



Intelligence Ministry arrests members of anti-Revolution network **2**



Forex rate not to be changed significantly in next year's budget **4**



Iran, Wilmots reach deadlock over Team Melli's future: official **15**



Iran's National Orchestra to perform works by Armenian composers in Tehran **16**

U.S. sending private messages to Iran



See page 2

Baqeri: Iran, China reviewing 25-year strategic relations document

TEHRAN — Mohammad Baqeri, chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, announced on Tuesday that Tehran and Beijing are reviewing an important document which will guarantee joint strategic cooperation for the next 25 years.

Major General Baqeri's remarks came in a meeting in Tehran with Lieutenant General Xia Yoon Ming, the deputy commander of the Chinese Army's Interna-

tional Relations and cochairman of the Iran-China Joint Military Commission.

"Iran's Leader views Tehran-Beijing relations as strategic. The Chinese president has also similar view towards the issue," Baqeri said.

He further said, "Iran has drafted an important document over the strategy of 25 years of relationship between the two nations." **→2**

Iran starts issuing electronic visas for Pakistani citizens

TEHRAN - Iran has launched an e-visa system for Pakistani citizens in order to facilitate their travels through abolishing old-fashioned paper visas.

E-visas will be issued for Pakistani citizens by Iranian consulates in four [Pakistani] provinces and the Iranian embassy based in Islamabad, Urdu

Point reported on Monday.

The main purpose of issuing e-visa for Pakistani citizens is to ensure more convenient and speedy traveling facilities to active workers in tourism industry, commercial activities and trade, the news website quoted Iranian embassy sources as saying. **→10**

Corbyn: I wish NATO didn't exist

Jeremy Corbyn, the current leader of the UK Labor Party, claimed in a 2014 video that he wished NATO and other Western military alliances did not exist.

The footage has been publicized just in time for the United Kingdom to host a major NATO summit this week, bringing together world leaders, including US President Donald Trump.

The footage, reportedly from 2014, shows Corbyn, flanked by Labor candidates Catherine West and David Lammy, saying, "I am no fan of NATO, indeed I

wish NATO didn't exist. I am no fan of Western military alliances, indeed I wish they didn't exist", The Daily Mail reported on Tuesday.

Last month, Corbyn reportedly refused to call the NATO alliance a great military success during an interview. Asked if he agreed with the chief of defense staff, Nick Carter, on the latter's description of NATO as being the "most successful military alliance in history", Corbyn replied, "I'm not sure I'd define it as that", according to the Daily Mail. **→13**

Netanyahu's London trip nixed after veto from UK officials

Israel prosecution lists 333 witnesses in Netanyahu's graft cases

By staff & agencies

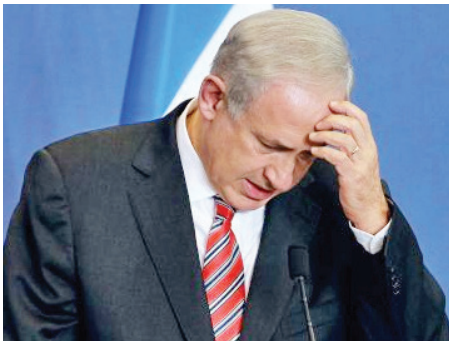
Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not fly to London on Tuesday to meet with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on the sidelines of a NATO summit, a senior official told Channel 13 news.

According to the report, the UK government said that logistically it cannot accommodate Netanyahu on such short notice in addition to the other world leaders and their delegations who are attending the conference.

UK reportedly says not enough notice given for Netanyahu's visit on NATO sidelines; Merkel, Macron said not eager to meet him.

Sources told Haaretz that Merkel and Macron rebuffed inquiries about meeting with Netanyahu on the sidelines of the summit.

In September, Netanyahu flew to London to meet with US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson. The spontaneously planned trip raised some eyebrows among political analysts, given the turmoil then



engulfing the British political system that was sure to take priority over any other matter in 10 Downing Street. He held talks with Johnson, who was facing a revolt within his Conservative party over his controversial plan to leave the European Union.

According to Hebrew-language reports, Netanyahu plans instead to meet with Pompeo in

Lisbon, Portugal, later this week.

The Haaretz newspaper reported that the British officials were unhappy that this was to be the second time in recent months that Netanyahu planned a trip to London just to meet with US officials — this time with short notice, at an event with multiple delegations in need of security and just days after the British capital was hit by a terror attack.

In addition, the reports of the cancellation of the trip came as Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit released a new version of the charges against Netanyahu and clarified that the 30-day period for him to request to be granted parliamentary immunity by the Knesset has now officially begun.

Israel's attorney general has officially submitted his indictment of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the Knesset (parliament), laying out a sweeping case in which an estimated 333 witnesses, including wealthy friends and former aides, could be called to testify.

UAE diplomat praises Syrian president's 'wise leadership'

A United Arab Emirates diplomat has praised Syrian President Bashar Assad's "wise leadership," describing relations between the two Arab countries as "solid and special."

The comments by Charge d'affaires Abdul-Hakim Naimi came during a ceremony late on Monday in Damascus to mark UAE's National Day.

Naimi said he hopes that "peace, security and stability will prevail Syria under the shadow of the wise leadership" of Assad.

The UAE was a supporter of the Syrian opposition, which is now largely confined to the northern Idlib province after losing its strongholds elsewhere.

In December 2018, the UAE reopened its embassy in Damascus for the first time in seven years, a reflection of improved relations between Assad and some of his Arab foes as the government gains more ground in the war-torn country.

At the ceremony, Syria's deputy foreign

minister Faisal Maqdad thanked the UAE for its support.

"We cannot forget that the United Arab Emirates stood by Syria in its war against terrorism," he said.

Earlier in the war UAE supported armed groups opposed to Assad. But its role was less prominent than that of Saudi Arabia, and mainly centered on ensuring that extremist forces did not dominate the uprising.

(Source: NY Times)



© Tehran Times/ Maryam Kamyab

3080 candidates registered for parliamentary polls by Tuesday

TEHRAN — By working hours on Tuesday, 3080 people registered to run in the upcoming parliamentary polls.

"So far, registration of 3080 people have been finalized and others are completing this process as well," Interior Ministry director for election affairs Esmail Mousavi said, according to ISNA. **→3**



PERSPECTIVE

M.A. Saki
Deputy editor-in-chief

Air pollution and the war of wills

With the arrival of cold season air pollution spreads its shadow over cities, especially big ones.

Many proposals have been presented over the past years to reduce air pollution, but no concrete measures have been taken so far.

However, anybody who is aware of the complexities surrounding the issue does not expect a miraculous solution to the problem.

The illegal and cruel sanctions by the Trump administration on Iran has made the situation more complicated. Sanctions have made it almost impossible for Iran to benefit from new technologies in auto industry. Companies which had signed or were about to sign partnership agreements with local car companies left Iran because of sanctions.

Even if responsible bodies start to reduce air pollution from today it will take many years to resolve it.

Also, there is no single solution to the issue. But one thing is certain: the air pollution is taking toll on the citizens.

Shina Ansari, chief of environment and sustainable development at the Municipality of Tehran, says air pollution costs the capital up to \$2.6 billion per year.

The Majlis Research Center has also cited the World Bank as saying that "the cost of air pollution in Tehran is \$2.6 billion per year." It says, "The estimate only considers human health effects."

Alireza Raisi, the deputy health minister, told ISNA in an interview published on Monday that density of air pollution in certain regions in Tehran has reached 30 times above the normal level.

He said that pollution is not just restricted to Tehran. The health official said now cities such as Shiraz, Isfahan and Ahvaz are not immune from air pollution.

Raisi said Health Minister Saeed Namaki has written a letter to Tehran Mayor Pirouz Hanachi complaining that air pollution intensifies spread of influenza virus which also resurfaces in cold seasons and has so far taken the lives of 56 people.

There are certain reasons for air pollution but only experts can determine the share of each pollutant. In big cities like Tehran diesel and gasoline-powered vehicles are the main culprits. **→12**



ARTICLE

Maryam Khormaei
Mehr News Agency
journalist

Why Germany turned its back on parallel coalitions in Strait of Hormuz

Germany recently announced it will not join the French-led mission in the Strait of Hormuz. This is while, not long ago, Berlin's lack of support for Paris's position on "the brain death of NATO" became a hot issue.

Berlin's stance against Paris reinforces the assumption that maybe Germany, on the eve of Brexit, is trying to prevent France to become the dominant power in Europe. The assumption is largely reasonable, provided one does not forget that Germany, in a parallel action, benefits from the cooperation with France to challenge U.S. supremacy and show of power by the EU.

■ Britain, from innovation to treason

Where did the idea of creating a European mission in the Strait of Hormuz come from and what countries were involved in it?

What today is known as the French initiative to secure the Persian Gulf was first proposed by Britain in response to the Iranian seizure of the Stena Impero ship in July.

This issue is related to the time before the premiership of Boris Johnson, who follows U.S. President Donald Trump in his extremist policies.

At the time, Jeremy Hunt was serving as the British foreign secretary. Hunt preferred to offer a plan that did not directly involve the EU, NATO and, above all, the United States, in the light of Britain's ultimate intention to realize Brexit. Instead, Hunt created a far weaker coalition with the participation of the European countries like Norway, which were not a member of the EU.

The initiative was approved by France and Germany at the beginning because these three countries, as European parties to JCPOA, did not intend to join U.S.-led maritime coalition. The countries did not want to endanger the nuclear deal by assisting the maximum pressure campaign against Iran.

But the plan changed when Johnson took office. Johnson, who was determined to carry out Brexit, did not mind to question the European coalitions and preferred to compete with France and Germany by joining U.S.-led maritime coalition in the Strait of Hormuz. **→13**

Shinzo Abe says Japan still supports nuclear deal

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Tuesday that Japan still supports the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the JCPOA.

During a meeting with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Tokyo, Abe said that Japan will continue playing its diplomatic role in preserving the JCPOA.

Araqchi also submitted a written message from President Hassan Rouhani to Abe.

The Japanese prime minister welcomed continuation of political consultations between the two countries.

Araghchi said that Iran will return to full implementation of the JCPOA if sanctions are lifted.

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.

■ ‘Cooperation is needed more than ever’

In a separate meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, Araghchi said that the Middle East region is in a volatile situation and cooperation is needed more than ever.

Motegi said that Japan will make more diplomatic efforts to help reduce tension in the region.

Iran sounds out Japan about Rouhani visit: source

By staff and agency

Kyodo News reported on Tuesday that a source close to bilateral relations said Iran sounded out Japan on Tuesday about President Hassan Rouhani visiting the Asian country.

Abbas Araghchi, Iran’s deputy foreign minister for political affairs, serving as a special envoy of the president, relayed the message to Japan during his two-day visit to Tokyo from Monday, according to the source.

If realized, it would be the first visit by an Iranian president since October 2000.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Iran in June as the first Japanese leader since 1978.

Commander reiterates ground force’s readiness to defend Iran against possible threats

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The commander of Iran’s Army Ground Force announced on Tuesday that his forces are well prepared to counter any possible threats at borders.

“The army’s combat might is very well and it can defeat any enemy in the shortest time possible,” Kiomars Heidari said while addressing troops in Shiraz.

“Well, there is no any enemy deployed at our borders at the time, but we must permanently be vigilant in order not to be surprised by the enemies,” Heidari noted.

Touching upon ground force’s units deployed in Shiraz, the commander said, “These troops, including the 37th armored brigade, the armored training center and the 55th airborne brigade are unique and strategic that are shouldering a key role in trainings of new forces and enhancing combat might of the ground force.”

Iran has conducted major military drills in recent years to enhance the defense capabilities of its armed forces and to test modern military tactics and state-of-the-art equipment.

In November, the ground force staged large-scale military drills, codenamed “Zolfaghar-e-Velayat”, in northwest Iran to boost the combat readiness of its units. It covered a vast strategic area in the region.

Various divisions of the ground force participated in the drill, which was focused on practicing the transfer of rapid reaction units via ground and air from across the country to operation zones. The enlisted units also displayed their efficacy to enhance their readiness in responding to operational requirements and threats through day and night.

Baqeri: Iran, China reviewing 25-year strategic relations document

1 → The document has been handed over to the Chinese officials. The document has been prepared by the highest-ranking Iranian officials. The Leader has also confirmed the document.”

The top general said other countries cannot affect the growing ties between Iran and China.

“Other countries’ views and their hostilities could not affect the Tehran-Beijing relations. We hope that the Chinese officials’ point of view towards the document and their response to our strategic offer to help expand bilateral ties,” the Iranian commander said.

The Chinese military commander, for his part, evaluated Baqeri’s recent trip to his country as positive and said, “The trip founded a suitable bedrock for more cooperation between the armed forces of the two friendly nations.”

In his trip to China in mid-September, Baqeri said Iran attaches great significance to promotion of ties with China in different sectors, including military.

General Baqeri made the remarks in a meeting in Beijing with General Li Zuocheng, the chief of China’s Joint Staff Department of the Central Military Commission.

“Iran attaches great significance to its relations with the People’s Republic of China in all areas. We have long-standing ties in the military sector as well, and we hope this visit can be a turning point in the development and reinforcement of the relations,” Baqeri said.

Heading a high-ranking military delegation, Baqeri visited China for a three-day trip with the aim of promoting bilateral defense diplomacy.

Rouhani: We have no problem to resume ties with Saudis

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — President

Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that Iran has no problem with expanding relations with neighbors and resuming ties with Saudi Arabia.

“From the Islamic Republic of Iran’s point of view, there is no problem with expanding relations with neighbors and resuming ties with Saudi Arabia,” Rouhani said during a meeting with Omani Foreign Minister Yusef bin Alawi in Tehran.

Rouhani said, “All countries should stand beside each other to maintain security and stability in the region.”

The president said all the regional countries should play an active role in maintaining security in the region and in this line Iran proposed the Hormuz peace initiative.

“We should maintain security in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz through expanding cooperation and we should not let foreigners interfere,” the president pointed out.

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

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

Foreign Minister Zarif has invited all regional states to join Iran’s initiative for securing the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

In a tweet in September, Zarif said the initiative entails “dialogue, confidence-



Omani Foreign Minister Yusef bin Alawi met with President Rouhani on Tuesday.

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, security, stability, and prosperity” in the region.

■ ‘Yemen war has brought nothing but murder and destruction’

In his talks with the chief Omani diplomat, Rouhani also said that the war on Yemen has brought nothing but destruction

and murder of people.

“The Yemeni war has brought nothing but destruction, murder of the people, threat against territorial integrity and also hatred between the people of the two countries,” the president lamented.

He added that the United States and Europe have no interest in establishing peace in Yemen in order to sell arms.

The U.S. and certain European countries, including Britain, France and Germany, are the main suppliers of arms to Saudi Arabia and the UAE in their attacks on the impoverished Yemen.

Rouhani says the United States and Europe have no interest in establishing peace in Yemen in order to sell arms.

Iranian diplomat says IAEA should be impartial

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the International Organizations in Vienna Kazzem Qaribabadi has said that the International Atomic Energy Agency should be “impartial” in its dealings with Iran.

“Maintaining constructive working relations between Iran and the Agency is of paramount importance, which we believe that it should be carried out in an impartial, professional and independent manner, void of any hidden political agenda,” he said at the IAEA Second Special General Conference on Monday.

Qaribabadi was selected as the vice president of the special conference tasked to nominate director general for the IAEA.

Rafael Grossi, the new director general of the IAEA, was appointed to the post in October, following the death of the previous chief Yukiya Amano in July. He was set to take office as director general of the UN nuclear watchdog on Tuesday.

Congratulated Grossi on his appointment, Qaribabadi said, “We are confident that Ambassador Grossi, with his professional experience and expertise, will officiate over the activities of this organization to the best of its interests.”

‘No one can question Iran for reducing commitment to the JCPOA’

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araghchi said on Monday that no one can question Iran for deciding to scale down its commitments to the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

In a panel discussion in Tokyo, he said that Iran’s action in reducing nuclear commitments does not mean quitting the JCPOA.

“The current situation is the result of the United States’ withdrawal from the JCPOA and the only solution to it is removal of sanctions and return to diplomacy,” the top diplomat noted.

Iran has started to partially reduce its commitments to the JCPOA in response to the United States which abandoned the landmark deal in May 2018 and reinstituted sanctions.

So far, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has taken four steps to cut back commitments in accordance with 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.”

Top officials in Tehran has repeatedly said if the European



Union shields Iran’s economy from the sanctions effect the country will reverse its decision.

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

U.S. sending private messages to Iran: Rouhani

Day for the People with Disability.

In the meantime, Rouhani highlighted once again the key role of the people’s maximum resistance against the U.S. maximum pressure in thwarting plots aimed at bringing the Iranians to their knees.

He said, “Regardless of heavy economic pressure and unfair sanctions, people preserved their dignity and left behind hard conditions via resistance and tolerating difficulties.”

“Now the people have won and have proven that they will not allow the enemies to materialize their hostile objectives,”

the president further remarked.

Donald Trump, who unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the multilateral 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions against Iran under his officially stated “maximum pressure” strategy, has been trying to reach the Islamic republic for dialogue.

In relevant remarks earlier this month, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps commanders that the U.S. gained nothing by adopting the policy of maximum pressure against Iran.

“We all should make efforts to stop war in Yemen immediately and stabilize the country through inter-Yemeni talks,” he said.

Rouhani also said that Saudi Arabia’s policies in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon have not brought any achievement for Riyadh and expressed hope that the Saudis would change their policies.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched a devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015.

The U.S.-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, estimates that the war has claimed more than 100,000 lives over the past four and a half years.

The war has also taken a heavy toll on the country’s infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories. The UN says over 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme levels of hunger.

■ Rouhani describes Iran-Oman ties “brotherly”

Rouhani also said that Iran and Oman have “brotherly” and “friendly” ties and called for expansion of relations.

“Oman can be a center for Iran’s trade in the region,” he added.

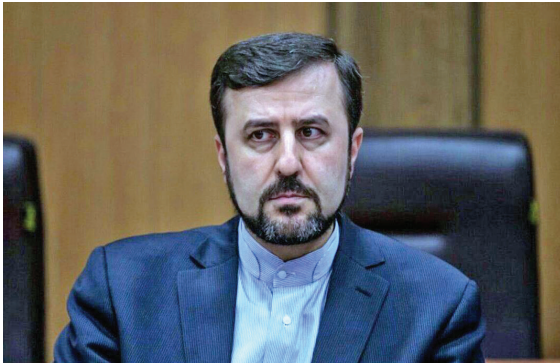
■ Omani FM says expansion of ties is beneficial to the entire region

For his part, bin Alawi said that expansion of relations between Iran and Oman is beneficial to all the countries in the region.

“Oman attaches great importance to expansion of relations and cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran,” he said.

Elsewhere, he said the Hormuz peace initiative will benefit regional security and stability.

Bin Alawi also held talks with Foreign Minister Zarif, Supreme National Security Council secretary Ali Shamkhani, and Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani on Monday.



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

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

Intelligence Ministry arrests members of anti-Revolution network

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Intelligence Ministry says it has arrested the top members of an anti-Islamic Revolution network who intended to create chaos in universities during the upcoming Students' Day ceremonies.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Intelligence Ministry said the network intended to foment insecurity in Tehran and some other cities.

Top members of the network were identified and were arrested through coordination with the Judiciary, the ministry explained.

In the recent protests against partially rationing gasoline and increasing its price, the network intended but failed to incite students of the University of Tehran to disrupt the country's security, it 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.

'2021 rioters arrested in Tehran province'

The governor general of Tehran Prov-

ince said on Tuesday that 2021 individuals were arrested in Tehran Province during the protests.

Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey said many of the arrested individuals were released immediately because they attended the unrest due to their "lack of awareness".

"But those who received orders and took to the streets in order to create problems for public order, security and peace and had criminal records are still under interrogation," he explained.

He added, "In Tehran province, 29 gas stations were set ablaze, more than 140 banks were seriously damaged ... and 47 chain stores were set ablaze or looted."

He also said as the Judiciary chief has said damage to private property will be compensated after investigation.

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.

A day earlier, commander of the Tehran division of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Mohammad Reza Yazdi, said investigations were 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 on Sunday.

Guardian Council: Adherence to constitution only way out of deadlocks

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Adherence to the constitution is the only way to break deadlocks, the Guardian Council said in a statement on Tuesday.

The statement was issued on the anniversary of the adoption of the constitution through a referendum on December 2-3, 1979, replacing the constitution of 1906. It was amended on July 28, 1989.

"December 3 each year is a commemoration day for glory of the country as well as the nation through which revolutionary path of the people resulted in overthrow of an oppressive kingdom and establishment of the Islamic Republic via ratification of a new constitution," the Guardian Council said in the statement.

"The constitution, which leads the society's political, cultural, economic and social institutions according to the Islamic principles and regulations, is the main source for stating new ruling system's objectives and pillars, major structure for managing the republic, the people's public rights and freedom, and the ways to guarantee the mentioned items," the statement added.

The statement further reiterated that the only way in front of the officials and people out of any deadlock, crisis or problem is adherence to the country's constitution.



The Guardian Council is an appointed and constitutionally mandated 12-member body.

The Iranian constitution calls for the council to be composed of six Islamic faqihs (expert in Islamic law), "conscious of the present needs and the issues of the day" to be selected by the Leader, and six jurists, specializing in different areas of law, to be elected by the Majlis (Parliament) from among the jurists nominated by the head of the Judiciary.

It is charged with interpreting the Constitution, supervising elections of, and approving of candidates to, the Assembly of Experts, the president and the Majlis, and "ensuring ... the compatibility of the legislation passed by the Islamic Consultative Assembly [i.e. Majlis] ... with the criteria of Islam and the Constitution".

Tehran congratulates new EU foreign policy chief on appointment

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has congratulated Josep Borrell on his appointment as the new EU foreign policy chief, voicing hopes that relations between Tehran and the EU would develop during his tenure.

"While appreciating @FedericaMog's moderate and sensible positions on Iran & congratulating the appointment of @JosepBorrellF, hope to witness the development of our relations with the EU and the consolidation of multilateralism and rule of law in the International arena," Mousavi said on his Twitter account on Monday evening.

Borrell on Sunday assumed the post of EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, replacing Mogherini, who served from 2014 to 2019.

On the same day, he said that the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (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, IRNA reported.

He also noted that killing the nuclear deal will be a "big mistake".



U.S. President Donald Trump walked away from the multilateral 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.

Judiciary differentiates between protestors and rioters

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Judiciary does not consider those who protested against increase in gas price as rioters, the spokesman for Judiciary said on Tuesday.

"From the Judiciary's point of view, those who protested against gas price rise plan and those who voiced their concern about their future and possible negative impacts of the plan on prices of other goods and services are different from thugs," Gholamhossein Esmayeeli told reporters.

"Those who set public properties on fire and killed security forces and even civilians were a special group of rioters and thugs who were affiliated to anti-revolution groups supported by alien countries' spy agencies," Esmayeeli added.

On Monday, Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi 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," Raisi added.

He said the Judiciary would also follow up



"From the Judiciary's point of view, those who protested against gas price rise plan and those who voiced their concern about their future and possible negative impacts of the plan on prices of other goods and services are different from thugs," Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmayeeli told reporters.



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Three domestically built ultralight planes joined the Iranian Navy in the southern port city of Bandar Abbas on Tuesday.

The three surveillance aircraft, called Chakavak (Lark), joined the Navy's fleet in a ceremony attended by Navy Chief Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi.

Chakavak is a light aircraft designed for both surveillance and training purposes, which can fly up to 14,000 feet.

Powered by a single engine, Chakavak can perform 4-5 hours of consistent flight.

Khanzadi also announced that the Navy's destroyers will be equipped with indigenous electronic warfare systems in

the near future, Mehr reported.

The electronic warfare system is strategic for the Iranian Navy, the commander asserted.

In remarks on Sunday evening, Khanzadi said presence of naval forces of the United States and other foreigners in the Persian Gulf cannot harm Iran's maritime security.

"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.

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.

3080 candidates registered for parliamentary polls by Tuesday

1 → Iran on Sunday began registering candidates running for the parliamentary elections, set to be held on February 21, 2020.

Candidates have until December 7 to register, Interior Ministry said on Sunday.

The elections will be held in over 200 constituencies across the country's 31 provinces.

The Iranian parliament has 290 members who are elected by the people for four-year terms.



The midterm elections of the Assembly of Experts will also be held on the same date in Tehran, Khorsan Razavi, North Khorasan, Fars and Qom provinces.

The Guardian Council will vet parliamentary hopefuls for their qualifications and will release the names of candidates deemed eligible to run by December 18.

Disqualified candidates will have four days to object to the Guardian Council, after which the council will study complaints and announce the final list on February 11.

The candidates will have 8 days to spend on the campaign trail, ending on February 19, and then the elections will be held on February 21, 2020.

'Guardian Council is the only election supervisor'

Guardian Council spokesman Abbasali Kadkhodaei said on Tuesday that the council is the only body responsible to supervise the elections.

"Sometimes questions arise over whether we are the only supervisor of the elections or not," Kadkhodaei said, adding, "I emphasize that the Guardian Council is the only supervisor of the elections."

