesa to resign, and by December, Bolivians elected Morales president. He served three terms.

### ■ Poverty alleviation and indigenous rights

At a time when most Latin American economies were slowing, Bolivia under Morales and MAS reduced poverty by 42 percent and extreme poverty by 60 percent, according to a study by the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR). In 2008, unemployment was cut in half, from 7.7 to 4.4 percent.

MAS made these advances because Bolivia defied conventional US economic prescriptions, according to Guillaume Long, a senior policy analyst at CEPR. “MAS opposed the neoliberal agenda and nationalized resources such as gas,” he told me in a phone interview.

The country’s indigenous groups, including Aymara and Quechua, saw significant gains under the MAS government, according to Bret Gustafson, an anthropology professor and Bolivia expert at the Washington University



in St. Louis.

“The government passed anti-racism legislation,” he said in a phone interview. “Indigenous people were included in the highest level of the government and military. Indigenous languages and culture were celebrated under Evo.”

But those gains are in serious danger if the right wing stays in power.

### ■ Controversy: Morales runs again

Under Bolivia’s constitution, a newly elected president may serve two terms. In 2016, by a narrow margin, Bolivians voted down a referendum that would have eliminated presidential term limits. But in 2017, Bolivia’s Constitutional Court ruled that term limits were in violation of the OAS treaty on human rights, clearing the way for Morales to run again.

The conservative opposition angrily denounced the ruling, saying the court was packed with Morales supporters. But Gustafson says even some liberal and leftist Bolivians have a “deep memory of past dictatorial governments.” Moreover, Morales had not groomed a successor who could maintain party

unity. “Morales was the glue that held everything together,” Gustafson says.

In the October 20 election, a dozen candidates vied for the presidency, including former President Carlos Mesa and Evo Morales. Under Bolivian law, a candidate can win by gaining just 40 percent of the vote if it is 10 percent more than the second-place opponent. After the final count, Morales won with 47 percent compared to Mesa’s 36.5 percent. MAS also won a majority in both legislatures.

The Organization of American States and the Trump Administration immediately alleged vote fraud. They claimed the vote count was halted when it seemed Morales would be forced into a runoff and then suspiciously re-opened with a Morales victory.

As explained in an exhaustive election analysis by CEPR, the official vote count never stopped. The unofficial “quick count” did stop, as planned beforehand, after tabulating 83 percent of the votes. The official count, which is the only binding result, continued uninterrupted until officials announced the results.

The last votes to be tabulated, which the OAS claims were suspiciously favorable to Morales, were in fact consistent with votes from areas traditionally supportive of MAS. From both the quick count and final count, “You could easily determine that Morales won,” says CEPR’s Long, who was also an OAS observer in the 2017 Bolivian elections.

In short, there was no voter fraud that propelled Morales into power. But the misinformation, along with genuine anger from those opposed to Morales running at all, led to large demonstrations.

### ■ The US role

Bolivia is a major source of natural gas and minerals such as lithium, making it of great importance to multinational corporations. The US in the past supported military coups in Bolivia when civilian governments didn’t follow pro-Washington policies.

The US has a long history of training Bolivian police and military leaders. One of the leaders of the recent coup attended a course at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (formerly known as the School of the Americas) at Fort Benning, Georgia.

For many years, USAID has funded projects to promote businesses in conservative, eastern Bolivia, pitting them against the movements of workers and peasant farmers.

Washington has the means and the will to instigate a coup in Bolivia. In the months and years ahead, more information will emerge revealing the extent of direct US involvement. But there’s no doubt the coup serves US interests and has full US support.

### ■ What lies ahead?

After the military forced Morales

and other leaders to leave Bolivia, Senator Jeanine Añez, a little known ultra-right-winger, declared herself president based on her position as second vice president of the Senate. Her initial cabinet had only one indigenous member and reporters quickly discovered racist tweets in her Twitter account.

Widespread looting broke out. MAS supporters mobilized against the coup, blockading highways leading to many cities. On November 20, six indigenous men were shot and killed in El Alto, in an act that protesters attributed to the military. To date more than thirty people have died and dozens have been injured.

In late November, demonstrations were halted in some MAS strongholds but continued in others as protesters demanded release of demonstrators arrested in previous protests. On November 24, MAS legislative leaders and Añez agreed to legislation calling for new presidential and legislative elections in April 2020, while prohibiting Morales from running.

From his exile in Mexico, Morales reluctantly agreed with the compromise. “In the name of peace, sacrifices have to be made and I am sacrificing my candidacy even though I have every right to it,” he told The Guardian.

“It was a practical recognition of the balance of power,” Gustafson says. “Evo still has widespread support. But any effort to bring him back would galvanize rightwingers, some military officers, and some moderates.”

Bolivia remains deeply divided. The right wing is split among several factions. While Morales can’t run, MAS will field another candidate for president in April, along with veteran legislators from both houses.

“Morales has a lot of personal appeal, but MAS also has popular support,” says analyst Long. “MAS remains a force to be reckoned with



## Soil is a non-renewable resource

Soil is a finite resource, meaning its loss and degradation is not recoverable within a human lifespan. As a core component of land resources, agricultural development and ecological sustainability, it is the basis for food, feed, fuel and fibre production and for many critical ecosystem services.

The natural area of productive soils is limited. It is under an increasing pressure of intensification and competing uses for cropping, forestry, pasture/rangeland and urbanisation, and to satisfy demands of the growing population for food and energy production and raw materials extraction.

Soils need to be recognised and valued for their productive capacities as well as their contribution to food security and the maintenance of key ecosystem services.

### ■ Key challenges

As it is highlighted by FAO in this year's World Soil Day theme, soil erosion, as one form of soil degradation, is the greatest threat to soil functions in many regions of the world such as Africa, Asia, Latin America, Near East and North Africa, and North America. Erosion has three primary effects on crop growth and

yield: removal of the fertile surface soil horizon, incorporation of denser subsoil into the surface layer, and a possible decrease in the rooting zone of the soil.

Generally speaking, soil degradation is caused by unsustainable land uses and management practices and climate extremes that result from various social, economic and governance drivers.

Today, 33 percent of land is moderately to highly degraded due to the erosion, salinization, compaction, acidification and chemical pollution of soils. The current rate of soil degradation threatens the capacity of future generations to meet their most basic needs. Considering the little opportunity remained for expansion in the agricultural area, the sustainable management of the world's agricultural soils and sustainable production have therefore become imperative for reversing the trend of soil degradation and ensuring current and future global food security.

More efficient use of water, reduced use of pesticides and improvements in soil health can lead to average crop yield increases of 79 percent.

As part of FAO's global mandate, the Organization urges and assists its member states to adopt an integrated ecosystems approach for the management of land resources to generate local, national and global benefits, particularly increased food security and improved rural livelihoods.

### ■ Soil matters for biodiversity

Soil hosts a quarter of our planet's biodiversity.

Soil is one of nature's most complex ecosystems and one of the most diverse habitats on earth. It contains a myriad of different organisms, which interact and contribute to the global cycles that make all life possible.

Nowhere in nature are species so densely packed as in soil communities. A single gram of soil may contain millions of individuals and several thousand species of bacteria. However, this biodiversity is little known as it is underground and largely invisible to the human eye.

### ■ Soil erosion, soil biodiversity, and agriculture

Soil erosion, one form of soil degradation, is the greatest threat to soil in many regions of the world, as reflected in this year's World Soil Day theme. By removing the most fertile layer of soil, erosion causes a soil biodiversity decline.

The quality and health of soils largely determine agricultural production and sustainability, environmental quality and, as a consequence of both, has a bearing on plant, animal and human health. Improving soil biodiversity is vital to ensuring soil health and future food and nutrition security.

The scientific findings presented by FAO show that agricultural systems and agro-ecological practices that dedicate great care to nurturing soil biodiversity, such as organic farming, zero-tillage, crop rotations and conservation agriculture, can sustainably increase farm productivity without degrading soil and water resources.

(Source: FAO)

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### New comic Superhero

(June 10, 2002)

The leading American comic book publisher, Marvel Comics, is starting a new comic book which it hopes will become as popular as its classics, "Spiderman", "Superman" and "The Incredible Hulk". But in this comic book the heroes will be ordinary New York police, firefighters and paramedics. This report from Jane Standley. It's a case of **move over** Spiderman and The Incredible Hulk - here come New York's **finest**. That's how its police officers are known; its firefighters are called the bravest. Their first adventures, along with the **exploits** of a female paramedic, are being sent out to the three-million **subscribers** to other, more traditional Marvel comics and will now also be in the shops.

The first issue - "The Call of Duty: The Brotherhood" - focuses on firefighters, who respond to all kinds of emergencies, small and large, around the city. But they're always **hot on the heels** of evil-doers too who want **to wrong** New Yorkers. And, because the comic strips take place in superhero land, there are hints of the **super-human**.

