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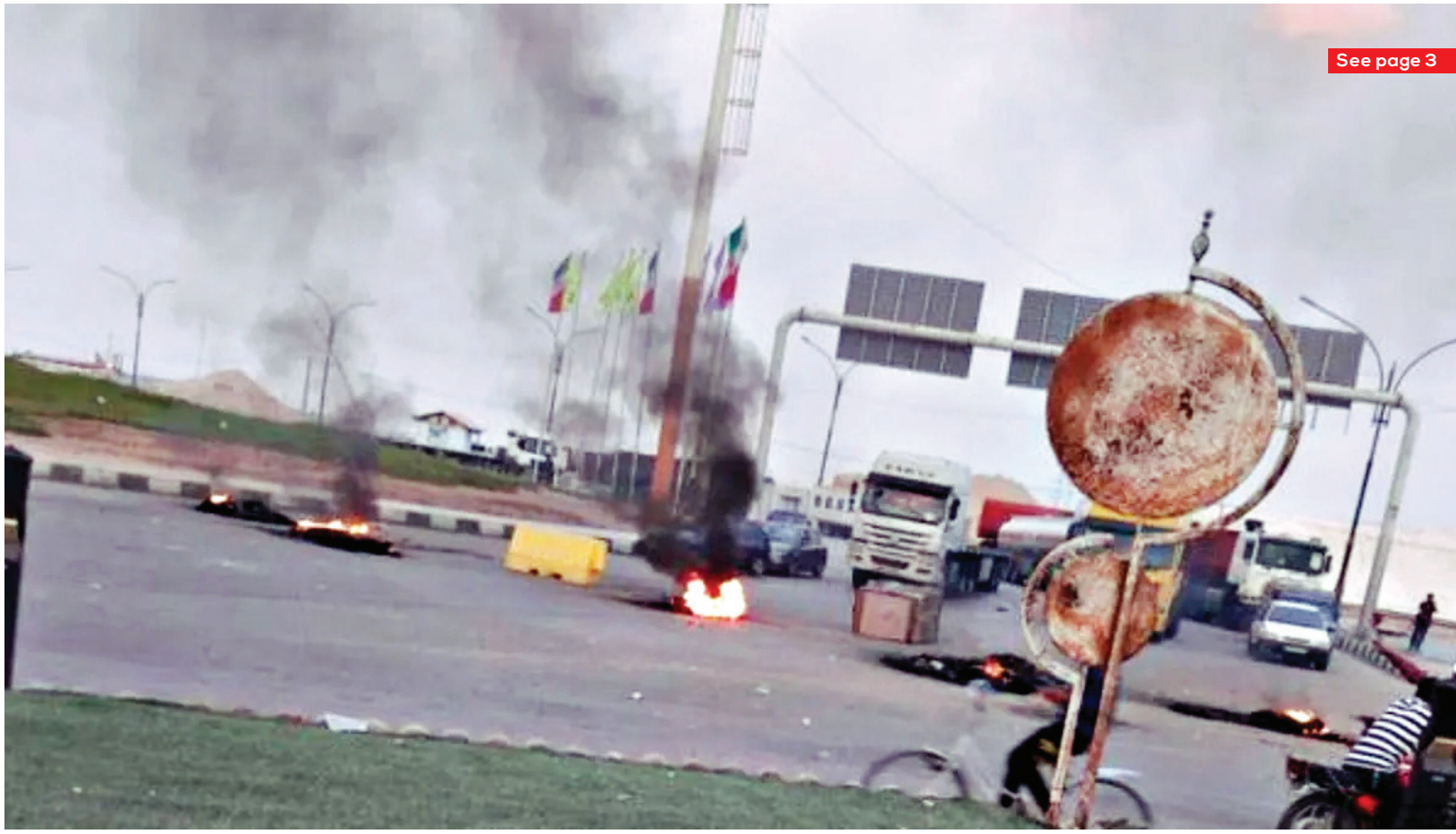


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# The truth about the incident in Mahshahr



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## Monthly non-oil exports from PSEEZ rise despite sanctions

**TEHRAN** — The value of non-oil exports from Pars Special Economic Energy Zone (PSEEZ) in Iran's southwestern port city of Assaluyeh increased 39 percent in terms of weight and five percent in terms of value in the Iranian calendar month of Aban (October 23-November 21) compared to the last year's same period, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

The increase in the country's non-

oil exports comes in a time when Iran has been facing many restrictions regarding shipping, insurance, and banking transaction under the unjust U.S. sanctions.