He said the Judiciary is tasked with investigating offenses and the Interior Ministry has an executive responsibility.

"This separation of supervision and execution is very important," the spokesman remarked. "We should be able to implement our legal responsibilities properly."

Kadkhodaei also urged the authorities to avoid personal tastes and partisan goals and strive to uphold Iran's national interests.

Meanwhile, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Sunday advised potential candidates not to run for the elections "if you don't have management capabilities."

The Leader criticized the way many people register for the elections, saying now that potential candidates can register for the elections, a lot of people go ahead and register without hesitation.

Every responsibility or position requires certain commitments, Ayatollah Khamenei said.

"You have to see if you can make that commitment," he added.

Defense chief: Western colonialists plotting return to the region

TEHRAN (FNA) — Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami lashed out at Western governments for their destructive role in the Middle East, adding that former colonialists are seeking to return to the region.



"Powers from beyond the region and their profit-seeking interference are the main elements behind instability and insecurity in the region", Hatami said on Monday.

The defense minister made the comments in response to the remarks made by the French Defense Minister Florence Parly in the recent Manama conference.

Hatami said the former colonialists are seeking to return to the region after they were expelled out by the resistance of the people of the region, while noting that the people of the region are now awakened and have not forgotten the oppression and looting of their countries.

Stressing that there is no doubt about the fact the U.S. power is in decline (as it was referred to by the French defense minister), adding that "This does not necessarily mean that the region is ready to replace it (the U.S.) with other arrogant powers."

He further advised the French defense minister to have a look at the number of French citizens who joined the ISIL terrorist organization and their involvement in the crimes that were committed in Syria and Iraq.

He further pointed out that the people and the armed forces defeated ISIL terrorists with the help of Iran and Russia rather than the Western countries.

Hatami went on to describe the French defense minister and other Western officials' proposals for the security of the region as new irresponsible ways to colonialize the region which will further complicate the situation in the region.

Referring to the American and Israeli plots for the region, the Iranian defense minister noted, "The presence and the interference of the Westerners will further complicate the security conditions in the region."

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	320814.4
IFX	4116.34

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,521 rials
GBP	54,351 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$60.95/b
WTI	\$56.01/b
OPEC Basket	\$63.83/b
Gold	\$1,470.95/oz
Silver	\$17.06/oz
Platinum	\$904.45/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Growth spurt predicted for UK economy in 2021

While the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) foresees modest growth of 1.2 percent over 2020, the forecast for the following year stands at 1.8 percent, based on the assumption the UK “has clear line of sight to an ambitious trade deal” with the European Union (EU).

Such a deal, according to the CBI, would involve alignment with EU rules to ensure frictionless trade, including protection for the UK’s services sector.

The report says, the “main risk to the outlook remains continued Brexit uncertainty, particularly the threat of a no-deal Brexit. On the global front, a further escalation in U.S.-China trade tensions would deliver further hits to world growth and trade, with a knock-on impact on the UK economy.”

Rain Newton-Smith, CBI chief economist, says that UK businesses have continued to show remarkable resilience after more than three years of “crippling uncertainty” since the vote to leave the EU. “In that time,” she adds, “firms have continued to go about their day jobs, playing a vital part in driving economic growth. But they’ve been beset by headwinds. Alongside perennial Brexit uncertainty, they are also contending with softer global demand. “Should these dual headwinds subside, we expect a gradual pick-up in activity. But the bigger picture is one of fairly modest growth over the next couple of years – growth that should be far better, given the UK’s relative strengths.”

Newton-Smith says, the “UK’s potential has been held back by more than a decade of weak productivity growth and stop-start investment. It’s vital that the next government prioritizes lifting productivity and living standards by addressing day-to-day business concerns, including reforming the apprenticeship levy, raising UK R&D expenditure and tackling long-term challenges on skills.

■ A lost decade of productivity
“But transforming a lost decade of productivity will only be possible if supported by a good Brexit deal – one that keeps the UK aligned with EU rules is essential for frictionless trade along with protecting the UK’s world-beating services sector, which accounts for 80 percent of our economy.

“Let’s be clear: a no-deal Brexit would put the brakes on UK growth and realize businesses’ worst fears. What’s needed is a clear and committed line of sight to an ambitious deal that will protect the UK’s economy and future prosperity. If firms can see a close deal with the EU on the horizon, with no further Brexit cliff-edges to worry about, investment will be unlocked.”

The forecast says that growth in the economy would be largely driven by consumer spending, along with a contribution from government plans outlined in the September Spending Review.

Business investment is expected to grow modestly in 2020, as Brexit uncertainty gradually wanes “under our assumption that the UK begins a smooth transition to a new relationship with the EU”, before picking up in 2021.

“In the case of more prolonged Brexit uncertainty, we would expect business investment to be weaker,” adds the CBI. “Our forecast sees a downgrade to global growth, which has continued to disappoint during the first half of 2019, reflecting regulatory tightening in China, slower Eurozone growth and economic stress in some emerging markets.

“Increasing trade tensions are also weighing on investment and sentiment. We still expect an improvement in global growth ahead, particularly as momentum in the Eurozone picks up and the emerging markets outlook stabilizes.”

(Source: relocatmagazine.com)

FDI woes still plague Ukraine

Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows had broken a record in 2012, at about \$8.2 billion. By 2013 – a tumultuous year in Ukrainian politics that sparked mass street protests in November – this figure had halved to about \$4.5 billion.

By the end of 2014 FDI had fallen to a 12-year low of \$847 million. Although inflows rebounded again in 2015, breaching \$3 billion, FDI again started dropping in 2017 and this trend has continued to 2019.

Even the good news must be qualified. Portfolio investments (a type of capital inflow covering shares, bonds and the like), which also reversed sharply in 2014, recovered in 2015 and, unlike FDI, have continued to grow – reaching \$2.1 billion by the end of 2018 and already \$1.2 billion in the first six months of 2019.

Still, this is a far cry from the \$8.8 billion recorded in 2013. And portfolio investments are often referred to as “hot money” because they are not as stable as FDI inflows.

Unlike FDI, which usually involves the creation of productive assets, behind portfolio investments are often speculators seeking high returns. In case of economic downturn, these investments can be pulled out of the country more easily.

Its neighborhood offers Ukraine some hard lessons. Income levels are far lower than in Belarus and Poland, and poverty levels remain high. Ukraine’s economy contracted by 6.6 percent and 9.8 percent in 2014 and 2015 respectively.

(Source: eurasianet.org)

Forex rate not to be changed significantly in next year’s budget

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dehpasand said that the forex rate in the budget for the next Iranian calendar year (begins on March 20, 2020) is not to be changed significantly from the rate envisaged in the current year’s budget, Tasnim news agency reported.

Making the announcement among the reporters on Tuesday, the minister said that as the dollar exchange rate of 42,000 rials has been decided to be considered for imports of the basic goods and medicine, the next year’s

budget will not witness so much change in the forex rate.

The official further announced that the next year’s budget is anticipated to put the tax income at 1.6 quadrillion rials (about \$38.09 billion), adding that last year some 1.09 quadrillion rials (about \$25.95 billion) of taxes has been collected in the country.

The revenues gained from elimination of hidden energy subsidies as well as increased tax incomes will replace oil revenues in the next year’s budget bill, according to the head of Iran’s Planning and Budget Organization

Tehran to host Iran-Oman Joint Economic Committee meeting on Dec. 7

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The 18th Iran-Oman Joint Economic Committee meeting is slated to be held in Tehran on December 7, Portal of Iran Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) reported.

Aimed for strengthening the two sides’ bilateral relations in various areas including trade, finance, investment and technical cooperation, the event will be chaired by the two countries’ industry and trade ministers, according to the Director General of TPO’s Arabic-African Affairs Office Farzad Piltan.

Among other areas, cooperation in the fields of economics and commerce, mining and industry, banking, insurance, free trade zones, agriculture and fisheries, transport, oil, gas and petrochemicals, cultural heritage, handicrafts and tourism, sports and youth, water and electricity, education and culture, standards, judiciary, engineering, environment, customs, communications and

technology, geology and labor and social welfare are some of the topics to be dealt with in the said joint committee meeting.

The trade turnover between Iran and Oman stood at nearly \$220 million in the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22).

Technical discussions will be held on December 3-4, prior to the main event at the place of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization in Tehran.



Iran, Senegal explore avenues of economic co-op

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) hosted an Iran-Senegal business forum on Tuesday, in which the two sides discussed expansion of mutual trade ties.

The forum was attended by officials, traders, and economy experts from both sides, including ICCIMA Deputy Head for International Affairs Mohammadreza Karbasi, Iran’s Ambassador to Dakar Mohammadreza Dehshiri, and Hasan Khosrojerdi, the head of Iran-Africa Joint Chamber of Commerce, as well as Senegal’s Ambassador to Tehran Amadou Sow.

Delivering a speech in the gathering, Karbasi pointed to Senegal as an important gateway into Africa’s 200 million market, saying “The strategic port of Dakar is one of Africa’s important platforms for investment, economic growth and development of trade relations with other countries.”

According to Karbasi, given the positive political relations between Iran and Senegal and the fact that Senegal is a member of the West African Economic and Monetary



Senegal’s Ambassador to Tehran Amadou Sow (2nd L) and ICCIMA Deputy Head for International Affairs Mohammadreza Karbasi (3rd L) speaking at an Iran-Senegal business forum in Tehran on Tuesday

TPO to dispatch trade-marketing delegation to Russia in mid-Feb. 2020

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO) plans to dispatch a trade and marketing delegation to Russia during February 9-13, 2020, TPO portal published.

The Iranian delegates are active in the fields of agriculture, foodstuff, and fisheries.

Also as previously announced, a 23-member trade delegation from Russia’s Samara City is going to visit Tehran on December 11 to attend a business forum hosted by Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TC-CIMA).

As announced by TCCIMA portal, the delegation is comprised of representatives of Russian companies active in various areas including agriculture and livestock, agricultural machinery, textile, IT services, natural gas processing for electricity and heat generation, environment-friendly vehicle systems, lighting control systems, aerospace, wire and cable, casting, industrial



equipment, oil, gas and petrochemicals, medical services, etc.

On November 20, Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian and his Russian counterpart Alexander Novak met in Moscow and stressed expansion of ties in all areas.

As reported, the two sides followed up on the agreements made in different fields of energy, industry, agriculture and banking during the 15th Iran-Russia Joint Economic Committee meeting held in Isfahan in mid-June.



(PBO).

“This does not mean a rise in tax income; but by setting new tax bases and eliminating unnecessary exemptions at a time of economic warfare, more tax revenues will be provided,”

Mohammad Baqer Nobakht has said.

Back in September, Nobakht had announced that the government was going to submit the budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year to the parliament on December 6 as scheduled.

EAEU exclusive expo to be held in Tehran

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Managing Director of Iran International Exhibitions Company Bahman Hosseinzadeh announced that the first international exhibition of Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states is planned to be held in Tehran.

Speaking on the sidelines of a ceremony on the occasion of the 23rd National Exports Day anniversary, Hosseinzadeh stressed the important role of international exhibitions in boosting exports.

“After producing domestic products, these products should be introduced to the target markets, and international exhibitions both inside the country and abroad will be a great help in this regard,” the official said.

Pointing out the fact that Iran is trying to increase the number of international exhibitions as planned, Hosseinzadeh added, “Since one of the main priori-



ties of the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade is promoting exports to the neighboring countries, this year nearly 40 international exhibitions have been held in the country.”

The industry ministry is also planning to provide the organizers of such exhibitors with necessary financial assistance.

“Overall, exhibitions are directly and indirectly contributing to the country’s economic boom, he said.

Union (UEMOA) and also a member of the African Union, it is very important for Iran to develop economic relations with the country.

He further mentioned some of the potential areas for mutual cooperation between the two nations, saying “There are numerous opportunities to work with Senegal considering the existing capacities in industry, technical services, civil engineering, road construction, oil and gas, food, and petrochemicals.

“There is potential for cooperation in other areas including medical tourism, rice production, extraterrestrial cultivation, medicine, medical equipment, agriculture and industrial machinery. Senegal can also supply part of Iran’s need for agricultural, gastric and precious metals, coffee and cocoa,” he added.

Amadou Sow for his part, mentioned the long history of economic cooperation between the two countries, like in automotive manufacturing and said “Senegal welcomes Iranian investors and traders in all fields.”

Iran to launch new shipping line to Eastern Mediterranean

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran plans to launch a direct shipping route to carry its goods to the Eastern Mediterranean, IRNA reported on Monday, quoting an official with Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL), as saying.

“Despite the unjust sanctions imposed by the United States on Iran’s maritime transportation industry, Safiran Payam Dar-ya Shipping Company (SAPID) intends to launch a new shipping line, specifically aimed for carrying basic good cargos to Eastern Mediterranean in order to support the exports sector,” Head of IRISL’s Bulk Carrier Company Mohammadreza Banaei said.

Increasing the share of the national fleet from the country’s total imports and exports transport market has been cited as the most important goal for launching this shipping line, he said.

“With the inauguration of this shipping line, from Iran to Eastern Mediterranean and vice versa, the national fleet share will



increase and it is expected to also provide suitable ways for transportation of products to Iran via Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea,” Banaei added.

Supporting the country’s exporters during the sanctions era is also among the objectives of the mentioned shipping line, he stressed.

Following the studies made, transporting various types of consignments up to 20,000 tons will be carried out through this line to the destination of Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean using multipurpose vessels.

(Source: hurriyetdailynews.com)

Turkey overcoming recession, says economist

Turkish economy is now getting out of a severe recession bursting in the second half of 2018, according to eminent economist Nouriel Roubini.

“There is an improvement in growth, which is expected to be to 2-3% next year, lower than the potential,” Roubini told Anadolu Agency in an exclusive interview.

Turkey saw a larger current account deficit in the second half of 2018, Roubini said, but it is shrinking as the devaluation of the currency and exports are more competitive.

He, however, said that that growth is partially driven by a policy stimulus that is probably not sustainable.

“I think fiscal policies is too loose (...) and using state banks and other credit institutions as a way of boosting domestic demand, it’s very risky,” he warned.

Roubini ... the interest rates were dropped too much and fast compared to the gradual fall in the inflation rates in Turkey.

This may cause shocks on Turkish lira and the process of structural reforms that should be boosting potential growth, according to the economist.

Commenting on central banks globally, he said the banks

started to ease their monetary policies again since last year.

“Because there were a number of global territories that led to a sharp economic slowdown and concerns about even a global recession, the risk of an escalation of trade, currency, technology and cold war between the U.S. and China,” he explained.

The risk of hard Brexit the between the UK and the EU, as well as geopolitical risks in the Middle East could spike on process, Roubini added.

■ The risk of global recession

“So given these, global (developments) ease that monetary policy, and the good news that easing has allowed to easing a financial condition and so reduce the risk of a global recession,” he highlighted.

He said some of those global risks have been reduced with the “phase one” of a long-sought trade deal between the U.S. and China.

“And for now, there is not an escalation of the tension with the U.S. and Iran that could spike oil prices across the world. So that’s the good news,” he added.

Roubini, on the other hand, said fundamental problem

to keep growth at mediocre level -- around 3% for the global economy -- is unchanged.

“Markets are becoming more optimistic about the future expansion and deflation. But the data from China, Europe, Japan and emerging markets are not consistent with this renewed optimism about financial markets’ improvement.

“Things may or may not be worsening compared to a few months ago. I don’t see a significant acceleration of global growth in the next four months,” he asserted.

When asked about whether global fiscal policies will be more effective in 2020, Roubini said many central banks are reaching the limits of what they can do.

“They (central banks) say we cannot be the only game in the town and are now saying if there is weakness in growth and demand, fiscal authority which will take the button off should stimulate growth.”

According to Roubini, as many countries in the world have large fiscal deficits and public debts, they do not have a lot of fiscal space.

RCUWM governing board to gather in Tehran on Thursday

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** – The 10th meeting of the UNESCO Regional Centre on Urban Water Management (RCUWM)’s governing board is slated to be held in Tehran on Thursday, during which urban water issues and expansion of cooperation between the region’s countries will be discussed.

To be attended by senior officials from 16 member states, the event is going to be chaired by Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, IRNA reported.

As reported, representatives of international and regional organizations, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Development Program, will also be attending the summit.

Sharing experiences in areas such as water management and adaptation to droughts, flood and drought management, improving drinking water quality, irrigation systems, holding training courses, and



water engineering, among other topics, are reported to be the major issues covered in the gathering.

The RCUWM’s ninth meeting was held in August 2013 in Tajikistan capital Dushanbe. The meeting was attended by senior offi-

cials from different countries in the region including Iran, Afghanistan, Oman Sultanate, Tajikistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt, Syria, India and Iraq as well as representatives of international governmental and non-governmental entities including International UNESCO-IHP and INWARDAM.

RCUWM has been established under the auspices of UNESCO since 2002 in Tehran-Iran. The agreement between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and UNESCO regarding RCUWM has been recently renewed, signed and exchanged for its third period of activities as for 2018-2023.

RCUWM is guided and overseen by its Governing Board (GB) as the most important decision making constituent at the highest level according to the agreement. The Centre’s GB member states were Ministers from Iran (Chair), Afghanistan, Armenia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt, Germany, India, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Syria, Tajikistan and Yemen as well as UNESCO Director General during the period of 2002-2017.

Monthly loading, unloading of oil products at Iranian ports up 28% yr/yr

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Some 3,705 tons of oil products were loaded and unloaded at ports of Iran during the eighth Iranian calendar month of Aban (October 23-November 21), registering 28.4 percent rise compared to the same month in the preceding year.

As reported by IRNA on Saturday, the figure had witnessed only a 5.4-percent rise in the seventh Iranian calendar month of Mehr (September 22-October 21), year on year.

The growth in loading and unloading of oil products among other commodity groups comes in a time when the United States has also added oil products such as petrochemicals to its sanctions list.

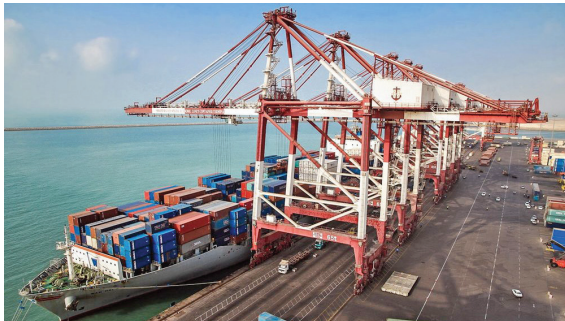
Since the U.S. withdrew from Iran’s nuclear pact in May

2018, vowing to drive Iran’s oil exports down to zero, the Islamic Republic has been taking various measures to counter U.S. actions and to lessen its economy’s reliance on oil.

In this regard the country has been implementing new strategies like focusing on development of the country’s refineries and also offering oil products at the country’s stock market to increase the exports of such commodities.

Over the past few years, Iranian think-tanks and energy experts have been repeatedly stating that the country should increase its refining capacity in order to lessen the economy’s reliance on crude sales.

China, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Afghanistan and India are among the top destinations for Iranian oil products.



Oil higher as Saudi pushes for further supply cuts

Oil prices edged higher on rising expectations of deeper output cuts when OPEC and its allies meet this week, although skepticism about a deal among some analysts limited the gains.

Brent futures LCOv1 rose 43 cents to \$61.35 a barrel by 0924 GMT on Tuesday. U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude CLC1 was up 44 cents at \$56.40 a barrel.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, known as OPEC+, are discussing a plan to increase an existing supply cut of 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) by a further 400,000 bpd and extend the pact until June, two sources familiar with the matter said.

Saudi Arabia is pushing the plan to deliver a positive surprise to the market before the initial public offering of state-owned Saudi Aramco, the sources said.

But it remains unclear if there is consensus within the group to achieve a deeper cut.

Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said on Tuesday he expected this week’s meeting to be constructive, but added that Moscow had yet to finalize its position.

Vagit Alekperov, CEO of Russia’s No.2 oil producer Lukoil (LKOH.MM) said it would not be expedient to deepen production cuts in the winter season, especially for Russia.

■ Extending output curbs

Goldman Sachs said on Monday that OPEC+ will likely extend output curbs through June, but expects the “uneventful” three-month extension to provide little support to prices.

The factors behind this view included a large increase in production from legacy non-OPEC projects and a still uncertain outlook for demand growth, it added.

The investment bank said it expected Brent to trade around \$60 a barrel in 2020, “absent new growth or geopolitical shocks.”

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

Concerns about the inability of the United States and China, the world’s two biggest oil users, to reach a preliminary deal to resolve their 17-month trade dispute also weighed on oil prices, along with discouraging U.S. economic data.

A senior adviser to President Donald Trump said a U.S.-China trade deal was still possible before the end of the year, adding that the first phase was being put to paper, although the talks have dragged on for weeks.

While OPEC may cut output, U.S. producers have been only too happy to meet any market shortfalls, with production setting successive records. Growth into 2020, though, may range between 100,000 bpd and 1 million bpd.

(Source: uk.reuters.com)

B.C. and Alberta find common ground on international LNG credits

The premiers of B.C. and Alberta appeared to find common ground in their otherwise tense relationship Monday, uniting behind the idea of exporting more liquefied natural gas to Asia and taking pollution credits for weaning countries off of dirtier coal.

B.C. Premier John Horgan told reporters at the Council of the Federation meeting in Toronto that he believes B.C. and Canada should get credit for selling LNG to customers in Asia and India because it will replace dirty, coal-fuelled power plants and improve global air quality — an argument he once openly mocked when it was made by the previous Liberal government.

“We believe low-emission natural gas is a preferable fuel source to high-emission thermal coal,” Horgan said. “We have a lot of work to do on coming to terms with how we manage global emissions. And Canada’s role, and certainly Western Canada’s role in that, can be to displace these noxious sources with a cleaner product.”

B.C.’s first major LNG facility, LNG Canada, is currently under development near Kitimat. At \$40 billion, it’s the largest private-sector project in Canada’s history and intended to export Canadian natural gas to overseas markets. The NDP offered \$6 billion in tax breaks for LNG Canada in 2018.

Alberta Premier Jason Kenney, seated beside Horgan at the closing news conference, chimed in with his support. It marked a

rare moment of agreement between the two provinces, who have been engaged in a long fight over B.C.’s opposition to the expansion of the Trans Mountain Pipeline project that will triple the flow of oil products from near Edmonton to Burnaby.

“Every extra unit of exported Canadian liquefied natural gas will reduce global greenhouse-gas emissions,” said Kenney. He described it as the “global game-changer on greenhouse-gas emissions that Canada can play in the foreseeable future is significantly increasing our natural-gas exports.”

■ Credit for exporting LNG

Former Liberal premier Christy Clark also used to argue that B.C. should get credit for exporting LNG to displace China’s use of coal and Japan’s use of nuclear power.

“We are doing the world a favor,” she said in 2013.

The then-opposition NDP sharply criticized Clark for that argument, calling it a “fantasy.”

The “assertions from the premier are that if we sell them gas, magically their emissions will go down,” Horgan said when leader of the opposition. “I’m not convinced that will happen.”

“There’s absolutely no evidence B.C. LNG will result in the use of less coal in China,” then-NDP environment critic George Heyman said in 2016. Heyman is now environment minister.

(Source: vancouvernews.com)

OPEC seen to extend output cuts as global growth slows

Faced with slowing global economic growth and with abundant stocks putting pressure on oil prices, the OPEC group of oil producers and its partners are set to maintain production cuts when they meet in Vienna on Thursday and Friday.

The cuts of 1.2 million barrels per day from October 2018 levels were originally fixed in December last year and were already extended at OPEC’s last meeting in June.

They are currently due to remain in effect until March 2020 and could be extended “until June, the date of the next summit,” says Tomas Varga, analyst at PVM.

According to Andy Lipow from Lipow Oil Associates the cuts could even be drawn out “until the end of 2020.”

OPEC’s Economic Commission Board -- which is a strong indicator of the bloc’s direction -- said last week that maintaining cuts into 2020 would lead to a “balanced” market.

The organization’s members may well be tempted to follow a cautious course by a forbidding global economic context.

The trade war with the U.S. is acting as a drag on growth in China, normally an avid consumer of oil, while the European economy is also currently stagnating.