Marvel comics think they have hit on a best seller and a new cultural trend. New York's emergency personnel, especially its firefighters, have become **revered** for the way in which they responded to the attacks on the city on September the eleventh. Four-hundred-and-three of them were killed. The publishers say they are not **cashing in**, just treating the emergency services with the respect they deserve. But this being America, there will of course be toys and videos as **spin-offs** of the new superhero series.

### ■ Words

**move over**: no longer big news

**finest**: here, bravest people

**exploits**: brave actions

**subscribers**: people who pay to receive a publication regularly

**hot on the heels of**: here, chasing

**to wrong**: to treat badly

**super-human**: beyond the powers of ordinary people

**revered**: greatly respected

**cashing in**: making money from the situation

**spin-offs**: new products which are based on an existing idea

(Source: BBC)

# Smart Tehran Congress 2019 to be held

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** — The 3rd **d e s k** Smart Tehran Congress will be held on December 9-10 at Milad Tower, ISNA news agency reported on Monday.

Mohammad Farjoud, head of Tehran Municipality's ICT Organization, said that Smart Tehran Congress is the main plan of Tehran Municipality to move towards smart city.

"Last year, we were more involved in planning and building the infrastructure for the implementation of pilot projects in the field of Smart Tehran, and this year we are ready to implement the projects and make Tehran a smart city," he explained.

The main purpose of the congress, which is welcomed every year by all cities representatives, is to create a forum for exchanging and updating urban development knowledge, he stated.

The first Smart Tehran Conference will be held concurrently with the third Smart Tehran Congress and exhibition in partnership with Amir Kabir University of Technology with the aim of gaining access to intelligent data-based urban management, he said.

He went on to say that topics such as data mining and extraction of reliable and useful data, smart city and indicators of life quality improvement in cities, sustainable development and challenges of urban management, smart mobility, modeling and analysis of urban transport, data and applications on artificial intelligence will be discussed in the conference.

The exhibition also will be held in the field of urban management on the basis of technological requirements, as opposed to traditional exhibitions dedicated to



the provision of products, services and capabilities, Farjoud noted.

In fact, the developmental capacities and technological requirements that are already documented in urban management subsystems require technology and knowledge, startups and experts in this field to deliver their innovations and technologies within a specified timeframe to the organizers, he added.

Referring to specialized meetings and workshops, he said that more than 15 specialized meetings and workshops,

both domestic and international, will be held on the sidelines of the event, aimed at expressing the challenges of smart city management and providing useful solutions and experiences with experts, domestic and international policymakers, planners, and professors in attendance.

Specialized workshops topics include the challenges of urban data exchange, smart waste management, intelligent traffic management, artificial intelligence in urban services, smart city lifestyle, the role of IoT in smart cities, and block chain in smart cities,

Farjoud explained.

Another program will be held during the event which provides startups with an opportunity to present their state-of-the-art products and services in the field of smart city, so they can communicate directly with citizens and use their feedback when introducing their products.

The 'capital cafe' event is a gathering of investors and top startups in which startups can present their products or services and investors can offer each of them partnership, he concluded.

## Iranian university students win ICSR 2019 award

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian students at Tehran's Sharif University of Technology won the 11th International Conference on Social Robotics (ICSR 2019) Special Mention Award, which was held in Madrid on November 26-29.

Organized by the Roboticslab at University Carlos III of Madrid, the event brought together researchers and practitioners working on the interaction between humans and intelligent robots and on the integration of robots into the society, according to ICSR website.

Elham Ranjkar, Raman Rafatnejad, Ali Amoozandeh Nobaveh, Ali Meghdari and Minoo Alemi won the award for inventing an Intelligent Elephant Social Robot called MAYA.

Social robot designs from practitioners are selected by the organizing committee and are invited for exhibition during the conference; those selected innovative designs will be



granted awards in three categories of Innovation in software, applications and interaction modalities award, Innovation in hardware, design and interfaces award, Special Mention Award (the most important one).

MAYA also won the second place at the 7th International Conference on Robotics and Mechatronics, held on November 20-21 at Sharif University of Technology.

Social robots are intended to coexist with humans and engage in relationships that lead them to a better quality of life. The success of these relationships relies on a positive perception of the robots that can be achieved by their behavior through AI, computational models, or robot embodiments.

ICSR 2019 aimed to foster discussion on the development of innovative ideas, novel applications and relevant studies that contribute to the integration of social robots in our daily society.

## Over 1,000 residential units provided to the underprivileged



**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The Welfare Organization has provided 1,057 houses to the underprivileged under coverage of the organization in 26 provinces across the country, IRNA news agency reported on Monday.

The residential units, costing 950 billion rials (nearly \$22.5 million) to be built, were provided to 915 families with physically challenged members and 142 female heads of

households, Vahid Qobadi-Dana, head of the Welfare Organization said.

The organization has so far provided 116,000 residential units to the financially struggling people, he highlighted.

He went on to say that some 48,000 housing units are currently under construction, adding, 43,000 families with disabled members will receive the houses by the next four years.

The project to provide housing to families with two or more people with disabilities began 4 years ago, 17,000 families have so far been identified, 7,000 of whom received free houses, he explained.

Currently, 6,000 housing units are being constructed for these families having two or more disabled members, he stated, adding, houses for more 4,000 families are to be constructed.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

## Wildfire risk increases in Zagros foothills

Following heavy rainfall doused the country during the past months, vegetation has covered vast areas of Zagros forest in southwestern part of the country, which easily ignites when temperature level gets higher and wildfire risk increases.

Torrential rains over the past few months, has positive consequences like saturating the wetlands and reservoirs, however, led to some natural incidents like flooding which caused losses to the country, Mohammad Mansourpour, an official with the Iranian Space Agency said.

As the result of the rain, plants and vegetation has grown in vast areas of forests and rangelands which soon will be dried due to temperature rise and enhance the possibility of massive fires, he added.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “lipo-, lip-”

#### ■ Meaning: fatty

■ **For example:** *Lipid* accumulation frequently leads to mental retardation or progressive loss of central nervous system functions.

## PHRASAL VERB

### pencil somebody/ something in

■ **Meaning:** to make an arrangement for a meeting or other event, knowing that it might have to be changed later

■ **For example:** Pickford has been penciled in as Robson's replacement.

## IDIOM

### Cut both ways

■ **Explanation:** Something that has both a positive and a negative effect at the same time

■ **For example:** Banning cars in the town center can cut both ways: less traffic congestion but fewer customers in the shops.

## احتمال افزایش آتش سوزی در دامنه های زاگرس

بارش باران طی ماه های خیر باعث رویش علف های پرتراکم در قسمت های مختلف کشور شد که پس از افزایش دما علف ها خشک شده و احتمال آتش سوزی را در دامنه های زاگرس افزایش می دهند.

مصطفی منصوریپور مدیرکل سنجش از دور سازمان فضایی ایران گفتگو با ایرنا اظهار داشت: بارش های بهاری امسال، علاوه بر فوایدی که داشت و باعث پر آب شدن تالاب ها و ذخایر آبی شد، متأسفانه مشکلاتی و خساراتی مانند سیل نیز به بار آورد.

او افزود: با توجه به این بارش ها، برخی از مراتع کشور که بدون پوشش گیاهی هستند، با علف های بهاری با تراکم بالا پوشیده شدند اما طول عمر این علف ها معمولاً دو ماه است و پس از آن خشک می شوند. با توجه به ماهیت اشتعال، تراکم زیاد علف ها و افزایش دما، بحران آتش سوزی قابل پیش بینی بود.



# Corbyn would stop arms sales to Saudi for use in Yemen if elected

The United Kingdom's main opposition Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has said he will stop arms sales to Saudi Arabia for use in war-torn Yemen if his party won the country's upcoming election.

"Labor will stop arms sales to Saudi Arabia for use in Yemen and work to end the war there, not actively support it as the Conservative government has done," Corbyn said in a speech setting out his party's foreign policy objectives before the December 12 polls.

"Labor's new internationalism means we will create a peace and conflict-prevention fund and invest an extra 400 million pounds [\$513m] to expand our diplomatic capacity and increase oversight of arms exports to ensure we're not fuelling conflicts, as in Yemen and in Israel and the Palestinian territories," he said in the speech in the northern English city of York.

The UK's Conservative-led government in June said it would not grant any new licenses for weapons exports to Saudi Arabia or its coalition partners fighting in Yemen after a court ruled that such sales were unlawful.

The decision by the Court of Appeal followed a challenge by the Campaign Against



Arms Trade that accused the government of licensing arms sales despite a clear risk their use could breach international humanitarian law.

## ■ Court order breached

However, in September, the UK's inter-

national trade secretary admitted that the country had breached for a third time the court order in question, prompting opposition calls for her resignation.