According to the PSEEZ Customs Managing Director, Ahmad Pour-Heydar, in the mentioned time span, over \$500 million worth of non-oil commodities were exported from the zone. **→4**

## Tehran, Baku to deepen defense, security cooperation

**TEHRAN** — Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, chief of staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, and visiting Azeri Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev on Wednesday vowed to do their best to deepen Tehran-Baku relations, especially in defense and security fields.

Reviewing the necessary bedrocks for expansion of all-out relations, the two senior officials laid emphasis on

deepening and strengthening mutual security cooperation through a strategic point of view.

Major General Baqeri said that some of the regional and trans-regional players can't tolerate friendly relations between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan, adding, "Iran views close relations between the people and the armed forces of the two nations as its strategic priority." **→2**

## ‘Foreign agents kill protesters, security forces in Iraq’

Iraq's envoy to the United Nations has blamed the infiltration elements for killing demonstrators and security forces and burning public and private property.

Nearly two months of protests have rocked primarily the capital city of Baghdad and southern areas of Iraq.

The protesters have expressed frustration with the failing economy and have demanded political and anti-corruption reforms.

The rallies have, however, turned into violent confrontations in numerous occasions, with reports alleging that certain foreign-backed elements have been seeking to wreak havoc in the country. Meanwhile, UN Special Envoy Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert said that "out of love for their homeland", thousands of Iraqis have taken to the streets, asking for their country to reach its "full potential for the benefit of all Iraqis". **→13**

## America has no right to slam violence (it has helped provoke or executed) anywhere

By Martin Love

**NORTH CAROLINA** — From one American's perspective, Ayatollah Khamenei jumped on Twitter this week and said something quite true even if it is not ever said nearly enough: "Our main enemy is one of the most evil, cruelest governments in the world. It supports terrorists like ISIS and the Zionists and former dictatorships such as the Shah's in Iran and the cruel Saudi family...."

The Ayatollah's statement is worth unpacking a bit.

First, Khamenei did not mention in his assertion how the U.S. goes around the world trying to unseat existing governments to install its chosen, usually unelected "leaders". The baldest example of this kind of action of late was the recent coup d'état in Bolivia, and then we have the desired coup in Venezuela and Cuba and other countries such as Syria, plus scores of earlier coups, accomplished or attempted, since World War II, including the overthrow of Mossadegh in the early 1950s. None of these countries under attack in one form or another, including Iran, have ever, ever constituted any kind of real threat to ANY aspect of the United States or to Americans EXCEPT as a threat to the utterly perverse desire of the U.S. government to destroy any kind of opposition to any of its overweening "exceptionalist" policies.

In other words, the U.S. wants full spectrum dominance to dictate to anyone, anywhere, and not only is this a preposterous and undemocratic demand, especially when the chosen means to achieve it has not involved diplomacy but violence which has made the U.S. and its allies de facto (if not yet de jure) war criminals of the worst kind. Nothing like

this has been witnessed even remotely in the modern era except quite clearly in the case of Nazi Germany in its quest for lebensraum which culminated in its defeat, thanks to the Soviet Union largely during World War 2. The entire world knows this but has yet to call the U.S. (and its allies) to account because of cowardice and fear of becoming a U.S. target themselves. There is no other explanation that makes any sense. So much for the big picture, which is undeniable, even for many Americans who have been subjected to so much propaganda by the mainstream U.S. media since it was co-opted by narrow corporate ownership and various billionaire oligarchs that their heads spin trying to get a grip in what is fact and what is not.