(Source: abs.cbn.com)

First Announcement



N.I.S.O.C

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 31-32-09999-9009-8

National Iranian South Oilfields Company(NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

Material Description	Quantity
CHT 815-H 2-10' HYDRAULIC HOT TAPPING MACHINE. MAX DESIGN OPERATING PRESSURE 5000 PSI. HYDRAULIC POWER PACK UNIT. STANDARD HOT TAP CUTTER STANDARD HOT TAP PILOT DRILL BRAZED INSERT #2500 & #600 RF FLANGE ADAPTOR MHT4-20 4-20" HYDRAULIC HOT TAPPING MACHINE. MAX DESIGN OPERATING PRESSURE 1480 PSI. STANDARD HOT TAP CUTTER STANDARD HOT TAP PILOT DRILL BRAZED INSERT #300 & #600RF FLANGE ADAPTOR HTM 100 1/2"-4" HOT TAPPING MACHINE(FOR FREE) HOT TAP HOLE SAW #150 FLANGE ADAPTOR HOLE SAW HOLDER & PILOT DRILL	30 NO

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their “Intention to participate” letter via Fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: WWW.nisoc.ir , not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 17,059 EURO or 804,835,069 RIAL, in favor of NISOC

Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: WWW.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab

The ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P. NISOC’S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI.IRAN PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D. SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC’ S MATERIAL APPROVAL NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex
Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran

Tel. No.: 061 341 23455 Fax No.: 061 3445 7437

Public Relations www.shana.ir www.nisoc.ir

تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۸/۹/۱۳ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۹/۱۶

Potential of renewables in the MENA region: The cases of Turkey and Jordan

By Antonia Dimou

The potential of renewables in the MENA region is met with major challenges and opportunities. The region is home to more than half of the world’s crude oil and more than a third of its natural gas reserves thus being a global producer and exporter of energy.

The MENA region is also a major energy consumer, and alongside Asia it is estimated that it will continue to represent the majority of the world’s energy demand growth. Solar power can constitute a major pillar of renewable energy due to the region’s climate conditions thus playing a significant role as a cost-competitive alternative to conventional fossil fuels.

Creating the right incentives for renewable energy deployment in the MENA region can involve a spectrum of economic policies that reduce or eliminate market distortions like access to sources of finance. The removal of distortions via the reduction of energy subsidies, for instance can be a step towards the right direction that is however met with both opportunities and challenges.

The provision of low energy prices in the past few decades has helped certain regional countries to achieve key developmental and social objectives, such as protection of the income of households, promotion of industrialization and inflation control. But this policy has come at a huge cost and has led to a wide range of distortions, such as hindering economic diversification; and, low efficiency as consumers and industries have had little incentive to conserve energy.

No doubt that the increase in energy prices due to reduction of subsidies will have direct and indirect effects on the welfare of households and the profitability and competitiveness of the MENA industry.

To revert negative consequences, regional governments could establish specialized funds to help industries adjust to higher costs by introducing new technologies and upgrading equipment.

■ Increases in energy prices

Also designing compensation schemes for households would be essential to avoid backlash from consumers. For instance, increases in energy prices in Jordan were accompanied with direct cash handouts to households with low income.

The main question that arises is the following: Are renewables a threat to natural gas or the other way around?

Energy markets that are competitive and resilient illustrate how natural gas and renewables are not mutually exclusive, but rather are complementary. Natural gas and renewables can gradually replace coal in power generation, thus lowering carbon dioxide emissions. In the regional setting, Turkey and Jordan present success stories in that they combine natural gas and renewables for power generation.

Jordan particularly looks for the provision of affordable and sustainable electricity from renewables and natural gas. The kingdom is on pace to exceed 20 percent of generated electricity from renewables by 2020.

Jordan managed to rank first in the MENA region in renewable energy growth because there are stable political and regulatory frameworks that support investments for renewables along with clear financial schemes such as tax exemptions. However, the Energy and Minerals Regulatory Commission should ensure that the Jordanian National Electric Power Company (NEPCO) and other distribution companies receive adequate incentives to connect renewables to the grid.

The Zaatari refugee camp can be cited as the world’s largest solar power production project, which produces 23 gigawatt hours/year and supplies electricity 14 hours/day to at least eighty thousand Syrians, twenty-two schools and two hospitals.

The Zaatari camp has set a precedent when it comes to executing sustainable renewable energy projects. At the same time, the kingdom has pursued three viable options of gas supply for electricity generation: (1) reliable Israeli gas imports that could strengthen Jordan’s energy security; (2) the supply of gas from the Risha field in northeast Jordan that currently covers two percent of domestic needs, and (3) Qatari gas imports via the existing LNG terminal at the port of Aqaba.

Coming to Turkey, to ensure resource diversity, Turkey generates 24 percent of its electricity from renewables, which is equal to the world average of electricity production from renewables. Turkey’s success in renewables is attributed on the one hand to the abandonment of the feed-in-tariff model that entailed high costs and on the other hand to the adoption of the Renewable Energy Resources Area Project-YEKA model that is applied to wind and solar power.

■ Production of wind turbines

The YEKA model ensures a minimum domestication rate of 65 percent and a 15-year purchasing guarantee for contractors, including plant construction and production of wind turbines.

According to Turkey’s New Economic Program, the growth rate of the Turkish economy will increase rapidly from 2021 and onwards and consequently the demand for energy will increase.

The combined power generation from natural gas and renewables is a priority for Turkey that covers 60 percent of its primary energy needs from natural gas, while electricity from renewables is destined for domestic consumption. It is estimated that by 2035, Turkey will consume 55 bcm of gas, and for this reason, Ankara seeks to safeguard import capacity. This shows that a strong interest in East Mediterranean gas will likely remain regional as opposed to reaching international markets.

(Source: moderndiplomacy.eu)

Second Announcement

Amendment

Public Call for Qualitative Evaluation of Tenderers to Identify the Contractor for Construction of the Islamic Republic of Iran Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai



By virtue of the written authorization No. H 56272T/157382 dated February 16, 2019 by the Cabinet of Ministers, the Islamic Republic of Iran International Exhibitions Company invites companies that have the necessary external qualifications detailed in call documents (Tenderers Evaluation Enquiry) and are authorized to perform construction work in Dubai, UAE, for the construction of Islamic Republic of Iran Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai. Tenderers may refer the company website or visit the company in person at the address below to read the call documents, and deliver their documents for evaluation to Iran International Exhibitions Company Secretariat at Welfare Bldg. (Bldg. No. 2), Iran International Fairground, Chamran Highway, Tehran, against a receipt.

Notes:

1- Evaluation documents are to be presented and submitted no later than January 01, 2020.

2- Having the necessary qualifications from the competent authorities in Dubai to perform the work according to the description of the call.

Contact Details of the Principal

Secretariat Address: Welfare Bldg. (Bldg. No. 2), International Fairground, Chamran Highway, Tehran

Expo HQ Tel. No.: +98 21 22662473

Secretariat Tel. No.: +98 21 21912501

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN – Surveys recently released in the United States, both at the state and national levels, show that the situation in the United States is ambiguous. The closer we get to the US presidential election next year, the electoral and political climate in the United States becomes more blurred. Here's a look at the latest polls in the United States:

■ **Poll: Biden leads Warren by 6 points in Illinois**

Former Vice President Joe Biden continues to lead the Democratic field in Illinois, although his advantage has shrunk since July, according to a poll Monday. The poll from the Chicago-based independent company Victory Research found the former vice president with 23.2 percent support. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) was second with 17.4 percent support.

Biden's lead has narrowed since his 36.1 percent support in July, the Jacksonville Journal-Courier noted, after seeing a 13.6 point drop among African Americans. South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg came in third in the latest poll, with 15.9 percent support, edging out Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), who got 15 percent support. All of the other candidates received 3.6 percent support or less. The poll surveyed 1,200 likely Democratic primary voters between Nov. 22 and Nov. 25. The margin of error is 2.83 percentage points.

As Vtdigger reported, Since April, Sanders had hovered around 20% – No. 2 in the crowded Democratic primary – in Morning Consult's polling. But Warren surged ahead of Sanders in mid-September and maintained a slight edge until Nov. 10, when she began to slip.

Warren now sits at 15% in that poll, with Sanders at 21% in second, still trailing Biden, who has 30% support nationally. South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg is in fourth place with 9%, ahead of other candidates including California Sen. Kamala Harris and New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker.

"Biden and Sanders continue to hold their bases, which should concern Warren, as she has waited for one of the front runners to slip these past few months – yet, their support seems to be crystalizing," Spencer Kimball, director of Emerson College's polling, said in a statement. Newcomers to the race – billionaire Michael Bloomberg and former Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick – barely show up in the recent national polls.

"The only angle and hope candidates like Bloomberg or Patrick have for the nomination is a brokered convention, and while unlikely, the elimination of Super Delegates in 2020," Kimball added. Not all of the news has been positive for the Sanders campaign.

In a Quinnipiac University poll published Tuesday, Biden is at 24% with Buttigieg second with 16%, Warren at 14% and Sanders fourth with 13%. In October, Sanders was third in that poll. Meanwhile, Sanders has also stabilized in recent statewide polls in early caucus and primary states.

In Iowa, Sanders sits in second place at 18%, one point behind Warren, who had been comfortably leading since September, according to a poll conducted by Iowa State University.

However, Warren has seen her support drop in the Hawkeye State by 10 points in the past month, allowing Buttigieg to move to the front of the pack with 26%. Biden has slipped to fourth place in Iowa with 12%. The caucus is the first week of February.

In a statement, Dave Peterson, a political science professor who oversees the polling process, attributes the recent shift in the polls to the heightened scrutiny on Warren's Medicare for All spending plan combined with Buttigieg's rising national popularity. "What this tells me is that there is a segment of Iowans backing the candidate getting the most positive coverage," he said. "If we start seeing more scrutiny of Buttigieg, then his lead might prove to be temporary as well."

The Sanders camp received a scare in New Hampshire, where he resoundingly won in 2016, on Nov. 18 when St. Anselm College released a poll with the Vermont senator sitting in fourth place with 9%. Buttigieg led in the poll with Warren and Biden tied for second at 15%.

But a week later Suffolk University/Boston Globe published a Granite State poll with Sanders in first place among a bunched group of four. The Vermont independent led with 16% ahead of Warren, Buttigieg and Biden. David Paleologos, director of Suffolk University's political research center, told the Boston Globe that for much of the campaign cycle Sanders and Warren have been fighting for supremacy among New Hampshire voters but not any more.

"The narrative is changing in New Hampshire," Paleologos said. "Now, add to that the war between Buttigieg and Biden."

Trying to capitalize on the recent uptick in the polls, the Sanders campaign sent out a plea asking for 15,000 donations by the end of Tuesday. "November is a tough month for fundraising, and our movement is doing a great job keeping pace with where we need to be," the campaign wrote to supporters.

The campaign also wrote that in the debate, Sanders – who only spoke for 11.8 minutes – showed he will "stand up to special interests when we are in the White House."

During the Nov. 20 debate, Sanders said he agreed with former President Barack Obama's recent comments that the average American does not want to tear down the current political system.

"We don't have to tear down the system, but we do have to do what the American people want," Sanders said in response to a question

What does the latest poll ?in America say

Ambiguous atmosphere in American elections



during the fifth Democratic debate. At an event with wealthy liberal donors, Obama had urged candidates not to push too far left.

"Even as we push the envelope and we are bold in our vision, we also have to be rooted in reality," the New York Times reported Obama saying. "The average American doesn't think we have to completely tear down the system and remake it."

Earlier in 2019, when Sanders was leading in many polls, Obama privately told advisers he would "speak up to stop him" from winning the nomination, Politico reported Tuesday. Politico asked a close adviser whether the popular former president would actually act to make sure Sanders did not win the Democratic nomination.

"I can't confirm that," the adviser told Politico. "He hasn't said that directly to me. The only reason I'm hesitating at all is because, yeah, if Bernie were running away with it, I think maybe we would all have to say something. But I don't think that's likely. It's not happening."

■ **Donald Trump is no Abraham Lincoln, despite poll**

As (CNN) reported, An Economist/YouGov poll conducted just before Thanksgiving found that a majority of Republicans (53%) think Donald Trump is a better president than the first Republican elected to that position, Abraham Lincoln.

I doubt that any of the 53% of Republicans who gave the nod to Trump over Lincoln did so because of what they thought or felt about Lincoln, who they might know a lot about or very little. Rather, their poll response was all about Trump and themselves. "He's my guy, and I hope to have him for another four years," you might imagine them saying. "When I look in a mirror, I see a man wearing the same red hat that I'm wearing."

The poll results demonstrate one of the historical givens of American politics: facts, evidence, expert opinion, rational analysis, and historical consensus don't matter when it comes to political preference. Perhaps they also demonstrate a given of human nature: feelings, self-image, self-interest, life-long influences, birth and parentage, group affiliation and economic and social status are all powerful forces that often determine what we think and how we vote.

Mark Twain was quite bitterly certain about this: "You tell me whar a man gits his corn pone, en I'll tell you what his 'pinions is." Lincoln did his best as often as he could to appeal to "the better angels of our nature." Twain had some doubt about there being "better angels" within ourselves or anyplace else. Trump? No angels at all.

A comparison between Lincoln and Trump on matters physical or metaphysical, personal or political is illuminating. Lincoln rarely looked into a physical mirror; Trump is obsessed with self-image, with clothes, style, hair, complexion, with his own self-aggrandizement.

■ **The Trump administration is trying to rewrite America's founding principles**

Lincoln had the advantage of being born poor and having had to make his own way in the world. He was the archetype of the best sort of Republican self-made man. Trump is a child of wealth who pretends he's a master businessman, a parody of the American values associated with Benjamin Franklin and Horatio Alger. And though Lincoln and Trump are both nominally Republicans, the party of 1860 and the party of 2019 have nothing in common but the name. Lincoln was pro-immigration; he favored a balanced budget; he abhorred dealmaking other than as constructive com-

promise; he believed that it was the job of the president to implement, not to make or to disregard, the law.

A student of American history and a lawyer by profession, he knew the Constitution by heart. He believed in and acted as if Congress was a co-equal branch of government. He knew how government worked at its best: he had been a member of Congress and his state's legislature. Trump knows only one thing: the values of upper-class New York City real estate deals.

Lincoln believed in speaking truth to power which meant creating a cabinet of estimable rivals who spoke their minds to him. Like Trump, he was elected by a minority of the popular vote. But, once elected, he favored inclusiveness and reconciliation. No American was an enemy; every American deserved the respect and the rights of American citizenship, the appeal to reason and to the "better angels of our nature."

'Honest Abe' wasn't above raucous debates, savvy politics

'Honest Abe' wasn't above raucous debates, savvy politics

Lincoln was not perfect, but his imperfection was encased in a personality that was both compassionate and kind, including to people who disagreed with him. He abhorred slavery, but not slaveholders.

As a president, he was a realistic humanist. Unlike Trump, he was never self-serving or simplistic about the complications of the human situation, both personal and political. He had a gift for the English language, from grammar to oratory. He used words to inspire and heal. There's no record of Lincoln ever being nasty in word, gesture, or act.

Trump's words hurt the ears and the heart. Trump has made a career of being nasty. Lincoln would find it hard to understand how that alone would not disqualify him, independent of public policies, for the presidency.

Lincoln was a moral man in a world in which being moral meant a total commitment to truth and justice. The 47% of Republicans who thought Lincoln the better Republican president command our respect.

Don't understand how Biden's still ahead? You don't know enough older black voters.

A new CNN/SSRS poll shows that former Vice President Joe Biden leads the Democrats among potential Democratic voters nationwide with 28%. Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren are in a fight for second at 17% and 14% respectively. South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg comes in fourth at 11%. Other national polling shows Biden with a clear advantage on the Democratic field.

What's the point: Biden is steady as a rock in national polling. As I noted earlier this week, he's been within the margin of error of 30% in all but two CNN/SSRS national polls. Yet, it always seems that his opponents (and some members of the press) are just waiting for him to collapse.

Biden could eventually falter, but it seems to me that those counting on it just aren't talking to enough older black voters.

Biden's averaged 49% among all potential black Democratic primary voters in our last two CNN national polls. That's good enough not only for a 35-point lead over his Democratic competitors, but good enough to beat all of them combined by about 10 points.

But I think treating black voters as if they're some sort of monolith creates some sort of a blind spot for those following the campaign: the wide faultline along age in the black community.

In our polling over the last two months, Biden

is getting northward of 60% of the vote among black voters 45 years and older. His nearest competitor, Warren, is 50 points behind him.

Younger black voters are far less enthralled with Biden. A look at our polling over the last three months has him in the low 30s with black voters under the age of 45.

This large age gap has existed all primary long, and it's not going away. If anything, our polling is indicating that it is getting larger.

The age gap in Biden's support benefits him in a way that I'm not quite sure folks understand. Simply put, there are more older black voters than there are younger black voters. Those 45 years and older made up 60% of all potential black primary voters. In the majority black primary in South Carolina, those 45 years and older were 71% of all actual primary voters in 2016.

I cannot help but think this age divide imperils some folks ability to understand Biden's appeal with black voters. If all you're reading about is how a lot of younger black activists don't like Biden (which is true), you're missing most of the black voting population. This is also true if you're someone who gets their news off of Twitter, where younger voices dominate in a way they don't in the real world.

Indeed, I would argue that Biden's standing with older black voters is historically strong. Looking back over the past 40 years, the only candidates with anywhere near the sort of edge with older black voters at this point in the primary that Biden has were Jesse Jackson in 1988, Al Gore in 2000 and Hillary Clinton in 2016.

All three of these candidates went on to easily win older black voters. Clinton and Gore would win the primary overall. It's Jackson, though, who may be an interesting comparison to Biden. While the two are certainly very different (e.g. Jackson was the first black candidate to win a substantial number of primaries), Jackson held onto his black support even after performing poorly in the mostly white states of Iowa and New Hampshire.

No one knows if Biden can maintain the backing of older black voters if he loses in Iowa and New Hampshire, but Jackson showed it can be done.

■ **Biden launches eight-day 'no malarkey' bus tour amid flagging poll numbers**

Joe Biden has embarked upon an eight-day "no malarkey barnstorm" bus tour across Iowa as the former US vice-president attempts to arrest his flagging poll numbers in the key state, which is the first to vote in the race to be the Democratic 2020 presidential nominee.

Biden started his election blitz on Saturday, telling supporters in a fundraising email that he was undertaking an "eight-day, 18 county, 'no malarkey' barnstorm" across Iowa. "The plan is to meet as many caucus-goers as I can, and we're going to cover a lot of ground to do it," the email read.

On Sunday, the former vice president was due to attend a meet-and-greet in Carroll, a town hall in Storm Lake, meet and greets in Jefferson and Perry, and a town hall in Spencer.

The bus tour follows recent polling that shows Biden's standing has slipped among Democratic voters in Iowa who, on 3 February, will be the first caucus in the US to pick a favored candidate to take on Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election. After topping the Democratic field in the state in several polls as recently as September, the 77-year-old has seemingly been eclipsed by Pete Buttigieg in recent surveys of Iowan Democrats. Still, the polls show a tight race and Biden's supporters deny that his cam-

paign is in any sort of trouble, especially as he still frequently leads the Democratic field in national polls.

"As people get closer and closer to February, they become more and more practical about this," said the former Iowa governor Tom Vilsack, who recently gave Biden his most high-profile Iowa endorsement. "He can make the strongest case, among all the candidates, that he is in a position to get things done, and he is in a position to win."

Biden opened November with an underwhelming speech at the state party's "Liberty & Justice" gala. While Buttigieg and Senator Elizabeth Warren roused thousands of supporters in a Des Moines arena, Biden ticked through his standard applause lines as whole sections of seats purchased by his campaign sat empty.

In south-east Iowa, the state party's rural caucus vice-chairman says Biden's footprint isn't visible. "I know the names of the people who are supporting various other candidates," Glenn Hurst said. "But in terms of people out there knocking on doors, who attend other campaign events, district events, I can't name a member of the south-east Iowa Democrats who's supporting Joe Biden."

Fairly or not, Biden's national staff has fueled skeptical assessments with pronouncements that he doesn't have to win Iowa to win the nomination.

Iowa is overwhelmingly white; Biden's national advantage leans heavily on non-white voters who help determine outcomes in Nevada, South Carolina and many 3 March Super Tuesday states.

Yet all the handwringing misses key variables in Iowa, according to Vilsack and other Biden supporters. They contend that, public enthusiasm aside, Biden has the broadest range of support both demographically and geographically, especially in rural and small-town Iowa and among the growing minority population that, while small, could prove important with so many candidates dividing the overall caucus vote.

Those Biden organizers that get so much criticism, the campaign says, spend their days not with local party officials, but with volunteers knocking on doors and making calls. Their focus: reliable caucus participants, plus disaffected Republicans and independents.

"The media seems to have picked up this narrative that the Biden campaign is not doing well or not as well as it should," said the longtime party activist and Biden supporter Phyllis Hughes Ewing, daughter of a former Iowa governor and US senator.

"I'm on the phones with voters two nights a week for several hours at a pop. I'm a boot on the ground, and that's not what I'm seeing."

■ **Bloomberg overtakes Harris in new poll**

As The Hill reported, Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg (D) topped Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) in a new Hill-HarrisX poll of the Democratic presidential primary race.

The survey released on Monday found that support for the former mayor ticked up from 3 percent to 6 percent among likely Democratic voters and Democratic-leaning independents. Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), meanwhile, fell behind with 2 percent support, a two-point decrease.

This marks the first Hill-HarrisX poll that has been taken since Bloomberg officially jumped into the 2020 race, though he was included as a possible candidate in a previous survey.

However, Bloomberg still significantly trails the party's current front-runners, former Vice President Joe Biden (D), Sens. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), and South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg (D). All four contenders have vied for control of the top tier of the Democratic field for months.

Biden still holds the lead, inching up one percentage point to 31 percent support. His fellow top rivals saw a slight dip, with Sanders dropping 3 points to 15 percent support and Warren sliding 5 percentage points to 10 percent. Buttigieg, who gained momentum in recent weeks, received 9 percent support, a two-point increase from the prior Nov. 16-Nov. 17 poll.

Businessman Andrew Yang, Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) and former Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julián Castro garnered 2 percent.

The rest of the contenders in the crowded Democratic field received 1 percent in support or less. Another 3 percent said they were unsure.

The survey comes in light of an ever-fluid Democratic primary race. Though the field recently expanded with the addition of Bloomberg and billionaire Tom Steyer, the primary also lost two candidates over the last few days.

Former Rep. Joe Sestak (D-Pa.) and Montana Gov. Steve Bullock (D) each ended their 2020 White House bids after failing to gain traction in national polls. Sestak announced the news in a press release over the weekend, saying he was thankful for what he called an "endeavor filled with immeasurable wisdom, passions, humor and insights to, and from, the people of America."

A day later, Bullock issued a statement announcing his own departure from the 2020 race.

"While the concerns that propelled me to enter in the first place have not changed, I leave this race filled with gratitude and optimism, inspired and energized by the good people I've had the privilege of meeting over the course of the campaign," he wrote.

The Hill-HarrisX poll surveyed 1,001 registered voters between Nov. 1-Dec. 1. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. ➔

What does the latest poll in America say?

6 → Here's how Biden, Sanders, Warren and other top Democrats are faring against Trump in national polls

As CNBC reported, Donald Trump finds himself in a rut in potential matchups with top Democratic challengers a year before the 2020 election, polling shows.

Former Vice President Joe Biden, Sens. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and Kamala Harris, D-Calif., and South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg all hold comfortable leads over the president in hypothetical contests, according to RealClearPolitics averages of national surveys. The latest poll of head-to-head races raised eyebrows: an ABC News/Washington Post survey released Tuesday showed all five of the Democratic candidates beating Trump by at least 9 and as many as 17 percentage points, a wider margin than in most other polls.

Biden fares the best against Trump, as polls find a 10 percentage point advantage for him on average. Sanders holds the second-biggest lead against the president, trailed closely by Warren. Harris and Buttigieg have the most narrow edges over Trump among the five candidates tracked by RealClearPolitics.

Here are how those Democrats currently stack up against Trump in averages of national polls:

The surveys underscore the peril Trump faces in trying to win another term in the White House, even backed by an economy strong enough that it would traditionally boost an incumbent's hopes. Dragged down by poor approval ratings on issues such as health care, immigration, foreign policy and race relations, the president appears headed for anything other than a 2020 landslide.

Though national polls offer a snapshot of Trump's current standing against his rivals, they leave major gaps in understanding what will happen in November 2020 — especially this early in the race.

Polling averages in the individual states most likely to determine who wins the Electoral College still favor Democrats. But Trump looks to have a better chance of carrying 2020 battlegrounds than winning the nationwide popular vote.

Take Pennsylvania and Michigan, two of the states that propelled Trump to the White House with narrow 2016 victories. In an average of Pennsylvania surveys, Biden, Sanders and Warren lead Trump by about 7, 5 and 2 percentage points, respectively, according to RealClearPolitics. In Michigan, Biden, Sanders and Warren have edges of about 8, 7 and 3 percentage points, respectively, over the president.

A series of swing state surveys released Monday indicate the Electoral College could swing either way. The New York Times/Siena polls gauged potential head-to-head matchups in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Florida, Arizona and North Carolina — states that will play a huge role in deciding the election.

Trump performs worse in those states in hypothetical matchups versus Biden than he does in potential contests with Warren and Sanders. The vast majority of those polls show tight races a year out: Nearly all of them show a candidate with a lead that falls within the survey's margin of error.

The Times' Nate Cohn on Elizabeth Warren's Odds Against Donald Trump

As New Yorker reported, in Monday, the New York Times and Siena College released a poll of how Donald Trump is faring against three leading Democratic Presidential opponents—Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren—in six critical swing states, all of which Trump won in 2016. The results contain bad news for Warren, despite her strong showing with Democratic-primary voters in Iowa; against President Trump, she performs worse than Biden or Sanders, with Trump leading or tied in five of six swing states.