Liz Truss told parliament that officials had discovered a further violation, 10 days

after she was forced to write to the Court of Appeal admitting two other export licenses had been unlawfully granted.

The UK's arms sales have significantly bolstered the Saudi-led coalition's capability to carry out air attacks in Yemen, in the grip of a devastating conflict pitting the Saudi-UAE-backed internationally recognized government against the Houthis.

The brutal war has killed tens of thousands of people and forced millions from their homes, causing the world's worst humanitarian crisis, according to the United Nations.

After joining the conflict in Yemen in 2015, Saudi Arabia has become the world's biggest weapons importer. In 2018, its military spending stood at nearly \$70bn, which corresponded to approximately 9 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP).

The United States is by far the largest arms supplier for the kingdom, making about 70 percent of the sales between 2014 and 2018. The UK was the second-largest in the same period, accounting for about 10 percent of total Saudi arms purchases.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## Terror checks intensify as UK attack enters vote fray

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the security services were stepping up monitoring of convicted terrorists released early from prison, as the London Bridge attack became embroiled in the election campaign.

The premier revealed officials were scrutinizing around 74 people with terrorist convictions who had been released early from prison like Usman Khan, who left jail last December and went on to stab two people to death in Friday's rampage.

"They are being properly invigilated to make sure there is no threat," Johnson told the BBC. "We've taken a lot of action as you can imagine in the last 48 hours."

Police shot dead 28-year-old Khan, who was wearing a fake explosives vest, on London Bridge after he launched a stabbing spree in a nearby hall hosting an ex-offender event. The attack also left three people wounded.

Police Sunday formally identified the two victims killed as Jack Merritt, 25, from

Cambridgeshire in eastern England, and 23-year-old Saskia Jones of Warwickshire in the West Midlands.

Meanwhile hospital officials said one of the wounded had returned home, while the two others remained hospitalized in a stable condition.

Members of the public have been hailed as heroes for preventing even greater loss of life by tackling Khan - one armed with a 1.5-meter-long narwhal tusk and another with a fire extinguisher.

The incident came two years after extremists in a van plowed into pedestrians on London Bridge before attacking people at random with knives, killing eight people and wounding 48.

'Keep you safe' After searching two properties Saturday in central England believed to be linked to Khan, police have said they believe he was acting alone and are not seeking anybody else.

But Daesh (ISIL) has released a statement claiming responsibility for the attack.

(Source: AFP)

## Trump, lawyers won't participate in impeachment hearing: White House

U.S. President Donald Trump and his lawyers will not participate in a congressional impeachment hearing this week due to a lack of "fundamental fairness," according to a letter from the White House to Democratic lawmakers.

"We cannot fairly be expected to participate in a hearing while the witnesses are yet to be named and while it remains unclear whether the Judiciary Committee will afford the President a fair process through additional hearings," White House counsel Pat Cipollone wrote to Jerrold Nadler, a Democrat from New York's 10th congressional district and Chairman of the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee.

Cipollone did not rule out participation in further proceedings, but he signaled that Democrats would first have to make major procedural concessions.

The Democratic-led House Judiciary Committee, tasked with considering charges known as articles of impeachment, had given Trump until Sunday night to say whether he would dispatch a lawyer to take

part in the judiciary panel's proceedings on Wednesday.

Trump's aides have responded defiantly to the first of two crucial deadlines he faces in Congress.

Nadler has given the White House a Friday deadline to say whether Trump will mount a defense in broader impeachment proceedings. Nadler also set a second deadline of 5 p.m. (2200 GMT) on Friday for Trump to say whether he or his legal counsel would participate in further proceedings expected next week to examine evidence against him.

House Democrats launched an impeachment inquiry against Trump in September after a whistleblower alleged the Republican president pressured Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden and his son Hunter, who had served as a director for Ukrainian energy company Burisma.

The impeachment probe shifted to a public phase on November 13 after weeks of closed-door interviews in the House.

(Source: agencies)

## China suspends U.S. army's Hong Kong visits in response to new law

China has suspended U.S. warship visits and sanctioned several American non-government organizations in retaliation for the passage of a bill backing pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong.

"In response to the unreasonable behavior of the U.S. side, the Chinese government has decided to suspend reviewing the applications for U.S. warships to go to Hong Kong for [rest and] recuperation as of today," foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a regular news briefing on Monday.

"We urge the U.S. to correct the mistakes and stop interfering in our internal affairs. China will take further steps if necessary to uphold Hong Kong's stability and prosperity and China's sovereignty," she said.

Last week, U.S. President Donald Trump signed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, which requires the president to annually review the city's favorable trade status and threatens to revoke it if the semi-autonomous territory's freedoms are quashed.

The move came as the world's two biggest economies have been striving to finalize a "phase one" deal in their protracted trade war.

China had already denied requests for two U.S. Navy ships



to dock in Hong Kong in August, without specifying a reason.

The last U.S. navy ship to visit Hong Kong was the USS Blue Ridge in April, before the mass protests broke out in June.

In more normal times, several U.S. naval ships visit Hong Kong annually, a rest-and-recreation tradition that dates back to the pre-1997 colonial era which Beijing allowed to continue after the handover from the United Kingdom to the Chinese rule.

## ■ NGOs sanctioned

Hua said they would also apply sanctions to a number of U.S.-based NGOs, although she failed to give any specifics over the form the measures would take.

Sanctions will apply to NGOs that had acted "badly" over the recent unrest in Hong Kong, she said, including the National Endowment for Democracy, Human Rights Watch and Freedom House.

Foreign NGOs are already heavily restricted in China and have previously received sharp rebukes for reporting on rights issues in the country, including the mass detention of Uighurs in Xinjiang.

"They shoulder some responsibility for the chaos in Hong Kong and they should be sanctioned and pay the price," said Hua.

"Operationally, from a military point of view, it doesn't really make a difference for the U.S., as they can use many naval bases in the region," Michael Raska, a security researcher at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University, told AFP news agency.

However, it "sends a signal that U.S.-China tensions will continue to deepen", Raska said.

(Source: agencies)

## Fruit of 'U.S.-backed colonization': Israel to DOUBLE Jewish population in West Bank's Hebron

Two weeks after the U.S. announced that it did not consider illegal Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territories to be in breach of international law, Israel announced a plan to double the Jewish population of Hebron.

The plan announced by Israel's newly appointed Defense Minister Naftali Bennett on Sunday will involve demolishing a wholesale market in Hebron and replacing it with a new neighborhood. At the moment, there are an estimated 200,000 Palestinians and 1,000 Jews living in the city.

The statement touted the move as ensuring "territorial continuity" between the existing Jewish Avraham Avinu neighborhood and the Tomb of the Patriarchs holy site, as

well as the restoration of historic justice. The market area was owned by Jewish residents of Hebron since the early 19th century. But the deadly riot and pogroms of August 1929, in which dozens of Jewish residents were killed by Arab extremists, forced the evacuation of several Jewish neighborhoods.

Control over the area switched hands along with the rest of the West Bank until going back to Israel after the 1967 war. The Palestinian wholesale market in Shuhada Street was constructed after that and remained a major gathering site until the 1990s. In 1994, a right-wing American-Israeli extremist opened fire at Palestinian worshippers, who had gathered to pray at a mosque at the Cave

of the Patriarchs compound. He killed 29 people and injured over a hundred before being overpowered and beaten to death. The incident led to Palestinian riot, to which the Israeli administration responded by shutting down Shuhada Street to Palestinians, effectively stifling business. Access has since been partially restored, but the marketplace shops were never allowed to recover due to remaining restrictions.

The Bennett office said the redevelopment plan will respect the ownership of Palestinians to ground floor properties.

The news was hailed by Jewish settlers in Hebron, who said it will bring justice "for which the Israeli nation has been waiting

for 90 years." Others were highly critical of the decision.

Dr Saeb Erekat, a senior Palestinian official and a former chief negotiator for the Palestinian Authority, said the Israeli move was the first tangible result of Washington's decision "to legitimize colonization" two weeks ago. He was referring to the much-criticized announcement by the Trump administration that the U.S. no longer considers Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territories to be in violation of international law. Erekat called on the international community to impose sanctions against the Israeli settlements.

(Source: RT)

leaves this area," Uaykani said.

Anger erupted last week over the perceived failure of UN peacekeepers to protect civilians from deadly rebel attacks with several mass demonstrations targeting UN facilities in northeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

(Source: al Jazeera)

## Failed attempt of engineering a 'crisis' in Iran

➔ However, it would be safe to say that the move was not implemented and executed in a proper way. The government announced the hike without taking people into confidence and without informing them about the objectives of the move, which forced them into streets.