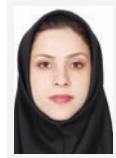
And to make matters worse, the U.S. is now teetering on the edge of a potential economic and social dislocation it has not experienced since the Civil War almost 200 years ago as every President since Jimmy Carter has been worse than the preceding one in advocating destructive policies at home and abroad that have undermined the health of the U.S. internally in almost every dimension. In this the U.S. media has been complicit, and since this writer addressed the case of Thomas Friedman of the New York Times recently, it's time to narrow the focus to yet another U.S. journalist, this time to the Washington Post's Jason Rezaian, who for a time was the Post's correspondent in Tehran until he was arrested and jailed for over a year and then released by the Islamic Republic along with two or three other American prisoners at Evvin.

By all accounts Rezaian is a decent man and

he seems, far more than Friedman ever has, to attempt to get his reporting more or less correct at the Washpo, but he clearly does not succeed. He recently castigated the "brazen use of force" by Iranian authorities to put down the protests in Iran that the rise in gasoline prices allegedly provoked, and in which an alleged 200 or so people died amid some significant physical destruction.

But at the same time in the same article, he failed to point out that the current relative economic misery in Iran is almost exclusively the result of draconian U.S. economic sanctions and the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA over 18 months ago, plus the failure so far of the other signatories to the JCPOA to assist Iran in getting around the sanctions to keep the Iranian economy healthy. (There WAS to be a quid pro quo with the erection of the JCPOA!)

Rezaian also claimed that as a result of the protests, Iran's authorities can now have few illusions about the degree of popular support they enjoy among the population, and that there are "plenty of people (outside Iran) salivating over what they see as the imminent demise of the Islamic Republic" even as they have no idea or concept about whatever might come next. Rezaian and those alleged others fail to understand that the demise of the "Islamic Republic" is NOT going to happen even if changes instigated by the Iranian people alone occur. Opposition groups such as the MEK and those around the late Shah's son have been claiming they have helped establish an opposition movement inside Iran to which they are connected, Rezaian wrote, but at least he has the sense to call such assertions false. **→13**



## ARTICLE

**Mahnaz Abdi**  
Head of the TehranTimes  
Economy Desk

## Indigenizing modern technology in steel sector nullifies sanctions

**W**hile the U.S. unilateral sanctions on Iran in recent years have upset the Iranian industry in some sectors, the statistics indicate that the minerals sector has not been affected by the sanctions, while it's been also improved.

The improvement is more noticeable in the steel sector, as according to the World Steel Association (WSA), Iran became the world's tenth largest steel producer in 2018.

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

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

Also as announced by the head of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), annual production of crude steel in Iran is planned to rise three million tons to 28 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020).

Such progress in this sector is mainly the result of "indigenizing" approach, which is seriously followed up in all industrial sectors of the country.

In fact, indigenizing the technology of manufacturing required products, equipment and machinery to attain self-reliance is the major economic approach of the country during the sanctions.

Such approach is now seriously followed up in the oil industry as the major sector in Iran's economy.

On Sunday, Sirous Talari, the chairman of the Board of Directors of Iranian Association of Manufacturers of Oil Industry Equipment, said nearly 85 percent of the country's oil industry equipment are manufactured based on indigenized knowledge and technology.

And in terms of steel, Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani has said that the country has achieved a proper self-reliance in this sector. **→4**



## ARTICLE

**Gerold Bodeker**  
FAO Representative  
to Iran

## Let's mind the soil as it truly matters

**S**oil is an essential natural resource for sustaining life on Earth. It is a core component of land resources, agricultural development and ecological sustainability that constitutes the basis for the preservation and advancement of human life on this planet.

Soil is one of nature's most complex ecosystems, contains a great diversity of organisms which play many vital functions such as the breakdown of plant debris, take in components from the atmosphere, and aerate the soil as well as regulation of carbon, nutrient and hydrological cycles and breakdown of toxic elements.