Biden leads or is tied with Trump in five of the six states, while the Times/Siena poll shows Trump and Sanders running essentially even. The Times' Nate Cohn, who oversaw the poll, wrote of Warren, "not only does she underperform her rivals, but the poll also suggests that the race could be close enough for the difference to be decisive." Cohn also noted that the poll suggests that Trump may have a greater advantage in the Electoral College in 2020 than he did in 2016, suggesting that the President could again win the election while losing the popular vote.

For further insight into the results, I recently spoke by phone with Cohn. (Cohn and I worked together at The New Republic and remain friends.) During our conversation, which has been edited for length and clarity, we discussed why some Biden voters dislike Warren, the odds of



a Democratic upset in Texas, and whether other pollsters are making the same mistakes they did in 2016.

What is your biggest takeaway from all of the data you collected?

The President is better positioned in the battleground states than he is nationwide, and remains really competitive in the states likeliest to decide the election, despite all that's happened to him.

What would you imagine the national numbers are if these are the numbers in the swing states you polled?

Over the summer, we did an analysis of what we thought the President's approval rating was in every state. And in these states we thought the President's approval rating was five points better than nationwide. So, if Biden is up two in these states, I would say maybe that he is up seven nationwide. That would make Warren up three nationally.

Michigan and Pennsylvania surprised me a little bit. You have Warren losing by six in Michigan, and Biden tied. Biden is up three in Pennsylvania, while Warren is tied. Why might they be as close or closer than in Wisconsin, which you and others have long talked about as the most likely key swing state?

The first thing I would note is that individual state polls are going to be fairly noisy. And, in general, I would suggest that people take the data collectively rather than focus on the exact order of the states. That said, I could conjure up an argument about how Pennsylvania is a state where Elizabeth Warren's style of reformist, idealistic progressivism is not likely to play as well as it would in Wisconsin. Pennsylvania is a state that has a tradition of being friendly to establishment Democrats in the primary, like Hillary Clinton in 2008 and 2016, while Wisconsin voted for Bernie in the 2016 primary and Obama in 2008. So I could imagine something like that explaining the difference, if it is real.

And Michigan?

I think the same story could potentially hold there. The other thing I would note about Michigan that is interesting in our sample is that we think the President is doing really well among non-voters in Michigan. It is the only state where the President does better among registered voters than likely voters. And if you narrow it even further, to people who have voted before, Biden's lead grows even more. Our sample of non-voters is not particularly big in Michigan, but it is conceivable to me that the voters who are on the sidelines of politics there may be an untapped source of strength for the President. Again, it is a single-state poll, and we are talking about a sub-sample of that poll, but that is the story in this particular survey.

Arizona surprised me, too. It's the only state with Warren leading. Biden is up five among registered voters. Were you surprised?

I was not. Over the summer, we estimated that the President was weakest in Arizona, among all of these states. Remember, this is a poll of registered voters, and so there are a large number of Hispanic voters who are on the sideline there. I think we had Joe Biden with more than a fifty-point lead among Hispanic voters in Arizona. And so in this poll of registered voters you have a more diverse electorate than the one you have seen on Election Day, and that's an advantage Democrats can claim that they wouldn't get in a state like Michigan or Pennsylvania, where most of the non-voters are a bunch of white working-class voters who would be relatively favorable to the President.

Would one upshot of what you have said be that, if I told you on Election Day,

2020, that there was a massive turnout, that would imply good news for the President in a place like Michigan, and good news for the Democratic nominee in Arizona or Texas? Or is that too simplistic?

I don't think that is too simplistic. I am not saying it is a sure thing. It would depend on who is mobilized to the polls. It is not just the opportunity but how you take advantage of it. But I think that, in general, the Democrats have this upside that they have not realized in states like Texas or Arizona, while I think there is a case that it is the reverse for Republicans in the north. Or, at least, the Democrats don't have that kind of upside.

What do the Arizona numbers make you think about Texas? What was your guess about Trump's approval over the summer?

When we estimated the President's standing in Texas over the summer, we thought it was basically the same as it was in Pennsylvania or Michigan or Wisconsin among registered voters. And, again, there is a difference between the registered-voter population in Texas and the one that has ever shown up to vote before. If you look at our poll in Arizona, it is consistent with that. It has Joe Biden up by five in a state that Hillary Clinton lost by almost four. That is a nine-point swing. I would note that Hillary Clinton lost Texas by nine. I don't think it is crazy that there could be a nine-point swing between the 2016 vote and the registered-voter population in Texas. It could even be more. Texas is a more diverse state. It's very conceivable to me that we would have found Biden ahead in Texas if we had conducted a poll there.

So you think that, even if the registered-voter advantage wouldn't translate into Democrats being favored there, it would be close enough that Democrats should compete there?

I would want to have actual data from Texas before making that conclusion and spending the millions of dollars that it will take to compete in Texas. But, I think, if you were to extrapolate from our data, you would think there would be a real opportunity for Democrats in Texas. And I would add that these are polls of people who are registered today, and millions of people are going to register over the next year. That would tend to exaggerate the trends that we see among new voters in this data. Texas may be a narrow Biden lead in registered voters now, but, after another year of young and nonwhite and newly eligible voters, perhaps it would be more than that.

Who are the Biden-but-not-Warren voters? How do you think about them as a group?

I think they are about six per cent of the electorate, and I think it is useful to divide them into three groups. One group thinks Warren is too far to the left ideologically. They are relatively well-educated and live in the suburbs, they consider themselves moderate, they voted for Trump or Gary Johnson, they do not like single-payer health care. That vote makes sense for me, and I think they are logical. I think it is consistent with a lot of evidence about the role of ideology in political elections.

The next group is not so obviously disposed against a left-leaning candidate but really doesn't like Warren that much. One question we asked that may be telling about the reason they don't like Warren is whether they thought that the women who run for President aren't very likable. About forty per cent of the voters who support Biden but not Warren said they agreed with that statement. I think this group also holds some conservative views on cultural issues. They believe whites face about as much discrimination as nonwhite people

do, or they think political correctness has gotten out of control in this country. This is a disproportionately working-class group, and it is disproportionately male. There is less evidence that gender plays a huge role in American elections. Most of that data is from congressional races. I think it is conceivable that it is a bigger factor here, or at least in this case.

Then there is a final group who just don't know very much about her. I would think she could have success in mobilizing this group to her side over the next year. And, to be clear, she could persuade the other voters, as well, but I think she faces real obstacles now that she will have to surmount.

One of the striking findings was, as you wrote in your story, that "Nonwhite Biden supporters are likelier than white Biden voters to say they would choose Mr. Trump over Ms. Warren." How do you understand that?

If we just step back for a second, we found across the board that Democrats were not doing as well with nonwhite voters against the President as Hillary Clinton was in similar polling in 2016. I think that, whether it is the economy, or whether it is because the nonwhite population is not as woke as one might assume, and not as offended by the President's conduct as you might think, that the President has made some inroads—not many, but some—among voters who we wouldn't typically think of as receptive to his cause. And this should not be totally unfamiliar for Democrats. Back in 2004, the polls said the same thing about Bush against Kerry. Granted, there was the security explanation, but this idea that an incumbent President with the advantage of incumbency and name recognition running on a culturally populist message might make a few more inroads among nonwhite voters than we might think wouldn't be a huge surprise. The idea that there might be a group of voters who are a little Trump-curious, and Warren might not be the right candidate for them, doesn't seem like a huge surprise.

Do you have enough data to see whether there is a giant gender gap among non-white voters?

We did find evidence of a large gender

gap among nonwhite voters. I think Elizabeth Warren was only receiving about forty-nine per cent of nonwhite men in our surveys.

Who are the Warren-but-not-Biden voters? There are not nearly as many of them.

There aren't as many as them, and so the sample sizes are getting really small. I didn't see a clear message from them. They didn't like Biden, but it wasn't like they were a bunch of very liberal voters, either. They weren't overwhelmingly women. It wasn't obvious what the source of the issue was, other than I am inclined to assume that for whatever reason they don't like Joe Biden much. There is always this sort of churn in the electorate.

What does your poll do that other polls don't do that leads you to believe your data is worth paying attention to?

I think we do a lot of things, but I would emphasize two. One is that we are able to adjust our sample on party registration for these states. So, when you look at a poll in Arizona, that is a poll where registered Republicans outnumber Democrats by four points, just like in reality. Our poll in Pennsylvania is the opposite. That sample is forty-seven-per-cent registered Democrats and thirty-nine-per-cent registered Republicans. So you can have confidence that, on the single characteristic that is the most likely to predict whether you like the President or not, we have taken steps to make sure it is appropriately balanced. There are very few public polls that do that.

The second thing I would note is that our poll is constructed to account for the educational composition of the electorate. In 2016, many states pollsters didn't do that, and as a result they underestimated President Trump's support, because well-educated voters are likelier to respond to telephone surveys. That problem continues today, and a number of the state polls you see that show the Democrats posting wide leads over the President have not been adjusted to account for the reality that we live in a country where only about thirty per cent of the population has a college degree.

So you are still concerned pollsters are making the same mistake.

I am. In 2018, there were a lot of state polls that overestimated the Democrats in a lot of white-working-class states. On Election Night, it was a big surprise that Claire McCaskill was losing when there were polls showing her up. Same thing for Joe Donnelly, in Indiana. Democrats lost governors' races in Iowa and Ohio where they led in pre-election polls. Obviously, the polls over all weren't all that inaccurate, but, in a lot of the same states, they were biased in the same way. And that's when Donald Trump wasn't the person on the ballot. He is the one who really generates the largest education split. So the idea it could be back in full force in 2020 isn't crazy to me. I am not saying it is assured, but it strikes me as a possibility.

Some people have suggested that general-election polling this far out from an election isn't helpful. You write in your story that, "On average over the last three cycles, head-to-head polls a year ahead of the election have been as close to the final result as those taken the day before." Why might this be? And do you think this

would hold with lesser-known candidates?

I don't think it would hold with lesser-known candidates, or candidates who have not been attacked and who have not faced criticism from their opponents or a full-fledged campaign. There are many cases where I wouldn't want to take a poll and results a year out as an indication of anything. But, when it comes to Trump, Warren, Sanders, and Biden, I think it's a little different. They are well-known candidates who have been in the fray. The President has certainly been under attack. I would think a large number of voters basically know what they need to know about those folks. A lot could change, but I do think it means that it isn't unreasonable to take a measure of where things are.

What other swing states interest you from these numbers?

I would consider Georgia. I feel like we know that Georgia is a state where voters are deeply divided about the President. I would be surprised if we learned something like Biden up five or Trump up five. I think it could be an important part of the swing-state picture, but I am not sure I have that much uncertainty, because the state is deeply polarized along racial lines. I am curious about some of the peripheral northern battlegrounds, like Maine, New Hampshire, and Minnesota, not because I think those states are necessarily going to be top-tier battlegrounds but because it might help confirm the general pattern in the Midwest in our polling, or call it into question. And, by the way, if we are right in Pennsylvania or Michigan, then I think those states would be fairly competitive.

You also did a survey of Iowa, in which you found Warren further behind than anyone else, despite all the time she has spent in the state, and despite the fact that she led your primary poll among Democrats. What did you make of that?

The Iowa poll was done after everything else, so we had already seen Warren underperforming by about four points across the battlegrounds. And so it was: there is that again. I would say I don't think it is particularly good news for Warren. If there was a state where she might have hoped to have made more inroads as the result of active campaigning, that would have been the state where it would happen, and it didn't. It doesn't rule out the possibility it will happen in the future, but it at least crosses off one potential argument on her behalf.

Your poll included a note that the Michigan data was hard to gather. What, exactly, was the problem?

Michigan has been tough for us for a while. We just have very low response rates, and a lot of numbers were people saying the person we were asking for doesn't live there. The people apparently are pretty mean to our interviewers, too. The survey responses don't come in as balanced as we want them to, which requires more weighting. In this case, we reduced the number of interviews compared to everywhere else. I guess my view is that I don't think this poll is terrible or something. I think it still obeys the rules of the margin of error. But, by the measures that we use to evaluate our own polling, it's objectively the worst of the samples. So I would say I have more uncertainty about that result than the others.

First Announcement



1398.5435

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN
TENDER NO. : 01-31-9646010

National Iranian South Oilfields Company(NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

Items	Material Description	Quantity
09	PARTS FOR “COOPER-BESSEMER” CENTRIFUGAL GAS COMPRESSOR	255 NOS

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention to participate" letter via to the following fox number/email address along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: WWW.nisoc.ir , not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 4,049 EURO or 509 ,526,151 RIAL, in favor of NISOC

Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: WWW.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P. NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI.IRAN PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D. SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC' S MATERIAL APPROVAL NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex

Kouy-e-Fadaeian Island (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran

E.MAIL: KALA.F.P@nisoc.ir Tel. No.: 061 341 24644 Fax No.: 061 3445 7437

Public Relations www.shana.ir www.nisoc.ir

تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹/۱۳/۹۸ نوبت دوم ۹/۱۶/۹۸

Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

Apartment

Apt in Zafaraniyeh
almost new, units from 135 sq.m
to 185 sq.m, unfurn, spj elevator
storage, parking
Price: negotiable
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Farmanieh
brand new, 6th floor, 266 sq.m
3 Bdrs., spj, storage, parking
\$4500
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Elahieh
2th floor, 198 sq.m, 3 master
bedrooms, furn & unfurn
spj, gathering room, lobby
lobby man, 2 lines elevator storage
parking, **\$1500**
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Yusef Abad
almost new, 5th floor, 97 sq.m
2 Bdrs., furn, very clean, spj
kitchen, elevator, city view storage
parking
Price: negotiable
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Velenjak
brand new, 2th floor, 165 sq.m
3 Bdrs., furn, very clean, spj
elevator, parking, **\$2000**
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Mahmoodieh
almost new, 1th floor, 80 sq.m
1 Bdr., furn, swimming pool
elevator, storage, parking
\$1200
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Villa

Villa in Elahieh
duplex, 3000 sq.m land
furn/unfurn, 500 sq.m built up
Beautiful garden, parking
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Villa in Niavaran
brand new, 5 floors, 1100 sq.m
7 master bedrooms, furn &
unfurn, servant quarter, spj
elevator, lots parking
Price: negotiable
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Duplex Villa in Soheil
500 sq.m land, 600 sq.m built up
8 Bdrs., 6 bath rooms, unfurn
servant quarter, renovated
3 storages, 12 parking spots
3-side entrances, **\$5500**
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Duplex Villa in Fereshteh
800 sq.m land, 600 sq.m built up, 4
Bdrs., unfurn, renovated
parking, yard, **\$5500**
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Villa in Elahieh
800 sq.m land, 600 sq.m
built up, 10 Bdrs., unfurn outdoor
swimming pool, yard renovated, 4
parking spots
\$7000
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Villa in North Kamranieh
duplex, 750 sq.m land, 500 sq.m
built up, unfurn, servant quarter
parking, **\$10000**
Ms.Sara: 09128103207



Holder of

ISO 9001:2008

ISO 10004:2012

ISO 10002:2014

From Oxford Cert Universal

Best Consultation
Best Services, Best Result

Intl. Department Manager "Tina 09128103205"

Tel: 22662452-8, Fax: 22667173

Hot Line: 28141
info@parsdiplomatic.com

www.parsdiplomatic.com

Building & Office

Whole Building in Qeytarieh
300 sq.m land, 3 floors, 3 units
each units 120 sq.m with 3Bdrs.
parking, **\$4000**
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Office in Valiasr
several administrative offices
units from 105 sq.m to 350 sq.m
nice lobby, could be flat or office
lots of parking, guest parking full
of foreign companies
good access to highway
near to Mellat Park
Price negotiable
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Whole Building in Heravi
7 floors, 3500 built up
units between 110 sq.m &
160 sq.m, spj, elevator
40 parking spots
\$13 per sq.m
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Whole building in Jordan
administrative office license
5 floors, units between 500 sq.m
& 700 sq.m, elevator lobby
lots of parking
Price: negotiable
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Whole Building in Vanak
administrative office license
brand new, 1600 sq.m totally
5 floors, each floor one unit each
unit 1400 sq.m, 1000 sq.m roof top
175 parking spots
\$23 per sq.m
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Ideal Offers

Apt in Jordan
almost new, 4th floor, 100 sq.m 2
Bdrs., furn, equipped kitchen,
balcony, elevator storage, parking
\$1000
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Motahari St.
4th floor, 99 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.
furn, renovated, parking
\$1000
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in Fereshteh
10th floor, 250 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.
semi furn, elevator, parking
\$1500
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Apt in Qeytarieh
3th floor, 150 sq.m, 2 Bdrs.
furn, equipped kitchen
elevator, parking
near Qeytarieh park
\$1400
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

Villa in Sheykh Bahayi
triplex, 500 sq.m built up
3 Bdrs., outdoor swimming pool
Jacuzzi, no over look
completely renovated, parking
\$4000
Ms.Sara: 09128103207

Apt in North Shariati
4th floor, 75 sq.m 2 Bdrs.
furn, good light, elevator parking
\$700
Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

مالکین محترم

ملک های فروش و اجاره ای خود را (آپارتمان،
ویلا، مستغلات، اداری و تجاری) به ما بسپارید.

بهترین مشاوره، برترین سرویس، بالاترین رضایت

مالکین محترم املاک مبله و غیر مبله، مسکونی، اداری و تجاری، ویلا و مستغلات
شما را جهت اجاره به سفارتخانه ها و شرکت های خارجی نیازمندیم.

مالکین محترم

ویلاهای شما را جهت اجاره به منزل سفیر و مدیران
شرکت های بین المللی در مناطق شمالی تهران
نیازمندیم.



Farmanieh Apts
(\$1800) 180sq.m, 3bdrs
(\$2800) 250sq.m, 4bdrs
Both with S/p, S, J, & F.F

Shahrak-e-gharb Villa
1000sq.m, 7bdrs, S/pool
Sauna, Jacuzzi, yard
Fully Furn (\$6000)

Elahieh (\$2000)
200sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p, & F.F

Vanak office (\$25 per sq.m)
200, 300, 400sq.m, pkgs

Don't Waste Your Time

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www.DeltaHOME.ir

The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

HOME
Real Estate

Member of DELTA Real Estate Group
(021) 88888865

Full Time or Part Time
English Speaking Driver
Familiar with Tehran and
all other Tourism Attraction
Cities Available with A Brand
new SUV Car Renault
Duster at your disposal, Please
call me Fred Mirza.

MOB :

09351283820

TEHRAN TIMES

Iran's Leading
International Daily

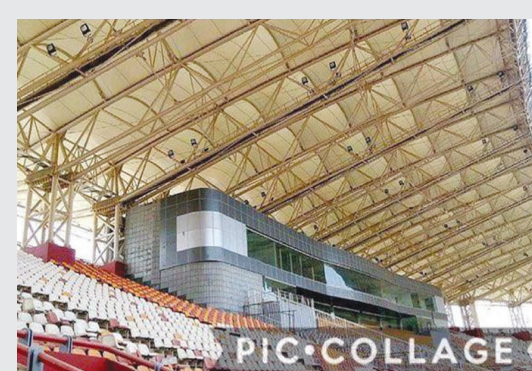
Advertising Dept



Tel:

021-430 51 450

Modern Stadium of Martyrs of Khuzestan Football Club (KSC)



maharaja
Indian Restaurant

**FIRST INDIAN RESTAURANT
IN IRAN**

PRIVATE PARKING LOT

Jahan Hotel (Exelsior) - Rahimzade Alley - Taleqani
Crossroads - Valiasr St. Tel: **66476855**

Spacewalkers back inside ISS after completing work to repair particle detector

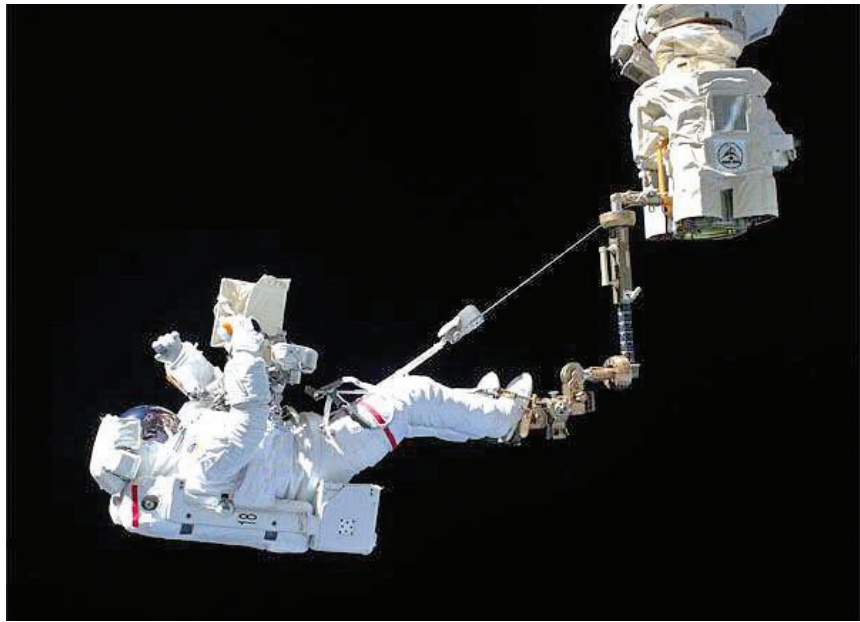
NASA astronaut Andrew Morgan and European Space Agency astronaut Luca Parmitano are back in the International Space Station after completing the third in a series of complex spacewalks aimed at fixing an experimental physics device designed to detect antimatter in cosmic rays.

During the first few hours outside ISS, Morgan and Parmitano “completed all primary tasks for today’s spacewalk and started work on get ahead tasks,” according to a Twitter update from the International Space Station.

The duo switched their spacesuits to battery power — the official beginning to all spacewalks — at 6:31 a.m. ET on Monday morning. Though they were originally scheduled to spend 7.5 hours outside the space station, Morgan and Parmitano finished their work early, returning to ISS at 12:33 p.m. ET — a six-hour-and-two-minute spacewalk.

The mission was broadcast live on NASA TV. “The two astronauts successfully installed a new cooling system for the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer,” ISS wrote on Twitter.

The Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer was installed in 2011. Over the last few years, the instrument has observed hundreds



of thousands of positrons, the antimatter counterpart of the electron. Data collected by the AMS could help scientists determine

the mysterious makeup of dark matter, which accounts for most of the mass in the universe. But the device wasn’t designed to last

this long, nor be serviced in space. To fix the instrument’s broken cooling pumps, engineers had to develop special tools and send them to the space station.

In addition to prolonging the AMS experiment, the series of complex spacewalk missions has helped NASA astronauts gain valuable troubleshooting experience.

“The process of creating the tools and procedures for these spacewalks is preparing teams for the types of spacewalks that may be required on Moon and Mars missions,” NASA wrote. “The tools include plumbing instruments to cut into the cooling lines, new screwdriver bits and devices to capture the fasteners the astronauts remove from AMS.”

In addition to successfully repairing the AMS’s cooling system, the two spacewalkers also completed several get-ahead tasks.

“The astronauts also completed an additional task to install an insulating blanket on the nadir side of the AMS to replace the heat shield and blanket they removed during the first spacewalk to begin the repair work,” NASA wrote in an update. “The flight control team on Earth initiated power-up of the system and confirmed it is receiving power and data.”

(Source: UPI)

Will 2020 be the year we find intelligent alien life?

By Leonard David

Probably not, but there are reasons to be optimistic about our near-future prospects.

The SETI Institute’s Allen Telescope Array (ATA) searches our galaxy for radio signals from potential intelligent alien life.

The Allen Telescope Array in northern California is dedicated to astronomical observations and a simultaneous search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI).



In the past three decades, scientists have found more than 4,000 exoplanets. And the discoveries will keep rolling in; observations suggest that every star in the Milky Way galaxy hosts more than one planet on average.

Given a convergence of ground- and space-based capability, artificial intelligence/machine learning research and other tools, are we on the verge of identifying what is universally possible for life — or perhaps even confirming the existence of extraterrestrial intelligence?

Is 2020 the celestial payoff year, in which objects of interest are found to offer “technosignatures,” indicators of technology developed by advanced civilizations?

Space.com asked top SETI (search for extraterrestrial intelligence) experts about what next year may signal regarding detecting other starfolk.

“Well, despite being the widely celebrated 100-year anniversary of the election of Warren G. Harding, 2020 will not likely gain fame as the year we first discover extraterrestrial life,” said Seth Shostak, a senior astronomer at the SETI Institute in Mountain View, California.

The search for intelligent beings elsewhere, Shostak said, is largely conducted by checking out nearby star systems for either narrow-band radio signals or brief flashes of laser light. And those might succeed at any time, he told Space.com.

“But one should remember that this type of search is gaining speed in an exponential fashion, and that particular technical fact allows a crude estimate of when SETI might pay off. If we take — for lack of a better estimate — Frank Drake’s opinion that there might be 10,000 broadcasting societies in the Milky Way, then we clearly have to examine at least one [million] — 10 million stellar systems to have a reasonable chance of tripping across one. That goal will be reached in the next two decades, but certainly not in 2020,” Shostak said.