But, on the other side, the United States and Israel have quite clearly and loudly announced their 'regime change' agenda which is trending on Twitter. They saw this as an opportunity to push their own agenda of stoking the flames of unrest in Iran. The way peaceful demonstrations changed into riots showed how the foreign aggressors are trying to implement their sinister agenda. Turkish President Tayyab Erdogan had warned about this 'spring' few weeks ago, which started from Iraq and then to spread to Lebanon and now reaching Iran.

The demonstrators, constituting mostly unruly mobs and hooligans, targeted at least 500 places in different cities and set ablaze public institutions, banks, gas stations, passages and even cultural sites such as libraries, mosques, seminaries especially in small towns and on city outskirts. It has resulted in millions of dollars' worth damages to the country and dented the already fledgling economic system.

It is important to mention that the hooligans ran amok within hours of the violent demonstrations. They had already identified their targets and went about their tasks systematically with support from outside. The situation was brought under control soon and main 'ringleaders' were arrested.

According to Iranian official news agency, the ringleaders were affiliated with the former Pahlavi regime and intelligence agencies found that there were links with western intelligence. Majority of them were found to be non-Iranians.

Following the unrest, the Iranian government completely shut down the Internet, blocking communication with the outside world and prevented the use of social media and cyberspace to control human cyberspace activities and to manage the simmering crisis.

The internet shutdown was an attempt to keep protesters from organizing online protests and to prevent the misuse of internet by the outside agencies who seek instability in the country.

According to the Le Monde newspaper, this move by Iran to completely shut off the Internet while all current activities in the country, including banking, transportation, stock exchange, etc., were in full swing has been a huge success in the field of information technology.

Meanwhile, millions of people around different cities poured into the streets in different cities in support of the government last Monday. Ironically, majority of these people dislike government policies. However, they know that these violent protests would serve no good to their cause and will add more problems to the basket. And, interestingly, none of the international media outlets deemed it important enough to cover it.

## Perry ends final day as U.S. Energy secretary

➔ Today I bid farewell to the Department of @ENERGY. It has been the honor and privilege of a lifetime to serve in the @realDonaldTrump Administration as your Secretary. Thank you to my wife, my children, and to the American people for allowing me to serve. Signing off. – RP pic.twitter.com/AlkYNLsqrf

Perry's resignation was announced by Trump at a Cabinet meeting in October, with the president announcing shortly afterwards that Deputy Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette would be nominated to replace the outgoing secretary.

"I want to thank Secretary of Energy Rick Perry for the outstanding job he has done. He will be leaving at the end of the year to pursue other interests. Rick was a great Governor of Texas and a great Secretary of Energy," Trump tweeted in October.

"He is also my friend! At the same time, I am pleased to nominate Deputy Secretary Dan Brouillette to be the new Secretary of Energy. Dan's experience in the sector is unparalleled. A total professional, I have no doubt that Dan will do a great job!" he added.

Perry joined the Energy Department in March of 2017, shortly after Trump's inauguration, despite campaigning for president in 2012 and famously calling for the department to be abolished at the time.

(Source: The Hill)

## Climate summit kicks off as Guterres issues stark warning

United Nations leaders and delegates kicked off COP25 on Monday in Madrid, launching a two-week summit on climate change with warnings over the fast-rising perils of a global environmental challenge.

"By the end of the coming decade we will be on one of two paths, one of which is sleepwalking past the point of no return," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his opening address.

"Do we want to be remembered as the generation that buried its head in the sand and fiddled as the planet burned?"

The other pathway, Guterres said, was to aim for carbon neutrality by 2050.

"There are calls from young people to do more, much more. They know we need to get on the right path today, not tomorrow, and COP25 offers us an opportunity."

The required global reduction of carbon emissions has more than doubled from 3.3 percent 10 years ago to seven percent now, he said, while the world was "still waiting for transformative movement from most G20 nations" responsible for three-quarters of carbon emissions.

Hoesung Lee, the chair for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, said "immediate reductions [of carbon emission] have powerful benefits for all sectors of society."

"The failure to do so will result in the opposite of this, the world will suffer from shredded assets, the financial sector will have greater uncertainty and the environment will suffer from an increased loss of diversity."

He summed up grimly that "if we stay on our current path, [we] threaten our existence on this planet."

The conference was planned to take place in Chile, but unrest there saw the location changed after Spain stepped in at short notice. The South American nation continues to preside over the conference.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## Heavy gunfire erupts as DR Congo's anti-UN protests continue

Gunfire rang out in the DR Congo town of Beni on Monday as protesters demanding the United Nations' withdrawal from the city again marched towards the UN headquarters.

Security forces blocked hundreds of demonstrators attempting to get close to the UN compound housed inside the airport near Beni, one of two UN bases in the area.

"We still have heavy gunfire here and local sources are confirming the deaths of two people, including a young boy and a woman," said Al Jazeera's Alain Uaykani, reporting from Beni, quoting officials from the hospital where the bodies were taken.

"They are saying they don't feel safe and the UN has to leave. They say they will not stop protesting until the UN



## English club set to bamboo-zle the opposition

High-flying English fourth tier side Forest Green Rovers are to wear bamboo shin pads, furthering their claims to be the world's greenest football club, they announced on Monday.

Forest Green -- whose environmental credentials have been recognised by FIFA and the United Nations -- had already become the first team to switch to bamboo kit at the beginning of the season.

The club, presently second in League Two, are working with a US manufacturer of eco-friendly products on the bamboo shin pads.

"Forest Green Rovers are the first professional club to switch to bamboo shin pads -- moving away from current products made largely from plastic," the club said in a statement.

"The low-profile shin pads are impact resistant and are anti-microbial."

Forest Green chairman Dale Vince said bamboo was an ideal material for shin pads.

"Bamboo is a natural wonder, a sustainable material that's ridiculously strong and ultra-lightweight, making it perfect for shin pads as well as better for the planet and for our players," he said.

"Reducing plastic use is an important part of the fight against the climate crisis and sport has a vital role to play in this."

(Source: AFP)

## Maguire frustrated over Man Utd defensive lapses

Harry Maguire is frustrated that defensive lapses are costing Manchester United crucial points after they let slip a winning position for the second consecutive match against Aston Villa.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side were leading 2-1 midway through the second half at Old Trafford on Sunday before a Tyrone Mings equalizer forced them to share the points.

The 2-2 draw left United in ninth place in the Premier League with 18 points from 14 matches, their worst return at a similar stage since 1988/89.

United also conceded a late goal in the previous week in a 3-3 draw against Sheffield United after storming back from 2-0 down to lead 3-2.

"We got ourselves in a great position in the second half (against Villa) and again conceded a sloppy goal really," Maguire told MUTV.

"As a defender especially, it's frustrating," he added. "We haven't really conceded many chances or goals prior to the last two games and then we've conceded five."

Jose Mourinho returns to Old Trafford for the first time since he was sacked a year ago with a resurgent Tottenham side on Wednesday before United make the short trip to neighbors Manchester City at the weekend.

Solskjaer has to find a way to turn draws into wins, having managed just six victories in 22 league matches since being appointed permanent manager in March.

Maguire believes the quick turnaround from Sunday to Wednesday could help United after their recent disappointments.

"It's perfect. When you don't win any football match you want a game as soon as possible to put things right," he said. "And there's no better way than to play Tottenham here at Old Trafford."

(Source: Mirror)

## Man City are not low on confidence, says Guardiola

Despite a run of just one win in five games Manchester City are not low on confidence and it is important to analyze performances not just results, says manager Pep Guardiola.

City drew 2-2 at Newcastle United on Saturday, leaving the champions 11 points adrift of leaders Liverpool. The result comes after defeat by Liverpool and victory over Chelsea in the Premier League and a pair of draws in the Champions League.

"You have to see how the players run, how far, how they try and the body language. We never give up. The team is always there, that is my feeling," Guardiola told reporters.

"You (the media) analyze the result. Of course, it's not good for us.

"I know it doesn't count but I have to analyze the performance. The performance was good."

City will have a chance to get back on track when they visit Burnley on Tuesday before rivals Manchester United head for the Etihad Stadium on Saturday.

(Source: Goal)

## Prem table 'not biggest concern' for United - Ole

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer says the league table is "not the biggest concern" even after he watched his Manchester United team draw 2-2 with Aston Villa to slip closer to the relegation places than the top four.

United are ninth in the Premier League, six points off 18th and eight points adrift of Chelsea in fourth, after managing only a point against Villa at Old Trafford on Sunday.

"I wouldn't have sat here and talked about us being fifth if we had got that one goal extra, so the league table at this point is not the biggest concern because it is so tight," Solskjaer told a news conference.

I just need to make sure that we get performances and get three or four performances after each other -- and results.

"What I can say is so far we have had the lead in so many games and we haven't been able to win those games, six or seven times we've been 1-0 up, or 2-1 or 3-2 like last week [against Sheffield United].