This natural resource also plays an important role in supporting animal biodiversity above ground, including wildlife and domesticated livestock.

The most widely recognised function of the soil is its support for food production. It is estimated that 95% of our food is directly or indirectly produced on our soils. Healthy soil supplies the essential nutrients, water and oxygen that our food-producing plants need to grow and flourish.

Soil is also crucial for ensuring the continued growth and maintenance of natural and managed vegetation, including our diverse forests and grasslands and the huge breadth of species and varieties that are cultivated or managed for their food, feed, fuel, fibre and medicinal products.

Soil organic matter is one of the major pools of carbon in the biosphere and is important both as a driver of climatic change and as a response variable to climate change, capable of acting both as a source and sink of carbon. Therefore, when managed sustainably, it can play an important role in mitigating and ameliorating the risks and effects of climate change.

Functional soil plays a key role in the supply of clean water and resilience to floods and drought. Water infiltration through soil traps pollutants and prevents them from leaching into the groundwater. The soil captures and stores water, making it available for absorption by crops, thus minimizing surface evaporation and maximizing water use efficiency and productivity. Healthy soil with a high organic matter content can store large amounts of water. **→12**



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## Nation gave U.S. another slap in the face, says IRGC chief

**TEHRAN** — Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says the Iranian nation gave the U.S. another slap in the face, referring to the foreign-backed riots which ended after people rallied in support of the Islamic Republic.

"The Iranian nation in recent weeks gave the global arrogance, especially the U.S., another slap in the face... so that they return to their internal anxieties," Major General Hossein Salami said on Wednesday, IRNA reported.

"Iran has stood for its national and Islamic values for four decades," he emphasized. **→3**



## Leader urges Islamic mercy in regard to recent riots

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The Leader of the Islamic Revolution on Wednesday urged relevant state bodies to honor Islamic mercy in regard to those who committed violent acts and caused insecurity in the protests that followed a rise in gas price.

The call by the Leader came in response to a request by Secretary of Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani on how to deal with those who were killed or wounded in the protests as well as those who acted viciously.

The Leader said those were killed without being involved in fueling riots should be considered martyrs and their families should receive stipends.

On others (those who instigated riots or committed violent acts under the influence of anti-Islamic Revolution propaganda), the Leader said each group must be treated in a way that is closer to the Islamic mercy.

Shamkhani has prepared a report according to a verdict by the Leader soon after eruption of protests to realize the root causes and reasons behind the unrests and providing support for the families of the victims.

The Supreme National Security Council's report has suggested that, within the existing legal framework, those ordinary citizens who were killed during the protests innocently without any destructive role, should be recognized as martyrs and their family should also be subject to services by the Martyrs Foundation.

In the meantime, the report has suggested that those who were killed in the protests in any way should be entitled to receive Diyeh (blood money based on the Islamic law) and their family members should also be appeased.

## Zarif rejects rumors of resignation

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Wednesday rejected claims that he has resigned.

"If I had resigned I would not be here," Zarif told reporters in the yard of the cabinet of ministers building.



An Iranian news website, which is critical of the government, had claimed that the chief diplomat has resigned.

In relevant remarks, Alireza Mo'ez, the deputy head of the presidential communications office, rejected the rumors and released some photos of Zarif at the yard of the cabinet of ministers building.

"As soon as media outlets wrote about possibility of promotion in the regional negotiations and diplomatic movements, some embarked on spreading rumors of resignation. Zarif in now in the yard of cabinet of ministers building," Mo'ez wrote on his Twitter account.

## Iran opposes Japan's SDF dispatch to Middle East

*By staff and agency*

Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday that Iran is against Japan's plan to dispatch Self-Defense Forces to the Middle East.

In an exclusive interview with NHK, he said Tehran is waiting for Japan's final decision, but it doesn't believe that the presence of any foreign forces in the region would help boost stability, security or peace.



Araghchi, who had visited Japan ahead of the JCPOA joint commission meeting in Vienna on December 6, said the United States' policies are the root cause of escalating tension in the Middle East.