But there are still reasons for intelligent-alien hunters to be excited and optimistic about the coming year. Multiple existing projects will either be expanded or improved in 2020, Shostak said. For example, the SETI Institute will get new receivers for the Allen Telescope Array in northern California, and both the SETI Institute and the University of California, Berkeley, will conduct new searches for possible laser technosignatures.

“And, of course, there’s always the unexpected,” Shostak said. “In 1996, the biggest science story of the year was the claim that fossilized Martian microbes had been found in a meteorite. No one really saw that coming. So one can always hope to be taken by surprise.”

The powerful 330-foot (100 meters) radio telescope at Green Bank, West Virginia, is being used by Breakthrough Initiatives in its SETI efforts. The powerful 330-foot (100 meters) radio telescope at Green Bank, West Virginia, is being used by Breakthrough Initiatives in its SETI efforts.

“I am skeptical about picking a specific year for the first discovery. Previous predictions of success have been wrong,” said Michael Michaud, author of the thought-provoking book “Contact with Alien Civilizations: Our Hopes and Fears about Encountering Extraterrestrials.”

“I and others have observed that the continued improvement of our search technologies and strategies could boost the odds for success,” Michaud said, noting that the primary focus of SETI remains on radio signals. “However, we still don’t cover all frequencies, all skies, all of the time. Other types of searches have failed, too, such as looking for laser signals or Dyson spheres [ET mega-engineering projects]. Those campaigns usually have limited funding and often don’t last long.”

A new possibility has arisen because of exoplanet discoveries, Michaud said: “In some cases, astronomers now can look for chemical evidence of life in planetary atmospheres. It is conceivable that we will find simple forms of life before we find signals from a technological civilization.”

If astronomers do someday confirm a SETI detection, how should they announce the discovery? It is an old question that has been answered in several ways.

“The prevailing opinion among radio astronomers has been that the news will leak quickly. If that is correct, scientific and governmental authorities won’t have much time for developing a public-affairs strategy,” Michaud said.

“It remains possible that the sophisticated monitoring capabilities of intelligence agencies might be the first to detect hard evidence,” Michaud said. “One might think that the government would have a plan to deal with such an event.”

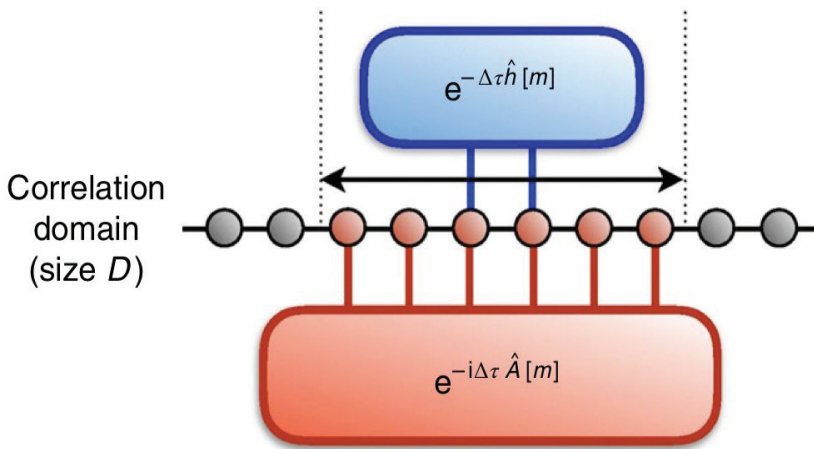
But, Michaud said that his own experience suggests that such plans are unlikely to be drawn up due to a “giggle factor” and would be forgotten as officials rotated out of their positions. He previously represented the U.S. Department of State in interagency discussions of national space policy.

Artist’s illustration of NASA’s Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS). Using data from TESS, scientists have discovered an “improbable” exoplanet that should’ve been engulfed by its star but wasn’t.

“While I’m enthusiastic at the reinvigoration of technological-signatures work, and in particular the growth in looking across much of the electromagnetic spectrum, I think this is going to be a long-term project. I estimate a very small probability of success in any given year,” said Pete Worden, executive director of the Breakthrough Initiatives. “But those chances are now orders of magnitude better than they were even a decade ago.”

Breakthrough Initiatives is tackling the big question of life in the universe, the notable query about whether or not Earthkind is alone. Breakthrough Initiatives is a multifaceted group that’s reinvigorating the search for extraterrestrial intelligence.

New algorithms to determine eigenstates and thermal states on quantum computers



Determining the quantum mechanical behavior of many interacting particles is essential to solving important problems in a variety of scientific fields, including physics, chemistry and mathematics. For instance, in order to describe the electronic structure of materials and molecules, researchers first need to find the ground, excited and thermal states of the Born-Oppenheimer Hamiltonian approximation. In quantum chemistry, the Born-Oppenheimer approximation is the assumption that electronic and nuclear motions in molecules can be separated.

A variety of other scientific problems also require the accurate computation of Hamiltonian ground, excited and thermal states on a quantum computer. An important example are combinatorial optimization problems, which can be reduced to finding the ground state of suitable spin systems.

Sofar, techniques for computing Hamiltonian eigenstates on quantum computers have been primarily based on phase estimation or variational algorithms, which are designed to approximate the lowest energy eigenstate (i.e., ground state) and a number of excited states. Unfortunately, these techniques can have significant disadvantages, which make them impracticable for solving many scientific problems.

A research collaboration between the groups of Garnet Chan, Fernando Brandao, and Austin Minnich at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) has recently led to the development of three new algorithms that could help to overcome the limitations of existing phase estimation and variational methods.

“Determining ground, excited and thermal states is of course an important problem in quantum computing, but the algorithms to tackle it on contemporary hardware typically require important quantum resources, such as deep quantum circuits (i.e. comprising many quantum gates, and thus prone to decoherence and imperfect implementation) and ancillary (i.e. additional) qubits—or non-linear noisy classical parameter optimizations,” Mario Motta, one of the researchers who carried out the study, told Phys.org.

The key aim of the recent study carried out by the researchers at Caltech was to develop new quantum algorithms for determining ground, excited and thermal states on quantum computers. The researchers tried to circumvent the practical limitations of existing techniques for computing Hamiltonian states by leveraging notions from classical computer physics, such as imaginary-time evolution, exact diagonalization and finite-temperature state sampling, ultimately extending these notions to quantum computing algorithms beyond what previously accomplished.

“Our algorithms are based on the notion of imaginary-time evolution, which is akin to a cooling process,” Motta explained. “Suppose

that we can prepare a quantum mechanical system in a simple but inaccurate approximation for the ground state, a trial wave function. By applying this cooling process to the system, we can systematically remove spurious excitations from the trial wave function, thereby gradually approaching the ground state. This is the content of the quantum imaginary-time evolution (QITE) algorithm.”

The three algorithms developed by the Caltech researchers are somewhat similar to classical techniques for finding ground and excited states. By collecting information as imaginary-time evolution unfolds, however, these algorithms can formulate and solve an eigenvalue problem that provides access to specific excited states, employing a quantum variant of the Lanczos approach, a well-established mathematical technique to compute eigenvalues and eigenvectors.

“Of course, imaginary-time evolution can also be used to cool a system from infinite to finite (greater than zero) temperature, and thus to compute finite-temperature properties, as we do in our QMETTS algorithm,” Motta said.

The quantum imaginary time evolution algorithm and Lanczos algorithm proposed by the researchers have several advantages over existing and classical techniques. For instance, as they are rooted in physical intuition, they can be implemented on contemporary quantum hardware and do not require deep circuits, ancillary qubits and complicated parameter optimizations, which are indispensable for other quantum algorithms.

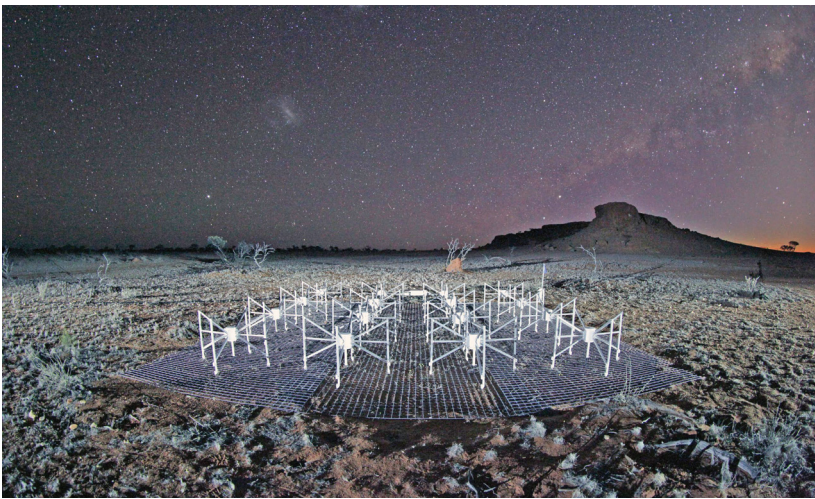
“The most meaningful achievement of our study was the conception of a suite of new algorithms for the study of many-body systems on contemporary quantum computers,” Motta said. “Our algorithms bring useful insights to the Physics field: in particular, they show how the combination of ideas and techniques from different fields of science can be synergistically combined to produce innovative techniques.”

In their study, Motta and his colleagues demonstrated the effectiveness of the algorithms they developed by implementing them on the Rigetti quantum virtual machine and Aspen-1 quantum processing unit. In these demonstrations the algorithms performed remarkably well, comparing favorably to existing techniques for computing Hamiltonian ground, excited and thermal states.

The new algorithms developed by this team of researchers could be used in a variety of studies that involve quantum simulations and optimization. In addition, they could be refined and extended to meet the needs of individuals’ research projects.

“Our future research will be directed towards expanding the predictive power of the algorithms we developed,” Motta said. (Source: phys.org)

Scientists inch closer than ever to signal from cosmic dawn



Around 12 billion years ago, the universe emerged from a great cosmic dark age as the first stars and galaxies lit up. With a new analysis of data collected by the Murchison Widefield Array (MWA) radio telescope, scientists are now closer than ever to detecting the ultra-faint signature of this turning point in cosmic history.

In a paper on the preprint site ArXiv and soon to be published in the Astrophysical Journal, researchers present the first analysis of data from a new configuration of the MWA designed specifically to look for the signal of neutral hydrogen, the gas that dominated the universe during the cosmic dark age. The analysis sets a new limit — the lowest limit yet — for the strength of the neutral hydrogen signal.

“We can say with confidence that if the neutral hydrogen signal was any stronger than the limit we set in the paper, then the telescope would have detected it,” said Jonathan Pober, an assistant professor of physics at Brown University and corresponding author on the new paper. “These findings can help us to further constrain the timing of when the cosmic dark ages ended and the first stars emerged.”

The research was led by Wenyang Li, who performed the work as a Ph.D. student at Brown. Li and Pober collaborated with an international group of researchers working with the MWA.

Despite its importance in cosmic history, little is known about the period when the first stars formed, which is known as the Epoch of Reionization (EoR). The first atoms that formed after the Big Bang were positively charged hydrogen ions — atoms whose electrons were stripped away by the energy of the infant universe. As the universe cooled and expanded, hydrogen atoms reunited with their electrons to form neutral hydrogen. And that’s just about all there was in the universe until about 12 billion years ago, when atoms started clumping together to form stars and galaxies. Light from those objects re-ionized the neutral hydrogen, causing it to largely disappear from interstellar space.

The goal of projects like the one happening at MWA is to locate the signal of neutral hydrogen from the dark ages and measure how it changed as the EoR unfolded. Doing so could reveal new and critical information about the first stars — the building blocks of the universe we see today. But catching any glimpse of that 12-billion-year-old signal is a difficult task that requires instruments with exquisite sensitivity.

When it began operating in 2013, the MWA was an array of 2,048 radio

antennas arranged across the remote countryside of Western Australia. The antennas are bundled together into 128 “tiles,” whose signals are combined by a supercomputer called the Correlator. In 2016, the number of tiles was doubled to 256, and their configuration across the landscape was altered to improve their sensitivity to the neutral hydrogen signal. This new paper is the first analysis of data from the expanded array.

Neutral hydrogen emits radiation at a wavelength of 21 centimeters. As the universe has expanded over the past 12 billion years, the signal from the EoR is now stretched to about 2 meters, and that’s what MWA astronomers are looking for. The problem is there are myriad other sources that emit at the same wavelength — human-made sources like digital television as well as natural sources from within the Milky Way and from millions of other galaxies.

“All of these other sources are many orders of magnitude stronger than the signal we’re trying to detect,” Pober said. “Even an FM radio signal that’s reflected off an airplane that happens to be passing above the telescope is enough to contaminate the data.”

To home in on the signal, the researchers use a myriad of processing techniques to weed out those contaminants. At the same time, they account for the unique frequency responses of the telescope itself.

“If we look at different radio frequencies or wavelengths, the telescope behaves a little differently,” Pober said. “Correcting for the telescope response is absolutely critical for then doing the separation of astrophysical contaminants and the signal of interest.”

Those data analysis techniques combined with the expanded capacity of the telescope itself resulted in a new upper bound of the EoR signal strength. It’s the second consecutive best-limit-to-date analysis to be released by MWA and raises hope that the experiment will one day detect the elusive EoR signal.

“This analysis demonstrates that the phase two upgrade had a lot of its desired effects and that the new analysis techniques will improve future analyses,” Pober said. “The fact that MWA has now published back-to-back the two best limits on the signal gives momentum to the idea that this experiment and its approach has a lot of promise.”

The research was supported in part by the U.S. National Science Foundation (grant #1613040). The MWA receives support from the Australian government and acknowledges Wajarri Yamatji people as the traditional owners of the observatory site.

(Source: Science Daily)

Iranian cuisine, culture attracts visitors at Slovenia exhibit

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — Visitors to a Slovenian charity exhibition highly welcomed Iran’s stalls which turned the spotlight on the country’s cuisine, handicrafts, ancient traditions, and tourism destinations.



Iran’s stall offers visitors traditional Persian dishes at a one-day charity exhibit in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia.

The one-day exhibition -- SILA’s 26th Annual Charity Bazaar -- was held on Sunday at SILA (the Slovenian International Ladies Association) in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia.

The Iranian embassy in Ljubljana set up two stalls at the event with the aim of promoting arts and culture of the country as well as its travel destinations, IRNA reported.

Exhibitors from 30 countries took part in SILA’s 26th Annual Charity Bazaar which was divided into two main sections, one dedicated to culture, arts and handicrafts, and the other to local foods and beverages.

Turkey, Indonesia, Brazil, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Croatia, Ukraine, Uganda, Egypt, Hungary, France, Greece, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the U.S., Russia, India, Thailand, Peru, Brazil, Sweden and Finland were among the participants, the report said.

SILA was originally established as a social group for the wives of diplomats and foreign businessmen stationed in the country. However, as times have changed so has the group, which is now open not only to any foreign woman living in Slovenia, but also Slovenes, a meeting point to share experiences, adventures and pleasures.

Organizers say while it’s the celebration of the foreign community in Slovenia and the varied sights, sounds and flavors that will draw the crowds, the real focus of the bazaar is charity, with money raised by the prize draw and other means.

Ancient puppy found in permafrost still has its fur and whiskers

A 18,000-year-old puppy, preserved in the Siberian permafrost, still has its nose, fur, teeth and whiskers – but DNA tests to determine whether it is a dog or a wolf have come up blank, suggesting it may represent a common ancestor of both.

The puppy’s remains were identified by researchers at a site near Yakutsk in eastern Siberia, last year. Since then, a team at the Centre for Palaeogenetics, a joint venture between Stockholm University and the Swedish Museum of Natural History, has been analysing a piece of the animal’s rib bone.

So far, the researchers have determined that the animal is male. Team members estimate that he was 2 months old and lived around 18,000 years ago. The puppy is now named Dogor, a Yakutian word for “friend”.

But the researchers can’t tell if the puppy was a dog or a wolf. If the animal is a dog, it may be the oldest ever found. But a researcher on the team thinks it may represent a common ancestor of both dogs and wolves.

(Source: New Scientist)

Iranian, Chinese provinces seeking closer tourism ties

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — The Iranian province of Isfahan and the Chinese province of Guizhou have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to lay the ground for deepening tourism ties.

The MOU was inked in Isfahan on Sunday by Isfahan’s tourism chief, Fereydoun Allahyari, and director of the information center at Guizhou’s tourism administration, Li Fang, IRIB reported.

“Guizhou province in China, with a population of over 40 million, has great potential to establish ties with Isfahan and [in particular] for exchanging travelers,” Allahyari said.

The Iranian official then reminded that over 120 million Chinese nationals annually travel to different parts of the world. “Considering the [high] rate of cultural and economic exchanges between the two countries, we are looking to increase interactions, especially with Isfahan province.”

Elsewhere in his remarks, Allahyari noted, “Given that Isfahan province has a wide range of cultural and natural attractions as well as medical tourism capacities, we hope this agreement would contribute to the tourism boom in Isfahan, especially as we are approaching the Chinese New Year this winter.”

The official also pointed to the ancient Silk Road as one of historical bonds that connects the nations together.

Isfahan was once a crossroad of international trade and diplomacy in Iran and now it is one of Iran’s top tourist destinations for good reasons. It is filled



Travelers visit the 17th-century Chehel Sotoun (“Forty Columns”) palace in Isfahan. Built as a pleasure pavilion and reception hall during the Safavid era, the royal structure is embraced by a well-manicured Persian-style garden.

with many architectural wonders such as unmatched Islamic buildings, bazaars, museums, Persian gardens and tree-lined boulevards. It’s a city for walking, getting lost in its mazing bazaars, dozing in beautiful gardens, and meeting people.

The capital city of Isfahan has long been nicknamed as Nesf-e-Jahan which is translated into “half the world”; meaning

seeing it is relevant to seeing the whole world. In its heyday it was also one of the largest cities in the region with a population of nearly one million. The cool blue tiles of city’s Islamic buildings along with its majestic bridges, well-contrast with the encircling hot, dry Iranian countryside.

Despite being a popular destination with domestic travelers, Guizhou, ac-

cording to Lonely Planet, has remained largely unknown to travelers outside China. The province has two of the country’s largest and most spectacular natural features – a waterfall and a cave – while outside the capital, Guiyang, it’s pretty much green hills and valleys, flowing rivers and limestone formations to the horizon.

Iran starts issuing electronic visas for Pakistani citizens

1 → “The Iranian consulates based in Peshawar, Karachi, Lahore, and Quetta have worked day and night to ease visa issuance process for pilgrims during the year, while last year Iranian embassies and consulates have issued millions of visas for Pakistani citizens.”

Some 150,000 Pakistani pilgrims annually visit Iran, Tasnim reported.

Earlier in June, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani issued an order for the waiver of physical stamping on travelers’ passports upon entering or leaving the country.

The decision is deemed to facilitate travels to the country without fear of possible U.S. penalties as last year Washington announced those travelers who would visit certain countries including Iran would face re-



strictions to enter the U.S.

In November 2017, the Islamic Republic started a pilot project in a select of its airports, issuing electronic visas -- without any entry or exit stamps -- for those traveling to the country, in a bid to facilitate tourist inflow and to cope with sanctions reimposed by the U.S.

Iran welcomed some 7.8 million foreign nationals last year, which shows a 52.5 percent increase year on year. According to a report by the World Travel & Tourism Council, Iraq was the main source of tourism for Iran in 2018, as Iraqis constituted 24% of all inbound visitors. Other major sources were Azerbaijan (17%), Turkey (8%), Pakistan (4%) and Bahrain (2%). The remaining 46% came from the rest of the world.

Why airlines want you to go by train



We might not all be Greta Thunberg, shunning air travel for weeks-long odysseys aboard Atlantic yachts, but turning our backs on short-haul flights in favor of train travel is, for many of us, a more practical enterprise.

Rather than bemoaning the loss of eco-conscious travelers, some airlines seem to be embracing this rail-orientated gear switch.

Dutch airline KLM recently announced plans to partner with European train companies Thalys and NS to replace one of its five daily flights between Amsterdam and Brussels with a high-speed rail service.

Elsewhere in Europe, Austrian Airlines is offering “AIRail,” another terrestrial service in partnership -- or codeshare, in aviation parlance -- with that country’s national rail operator OOB. In Germany, Lufthansa has a collaboration with train network, Deutsche Bahn.

So are these down-to-earth moves by air carriers being made for the sake of the environment, or the bottom line?

There’s clearly a business rationale. Replacing short-haul flights with trains frees up landing and departure slots at busy airports that can be used for more lucrative long-haul services. They also make the airline look greener, even if there’s no long-run difference to its carbon footprint.

As train expert Mark Smith, founder of rail route encyclopedia The Man in Seat 61, puts it, airlines replacing flight routes with train services combines both “good

PR” and “hard commercial reason.”

“There is this trend towards lower carbon travel and the airlines are aware that this is something they can be seen to be doing,” Smith tells CNN Travel.

“This sort of nods towards that, whilst actually there are sound commercial reasons for doing it, by freeing up the long haul slots.”

KLM makes no secret of the business sense behind cutting short haul Amsterdam-Brussels flights, but insists the move will help long-term sustainability and a “fly responsibly” campaign that advises passengers to pack light and offset the carbon emissions of their travel.

“If we can really build a product that is comparable to our current products, we will consider replacing more short-haul flights in the future,” KLM spokeswoman Manel Vrijenhoek tells CNN Travel.

By eliminating one in five of its Amsterdam-Brussels flights departing Schiphol Airport, KLM will play a part in the Dutch air transport sector’s overall mission to reduce Co2 emissions by 35% by 2030, she adds.

“KLM is committed to driving a sustainable future for aviation,” says Vrijenhoek. “Part of that commitment is that we want to reduce our footprint?”

As for travelers, the stats suggest people are becoming more willing to look at train travel for longer distances.

In the UK, Virgin Trains, which has operated the country’s West Coast railway line for the past two decades, says its share

of passengers traveling between London and Glasgow rose to a record 29% in 2019, a move it says is due to people choosing rail over flight.

Given that travel time on this 400 mile route is roughly 4.5 hours by train and about 1 hour 15 minutes by air (plus connection times), and the price points are relatively close, there could be some merit to the claim.

It could also reflect the growing popularity of the recent Sweden-originating “Flygskam” or “flight shame” movement that has seen some championing rail travel over short-haul flights.

But does it represent a major trend that could change the way the world travels?

“I doubt it’s got the airline industry scared,” says Mark Smith of The Man in Seat 61. “It’s more likely that the airlines are going to look towards longer-haul and pull out of short haul.”

Codeshare agreements with train companies also stop airlines from losing their monopoly in a changing market. For customers, it’s also a chance to use or earn air miles and retain airline club status.

So what’s it like to travel on an air-rail codeshare?

To make sure there’s no misunderstanding, the airlines do make it clear from the outset passengers are traveling by rail, printing it clearly on tickets.

Different types of rail-train alliances offer different services.

On board the Amsterdam-Brussels trains, KLM promises to “fully match the speed, reliability and comfort that air travel offers passengers.”

“There will be a dedicated check-in desk at Schiphol in 2020 to make the connection as smooth as possible for train passengers from Brussels,” says Vrijenhoek.

Austrian Airlines’ AIRail service using OBB trains between Vienna and Linz operates under designated flight numbers. Customers get food vouchers redeemable in the train restaurant, while biz class passengers can use OBB Lounges at Linz and Salzburg Central Station.

The service has operated since 2014 and is now a fixture of trans-European travel.

“Last year we canceled our flight service between Vienna and Linz as the rail offering was running well,” Leonhard Steinmann, a spokesman for Austrian Airlines, tells CNN Travel.

Something similar happened when Air

France began collaborating with French rail company SNCF on high speed services between Paris and Brussels.

On this super quick service, typically taking just over 80 minutes, Air France purchases a block of seats and administers them as an airplane cabin, with bags checked pre-journey and returned to passengers at destination.

The service “really provides an Air France experience,” says airline spokesman Patrice Tetard. So much so that Air France has eradicated its Paris-Brussels air route altogether.

“It didn’t make sense to maintain air connections between Paris and Brussels, the distance is too short,” explains Tetard. “However there is still significant connecting traffic, which we wanted to capture. That is why we established this commercial relationship.”

Over in Germany, Lufthansa got rid of its Frankfurt to Cologne short-haul due to its successful codeshare alliance with Deutsche Bahn under which passengers travel across the German countryside in dedicated compartments.

“The passenger traveling with the train stays our customer, as he travels with a Lufthansa

So could such success stories mean the end of the line for short-haul European flights?

It’s complicated.

“The decisive factor here is always the alternative for our passengers,” says Austrian Airlines’ Steinmann. “The geographical location and infrastructure play a key role in this case. If it takes too long for a passenger to travel the route by rail, the right framework conditions have to be created beforehand.”

Speed is perhaps the most important factor. In instances where a train service has killed off the equivalent flight route, it’s usually a high speed service known for reliability, efficiency and high standards.

When only long, slower services are available, short-haul flights maintain the upper hand.

“Trains do not always provide satisfactory solutions to cater to the specific needs of passengers, notably same-day return trips for business passengers,” says Air France’s Tetard.