"We should be better at seeing those games into wins." United came back from 1-0 down to lead Villa 2-1 before Tyrone Mings scored an equalizer for the visitors, who had arrived at Old Trafford with the worst away record in the league.

It was the third time in eight days Solskjaer's team had squandered winning positions after the draw at Sheffield United and defeat against Astana.

(Source: Daily Mail)

# SEA Games organisers say 'ready' for Typhoon Kammuri

Southeast Asian Games venues and officials in the Manila region are "ready", competition organizers said Monday, as powerful Typhoon Kammuri churned toward the Philippines.

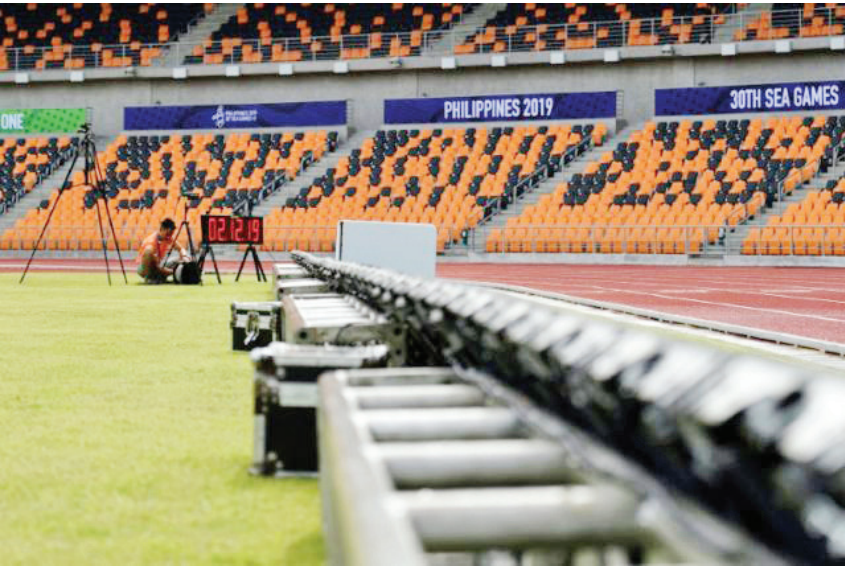
There was no talk of cancelling the Games as the storm headed for a swathe of the nation's north that includes key competition hubs as well as thousands of athletes, and had already impacted scheduling.

Forecasters predict the typhoon will make landfall late Monday or early Tuesday hundreds of kilometres southeast of the capital, with intense rains and potent wind gusts of up to 185 kilometres (115 miles) per hour.

"Everything is set," Ramon Suzara, COO of organizing committee PHISGOC, told journalists on Monday. "For contingency, all venues, all competition managers, technical delegates are ready."

Kammuri caused problems for the competition's plans before landfall. Windsurfing was halted as a precaution and triathlon events were held earlier than scheduled, an official said at the weekend.

Officials told reporters that each sport is overseen by managers and ultimately they would make the call on any possible cancellations or rescheduling.



"The proper timing of when to postpone them (events) is decided by the technical delegate or the one that is in charge of the sport," said Celso Dayrit, SEA Games Executive Committee Chairman.

As part of the contingency plan "in place

a long time ago", Games organizers have told venues to dismantle temporary structures like tents for officials, security and catering or outdoor branding over fears they could be ripped away by the strong winds.

Organizers did not elaborate on the

broader contingency plans or the decision making process, but cited the example of how an indoor event could be impacted.

"For example, basketball or volleyball, normally if there are typhoons, which has been done, the competition continues if necessary but without spectators," Suzara said.

As of Monday, windsurfing was halted as a precaution and triathlon and duathlon events were held earlier than scheduled.

Suzara ruled out any extension to the Games, which is due to end on December 11 after opening on Saturday.

Earlier this year at Japan's Rugby World Cup, three matches were cancelled as Typhoon Hagibis approached the country -- one of the biggest and most powerful storms Japan has seen in many years that would eventually kill more than 80 people.

The sheer size of the storm -- it covered the vast majority of the Japanese archipelago -- and the ferocity of the winds left the organizers with little choice but to cancel the games before landfall.

Around 8,750 athletes and team officials are expected at this year's 30th edition of the SEA Games along with another 12,000 volunteers.

(Source: AFP)

## Atletico fans chant 'die' at Griezmann on return with Barcelona



Barcelona forward Antoine Griezmann was targeted by Atletico Madrid fans with chants and banners on his first return to the club.

Barca won 1-0 thanks to a late Lionel Messi goal which was enough to see them return to the top of La Liga.

"You wanted to have a name and you forgot to be a man," a banner in the Wanda Metropolitano's Fondo Sur read.

As Griezmann warmed up for the game on the pitch, Atletico fans chanted "Griezmann die."

And whistles greeted his name being read out over the PA system ahead of the game, while his first touch was met in a similar fashion. Griezmann's plaque outside the stadium, in honor of him playing more than 100 games for the club, had toy rats left on it prematurely.

The only issue regarding the crowd that was written down in the referee's report was objects thrown onto the pitch, specifically an umbrella that was thrown from the stands while Barca celebrated Messi's goal.

Referee Mateu Lahoz picked it up before giving it to the fourth official. In his report the referee wrote: "Several objects were thrown, without impacting any player, highlighting a black umbrella."

The France international's €120 million move to Barcelona in the summer was controversial.

Griezmann had publicly turned down

a move to Barca in the summer of 2018 but only a year later left Atletico when the Catalan club paid his release clause.

Barca waited for Griezmann's buy-out clause to drop from €200m to €120m on July to make their move.

Atletico reported Barcelona to the Spanish Competition Committee for breaking its rules by beginning negotiations with Griezmann while he was under contract with them without their permission.

The Spanish Competition Committee fined Barca only €300 a breach of rules but absolved the player of any responsibility.

Atletico Madrid spokesman Clemente Villaverde felt the home fans had not crossed the line of what is acceptable.

"Atletico is always against any sign of violence or incorrect behavior," he said. "The public has kept a normal behavior within the course of a game like this one."

Barca coach Ernesto Valverde praised Griezmann in the post-game news conference: "I saw him well on the pitch. It was a difficult game in terms of the emotional aspect. The crowd did boo him a little but I saw him well. He worked and fought to help the team."

During five years with Atletico, Griezmann won the Europa League, the UEFA Super Cup and the Spanish Super Cup and scored 133 goals in 257 appearances.

(Source: Soccernet)

## Clippers 'still learning each other' despite hanging 150 on Wizards



In more than two decades of coaching, Doc Rivers says he's never had a team where its two best players had yet to practice together with the starting unit 21 games into the season.

Yet, even though Kawhi Leonard and Paul George are still waiting for that practice to happen, the LA Clippers are putting up staggering offensive numbers that the franchise has never seen. For the second time this season, the Clippers scored 150 points at home, this time demolishing the Washington Wizards on Sunday night 150-125.

Not bad considering the Clippers reached 150 points in a game just once in franchise history before this season, when they scored 152 points against the Toronto Raptors in 1998.

"I [still] think it's going to take time, just learning each other, playing in these games," Leonard said of the Clippers' having plenty of room to get better. "We're still up-and-down, sometimes our offense is stagnant ... or doing early quick shots without moving the ball."

Rivers said he was thrilled with the Clippers' improvement to 15-6 even though he has had George and Leonard play together in only six games this season.

"I don't know how many years I've coached, 20 maybe, but I've never had it where my best two players going into

Game 21 have yet to have a practice together on the floor -- not one," Rivers said before the win of not being able to hold many practices because of the schedule and wanting to keep his veterans fresh. "They've had one practice where they're opposing [each other in practice], but they have yet to be in the same lineup and have a practice."

"I don't think I've ever even heard of that. And yet that's us right now. I think we've had three shootarounds with this group."

Still, the Clippers joined the Houston Rockets as the only teams to score 150 points twice this season. The Rockets and Clippers reached those marks against the same teams -- the Atlanta Hawks and Wizards.

The Clippers did the majority of their damage against Washington with four players on offense. Leonard led just four Clippers in double digits with 34 points. George scored 31, while Lou Williams had 22 points and Montrezl Harrell had 23 points and 15 rebounds off the bench.

This was only the fifth time in NBA history that a team scored 150 points with just four players reaching 10 points, and it was the first time since the Seattle SuperSonics did so in November 1989, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

(Source: ESPN)

## Can Leicester City upset the odds and win another Premier League title?

Lightning couldn't possibly strike twice for Leicester City, could it?

Three years ago the club defied odds of 5000/1 to win the English Premier League in what was one of the greatest sporting upsets ever, bettering giants Manchester City, Manchester United and Liverpool.

After Sunday's dramatic, come-from-behind 2-1 win against Everton, Leicester City actually has more points after 14 games than at this stage of that remarkable 2015/2016 season -- 32 to 29.

Leicester won for a sixth straight time, one shy of the club's top-flight record set in 1963 -- and is racking up points while playing attractive football under newish manager Brendan Rodgers. The Foxes have scored 33 goals, second most in the division behind only reigning champion Manchester City.

And in case you were wondering, Leicester's odds of winning the title at the end of last season weren't as staggering as in 2015, though still daunting at 250/1. Now? You can back them at 14/1.

"You cannot write off Leicester -- not after what they achieved in 2016," former England and Liverpool midfielder Jamie Redknapp said in his column for the Daily Mail. "(Leicester) also haven't got the Champions League to distract them, so that makes them even more dangerous."

There is, however, a major stumbling block for Leicester in the form of table topping Liverpool. Indeed when Leicester tallied those 29 points in the 2015/2016 campaign, it was



tied for top spot with Manchester City on points.

Liverpool holds a commanding eight-point advantage, winning even when not firing on all cylinders. Jurgen Klopp's side tied a club record by making it 31 straight games unbeaten in the top division following an ultimately nervy 2-1 home win over Brighton on Saturday.

Liverpool was the last team to beat Leicester, 2-1 at Anfield in early October but fixture congestion could be an issue with a minimum of nine games in December -- including at Leicester on Boxing Day.

After the victory over Everton, former Liverpool boss Rodgers suggested his first goal was to get his team into one of the European positions, not win the title.

### ■ Targeting top six, not title

"It is a huge challenge here to break into the top six," he was quoted as saying by the Guardian.

According to bookmakers, he remains one of the leading contenders to replace Unai Emery at Arsenal. But after hinting late last week there was a buyout clause in his contract that would allow him to leave Leicester -- reported to be 14 million pounds (\$18 million) -- Rodgers didn't sound like he was going anywhere when he spoke Sunday after the game.

He was criticized for leaving Celtic last February while the Scottish behemoth was on the way to winning the title to take up the job at Leicester.

"My focus is very much here with Leicester," he said. "The club has been first class with me. The project feels very exciting with a lot of development ahead. So my concentration is very much with Leicester."

"I'll see where we are at with 10 games to go. Then we'll have a good idea of where we'll finish."

Rodgers has the magic touch at the moment, though still has a way to go before capturing the hearts of Leicester fans like "Tinkerman" Claudio Ranieri.

On Sunday Rodgers used forward Keleni Iheanacho for the first time this season in the league and the Nigerian set up Jamie Vardy for the equalizer in the 68th minute before scoring the winner in added time.

(Source: CNN)



# Iran empty-handed at AFC Annual Awards



Qatar’s rising star Akram Hassan Afif and Saki Kumagai of Japan won the AFC Player of the Year Award for men and women respectively at the 2019 AFC Annual Awards in Hong Kong on Monday.

Alireza Beiranvand (AFC Player of the Year), Mehdi Javid (AFC Futsal Player of the Year), Sardar Azmoun (AFC Asian International Player of the Year) and Katayoun Khosrowyar (AFC Woman Coach of the Year) had been nominated in the ceremony.

Afif burst onto the scene at the AFC Asian Cup where he was an instrumental figure in helping Qatar secure their first-ever title. His brilliance was not limited to the Continental stage after guiding Al Sadd to the AFC Champions League semi-finals by scoring five goals.

Afif, will be presented with the AFC Player of the Year Award at the 2019 Persian Gulf Cup, where he is currently playing for Qatar in the competition.

Al Sadd head coach Xavi received the award on behalf of the mercurial player.

In his acceptance video speech, Afif said: “I would like to thank the AFC for this award. My thanks also go out to the management of the Qatar national team, Al Sadd and Aspire Academy. I

cannot forget my family, who are my main supporters. This means a lot to me and I must thank all of you again for this award.”

Kumagai, Japan’s captain and one of Asia’s most accomplished footballers, who captured a fourth UEFA Champions League title with Olympique Lyonnais and represented her country at the FIFA Women’s World Cup France 2019 said: “It is a great honor to receive this award. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people who supported me, especially my teammates in the national team and Olympique Lyonnais. They’ve helped me grow up as a footballer and their support has led me to this stage. This award will continue to motivate me to perform to the best of my abilities.”

Korea Republic’s Chung Jung-yong, who impressively led his country to a runner-up finish at the FIFA U-20 World Cup in June, received the 2019 AFC Coach of the Year award in the men’s category, while Japan’s women’s national coach Asako Takakura claimed an unprecedented seventh AFC Coach of the Year award in the women’s category.

Japan’s Tomoki Yoshikawa wrapped

up a successful year by winning the 2019 AFC Futsal Player of the Year award, after helping his club Nagoya Oceans win the AFC Futsal Club Championship for a fourth time and was also named the competition’s Most Valuable Player in Bangkok, Thailand.

The Continent’s highest accolade – the AFC Diamond of Asia award – was bestowed to His Majesty Seri Paduka Baginda the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri’ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah Ibni Almarhum Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah Al-Musta’in Billah in recognition for his valuable contributions spanning more than three decades to the game in Asia.

The King of Malaysia received the award at the Istana Negara in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on November 7, 2019.

**■ AFC Annual Awards 2019 Roll of Honor**

**■ AFC Diamond of Asia:**  
His Majesty Seri Paduka Baginda the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri’ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah Ibni Almarhum Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah Al-Musta’in Billah

**■ AFC Member Association of the Year:**  
Inspiring: Japan Football Association

Developing: The Hong Kong Football Association Ltd.

Aspiring: Guam Football Association

**■ AFC President Recognition Award for Grassroots Football:**  
Inspiring Member Association: Chinese Football Association  
Developing Member Association: Football Association of Singapore  
Aspiring Member Association: National Football Association of Brunei Darussalam

**■ AFC Coach of the Year:**  
Women: Asako Takakura (JPN)  
Men: Chung Jung-yong (KOR)

**■ AFC Futsal Player of the Year:**  
Tomoki Yoshikawa (JPN)

**■ AFC Women Player of the Year:**  
Saki Kumagai (JPN)

**■ Awards not presented in Hong Kong:**

**■ AFC Player of the Year:**  
Akram Hassan Afif (QAT)

**■ AFC Youth Player of the Year:**  
Women: Jun Endo (JPN)  
Men: Lee Kang-in (KOR)

**■ AFC Asian International Player of the Year:**  
Son Heung-min (KOR)

(Source: the-afc)

## Keykavous Saeidi appointed as Iran’s NOC secretary general

**S P O R T S** d e s k TEHRAN - Keykavous Saeidi has been chosen as secretary general of Iran’s National Olympic Committee (NOC) on Monday.



Saeidi, who has already worked as head of Iran’s Golf Federation, was working as acting secretary general for the past six months.

He replaced Shahrokh Shahnazi who was forced to step down from his role in May because of personal reasons.

Iran prepare for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo. The Persians claimed three gold medals, one silver and four bronzes in the previous edition in Rio de Janeiro and finished in 25th place in medal table.

## FFIRI president Mehdi Taj praises Alireza Beiranvand

Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) president Mehdi Taj has lauded Team Melli and Persepolis goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand after he failed to win the AFC Player of the Year Award.

In the ceremony held in Hong Kong on Monday, Qatar’s rising star Akram Hassan Afif and Saki Kumagai of Japan won the AFC Player of the Year Award for men and women respectively at the 2019 AFC Annual Awards.

“Alireza became the first ever goalkeeper to be selected as the final three nominations and it shows that how talented player he is. Beiranvand has reached top of the Iran and Asian football and can achieve greater success in the future.

“His strong hands have made unforgettable memories for the Iranian people. To save Cristiano Ronaldo’s penalty in the 2018 FIFA World Cup as well as his crucial performances in the AFC Champions League with Persepolis have created memorable moments for the Iranian nation.

“He stands in the start of the road to success and there will be a bright future ahead of him,” Taj said in his message.

(Source: Khabaronline)

## Esteghlal’s Yazdani sidelined for Six Weeks

**TASNIM** — Esteghlal defender Siavash Yazdani will be sidelined for around six weeks after picking up a right hamstring injury.

He suffered an injury in the match against Sepahan in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Saturday.

According to Esteghlal’s doctor Kaveh Sotoudeh, Yazdani will be out for six weeks.

Yazdani’s absence is a big blow to Esteghlal.

Esteghlal headed by Andrea Stramaccioni, are favorites to win the IPL title after seven years.

## Iran futsal held in intl. Mashhad Cup opener

**MNA** — Iranian men’s futsal team was held with a 5-5 draw against Slovakia in the opening game of the 2019 Mashhad Cup in the northeastern Iranian city.

Held at Shahid Beheshti Stadium on Sunday night, fans were the major winner of the match as they could enjoy a game with plenty of tactics and goals.