The success stories also, unsurprisingly, involve cities that have airports with integrated rail stations.

(Source: CNN)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Komodo National Park

Komodo National Park, located in the center of the Indonesian archipelago, between the islands of Sumbawa and Flores, is composed of three major islands (Rinca, Komodo, and Padar) and numerous smaller ones, all of them of volcanic origin.



Located at the juncture of two continental plates, this national park constitutes the “shatter belt” within the Wallacea Biogeographical Region, between the Australian and Sunda ecosystems. The property is identified as a global conservation priority area, comprising unparalleled terrestrial and marine ecosystems and covers a total area of 219,322 ha.

The dry climate has triggered specific evolutionary adaptation within the terrestrial flora that range from open grass-woodland savanna to tropical deciduous (monsoon) forest and quasi cloud forest. The rugged hillsides and dry vegetation highly contrast with the sandy beaches and the blue coral-rich waters.

The most remarkable inhabitant of Komodo National Park is the Komodo Lizard, Varanus komodoensis. These giant lizards, existing no-where else in the world, are of great scientific interest, especially for their evolutionary implications.

Most commonly known as ‘Komodo Dragons’, due to its appearance and aggressive behavior, the Komodo Lizard, is the largest living species of lizard, growing to an average length of 2 to 3 meters.

The species is the last representative of a relic population of large lizards that once lived across Indonesia and Australia. As well as being home to the Komodo dragon, the Park provides a refuge for many other notable terrestrial species such as the orange-footed scrub fowl, an endemic rat, and the Timor deer.

(Source: UNESCO)

Trump was right before he was wrong: NATO should be obsolete

By Medea Benjamin

The three smartest words that Donald Trump uttered during his presidential campaign are “NATO is obsolete.” His adversary, Hillary Clinton, retorted that NATO was “the strongest military alliance in the history of the world.” Now that Trump has been in power, the White House parrots the same worn line that NATO is “the most successful Alliance in history, guaranteeing the security, prosperity, and freedom of its members.” But Trump was right the first time around: Rather than being a strong alliance with a clear purpose, this 70-year-old organization that is meeting in London on December 4 is a stale military holdover from the Cold War days that should have gracefully retired many years ago.

NATO was originally founded by the United States and 11 other Western nations as an attempt to curb the rise of communism in 1949. Six years later, Communist nations founded the Warsaw Pact and through these two multilateral institutions, the entire globe became a Cold War battleground. When the USSR collapsed in 1991, the Warsaw Pact disbanded but NATO expanded, growing from its original 12 members to 29 member countries. North Macedonia, set to join next year, will bring the number to 30. NATO has also expanded well beyond the North Atlantic, adding a partnership with Colombia in 2017. Donald Trump recently suggested that Brazil could one day become a full member.

NATO’s post-Cold War expansion toward Russia’s borders, despite earlier promises not to move eastward, has led to rising tensions between Western powers and Russia, including multiple close calls between military forces. It has also contributed to a new arms race, including upgrades in nuclear arsenals, and the largest NATO “war games” since the Cold War.

While claiming to “preserve peace,” NATO has a history of bombing civilians and committing war crimes. In 1999, NATO engaged in military operations without UN approval in Yugoslavia. Its illegal airstrikes during the Kosovo War left hundreds of civilians dead. And far from the “North Atlantic,” NATO joined the United States in invading Afghanistan in 2001, where it is still bogged down two decades later. In 2011, NATO forces illegally invaded Libya, creating a failed state that caused masses of people to flee. Rather than take responsibility for these refugees, NATO countries have turned back desperate migrants on the Mediterranean Sea, letting thousands die.

In London, NATO wants to show it is ready to fight new wars. It will showcase its readiness initiative – the ability to deploy 30 battalions by land, 30 air squadrons and 30 naval vessels in just 30 days, and to confront future threats from China and Russia, including with hypersonic missiles and cyberwarfare. But far from being a lean, mean war machine, NATO is actually riddled with divisions and contradictions. Here are some of them: French President Emmanuel Macron



questions the U.S. commitment to fight for Europe, has called NATO “brain dead” and has proposed a European Army under the nuclear umbrella of France

Turkey has enraged NATO members with its incursion into Syria to attack the Kurds, who have been Western allies in the fight against ISIS. And Turkey has threatened to veto a Baltic defense plan until allies support its controversial incursion into Syria. Turkey has also infuriated NATO members, especially Trump, by purchasing Russia’s S-400 missile system

Trump wants NATO to push back against China’s growing influence, including the use of Chinese companies for the construction of 5G mobile networks – something many NATO countries are unwilling to do

Is Russia really NATO’s adversary? France’s Macron has reached out to Russia, inviting Putin to discuss ways in which the European Union can put the Crimean invasion behind it. Donald Trump has publicly attacked Germany over its Nord Stream 2 project to pipe in Russian gas, but a recent German poll saw 66 percent wanting closer ties with Russia

The UK has bigger problems. Britain has been convulsed over the Brexit conflict and is holding contentious national election on December 12. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, knowing that Trump is wildly unpopular, is reluctant to be seen as close to him. Also, Johnson’s major contender, Jeremy Corbyn, is a reluctant supporter of NATO. While his Labour Party is committed to NATO, over his career as an antiwar champion, Corbyn has called NATO “a danger to world peace and a danger to world security.” The last time Britain hosted NATO leaders in 2014, Corbyn told an anti-NATO rally that the end of the Cold War “should have been

the time for NATO to shut up shop, give up, go home and go away.”

A further complication is Scotland, which is home to a very unpopular Trident nuclear submarine base as part of NATO’s nuclear deterrent. A new Labour government would need the support of the Scottish National Party. But its leader, Nicola Sturgeon, insists that a precondition for her party’s support is a commitment to close the base

Europeans can’t stand Trump (a recent poll found he is trusted by only 4 percent of Europeans!) and their leaders can’t rely on him. Allied leaders learn of presidential decisions that affect their interests via Twitter. The lack of coordination was clear in October, when Trump ignored NATO allies when he ordered US special forces out of northern Syria, where they had been operating alongside French and British commandos against Islamic State militants

The US unreliability has led the European Commission to draw up plans for a European “defense union” that will coordinate military spending and procurement. The next step may be to coordinate military actions separate from NATO. The Pentagon has complained about EU countries purchasing military equipment from each other instead of from the United States, and has called this defense union “a dramatic reversal of the last three decades of increased integration of the transatlantic defense sector.”

Do Americans really want to go to war for Estonia? Article 5 of the Treaty states that an attack against one member “shall be considered an attack against them all,” meaning that the treaty obligates the US to go to war on behalf of 28 nations – something most likely opposed by war-weary Americans who want a less

aggressive foreign policy that focuses on peace, diplomacy, and economic engagement instead of military force

An additional major bone of contention is who will pay for NATO. The last time NATO leaders met, President Trump derailed the agenda by berating NATO countries for not paying their fair share and at the London meeting, Trump is expected to announce symbolic US cuts to NATO’s operations budget.

Trump’s main concern is that member states step up to the NATO target of spending 2 percent of their gross domestic products on defense by 2024, a goal that is unpopular among Europeans, who prefer that their tax dollars to go for nonmilitary items. Nevertheless, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg will brag that Europe and Canada have added \$100 billion to their military budgets since 2016 – something Donald Trump will take credit for – and that more NATO officials are meeting the 2 percent goal, even though a 2019 NATO report shows only seven members have done so: the US, Greece, Estonia, the UK, Romania, Poland and Latvia.

In an age where people around the world want to avoid war and to focus instead on the climate chaos that threatens future life on earth, NATO is an anachronism. It now accounts for about three-quarters of military spending and weapons dealing around the globe. Instead of preventing war, it promotes militarism, exacerbates global tensions and makes war more likely. This Cold War relic shouldn’t be reconfigured to maintain US domination in Europe, or to mobilize against Russia or China, or to launch new wars in space. It should not be expanded, but disbanded. Seventy years of militarism is more than enough.

In Hong Kong, it’s U.S. vs. China now

By Patrick J. Buchanan

At first glance, it would appear that five months of pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong had produced a stunning triumph.

By September, the proposal of city leader Carrie Lam that ignited the protests – to allow criminal suspects to be extradited to China for trial – had been withdrawn.

And though the protesters’ demands escalated along with their tactics, from marches to mass civil disobedience, Molotov cocktails, riots and attacks on police, Chinese troops remained confined to their barracks.

Beijing wanted no reenactment of Tiananmen Square, the midnight massacre in the heart of Beijing that drowned in blood the 1989 uprising for democratic rights.

In Hong Kong, the police have not used lethal force. In five months of clashes, only a few have perished. And when elections came last month, Beijing was stunned by the landslide victory of the protesters. Finally, last month, Congress passed by huge margins in both houses a Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act that threatens sanctions on Hong Kong authorities should they crush the rebels. When President Donald Trump signed the bills, the protesters now had the U.S. as an ally, and the Chinese reacted viscerally.

An enraged Foreign Ministry declared: “The US ... openly backed violent criminals who rampantly smashed facilities, set fire, assaulted innocent civilians, trampled on the rule of law and jeopardized social order.” This so-called bill will only make the Chinese people ... further understand the sinister intentions and hegemonic nature of the United States. It will only make the Chinese people more united and make the American plot more doomed to failure.”

Thus do the Hong Kong protesters appear victorious, for now. Sunday, black-clad masked protesters were back in the streets, waving American flags, erecting barricades, issuing new demands – for greater autonomy for Hong Kong, the release of jailed protesters and the punishment of police who used excessive force. This confrontation is far from over.



Instead, it has escalated, and the US government, having given up its posture of benevolent neutrality in favor of peaceful demonstrators for democracy, has become an open ally of often-violent people who are battling Chinese police inside a Chinese city.

On Monday, China retaliated, suspending visits to Hong Kong by US military planes and Navy ships and declaring sanctions on the National Endowment for Democracy, Freedom House and half a dozen other US agencies that promote democracy for interfering in the internal affairs of China. And there is another issue here – the matter of face. China has just celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Revolution where Mao proclaimed, “China has stood up!” after a century of foreign humiliations and occupations.

Can Xi Jinping, already the object of a Maoist cult of personality, accept US intervention in the internal affairs of his country or a city that belongs to China? Not likely. Nor is China likely to accede to demands for greater sovereignty, self-determination or independence for Hong Kong.

This would only raise hopes of the city’s eventual escape from its ordained destiny: direct rule by Beijing when the 50-year China-U.K. treaty regarding the transfer of Hong Kong expires in 2047.

For Xi to capitulate to the demands of Hong Kong’s demonstrators could cause an outbreak of protests in other Chinese cities and bring on a crisis of the regime. Xi Jinping is no Mikhail Gorbachev. He is not going to let his people go. He is not going to risk a revolution to overturn the Maoist Revolution he has served his entire life.

A ruler committing the atrocities Xi is committing today in the concentration camps in the Uighur regions of China is staying his hand in Hong Kong only so the world and the West cannot see the true face of the ideology in which this true believer believes.

In providing moral support for protesters in Hong Kong who desire the freedoms we enjoy, America is on the right side. But to align the US with the protesters’ cause, and threaten sanctions if their demands are not met, is to lead these demonstrators to make demands that Hong Kong’s rulers cannot meet and China will not allow. We should ask ourselves some questions before we declare our solidarity with the protesters engaging the Hong Kong police.

If the police crush them, or if China’s army moves in and crushes the demonstrators whose hopes were raised by America’s declared solidarity, then what are we prepared to do to save them and their cause? Are we willing to impose sanctions on Beijing, such as we have on Venezuela, Iran and Vladimir Putin’s Russia?

Some of us yet recall how the Voice of America broadcast to the Hungarian rebels of 1956 that if they rose up and threw the Russians out, we would be at their side. The Hungarians rose up. We did nothing. And one of the great bloodbaths of the Cold War ensued. Are we telling the protesters of Hong Kong, “We’ve got your back!” when we really don’t?

Why Tehran doesn’t talk to Washington?

TEHRAN (FNA) — Despite Washington’s continuous denials, the CIA has a long history of meddling in Iran’s internal affairs.

For instance, it supported the recent violent protests in Iran. Back in 1953, it helped to orchestrate the coup against democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh. In the 1950s, the US and Britain opposed the nationalization of Iran’s oil industry as well. They passed a resolution at the UN Security Council and imposed economic sanctions on Iran. They adopted a similar policy against the nationalization of Iran’s nuclear industry and imposed similar sanctions. Perhaps, this is why even President Trump once famously said, “Iran has total disregard for the United States.”

The New York billionaire, who during his presidential campaign more or less promised a non-interventionist foreign policy, continues to repeat the anti-Iran rhetoric, promoted by war capital Washington and his cabinet members, accusing Tehran of supporting terrorism and destabilizing the Middle East. He binned the nuclear deal and has backed away from his insistence that he doesn’t want war with an already heavily sanctioned Iran, saying now of the war, “It could go either way, and I’m OK either way it goes.”

The new saga to support the recent violent protests in Iran, however, signals a marked escalation of tensions. This is not total nonsense. In response, if Iran



continues to have “total disregard” for the United States, it’s because the US has once again earned it. If the Trump administration does not like Iran’s disregard it should redeem itself. After signing the nuclear deal in 2015, Iran showed a new road to the US towards conflict resolution. Quite the contrary, it was the US that began throwing stones at Iran by refusing to fully commit itself to the historic deal.

Trump is desperate to convince the world that Iran is a threat and undemocratic. His talking point is filled with unutterable loathing, as in factual reality Iran is at the forefront of the reason why there is security in the Persian Gulf.

Those who disregard this reality have made huge spending to buy arms and security, but later came to realize that they have been fooled.

Trump has to stop upping the ante with economic terrorism, spying networks, military threats, and support for violent protesters. The man who lies to himself and listens to his own lies has come to a point that he cannot distinguish the truth within him, or around him. If Trump is serious about fighting terrorism and ensuring security in the Persian Gulf, he should withdraw all US troops. It’s the real obvious. Iran has never attacked any neighbour and the terrorist groups of ISIL, Al-Qaeda, and their off-shoots

are all enemies of Iran.

Things are going south in the US and it takes a lot of effort for the Trumpsters to claim otherwise. If the past mistakes are any indication, if the recent news about US trying to sow discord and violence in Iran are true, and if you think about it, Trump is doomed to a foreign policy failure that will repeat itself again and again, as did all previous presidents, for US foreign policy delusions are static things, colonial readings of already written papers. You can surely see by now that by doing the exact same thing his predecessors did, Trump’s anti-Iran presidency is doomed to this same humiliation and error.

It is wishful thinking, therefore, to expect the New York billionaire to analyze and correct America’s past mistakes regarding Iran before they paralyze his own future and legacy. He won’t kick out the past errors of the establishment foreign policy and whatever turns out to follow the populist right on an increasingly destabilised planet. As previously, the past Iran policy mistakes, including CIA’s clandestine operations and regime-change fantasies, will repeat themselves and there’s so much more to come.

In the coming decades, count on one thing: Iran will continue to uphold that America cannot be trusted at all, and that there is no change in its hostility toward Iran. The bottom line is that there is no advantage for Tehran to resume ties with war capital Washington.

Tehran parks, bus stations more accessible for persons with disabilities

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Tehran Municipality has improved accessibility of persons with disabilities to 66 parks and 139 bus stations.

The parks have been equipped with accessible entrance, routes, sports and playgrounds, cafeterias, benches, sanitary facilities, praying rooms, other amenities and buildings, IRNA quoted deputy mayor for urban services, Mojtaba Yazdani, as saying on Monday.



It is planned to make 44 other parks accessible for persons with disabilities by the end of this year (March 20, 2020), he stated.

Some 15 playgrounds for physically challenged children, 110 sport spaces in the parks for people with disabilities, and other projects are among the measures in this regard, he stated.

Meanwhile, deputy mayor for urban planning and architecture, Abdolreza Golpaygani, said that 139 bus stations have been made accessible for this group of the society.

He added that 182 bus stations in the capital required retrofitting, 139 of which have so far been equipped with the necessary infrastructure, he highlighted.

Majlis [the Iranian parliament] approved both general outlines and details of a bill on rights of persons with disabilities in January 2018. The law provides better living conditions for persons with disabilities to no longer feel isolated, additionally, development of disability-friendly cities, health insurance and employment are some of the articles of the law.

Smuggling out medicine increased in Iran

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Smuggling medicine out of the country has increased due to depreciation of the Iranian rial against foreign currencies which has lowered medicine costs inside the country, Mohammad Reza Shanehsaz, head of Food and Drug Administration, has said.

In addition to the traffickers who seize the opportunity to make higher profits and export medicines available on the market in



various ways, foreign and domestic travelers also carry suitcases containing medicines as lucrative items for selling abroad, he lamented.

Many of these people, of course, do not sell or smuggle these medicines out of the country and their relatives in neighboring countries may need them, such as diabetes patients who need insulin which is costly in neighboring countries, he noted.

While some of these people who take medicines out of the country for their family members do not think

that it has dire consequences for the country and patients in need of the medicines, he said, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

“So, we have expanded cooperation with the police, customs and border officials to counter this issue,” he noted, concluding, although medicine smuggling seizures have increased, unfortunately smuggling pharmaceuticals has increased generally.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Afghanistan’s loya jirga

(June 12, 2002)
Afghanistan’s traditional government assembly - the loya jirga - finally opened on Tuesday 11th June after 24 hours’ delay. It’s the first such meeting in nearly forty years. This report from Pam O’Toole
The current **interim administration** was shoehorned together at a UN sponsored conference in Bonn last December. It was regarded as an emergency measure and wasn’t entirely representative of the Afghan population, particularly the largest ethnic group, the Pashtuns. This loya jirga is intended to legitimize the power sharing arrangement set up in Bonn and begin to **iron out** at least some of the inequalities in representation. Some progress has been made. The delegates have been freely elected by their home districts and seats have been set aside for previously **under represented**, or **un-represented**, groups, such as women. But the **last minute** addition of extra places also means that Afghanistan’s powerful warlords-some of whom were accused of trying **to fix** earlier rounds of voting - will also have seats in the tent.

Over recent days, a **power struggle** again **erupted** over the role of Afghanistan’s former King, Mohamed Zahir Shah, with his supporters **pushing for** him to be named as head of state in the new administration. That would run **counter** to the wishes of the powerful ethnic Tajiks from the Northern Alliance who hold most of the key roles in the interim government and who are supporting its current leader, Hamid Karzai, as future head of state.

Words
interim administration: a government appointed for a short time until something more permanent is arranged
iron out: get rid of
set aside: kept available for a specific purpose
under represented, or un-represented groups: parts of the population which don’t have enough power in government, or have no power
last minute: left until very late in the process
to fix: here, to arrange unfairly that your candidate wins
power struggle: here, disagreement between different groups wanting control
erupted: began suddenly and intensely
pushing for: if you push for something, you try very hard to achieve it
counter to: against

(Source: BBC)

Hour al-Azim wetland hosting flocks of migratory birds

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Hour al-Azim wetland is hosting flocks of migratory birds this year again after years of water scarcity and no bird migration.

Hour al-Azim wetland, located in south-western province of Khuzestan, is an important wetland on the border of Iran and Iraq, which was dried up and turned to a major sand and dust storm hotspot due to oil sector projects and not being granted its water right.

While above normal rainfall led to water flow in the wetland and caused many migratory birds flying over the area again to stay during the cold season.

Some special bird species exclusively migrate to the wetland, including, lesser white-fronted goose, ferruginous duck and darters or snakebirds.

The situation of water reserve has improved in Hour al-Azim wetland since mid-November due to filled Karkheh Dam and end of water harvesting for summer cultivation, Seyed Adel Mola, Khuzestan’s department of environment deputy chief, has said.

He went on to say that many bird species have migrated to the wetland, and the presence of prominent species such as pelicans, African sacred ibis, crested duck, ferruginous duck and marble ducks have been recorded so far.

A good population of flamingos is also observed in the wetland, he further highlighted.

He added that 80 to 85 percent of the wetland is filled with water, but eastern part of it is still dry.

“Although roads are still a limiting factor for water flow in the wetland, we hope rainfall



Above normal rainfall led to water flow in the wetland and caused many migratory birds flying over the area again to stay during the cold season.

bring more water into the wetland,” he said. There are three fractures on the boundary

to Iraqi part of the wetland which have not yet been repaired, which cause a total of 18

to 20 cubic meters of water enter the Iraqi part of the wetland, he concluded.

FAO reaffirms readiness to assist Iran in sustainable soil management

FAO Representative to Iran, Gerold Bödeker, said that the Organization is looking forward to further collaboration with Iranian Government in sustainable management of soil and natural resources.

Speaking at the World Soil Day event, organized by the Ministry of Agriculture on Tuesday, Bödeker said that “FAO urges its member states to adopt policies motivating the wide spectrum of stakeholders in pursuing farming approaches that promote the sustainable management of soil,” adding “agro-ecology, conservation agriculture, organic farming, zero tillage farming and agroforestry,” are among the main practices advocated by FAO in this regard.

FAO Representative to Iran emphasized that the soil is a finite resource, meaning its loss is not recoverable within a human lifespan.

He further noted that “Erosion is the greatest threat to soil health and soil ecosystem services in many regions of the world.”



“Erosion causes the removal of the fertile surface soil horizon, incorporation of denser subsoil into the surface layer, and a decrease in the rooting zone of the soil; a sequence that adversely affects crop growth and yield,” he added.

As per the latest report published by FAO, the impact of erosion on global crop yields has been estimated to be a reduction by 0.4 percent per year. The report asserts that soil erosion contributes to the pollution of waterways and releases soil organic carbon from the soil.

Bödeker in his concluding remarks underscored that observing World Soil Day presents an opportunity to recognize the value of our soils for soil productive capacity as well as its contribution to food security and the maintenance of key ecosystem services. “As highlighted by this year’s theme, we need to work hard to ‘Stop Soil Erosion’ in order to ‘Save Our Future’.”

(Source: FAO)

Air pollution and the war of wills

1 → In its newest report the Majlis Research Center said “more than 2.6 million below Euro 4 standards sedans are currently moving around the capital city.”

Motorbikes, which their number reaches hundreds of thousands in the metropolis of Tehran, should also be blamed.

Even some experts believe that each motorbike, because of its faulty combustion system, produces gas emissions much more than a car. For example, in the recent days the density of air pollution was high in Qom,

a city full of outdated motorbikes.

Reducing air pollution entails the cooperation of different government bodies such as municipalities in developing public transportation system, environment departments in enforcing environment-friendly laws, or industry ministry in obliging companies to produce fuel efficient cars and standard motorbikes.

It also needs cooperation by the citizens. They can be encouraged to avoid using private cars at least on smoggy days.

On November 15, when the government decided to increase petrol price, which is still much cheaper than its real value, a great majority of citizens, no matter in which part of the country they live, reacted negatively.

Though the government did not increase petrol price because of air pollution, it can help reduce the pace of ever-increasing consumption of petrol at least for some months.

Air pollution is a monster that its defeat is not easy. A strong will and continuous effort

is needed. The campaign against air pollution entails cooperation by every single citizen to those at the top managerial posts.

From those farmers who burn straw stubble up to those citizens who use private cars even for short distances or heat their houses above a certain temperature in cold days as well as those companies that produce fuel-inefficient and substandard vehicles and those officials who have been hesitant to bring fuel prices to the market value must realize that the health of citizens is above anything else.

World must stop ‘war against nature’, UN chief says

The world must stop a “war against nature” and find more political will to combat climate change, United Nations secretary general Antonio Guterres has said ahead of the start of a two-week global climate summit in Madrid.

Around the world, extreme weather ranging from wildfires to floods is being linked to manmade global warming, putting pressure on the summit to strengthen the implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement on limiting the rise in temperature. “Our war against nature must stop, and we know that

it is possible,” Mr Guterres said ahead of the 2-13 December summit.

“We simply have to stop digging and drilling and take advantage of the vast possibilities offered by renewable energy and nature-based solutions.”

Cuts in emissions of greenhouse gases – mostly from burning carbon-based fossil fuels – that have been agreed so far under the Paris deal are not enough to limit temperature rises to a goal of between 1.5 and 2 degrees above

pre-industrial levels.

Many countries are not even meeting those commitments, and political will is lacking, Mr Guterres said.

President Donald Trump for his part has started withdrawing the US from the Paris Agreement, while the deforestation of the Amazon basin – a crucial carbon reservoir – is accelerating and China has tilted back towards building more coal-fired power plants.

(Source: The Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ↔ ع

Water drenches 18,000 ha of Hamoun-e Sabori wetland

Hamoun-e Sabori wetland on the Iran-Afghanistan border has been saturated, as rainwater flowed over 18,000 hectares of the wetland, Mohammad Reza Alimoradi, head of marine affairs at the Sistan-Baluchestan provincial department of environment has announced.

“Water entered 18,000 hectares of the wetland in the country, after the afghan part has been soaked in water,” Alimoradi said, IRNA reported on Saturday.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-fest”

- **Meaning:** gathering
- **For example:** It’s a horror mystery, rather than a **gorefest**.