The Iranian team’s head coach Mohammad Nazemosharia praised the performance of the European team after the match, saying that the game was a ‘real test’ for his team and helped to identify weaknesses. “Our players are not yet fully ready,” he said, noting that more work needs to be done in defense.

Iran will next meet with Belarus on Tuesday while Slovakia and Belarus will lock horns today.

This is a three-nation cup with the participation of Iran, Belarus, and Slovakia. Earlier, Kuwait had been named as another team participating in the competition but Kuwaiti officials have reportedly prevented the team’s departure to Iran due to security concerns. This is while security is provided all across the country.

Mashhad Cup will wrap up on Wednesday.

Iran is preparing to defend its title at the 2020 AFC Futsal Championship which is going to be held in Turkmenistan’s Ashgabat from Feb. 24 to Mar. 10.

## Mayer wins super-G in Alberta

Olympic champion Matthias Mayer won the men’s World Cup super-G in Alberta.

Competing a couple of hundred kilometers from where his father Helmut claimed Olympic silver in Calgary in 1988, Mayer charged down the Lake Louise mountain to triumph by nearly half a second.

The 29-year-old Austrian skied flawlessly, hitting speeds of 120 kph to end his run of four second-place finishes on the mountain.

For his sixth World Cup career victory — three in super-G and three in downhill — Mayer beat Italian Dominik Paris by 0.40 seconds, while Austrian Vincent Kriechmayr and Swiss Mauro Caviezel tied for third, 0.49 seconds off the pace.

Paris, the lead singer in a heavy metal band, had to settle for runner-up for the second successive day after being pipped in the downhill on Saturday.

Mayer is a double Olympic gold medalist, winning super-G in Pyeongchang in 2018 and downhill in Sochi in 2014.

(Source: Reuters)

## Iranian judoka Saeid Mollaei to fight for Mongolia



**S P O R T S** d e s k TEHRAN — Iranian judoka Saeid Mollaei has made the surprising decision to fight for Mongolia at the Qingdao Masters 2019.

The competition will be held in Chinese city Qingdao from Dec. 12 to 14 with 476 judokas from 70 countries.

President of Mongolia Khaltmaagiin Battulga, a former Sambo wrestling champion, handed him out the passport.

In Qingdao, Mollaei was supposed to fight under the International Refugee Team (IRT). However, at the website of the IJF he is a member of Mongolia.

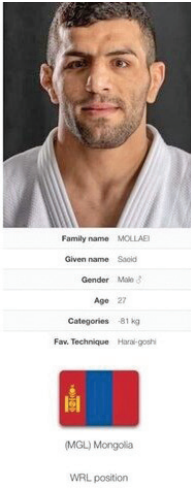
Mollaei, who is still ranked World Number three, should normally lose his points once switching to another country.

In his category U81kg the first

Mongolian fighter is Otgonbaatar Uuganbaatar at place 17 and Nyamsuren Dagvasuren is ranked 27th.

The 27-year-old Iranian athlete is a famous judoka who won a gold medal at the Baku 2018 World Championships and a bronze medal at the Budapest 2017 World Championships.

Mongolia have lost a few athletes to Azerbaijan and was about to lose three Mongolian athletes including Nyamsuren Dagvasuren to the UAE in 2018, but that transfer was cancelled. Mongolia have won consecutive Olympic medals since 2004 and with a judoka as its president, that ambition can become only stronger. With Mollaei Mongolia have a serious ace to continue the streak.



## Iran’s women down India at IWBF Asia Oceania Championships



**S P O R T S** d e s k TEHRAN — Iran’s women’s team beat India 43-13 at the 2019 International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF) Asia Oceania Championships in Thai city Pattaya on Monday.

Team Melli, who had already defeated Cambodia 40-22, will face Thailand on Tuesday.

Earlier on the day, Iran’s men’s team suffered their second loss against Australia (78-55) after they lost to Japan 71-51 on Sunday.

Iran will play hosts Thailand on Tuesday.

The IWBF Asia Oceania zone has four spots available for men and three for women at Tokyo 2020, with one spot in each already allocated to Japan as the host nation.

Fourteen men’s teams and an event-re-

cord eight women’s teams will compete at the competitions, taking place at the Eastern National Sports Centre and are scheduled to conclude on December 7.

In the men’s competition, the six top-ranked teams - Australia, China, Iran, Japan, South Korea and Thailand - will play in Division A, which will be a single round-robin to determine first to sixth place in the ranking.

The other eight teams - Afghanistan, Chinese Taipei, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Malaysia, the Philippines and Saudi Arabia - are drawn into two pools of four in Division B.

The top two teams in Division B will become the seventh- and eighth-ranked teams in Division A to make up the quarter-final pairings.

## Xavi backs Qatar to compete at World Cup after Akram award

Barcelona legend and Al Sadd coach Xavi backed hosts Qatar to make an impression at the next World Cup after exciting forward Akram Afif was named Asian player of the year on Monday.

Doha-based Xavi, who collected the award on Afif’s behalf at the Asian Football Confederation awards in Hong Kong, said the Qataris would be competitive in 2022 “for sure”.

Afif also helped Xavi’s Al Sadd reach the AFC Champions League semi-finals, where they lost to Saudi eventual winners Al Hilal 6-5 on aggregate.

“I think they are working very well, they are competing against very big countries,” Xavi, who won the 2010 World Cup with Spain, said of Qatar.

“I think they have a very good team and also a very good



coach. They are well organized on the pitch and they have a very good generation of players... Many players that can make the difference on the pitch.

“They are working really well and they can compete in 2022 for sure.”

Afif, who beat Iran goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand and Japan defender Tomoaki Makino to the honor, is the second Qatari in a row to win the men’s prize after defender Abdelkarim Hassan last year.

His award comes exactly nine years after Qatar were named as surprise World Cup hosts, a move that was followed by vote-buying allegations and a shift to the winter to avoid the Qatari summer heat.

(Source: AFP)

## ‘Chicharito’ opens door to MLS move in future

Mexico forward Javier Hernandez has refused to rule out playing in Major League Soccer later in his career.

Hernandez -- also known as “Chicharito” -- moved to Sevilla in the summer following a spell in the Premier League with West Ham.

“Yes, definitely,” he told the LA Times when asked if he had thought

about continuing his career in the U.S.

«Look, I am always thinking about my future. I want to be as open as I can to any opportunity.

“MLS is a league that is improving. It is an opportunity. Every league is an opportunity.”

Hernandez left Mexico in 2010 when he joined Manchester United from Gua-

dalajara and became an instant hit with 20 goals in his first season en route to a Premier League title.

He helped United win another title two years later but left to join Real Madrid on loan for the 2014-15 campaign where he won the FIFA Club World Cup before moving to Bayer Leverkusen permanently.

After two seasons in Germany, he moved back to England with West Ham. He joined Sevilla in the summer and has scored one goal in seven La Liga appearances.

Hernandez, 31, is Mexico’s all-time leading scorer with 52 goals in 109 appearances.

(Source: ESPN)



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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Morning is bright, because it has two clear eyes.

Imam Ali (AS)

## Iranian translators of Spanish books to meet at Tehran university

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — Iranian translators of Spanish books will come together at the Faculty of Persian Language and Literature of Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran on December 9 to review their latest offerings.



Spanish language scholar Najmeh Shobeiri in an undated photo.

“Most of the translators of Spanish books have been students at Allameh University, and we planned to invite them for the meeting to hold talks and exchange views,” Spanish language scholar Najmeh Shobeiri told the Persian service of MNA on Monday.

“Over the past few years, Spanish translators have made good progress and have translated many books into Persian, but their activities have been ignored,” she added.

Shamseddin Borqei, Sahar Yusefi, Saeid Matin, Elnaz Gholami, Elham Abdolalizadeh, Vahid Khodadadi and Mona Mohammadpur are among the translators, which will attend the meeting. They will make speeches about their latest books.

Shobeiri also said that they are planning to invite the Spanish ambassador and the cultural staff at the Embassy of Spain in Tehran to the meeting.

## Iranian children win awards at Japanese painting contest

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Members of Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) have won prizes at the 26th edition of the World Children's Picture Contest in Tokyo, Japan, the IIDCYA announced on Monday.



A painting by Iranian child artist Setareh Shahveisi that received a gold prize at the World Children's Picture Contest in Tokyo, Japan.

Setareh Shahveisi received a gold prize for her painting that shows some women on a sunflower farm.

Helia Karimi, Artin Soleimani, Hasti Rudbarani, Ilia Cheraghi and Fatemeh Moamar were awarded bronze prizes. Elham Qaranjiki, Setareh Nesari, Baran Didehban and Maryam Yazdani also received honorable mentions.

Organized by IE-NO-HIKARI Association, the contest aims at creating friendships and mutual understanding between children all over the world.