PHRASAL VERB

Narrow something down

- **Meaning:** to reduce the number of things included in a range
- **For example:** The police have narrowed down their list of suspects.

IDIOM

Cream rises to the top

- **Explanation:** Someone or something exceptionally good will eventually attract attention or stand out from the rest
- **For example:** I knew you’d succeed. As the saying goes: ‘cream rises to the top’!

۱۸ هزار هکتار از بستر هامون صابوری آبگیری شد

رئیس اداره دریایی اداره کل حفاظت محیط زیست سیستان و بلوچستان گفت: ۱۸ هزار هکتار از بستر هامون صابوری ایران در جریان بارش های اخیر آبگیری شد. محمد رضا علیمردادی روز شنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا اظهار داشت: این اتفاق پس از آبگیری کامل هامون صابوری افغانستان به سمت صابوری ایران صورت گرفته است.

Trump enters war of words between Macron, Erdogan

U.S. President Donald Trump has entered a war of words between his French and Turkish counterparts, saying Emmanuel Macron's remark that NATO was brain dead was "very, very nasty" and "disrespectful".

Macron made the comment in a November 7 interview with The Economist, as he criticized a lack of coordination between NATO members over Turkey's recent operation in Syria. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan later responded, challenging Macron to check his own "brain death".

Trump, speaking to reporters in London on Tuesday alongside NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, said Macron's assessment of the military alliance was "insulting to a lot of different forces".

"It's a tough statement, though, when you make a statement like that, that is a very, very nasty statement to essentially 28, including them, 28 countries," he said.

Trump also said he would not allow France to take advantage of American companies after a U.S. government investigation found France's new digital services tax would harm U.S. technology companies.

"It's not right to be taken advantage of on NATO and also then to be taken advantage of on trade, and that's what happens. We can't let that happen," he said.

In response, the French government said on Tuesday that France and the European Union are ready to retaliate if Trump acts on a threat to impose duties of up to 100 percent on \$2.4bn in imports of champagne,



handbags and other French products.

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire branded the U.S. threat unacceptable and said the French tax did not discriminate against American companies.

"In case of new American sanctions, the European Union would be ready to retaliate," Le Maire told Radio Classique.

He later told a press conference: "We are not targeting any country."

Trump struck a more conciliatory tone regarding NATO, the 29-member organization he has previously heavily criticized, saying it was more "flexible" now and serves

"a great purpose".

Several world leaders are in the English capital for a two-day NATO meeting celebrating 70 years of the alliance.

Queen Elizabeth will host them at Buckingham Palace later on Tuesday evening.

The official leaders' meeting will take place on Wednesday, in Watford at the Grove Hotel.

The gathering comes little more than a week before the UK holds a general election, on December 12.

NATO came under scrutiny in October when Turkey launched Operation Peace

Spring in northeastern Syria, after Trump said American troops would withdraw from the region.

Turkey said it wanted to create a safe zone to protect the country against Kurdish "terror" groups and ISIL, where it could relocate Syrian refugees. Ankara considers the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has waged an insurgency against Turkey for 35 years and is designated a terrorist organization by Turkey, the U.S. and EU.

The YPG forms the main component of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). But the militia, a U.S. ally, was crucial in the fight against ISIL, and several NATO leaders hit back at Ankara by suspending arms sales to Turkey while others, including France, worried that the operation risked ISIL fighters escaping.

Al Jazeera's senior political analyst Marwan Bishara said: "Clearly from the way leaders are approaching [NATO], they don't seem to be optimistic themselves."

"They don't see eye to eye on the challenges facing the West or the NATO alliance."

"Macron was saying that NATO has lost its raison d'être, its reason for existence - what he's saying is that if Turkey and the U.S. are going to act on their own without consulting NATO members on something as important as Syria, then why do we have NATO?"

(Source: al Jazeera)

UK Party manifestos all have 'unclear and unrealistic Brexit goals,' Think Tank says in report

The think tank finds even under the scenario of a Conservative Brexit leading to a free trade agreement, there'd be an annual fiscal shortfall of at least £6 billion and potentially as much as £20 billion. A World Trade Organization exit from December 2020 could push that as high as £28 billion.

Analysis conducted of major UK political party manifestos reveals their various stances on Brexit to be "vague and potentially unrealistic", especially in respect of the economic impact of Brexit on the economy, research by academic think tank The UK in a Changing Europe has revealed.

The report, Brexit: the manifestos uncovered, states that while Brexit will shape the UK's economic, regulatory and trading relationship with the EU for the foreseeable future, neither the Conservatives nor Labor actually address how Brexit would "affect their wider economic strategies and ambitions".

Key examples of unclear, unfeasible, misleading and missing statements include the Conservatives ruling out extending transition beyond 2020 and failing to discuss what will happen if a trade deal is not secured by then, and Labor's proposal to negotiate a new Brexit deal and hold

a referendum in six months, which is judged "exceedingly demanding", as the Constitution Unit estimates it takes around 22 weeks for Parliament to legislate for a referendum and for all the formalities to be sorted out.

?In respect of the UK-EU relationship, the Conservatives aim to have 80 percent of UK trade covered by free trade agreements within the next three years, starting with the US, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

"This is extremely optimistic, particularly given prospective partners will first ask about the nature of the UK's relationship with the EU," the report says.

Conversely, Labor's proposal to put its deal on the UK's future relationship with the EU to the people is deemed "misleading", as the UK can only negotiate its divorce agreement now - any political declaration dealing with the future, isn't legally binding.

The report also highlights some key differences between the deal struck by Theresa May with the EU and Boris Johnson's. For instance, the current prime minister "wants a far looser relationship" with the EU than his predecessor, whose deal talked about building on customs arrangements and held out the prospect of significant



regulatory alignment on goods.

May also wanted to maintain the possibility of participating in a range of EU agencies and programmes, which the current manifesto doesn't mention. There moreover isn't a single reference in the Conservative manifesto to maintaining security co-operation with the EU.

(Source: Sputnik)

Why Germany turned its back on parallel coalitions in Strait of Hormuz

➔ The European coalition: From idea to implementation

On November 24, France's Defense Minister Florence Parly announced that a French naval base in Abu Dhabi will serve as the headquarters for a European-led mission to protect Persian Gulf.

Although her announcement formalized the UAE as the headquarters of European-led mission, the decision had been anticipated much earlier and was stated in the August reports.

It was reported that Italy, Spain, Norway, Belgium and Sweden were expected to accompany France, while the Netherlands was not sure to join the European-led naval mission or the U.S.-led coalition. On November 25, the Dutch government formally announced its decision to accompany its European partners. Therefore, the Netherlands will contribute a ship to the French-led naval mission in the Strait of Hormuz for a six-month period starting in January 2020.

However, for some European countries participating in any extraterritorial mission

depends on the approval of the parliament. This issue has become a challenge for Berlin in accompanying Paris.

■ Germany constrained by law

From the earliest days when the U.S. was inviting states to create a maritime coalition in the Persian Gulf region, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas opposed the move and insisted on the need to follow diplomacy to reduce tensions in order to preserve the JCPOA.

Germany, like France, was also looking for a European initiative, but what is important now is that Berlin has apparently broken its promise and left Paris halfway.

But does the decision by Germany ruin the future of the European coalition?

It should be said that, despite refusing to join the coalition, Berlin still politically supports it. What prevents Berlin from joining the coalition is the country's constitution.

In fact, Germany has set a precondition for its support of the plan. Germany says the French-led initiative must turn into an "EU mission". In the current context, the initial core of the plan is still based on the

British model, which limits the coalition to the will of the European countries, regardless of direct dependence on the EU and NATO.

According to the German law, the country is only allowed to participate in a foreign mission if that mission is defensible from the perspective of a "system based on mutual collective security" within the framework the EU, NATO and the UN. Therefore, participation in the coalition proposed by France is not justified from the perspective of the German law.

On the other hand, Berlin's reason for refusing to join the U.S.-led maritime coalition was not just to preserve the Iran nuclear deal. Legal restraint was also a matter.

Unlike France and Britain, sending forces outside Germany has to be done with the consent of parliament, and almost all German parties are opposed to joining a U.S. mission against Iran.

The fight over establishing security in the Strait of Hormuz represents a small part of the NATO disputes. Currently, there are two parallel coalitions in the Persian Gulf.

Iran has approved none of the coalitions, and Germany has not participated in any of them.

At the beginning the U.S. expected 60 countries to join the coalition which was launched under the command of a headquarters in Bahrain in November. At the present time, just Britain, Australia, Albania, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain have joined the U.S.-led coalition.

The European coalition has also failed at the outset due to legal obstacles in certain countries in Europe.

Meanwhile, Defense Minister Parly affirmed European and U.S. coordination in parallel missions in the Strait of Hormuz. At the same time, Parly accused Washington of being indifferent to what happened in the Middle East in the summer, including the incidents of Fujairah port and Oman Sea, as well as downing of a U.S. drone.

The comments by Parly, in addition to what French President Emmanuel Macron had recently said about NATO's brain death, further fuels the domestic crisis within NATO.

Turkey threatens to block NATO's Baltic defence plan

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has threatened to reject NATO's so-called defense plan for the Baltic states and Poland if the Western military alliance fails to recognize groups that Ankara deems terrorists.

Erdogan made the remarks on Tuesday before his departure from Ankara for NATO's 70th anniversary summit in London.

The president said that he had spoken on the phone with his Polish counterpart, Andrzej Duda, and agreed to meet him as well as leaders of the Baltic states in London for talks on the plan.

"With pleasure, we can come together and discuss these issues there as well," he said. "But if our friends at NATO do not recognize as terrorist organizations those we consider terrorist organizations ... we will stand against any step that will be taken there."

NATO envoys need formal approval by all 29 members for the Baltic initiative, which is meant to defend three Baltic countries - Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - and Poland against alleged threats from Russia.

A Turkish security source said on Monday that his country is not "blackmailing" NATO with its rejection of the plan, stressing that Ankara has full veto rights for any proposal within the alliance.

"NATO is an institution where Turkey has full

veto rights, politically and militarily, and there are procedures here," he said. "There is no such thing as Turkey blackmailing - a statement like that is unacceptable."

Turkey, NATO's second largest standing military force, wants the alliance to formally classify the Kurdish-led YPG, the main component of the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), as a terrorist group.

Ankara is angry over NATO member states' support for the YPG, which Turkey says is tied to homegrown autonomy-seeking Kurdish militants.

On the sidelines of the NATO summit, Erdogan will attend a four-way meeting with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday.

During the meeting, the Turkish leader is expected to demand that Europe endorse his plan for a "safe zone" in northern Syria.

He will also seek an EU donation for the reconstruction of northern Syria and complain that Turkey has been left alone in its fight against terror, particularly against the YPG.

On Monday, U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper urged Turkey to stop holding up support for the NATO



defense plan for the Baltics and Poland.

In an interview with Reuters, he warned Ankara that "not everybody sees the threats that they see" and that he would not support labeling the YPG as terrorists.

"The message to Turkey ... is we need to move forward on these response plans and it can't be held up by their own particular concerns," Esper said.

(Source: RT)

Corbyn: I Wish NATO Didn't Exist

According to the media report, the Tories hope to use what they claim is Labor's lack of support for the UK military as the center of their political campaign this week.

Corbyn, in his first major foreign policy speech on Sunday, remarked that he wanted the next UK government to push NATO to soften its stance on Russia, and stop leaning on the United States for support.

If Labor wins the 12 December election, the party will "work for the alliance to reduce tensions in Europe and beyond", Corbyn noted, which may be the focus of the next week's NATO summit in London.

The Tories hope to attack Labor's perceived lack of support for Britain and undermining of the military at the heart of their campaign this week.

On Sunday, Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said Mr. Corbyn was 'Putin's useful idiot' for undermining NATO.

Wallace said that the Labor leader's 'long record of siding with Russia' is unpatriotic and renders him unfit to be Prime Minister.

The former British Army officer says the Leader of the Opposition 'is not a man capable of making the decisions we need to defend this nation'.

Mr. Wallace told The Mail on Sunday: 'I know that in dangerous situations the decision to pull the trigger is taken in a heartbeat. There is no time for a committee or a lawyer. It is just you on your own.'

'Just the time to aim and squeeze. In that split second our security forces need to know that their political leaders have their backs.'

(Source: FNA)

German court annuls de facto armored vehicles export ban to Saudi Arabia

A German court Tuesday annulled a de facto export ban on a producer of armored vehicles to Saudi Arabia which the government had imposed following the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

The German government authority for exports control had failed to meet formal requirements when it withdrew an export permission for 110 armored vehicles to the Royal Saudi Land Forces, an administrative court in Frankfurt said.

The court did not identify the company that had brought the case and said the ruling was not yet definitive and could still be appealed.

The economy ministry, which supervises the exports supervision office, was not immediately available for comment.

(Source: Daily Star)

World has not done enough over Khashoggi killing: UN investigator

The world has not done enough to ensure justice is done over the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, a special UN investigator said on Tuesday.

Agnes Callamard, the United Nations rapporteur for extrajudicial executions, called for more action from the European Union and the United States over Khashoggi's murder by Saudi operatives at Riyadh's consulate in Istanbul in 2018.

"I think it is important to recognize that the international community so far has failed in its duty to ensure that there cannot be immunity or impunity for the killing of Jamal Khashoggi," Callamard told reporters in Brussels.

Callamard is seeking an international criminal investigation instead of a Saudi trial, but Riyadh has rejected her request.

Hatice Cengiz, who had been due to marry Khashoggi, accompanied Callamard on a trip to Brussels which she said was intended to remind people they were still seeking justice.

Khashoggi was a U.S. resident and a critic of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Eleven Saudi suspects have been put on trial over his death in secretive proceedings. A report by Callamard has called for the crown prince and other senior Saudi officials to be investigated.

The death caused a global uproar, tarnishing the crown prince's image. The CIA and some Western governments have said they believe Prince Mohammed ordered the killing, but Saudi officials say he had no role.

The EU called on the first anniversary of Khashoggi's killing for "full accountability for all those responsible" and said there must be a "credible and transparent" investigation.

The United States has called for Saudi Arabia to show tangible progress toward holding those behind the killing to account.

(Source: Reuters)

2010s hottest decade in history: UN

This decade is set to be the hottest in history, the United Nations said Tuesday in an annual assessment outlining the ways in which climate change is outpacing humanity's ability to adapt to it.

The World Meteorological Organization said global temperatures so far this year were 1.1 degrees Celsius (two degrees Fahrenheit) above the pre-industrial average, putting 2019 on course to be in the top three warmest years ever recorded.

Manmade emissions from burning fossil fuels, building infrastructure, growing crops and transporting goods mean 2019 is set to break the record for atmospheric carbon concentrations, locking in further warming, the WMO said.

Oceans, which absorb 90 percent of the excess heat produced by greenhouse gases, are now at their highest recorded temperatures.

The world's seas are now a quarter more acidic than 150 years ago, threatening vital marine ecosystems upon which billions of people rely for food and jobs.

In October, the global mean sea level reached its highest on record, fuelled by the 329 billion tonnes of ice lost from the Greenland ice sheet in 12 months.

Each of the last four decades has been hotter than the last.

And far from climate change being a phenomenon for future generations to confront, the effects of humanity's insatiable, growth-at-any cost consumption means millions are already counting the damage.

The report said more than 10 million people were internally displaced in the first half of 2019 - seven million directly due to extreme weather events such as storms, flooding and drought.

(Source: AFP)

Federer to have Swiss coin minted in his honour

Tennis great Roger Federer is to become the first living Swiss to have a coin minted in their honour, with a commemorative 20 franc (15.64 pounds) silver piece bearing his image being issued in January.

The 38-year-old 20-time Grand Slam champion is regarded by many as the greatest tennis player ever and is a national hero in Switzerland.

Swissmint confirmed that 55,000 of the coins, featuring Federer delivering a backhand, will be produced and will be available for pre-order from Tuesday until Dec. 19.

“Roger Federer’s sporting achievements, his charitable commitments, his easy-going nature and his accessibility to his fans have prompted Swissmint to dedicate this 20-franc silver coin to him – the first time it has done so with a living person,” a Swissmint spokesperson told Reuters.

With demand expected to be high, Swissmint said another 40,000 coins could be issued in May while a 50 franc gold coin, featuring a different design would also be produced next year. “Thank you Switzerland and Swissmint for this incredible honour and privilege,” Federer wrote on Twitter.

This year’s commemorative Swiss coins included the 50th anniversary of the moon landings, the Furka Pass and the roe deer. The most recent sports-themed commemorative coin came out in 2015 and celebrated Hornussen — a traditional Swiss sport played by farmers involving a puck and a stick.

(Source: Reuters)

Real Madrid join the Climate Summit

Acanvas has been unveiled on the Estadio Santiago Bernabeu in order to win the 25th United Nations conference on climate change.

The canvas is micro perforated and flame retardant, measuring 35.77 metres in width by 19.60 metres in height.

Real Madrid described it as being capable of “an ecological treatment that, with daylight, converts pollution and dirt in water vapour and eliminates bacteria.

“Every three square metres of the canvas absorb the equivalent amount of nitrogen dioxide that a vehicle gives off in a year.”

The conference will be held in Madrid on December 13.

(Source: Marca)

“Madrid didn’t want Cristiano to win Ballon d’Or” - Chiellini

According to Juventus player Giorgio Chiellini, Lionel Messi was an “OK” winner of the award this year, but felt his team-mate was “robbed” last time out.

Giorgio Chiellini was happy for Lionel Messi to win this year’s Ballon d’Or, but the Juventus defender blasted the “theft” that meant Cristiano Ronaldo missed out in 2018.

Barcelona star Messi claimed the prize for a record sixth time on Monday, beating Liverpool defender Virgil van Dijk and Ronaldo.

It came a year after Real Madrid midfielder Luka Modric ended the 10-year dominance of Messi and Ronaldo, but it was that decision that upset Chiellini.

“It’s OK the Ballon d’Or for Messi this year,” the Juve captain told Sky Sport Italia at the Gran Gala del Calcio awards in Milan on Monday.

“The real theft was last year. Real Madrid decided that Cristiano should not win the Ballon d’Or. It was really strange.”

Chiellini added: “Real didn’t want him to win because he was no longer one of their players.”

Ronaldo joined Juventus from Madrid in July last year, and was on Monday named the Serie A player of the year for 2018-19.

(Source: AS)

WADA moves crucial ExCo meeting to Lausanne from Paris

The World Anti-Doping Agency said Monday it had moved next week’s crucial Executive Committee meeting from Paris to Lausanne because of fears of disruption caused by strike action in the French capital.



WADA confirmed the venue switch to Switzerland in a brief statement.

“WADA has taken the decision to relocate (the meeting) to Lausanne due to likely disruptions and uncertainty caused by imminent general strike action in Paris,” WADA said.

The December 9 meeting is expected to see WADA chiefs approve a recommendation by the body’s Compliance Review Committee concerning Russia.

The WADA compliance panel has called for Russia to be banned from sporting competitions for four years after accusing Moscow of falsifying laboratory data handed over to investigators earlier this year.

Under the proposed sanctions, Russian athletes would still be allowed to compete at the Olympics next year but only if they can demonstrate that they were not part of the Russian system.

Full disclosure of data from the Moscow laboratory was a key condition of Russia’s controversial reinstatement by WADA in September 2018.

The Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) had been suspended for nearly three years previously over revelations of a vast state-supported doping program.

(Source: Guardian)

Messi wins sixth Ballon d’Or as Rapinoe takes women’s prize

Lionel Messi said he hoped to carry on undimmed by age after claiming a record sixth men’s Ballon d’Or award at the age of 32 in Paris on Monday, while USA World Cup superstar Megan Rapinoe took the women’s prize.

Rapinoe was not at the Chatelet Theatre in the French capital, unable to make the trip back to the country where she led the USA to victory in July.

However, Messi was there with his wife, Antonella Rocuzzo, and two of their children. It is Messi’s first Ballon d’Or since 2015 and his sixth overall as he moves one ahead of old rival Cristiano Ronaldo.

“It is 10 years since I won my first Ballon d’Or here in Paris and I remember coming here with my three brothers, I was 22 and it was all unthinkable for me what I was going through,” Messi said on stage after receiving the award from last year’s winner Luka Modric.

“I hope I have several years left to keep enjoying my football. I am aware of the age I have and these moments are all the more enjoyable because the moment when I have to retire is getting closer and that is difficult.

“All going well I’ll have several years left but at the moment time seems to be flying and everything is happening very quickly.

“I hope to keep enjoying my football, my family, facing my rivals and all of this life that I have.”



■ Van Dijk comes second

The Barcelona number 10 won this year’s prize -- organized by France Football magazine and voted for by a panel of journalists from around the world -- ahead of Liverpool defender Virgil van Dijk, with Ronaldo third.

It is the first time since 2010 that Ronaldo has failed to rank in the top two.

Having starred in the Liverpool team that won the Champions League, Van Dijk finished second to Messi just as he did in

the voting for FIFA’s equivalent prize, The Best, in September.

“Unfortunately there are a couple of players like him who are a bit unnatural. Six times Ballon d’Or -- you need to respect greatness as well,” said Van Dijk.

Van Dijk was one of four Liverpool players in the top 10, with Sadio Mane fourth, Mohamed Salah fifth and goalkeeper Alisson seventh. The latter won a new prize for the goalkeeper of the year, named after former USSR icon Lev Yashin.

UEFA chief accuses British PM Johnson of fuelling racism



UEFA chief Aleksander Ceferin has accused British Prime Minister Boris Johnson of fuelling racism and insists European football’s governing body is working hard to tackle the problem plaguing the game.

A number of high-profile incidents in recent weeks, including racist abuse hurled at England players in Bulgaria and chants aimed at Romelu Lukaku and Mario Balotelli in Italy, have underlined the scale of the issue.

Johnson condemned the “vile” racist chanting during England’s Euro 2020 qualifier in Sofia in October and called for UEFA to take tough action.

But the prime minister, currently fighting an election campaign, has in the past courted controversy with various comments, including suggesting Muslim women wearing burkhas look like “letterboxes”.

In an interview with Britain’s Mirror newspaper, UEFA president Ceferin said: “When a politician that calls women with burqas post boxes or mailboxes then says publicly that he condemns you UEFA -- do you reply to that? Do you believe it’s honest? Come on.

“The situation in Europe is more and more tense,” he added.

“When you see high politicians, prime

ministers -- when you see presidents of republics who are racists, who were sexist, you see that something is wrong.”

UEFA has come under fire for a perceived lack of appropriate action to root out racism but Ceferin said the organisation was fully engaged in the fight.

“I don’t blame the players for what they say,” he said. “I understand that the players are desperate because of the punishments and the incidents that are happening again and again.

“Of course you want to say (to UEFA): ‘Go to hell!’ I know.

“But I am not so naive to think that we’ve done all we can and now everything is finished. We haven’t.

“We are trying and we care. We are not just some guys in Nyon (UEFA headquarters) sitting eating fancy food and driving Ferraris.”

UEFA appears set to overhaul its disciplinary panels, making them more diverse.

Ceferin said: “You have to have different perspectives, then you have a more, let’s say, clear view on what is right and what is wrong.

“We want to be specific. So we are working on that. We will change our statutes about it in March, the next committee.”

(Source: Eurosport)

Man Utd ‘a closed chapter’, says Mourinho ahead of Old Trafford return



Jose Mourinho says his time at Manchester United is “a closed chapter” and he is only interested in beating them when he takes his in-form Tottenham side to Old Trafford on Wednesday.

It is the new Tottenham manager’s first return to the touchline at United’s home ground since his sacking by the club last December.

“This is a closed chapter for me,” said Mourinho, who has won all three of his matches in charge of Spurs. “I left the club, I took my time to process everything that happened, I took my time to prepare myself for the next challenge.

“Honestly, United for me is in my book of experiences, it’s in my history book.”

United are struggling under Mourinho’s successor, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, but go into the game just two points behind fifth-placed Spurs.

“It is not for me to analyse United now,” Mourinho said at his pre-match press conference. “I analyse them as an opponent, how they play. How can we beat them? How can they beat us? For me that is the important thing.”

Mourinho is excited about the prospect of returning to Old Trafford.

He said: “I feel good, I like to play big

Messi has scored 46 goals in 54 matches so far in 2019, and netted 36 times in total in 34 La Liga matches last season as Barcelona won the title.

He did not enjoy a successful Copa America with Argentina but was also the top scorer in last season’s Champions League with 12 goals.

■ ‘Incredible year’ for Rapinoe

This is just the second year that a women’s Ballon d’Or -- voted for by 48 journalists -- has been awarded, with Rapinoe succeeding Norway’s Ada Hegerberg.

Rapinoe was the star of the Women’s World Cup on, and off, the field, winning the Golden Boot for top scorer, with six goals, and Golden Ball for best player.

She scored the opening goal as the USA beat the Netherlands 2-0 in the final.

But the 34-year-old feminist icon made headlines with her outspoken criticism of US President Donald Trump during the tournament and has led calls for her team to be paid the same as their male counterparts.

“It’s been an incredible year,” said Rapinoe in a recorded video message.

“I want to say a huge thank you to my team-mates, the coaches, the US Soccer Federation, for all of the support to allow me to be who I am and do what I do on the field but also be the person who I am off the field.”

(Source: AFP)

Hawks end losing skid, hand Warriors worst NBA record

If there was ever a time to do it, Monday’s matchup against the Golden State Warriors presented the Atlanta Hawks an excellent chance to snap a double-digit losing streak -- and they didn’t miss their chance.

“It wasn’t pretty, but we’ll take it,” coach Lloyd Pierce said. “It feels a lot better coming in here than the last 10 games.”

Behind 24 points and 7 assists from Trae Young, the Hawks dominated the skeleton Warriors 104-79, picking up their first win since Nov. 12.

“It feels good, obviously, winning,” Young said. “I haven’t won in a long time, which is not a good feeling. So any time you get a win it feels good, so we’re all happy but obviously we’ve got a long way to go.”

The Warriors, on the other hand, now sit alone with the worst record in the league at 4-18, having lost six of their past seven.

“I thought we were playing for ourselves out there, instead of playing for each other,” Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. “We were trying to dribble through traffic instead of moving the ball. Everybody was trying to make a play, instead of letting the next guy make the play, and we just got frustrated. We didn’t have any kind of rhythm or flow to the game.”

Against the second-worst defense in the NBA, the Warriors scored just 79 points (tied for second-fewest under Kerr), turned it over 23 times and shot 3-of-17 from 3, tied for the fewest made 3s under Kerr.

“It’s not easy for anybody to lose, especially given that



our team has fought really hard through the first quarter of the season and had some really difficult, close losses,” Kerr said. “It wears on you, and you want those efforts to be rewarded. You have to keep the faith, and you just have to keep fighting, and that’s my job to keep their spirits up and turn it around.”

Monday’s game brought two differing mindsets, with the Hawks trying to grow a young group into a playoff-caliber team, while the Warriors have endured an almost comical string of injuries. Atlanta isn’t interested in losing, while

Golden State can take advantage of an injury-plagued season for the upside of a high draft pick.

Despite an obvious opportunity to win against the battered Warriors, Pierce said the Hawks didn’t prioritize Monday’s game. And he’s also trying to make sure the outcome is kept in context as well, noting often who the Warriors didn’t have playing.

“I don’t know if it’s a momentum builder,” he said, “but it’s just good to get off the other side of the momentum.”

Coming off a deflating road trip that featured two close losses to top-level Eastern Conference teams and then a 47-point thrashing by the Houston Rockets, the Hawks kept preaching positive energy and investment. At Monday morning’s shootaround, the spirit was evident, with the team gathering around midcourt as the rookies sang happy birthday to De’Andre Hunter.

After the victory over the Warriors, the locker room was full of fun, with jokes about Cam Reddish’s missed dunk, Hunter being in pain because of a (apparently non-serious) finger injury and DeAndre’ Bembry grabbing two rebounds late in the game from Damian Jones, which prevented a double-double against his former team.

“When you’re on a 10-game losing streak, it’s hard to communicate,” Pierce said. “You don’t want to offend anyone, everyone’s pissed off. So to just be able to make fun of each other is a big part of it.”

(Source: ESPN)

Iran, Wilmots reach deadlock over Team Melli’s future: official

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Negotiations between Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) and Marc Wilmots over Team Melli’s future are deadlocked as the Iranian federation is going to terminate the Belgian coach’s contract, the official said.

Hedayat Mombeini, a member of Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI), said that head of football federation Mehdi Taj has traveled to Istanbul to negotiate with Wilmots’s lawyers over termination of the contract.

It was understood that Wilmots has signed a three-year deal but reports emerged that the Iranian federation has inserted a break clause into terms.

The Belgian coach had to stay in Iran during the 2022 World Cup qualifiers but he traveled to his homeland immediately after a loss against Iraq in Amman, Jordan. However, it should be noted that Wilmots believes that Iran football federation has created serious contractual violations for him and he faces an intolerable situation in Iran.

“There is no way to continue with Wilmots,” Mombeini said. “He failed to meet expectations that’s why we want to part company with him.”

According to him, there are a few other options to replace Wilmots and the Iranian federation is in talks with them.

Under leadership of the ex- Ivory Coast



trainer, Team Melli sit in third place in Group C with six points, five points adrift of leaders Iraq.

Mombeini confirmed that Iran football federation has negotiated with former Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic.

The Croatian coach led Team Melli in 2006 FIFA World Cup and the federation has expressed an interest in bringing him back.



Iran down Thailand at IWBF Asia Oceania Championships

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran’s men’s team humiliated Thailand 85-37 at the 2019 International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF) Asia Oceania Championships in Thai city Pattaya on Tuesday.

Iran’s Mohammadhassan Sayari scored a match-high 20 points and Pongsakorn Sripirom led Thailand with 21 points.

Iran started the event with a win over China but suffered two successive defeats against Japan and Australia.

Team Melli will play South Korea on Wednesday.

Also, Iran’s women’s team lost to Thailand 51-34.

The Iranian women, who have already defeated Cambodia and India, will meet Afghanistan on Wednesday.

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-record eight women’s teams will compete at the competitions, taking place at the Eastern National Sports Center 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.

Solskjaer: I don’t fear sack at Man Utd



Ole Gunnar Solskjaer says he does not fear the sack at Manchester United.

United are ninth in the Premier League table after their worst start to a season since 1988 and sit closer to the relegation places than the top four ahead of Wednesday’s visit of Tottenham.

“It doesn’t make me concerned,” Solskjaer said. “I’m just focusing on my job and that’s doing as well as I can, looking forward to the next game.”

Solskjaer’s United have taken 26 points from the 22 league games since he was appointed permanent manager in March. Mauricio Pochettino was sacked by Tottenham after collecting 25 points from his last 22 games in charge. Meanwhile, Unai Emery was dismissed by Arsenal having taken 28 points from his final 22 games.

Pochettino has said he intends to get back into management soon following

his departure from Spurs but Solskjaer has said he is purely focused on turning United’s season around.

“Football is a results business. We’re not happy, we know we can do better and we are working hard,” Solskjaer added, while also ruling out Paul Pogba for the visit of Jose Mourinho’s men.

“The work is always geared on us improving but we’re not getting all the results we’ve deserved.”

United have won just four of their 14 league games this term, and after the 2-2 draw with Aston Villa, they are on a run of three games without a win in all competitions.

Solskjaer, however, insists it is not the time for crisis talks with executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward and the Glazers.

(Source: ESPN)

Tokyo 2020 G-SATELLITE ready for launch



Mid-March 2020 the G-SATELLITE will be launched and transported to the ISS aboard a supply ship (actual date will depend on the ISS schedule of activities).

April 2020 The G-SATELLITE will be released from the ISS into earth orbit but the launch date will depend on the ISS schedule of activities.

Spring 2020 Voice messages by the fictional characters Amuro, the pilot of Gundam and Char, the pilot of Zaku, will be transmitted from space to earth (in Japanese only). The messages will be uploaded to the project website at: <https://participation.tokyo2020.jp/jp/oneteam/08.html>.

Spring 2020 A special video message from Amuro and Char to the winners of the Tokyo 2020 Twitter competition will be transmitted (in Japanese only).

Spring 2020 A special website will be launched showing the location of the G-SATELLITE in orbit against a back-

ground of 3D images of the earth (with text in Japanese and English).

May – July 2020 Live streaming of conversations between Amuro and Char while the satellite passes over Japan; transcripts will be uploaded to the Tokyo 2020 official YouTube channel (in Japanese only).

From July 2020 Messages of encouragement for the Tokyo 2020 Games displayed on the electric bulletin board and video of Gundam and Char’s Zaku in orbit will be transmitted via Tokyo 2020 social network channels (in English, French and Japanese). A countdown project will commence on 14 July.

This initiative is part of the Tokyo 2020 One Team Project, launched in August 2017, in which Japan’s leading creators, innovators and performers in a wide range of fields are being invited to express their own interpretations of the vision for the Tokyo 2020 Games.

(Source: Paralympic)

Cannavaro expects to stay at Guangzhou after ‘miracle’ title

Fabio Cannavaro said taking Guangzhou Evergrande to the Chinese Super League title was “a miracle” and gave the strongest indication yet that he expects to keep his job.

The 46-year-old Italian World Cup winner was temporarily moved aside as coach in October but returned to lead China’s most successful club to the championship on Sunday.

It was the former Juventus and Real Madrid defender’s first major honor as a coach and a personal triumph after a turbulent few weeks during which he appeared to be on the brink of the sack.

“I know that many names have been mentioned as a replacement for me, including (Jose) Mourinho, (Zinedine) Zidane and (former Guangzhou coach) Scolari,” Cannavaro told the Guangzhou Daily in a report published Tuesday, referring to recent rumors.

“For a team of Evergrande’s level, fans hope to have the top coaches and the coach will definitely face various pressures.

“I’m definitely not a perfect coach and it’s impossible to make everyone satisfied.”

Guangzhou were still top of the CSL in late October



but a poor run led them to briefly push Italy’s 2006 World Cup-winning skipper aside and put veteran captain Zheng Zhi in charge.

Cannavaro made a surprise return at the start of November but only after a reprimand by the club, which scolded him for his “weak ability to rectify mistakes”.

Guangzhou went on to win the next three matches and seal their eighth title in nine years with a 3-0 win over Shanghai Shenhua at the weekend, after which Cannavaro was tossed in the air by his jubilant players.

“I know very well that the outside world had various opinions about it,” Cannavaro said of the brief period when he was relieved of his duties.

He did not say how close he came to leaving, but said winning the CSL had fulfilled Guangzhou’s demands for the season.

Bearing in mind injuries and the need to revamp an ageing squad, winning the title was almost “a miracle”, Cannavaro said, hailing Brazilian midfielder Paulinho as a “superhero”.

“An average team can’t do it,” he added.

Cannavaro said he has several priorities for next season, suggesting that he expects to still be in charge at Guangzhou.

“I hope to further reduce the average age of the team, get in better replacements and continue to provide talent for the national team,” he said.

(Source: AFP)

Esteghlal handed tough tie at Hazfi Cup quarters

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Esteghlal football team were handed a tough tie in the 2019 Hazfi Cup quarterfinals.

Two teams shared the spoils in Iran football league on Saturday in a controversial match.



Defending champions Persepolis will face first tier Shahrdari Mahshahr.

Tractor will entertain Mes Kerman and Naft Masjed Solyman host Shahin Bushehr.

The ties will be played on Dec. 24.

Esteghlal are the most decorated football team in Hazfi Cup, winning the title seven times.

Hazfi Cup is the Iranian football knockout cup competition, run by the Iranian Football Federation.

Does Afif deserve to win 2019 AFC Player of the Year Award?

Iran’s Sports and Youth Minister Masoud Soltanifar has questioned the 2019 AFC Annual Awards for naming Akram Afif as the 2019 AFC Player of the Year over Team Melli goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand and says that his countryman deserved to win the accolade.

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 has made 56 matches for Qatar senior national football team and score 15 goals for Al Annabi.

Qatar defeated Japan 3-1 in the AFC Asian Cup final match courtesy of good performances of Al-Moez Ali, Hassan Al-Haydos and Afif.

Without a shadow of doubt, Afif was good enough to win the award thanks to his current year’s achievements.

“Alireza Beiranvand had a great performance in the 2018 World Cup group of death and helped Persepolis advance to the AFC Champions League final. These successes could impact the results.

“Star like Beiranvand has performed well in the 2018 World Cup and the results of the ceremony cannot deny his abilities. He sits on the podium of the AFC Annual Awards,” Soltanifar said.

The minister’s message is about the last year but Afif won the award because of his success in the current year.

Iran has just qualified for two World Cups in a decade and the country’s clubs have become runners-up twice in the AFC Champions League.

(Source: Persian Football)

Alireza Beiranvand Asia’s best goalkeeper: Gabriel Calderon

TASNIM — Persepolis Argentine coach Gabriel Calderon says the Iranian team’s goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand is the best in Asia.

Beiranvand was among the final nominees for the 2019 AFC Player of the Year.

Akram Afif from Qatar won the award over the Iranian keeper.

“It’s a great honor for us to see Beiranvand among the nominees. I believe that he is the best goalkeeper in Asia,” Calderon said.

“In my opinion, Persepolis’s fans should be proud of him for being in the list,” the Persepolis coach added.

Referee Zahedifar banned for five weeks

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Mohammadhossein Zahedifar has been suspended for five weeks following bad refereeing decisions in an Iran Professional League match.



Esteghlal suffered a late 2-2 draw against Sepahan on Saturday in Isfahan.

Sepahan Brazilian forward Kiros Stanley clearly touched the ball in the first half and Esteghlal should have been awarded a penalty but Zahedifar ordered to continue.

Last year, the Football Federation of Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) announced that the VAR (Video Assistant Referee) will be used at the stadiums in the new season but failed to deliver on its promise.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com
■ Managing Director: Mohammad Shojaeian
■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450
» Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
» Printed at: Jame Jam Bartaar Borna - 44197737

Tehrantimes79

Tehrantimesdaily

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713

GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Beware of the wrath and assault of a hungry noble man and a satiated ignoble one.

Imam Ali (AS)

Iran’s National Orchestra to perform works by Armenian composers in Tehran

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran’s National Orchestra will perform pieces by some Armenian composers in a program titled “Armenian Music Night” in Tehran on December 19.

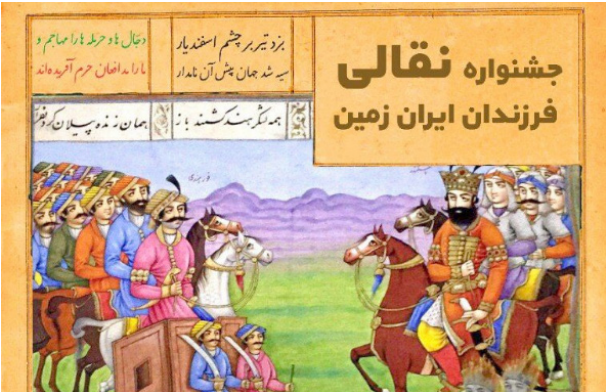
Iranian-Armenian maestro Razmik Ohanian will conduct the orchestra during the concert, which will be held at Vahdat Hall, the Rudaki Foundation announced on Tuesday.

Compositions by Komitas, Aram Khachaturian, Edward Avedisian and Loris Tjeknavorian have been selected to be performed at the concert.

The orchestra will also be performing accompanied by soloists Samvel Galstyan and Vahan Badalyan, and duduk player Saro Poghosyan.

Tehran cultural center to host festival of children’s naqqali

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Tehran’s Ibn-e Sina Cultural Center will be hosting a festival of naqqali, a style of storytelling dedicated to epic stories from Ferdowsi’s masterpiece Shahnameh, for children and young adults.



A poster for the Naqqali Festival for Children of Iran.

The Naqqali Festival for Children of Iran aims to honor the 10th anniversary of the Shahnameh millennium which was accepted on UNESCO’s 2010 calendar of events, the center has announced.

The festival has also dedicated a section to the epic stories about the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, which is also known as Sacred Defense in Iran.

The top winners will be honored during Ferdowsi Day on May 15, 2020.

The Shahnameh, which is known as the “Book of Kings” in English, is the celebrated work of the epic poet Ferdowsi, in which the Persian national epic found its final and enduring form. It was completed in 1010.

“Three Sisters, Three Queens” comes to Iranian bookstores

CULTURE d e s k **TEHRAN** — English historical novelist Philippa Gregory’s book “Three Sisters, Three Queens” has recently been published in Persian by Gooya Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Ali-Akbar Abdolrashidi, the 2016 book tells the stories of Margaret Tudor, Mary Tudor and Katherine of Aragon, three sisters who became the queens of Scotland, France and England, respectively.

United by family loyalties and affections, the three queens find themselves set against each other. Katherine commands an army against Margaret and kills her husband. But Margaret’s boy becomes heir to the Tudor throne when Katherine loses her son. Mary steals the widowed Margaret’s proposed husband, but when Mary is widowed it is her secret marriage for love that is the envy of the others.

As they experience betrayals, dangers, loss and passion, the three sisters find that the only constant in their perilous lives is their special bond, more powerful than any man, even a king.

Italian exhibition displays works by photographer Saeid Arabzadeh

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Novi Ligure International Photo Exhibition now underway in the northwestern Italian city is displaying photos from Iranian photographer Saeid Arabzadeh’s series “Desert”, the organizers have announced.

A selection of 50 photos by 34 photographers from different countries, including France, the U.S., South Korea, Greece and Vietnam, has been put on view at the exhibit, which opened at the Museo dei Campionissimi on Tuesday.

Arabzadeh is a member of Iran’s Focus Photo Club and has been active as a jury member in several Iranian and international photo contests.

He has also been awarded by several Iranian and international photography events.

“In the Wind Direction” from his series “Desert” won the NBPC Ribbon at the 12th NBPC International Salon of Photography in India this year.

He also won the Salon Bronze for “The Darkness”, a black and white portrait of a young woman, at the Brooklyn Photo Contest in New York City in 2018.

In 2017, Through the Viewfinder, an international photo contest held in Kragujevac, Serbia, honored Arabzadeh the Master of Light Photographic Association (MOL) Bronze Medal for his photo “Sorrow”.

The Novi Ligure International Photo Exhibition, which will be running until



A photo from Saeid Arabazadeh series “Desert”.

December 8, also features works by Korean photographers Ann Jung-bae, Baek Mi-suk, Choi Ok-hee and Han Sang-pyo; Jean Luc Cornu from France, Kate Theo from Italy, Le Hong Linh from Vietnam and Michelle Kwon from the U.S.

The exhibit has been organized by Museo dei Campionissimi in collaboration with the F Gallery in Jeonju, South Korea.



Nasser Hashemi and Mehran Rajabi act in a scene from director Kianush Ayyari’s drama “The Paternal House”.

Illegal upload, another shock to “The Paternal House”

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — “The Paternal House” has been illegally uploaded on some Persian sites to complete the run of bad luck on the controversial Iranian movie.

Produced nearly ten years ago, the honor killing drama was banned three times due to allegedly violent scenes.

Director Kianush Ayyari finally received the court’s permission on November 13 after making some modifications to his movie.

However, a full copy of the movie has been uploaded on

the internet, the Persian service of MNA reported on Tuesday.

It is not yet clear what persons are behind the movie upload.

Culture Ministry’s Supervision and Evaluation Office director Mohammad-Mehdi Tabatabaiejad, who is also the director of the Film Anti-Piracy Organization, said that only the film’s producer and laboratory have had the full version.

“It is not my intention to accuse anybody, but no one else has had a full copy of the film,” he noted.

However, he said that a team of experts is investigating the issue.

Cinéma Vérité to screen Macedonia’s submission to 2020 Oscars

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The director of the 13th Cinéma Vérité festival, Mohammad Hamidi-Moqaddam, said on Tuesday that screening “Honeyland”, North Macedonia’s submission to the 2020 Oscars, will be the highlight of the documentary film festival.

The film co-directed by Ljubomir Stefanov and Tamara Kotevska is about a woman who utilizes ancient beekeeping traditions to cultivate honey in the mountains of Macedonia. When a neighboring family tries to do the same, it becomes a source of tension as they disregard her wisdom and advice.

The film has received several awards during international events such as the Sundance Film Festival, Millennium Docs

Against Gravity and Montclair Film Festival.

“Andrey Tarkovsky, a Cinema Prayer”, a documentary that chronicles the life story of the legendary Russian filmmaker by his son Andrei Andreyevich Tarkovsky, is another highlight of the festival,” Hamidi-Moqaddam said during a press conference.

“We also invited the director to attend the festival, but on account of some personal issues he could not accept our invitation,” he added.

Organized by the Documentary and Experimental Film Center, the 13th edition of the Cinéma Vérité festival will take place at Tehran’s Charsu Cineplex from December 9 to 16.



“Honeyland” North Macedonian filmmakers Ljubomir Stefanov and Tamara Kotevska.

Robert Massie, who popularized Russian history, dead at 90

NEW YORK (AP) — Robert K. Massie, the Pulitzer Prize-winning historian who specialized in bestselling and critically praised biographies of the Russian tsars and discovered a personal connection to the country’s past through the blood disorder that afflicted both his son and the son of Nicholas II, died Monday at age 90.

Son Christopher Massie told The Associated Press that the author, who had been suffering from Alzheimer’s disease, died at his home in Irvington, New York.

Likened to David McCullough and Edmund Morris as a popularizer of history, Robert K. Massie wrote epic page turners on two outsized tsars: the 900-page “Peter the Great”, winner of the Pulitzer in 1981; and the 600-page “Catherine the Great”, winner in 2012 of a PEN award for biography. Reviewing “Catherine the Great” for The New York Times, Kathryn Harrison praised Massie as both a scholar and literary stylist.

“Massie, who has spent almost half a century studying czarist Russia, has always been a biographer with the instincts of a novelist,” Harrison wrote. “He understands plot — fate — as a function of character, and the narrative perspective he establishes and maintains, a vision tightly aligned with that of his subject, convinces a reader he’s not so much looking at Catherine the Great as he is out of her eyes.”

Massie’s first book drew upon his interest in Nicholas’ heir apparent, the Tsarevich Alexei, a hemophiliac like the eldest of Massie’s three children, Robert Jr. “Nicholas and Alexandra” was published in 1967, in the midst of the Cold



Robert K. Massie at his home in Irvington, N.Y., in 2011, just after finishing his book on Catherine the Great.

War, and praised in The New York Times as a long-needed and balanced account of the last tsar and his family. Massie’s book also was a commercial success and the basis for a 1971 film adaptation, starring Michael Jayston and Janet Suzman, that won the Oscar for art direction. Massie thought the film superficial, but took advantage of the publicity to raise money for hemophilia treatment.

“Nicholas and Alexandra” made Massie a celebrity, phoned by strangers who invited him for lunch, and a magnet for relatives and alleged relatives of the Romanovs.

He discussed hemophilia with the Duke and Duchess of Windsor (The Duke was the Tsarevich’s first cousin), and with Earl Mountbatten of Burma, a grandson of Queen Victoria. He received “fat, bulky envelopes,” one containing a letter from a woman identifying herself as “Mrs. J. Edgar Hoover, Her Imperial Majesty Catherine III Romanov-Hoover, Diplomatic Agent Five Star A.G., Chief of Mission for President Lyndon Baines Johnson.”

His other works included “The Romanovs”, which tackled the mystery of the royal family’s remains after they were executed in 1918 by the Bolsheviks, and a pair of books about the military rivalry between Britain and Germany in the early 20th century: “Dreadnought” and “Castles of Steel”. Massie and his first wife, Suzanne, collaborated in the mid-1970s on “Journey”, a memoir about their son. The couple, who also collaborated on “Nicholas and Alexandra”, divorced in 1990.

Two years later he married the literary agent Deborah Karl, with whom he had three children. Massie served as president of the Authors Guild from 1987-1991.

Born in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1929, Robert Kinloch Massie was a “bright, fiery boy from an old Southern family,” Suzanne Massie once wrote. He was a Rhodes Scholar who studied American and European history at Yale University and Oxford University. After serving in the Navy, he considered going to graduate school to become a teacher or a lawyer. But when his wife became pregnant with their first son, born in 1956, he needed

immediate income and looked for a job in journalism. He began as an office assistant at Collier’s, where he would work under Theodore H. White, the future author of “The Making of the President” series. Massie later joined Newsweek as a book critic and The Saturday Evening Post as a features writer.

By the mid-1960s, he was struggling to keep up with their son’s medical bills and was frustrated professionally. For years, he had been anxious to write about hemophilia. He submitted a story to Reader’s Digest in the late 1950s, but was turned down, and was no more successful while at Newsweek. The Saturday Evening Post did run a story by Massie in 1963, but declined a separate sketch on the tsar’s son.

Massie had read enough about Russian history to know that little had been told about the Tsarevich’s hemophilia. At the New York Public Library, where he often spent his lunch hour, he had discovered letters written between the tsar and his wife, the Empress Alexandra, which referred often to their son’s condition. Suzanne Massie suggested a book, but her husband was skeptical.

“You see,” Sue said, ‘nobody knows this. It has been completely ignored. You could change people’s thinking about the whole subject,’” Massie wrote in “Journey,” published in 1975. “Then, as she talked about Russian history, Russian literature, the Russian church, the Russian people she had met, I began to see that there was a book that could be done, and that only we, as parents of a hemophiliac, could do it.”

“Baby Shark” creators plan Navajo version of popular video

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Creators of the popular video “Baby Shark”, whose “doo doo doo” song was played at the World Series in October, are developing a version in Navajo.

Pinkfong, a subsidiary of the South Korea company SmartStudy, announced last week it is working with the

Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock, Arizona, to create a new version of the widely popular tune about a family of sharks.

The company is seeking voice actors to portray the roles of Baby Shark, Mommy Shark, Daddy Shark, Grandma Shark, and Grandpa Shark.

The “Baby Shark Dance” video has garnered more than 3.9 billion views on YouTube.

The Navajo Nation is the largest Native American reservation in the U.S.

A second North American leg of the “Baby Shark” concert tour is launching in March.