## Saeid Nejati on Dhaka festival jury

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Saeid Nejati, the Iranian director of the acclaimed short film “It Rains Slowly”, said on Monday that he has been selected as a member of the jury for the 15th International Short and Independent Film Festival (ISIFF), which will be held in Dhaka, Bangladesh from December 7 to 13.

Nejati is a graduate of cinema from Sureh University, and has cooperated as a jury member at several festivals such as the 19th Izmir International Short Film Festival, Tehran short Film Festival and Iran Cinema Celebration.

Filmmaker Kumar Shahani from India is scheduled to hold a workshop on mise-en-scène during the festival.

# Narges Abyar dedicates Tallinn festival's honor to Iranian people

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Narges Abyar, the director of the Iranian drama “When the Moon Was Full” that won the audience award at the 23rd Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival in Estonia on Saturday, has dedicated the award to her people.

“I dedicate this award to the people of Iran, as this is an award I received from the people and audiences,” Abyar said after accepting the award.

“I have good memories of this festival. I attended the festival three years ago and I won the best director award for ‘Breath’ at the event,” she added.

“When the Moon Was Full” tells the story of a woman from Tehran who marries a man from an Iranian province near the border of Pakistan. Soon after, she discovers that her new brother-in-law is a religious extremist trying to recruit her husband for his bloody cause.

The true love story had its premiere in Tehran during February at the 37th Fajr Film Festival in February where it won the Crystal Simorgh for best film and Abyar was named best director.

In addition, the movie also won Hutan Shakiba the award for best actor, while Elnaz Shakerdoost was crowned best actress for her role in the film.



Iranian director Narges Abyar speaks after accepting the audience award for her movie “When the Moon Was Full” at the closing ceremony of the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival in Estonia, November 30, 2019. Cast member Hutan Shakiba is also seen in the photo. (POFF)

## Intl. film experts to attend Cinéma Vérité market



A poster for the Cinéma Vérité festival.

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Several international film distributors and experts are scheduled to attend the market of the 13th Cinéma Vérité, Iran's major international documentary film festival, the organizers announced on Monday.

EBS International Documentary Film Festival executive producer Gune Hyoung from South Korea, SVT commissioning editor Lars Säfström from Sweden, ARTE program manager Peter Gottschalk from Germany and Slemani International Film Festival manager Fuad Jalal from Iraq are among the invitees.

An advisor to Tokyo Docs in Japan, Kenichi Imamura; Italy's Asiatica Film

Festival director, Italo Spinelli; Belgium's Millennium Festival artistic director, Zlatina Rousseva; and Kosovo's DokuFest artistic director, Veton Nurekollari, are also among the guests.

The film experts along with a number of film distributors from around the globe are scheduled to attend some meetings, which will be organized during the film market.

The market will be held on the sidelines of the festival at Tehran's Charsu Cineplex from December 11 to 14.

Organized by the Documentary and Experimental Film Center, the 13th edition of the Cinéma Vérité festival will take place in Tehran from December 9 to 16.

## Iran extends artists' tax exemption



People visit a group painting exhibition at Tehran's Laleh Gallery on December 1, 2019. (Honaronline)

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — Vice-President Mohammad-Baqer Nobakht, who is also the director of the Management and Planning Organization, announced on Sunday evening that the government is extending the tax exemption for artistic and cultural activities.

Based on Article 139, Section L of Iran's tax law, all publishing, press, Quranic, cultural and artistic activities being performed under the authorization of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance are exempted from paying the tax.

Earlier last week, some reports published on Iran's budget bill for the

upcoming year last week announced the government's plan to reduce the tax exemption to 50 percent.

The decision to reduce the tax exemption came as shock to many Iranian artists, cultural organizations and experts, and they warned against the implementation of the decision.

Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi stepped into the issue on Saturday by requesting a continuation of the tax exemption for cultural and artistic activities in letters sent to President Hassan Rouhani, First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs.

## Conductor Mariss Jansons dies at 76; led top orchestras

**FRANKFURT, Germany (AP)** — Mariss Jansons, conductor of top classical ensembles including the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam, has died in Russia. He was 76.

Jansons' death in St. Petersburg was confirmed by the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, where he was chief conductor. Jansons had canceled concerts this summer because of health reasons, the DPA news agency reported.

Born in German-occupied Riga in 1943 in what is now independent Latvia as the son of a conductor father and an opera singer mother, Jansons grew up in the Soviet Union and studied at the Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) Conservatory. A Soviet-era exchange program brought him to Austria in 1969, where he studied with famed conductor Herbert von Karajan. Jansons' work was also influenced by the legendary Soviet conductor Evgeny Mravinsky, who brought him in as his assistant at the Leningrad Philharmonic in 1972.

He was chief conductor in Pittsburgh from 1997 to 2004, regularly appeared at the Salzburg Festival, and in 2006 and 2012 conducted the Vienna Philharmonic New Year's Concert broadcast around the world. He left the Pittsburgh orchestra to become principal conductor of the Royal Concertgebouw, a post he held until 2015. Jansons is credited with raising the reputation of the Oslo Philharmonic through recordings and international tours during a 23-year tenure as music director.

Jansons' musical focus was large-scale orchestral works by 19th-century central and eastern European composers



Latvian conductor Mariss Jansons conducting the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra during the traditional New Year's Concert at Vienna's Musikverein. Jansons, January 1, 2012. (AP/Ronald Zak)

including Mahler, Dvorak, Bartok, Brahms and Shostakovich. He was known for close attention to detail in rehearsal and made extensive pre-concert sound checks, listening from different points in the hall while one of the musicians wielded the baton and even adjusting the position of players' chairs to get the sound he wanted.

“The notes are just signs,” he was quoted as saying in a 2012 interview in the Guardian. “You have to go beyond them and see what your fantasy tells you. But how do you express that through sound? If you think of the technical aspects of conducting as being on the ground floor of a big building, then 20 floors up you are beginning to get the sound you want.”

Jansons, who said in the Guardian interview that he held both Russian and Latvian passports, collapsed on stage during a concert performance of Puccini's opera “La Boheme” in Oslo in 1996 after suffering a heart attack and was subsequently fitted with a defibrillator.

## Disney's “Frozen 2” thrills Sámi people in northern Europe

**OSLO (Reuters)** — The sequel to Walt Disney Co's 2013 hit animated musical “Frozen” is generating excitement among indigenous Sámi people in northern Europe, whose culture the movie has taken inspiration from.

“Frozen 2” debuted in U.S. cinemas on Nov. 22 and is progressively rolling out worldwide. On its debut weekend, it grossed \$350 million, making it “the biggest opening ever for Walt Disney Animation (not including Pixar)”, according to Hollywood trade publication Variety. The movie opens in Norway on Christmas Day.

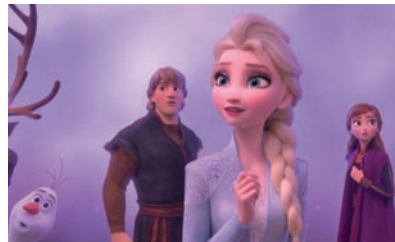
Norway inspired many elements of the first “Frozen” movie, such as character Anna's dress or the architecture of the fictional kingdom of Arendelle.

The second film takes inspiration from the culture of the Sámi, an indigenous minority living across Norway, Sweden, Finland and northern Russia, who have faced discrimination against their language and culture.

In Norway, a state-appointed truth and reconciliation commission is investigating the discrimination perpetrated on minorities including the Sámi and Kven peoples.

“I am planning to see the movie again with my whole family,” said Aili Keskitalo, president of the consultative Sámi Parliament in Norway, who attended the film's world premiere in Los Angeles with her 11-year-old daughter and set a scene from the movie as her Facebook profile picture.

“Frozen 2” sees Anna and sister Elsa head north of Arendelle to find out the truth about a mystery. They meet the Northdura,



who live closely with the reindeer. Reindeer herding is a traditional Sámi activity.

“Some of the beautiful costumes in the film took inspiration from our gákti. They also took inspiration from the guksi, our traditional wooden cup,” said Anne Lajla Utsi, a member of a Sámi advisory group that collaborated with the filmmakers.

“We felt they really listened and that it was very important to them to do this right,” Utsi, managing director of the International Sámi Film Institute, told Reuters.

Disney signed a contract with Sámi representatives to commit themselves to portray their culture respectfully. That included supporting the dubbing of the movie in North Sámi, the most spoken of the Sámi languages, and release it at the same time as the Norwegian version.

When Utsi posted a picture of the “Frozen 2” poster on Facebook with its Sámi title, “Jik'on 2”, it went viral.

“My youngest daughter is really looking forward to watching the movie again in her language,” said Keskitalo.

“My elder daughters, who are 22 and 25 years old, are also very excited about seeing the movie. It is not often that we see a movie in North Sámi. I think a lot of adults will see the movie too.”