The Asahi Shimbun reported on October 18 that Japan is considering dispatching the SDF to areas near the Strait of Hormuz to protect tankers and other vessels on its own, rather than joining the coalition pushed by the Trump administration.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga acknowledged

at a news conference on Oct. 18 that Tokyo is mulling the option.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe instructed government officials to consider the dispatch of the SDF independently when he met with the chief cabinet secretary, foreign minister and defense minister at the National Security Council on the afternoon of Oct. 18.

Although Washington is a key ally to Tokyo, Abe is set to opt out of joining the coalition to avoid worsened relations with Iran, an important oil supplier to Japan over many years.

Araqchi said in his meeting with Abe on Tuesday he elaborated on Iran's position in this regard.

He said Iran is inviting all countries which are affected by developments in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz to support Iran's initiative known as the Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE).

Araghchi also criticized the U.S. for withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear agreement, known as the JCPOA, and imposing "maximum pressure" on Iran.

The top diplomat also said that if Iran cannot benefit from the nuclear deal, the country will certainly take the next step, including the rejection of the International Atomic Energy Agency's inspections.

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.

# Rouhani says Iran resists sanctions without closing door to diplomacy

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that Iran is resisting sanctions but his country has not closed the door to negotiations.

"We have no way but resistance against sanctions, however, we have not closed door of negotiations," Rouhani said during a speech at Insurance and Development Conference.

The president said if the sanctions against Iran are lifted he will be ready to meet the leaders of the countries party to the 2015 nuclear deal.

"If they remove sanctions, we are prepared for talks at the level of 5+1 group's heads of states," Rouhani remarked.

The nuclear deal was signed between Iran and the 5+1 group (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council) plus Germany in July 2015.

Under the agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and confirmed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran was obligated to put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

However, Donald Trump, a presidential candidate favored by hawks in the U.S. and Israel, started harsh attacks against the JCPOA, vowing to tear it up if elected president.

Finally, in May 2018, he officially abandoned the JCPOA and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history against Iran.

The Trump administration not only returned the previous sanctions lifted under the nuclear deal it added new ones, including a total ban on Iran's oil exports.

Trump's administration has even threatened to penalize any country or company that does business with Iran.

**■ Rouhani says he answered Obama's phone call upon advice by advisors**

Rouhani also pointing to his phone conversation with Barack Obama, the former U.S. president, in 2013, when the nuclear



negotiations were underway between Iran and the 5+1 group.

"My advisers who accompanied me in visit to New York convinced me to answer phone call of the United States' president for progress in talks. I had doubts to do so, but all my advisers unanimously told me to do so and I accepted. So, at the last moments when I was leaving New York, the United States' president called and I answered."

He added that the phone conversation lasted for 15-20 minutes and it acted like a "very strong locomotive for movement of the trains of talks."

"We talked about the framework and he raised three issues. I told him we are not ready for the three issues. However, if the first issue which is nuclear related is negotiated and settled and you implemented it, negotiations on the second and third issues will be put on agenda," Rouhani explained.

Rouhani did not refer to the two other issues.

He added, "This move (phone talks) resulted in reaching the Geneva agreement in less than 100 days and temporary removal of sanctions in various areas and also return of 700 million dollars of Iran's blocked money in banks on a monthly basis. The most important achievement of this agreement was recognizing Iran's right to enrich uranium in that 100-day talks."

Elsewhere, Rouhani said that the nuclear deal could have been reached sooner than 2015 but it was delayed to disruptive efforts by Saudi Arabia and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"You know, we could reach the final deal in 2014; however, it was delayed to 2015 because of the pressure by the Saudis and Zionists. You know that the Saudi foreign minister and the Israeli prime minister went to Vienna (venue of the nuclear talks) and promised the United States to reduce oil price to make Iran sign whatever you say and not this agreement

which is ready today. They talked with the United States when the deal was ready," the president stated.

However, he said, Iran resisted and controlled inflations despite a sharp decrease in oil prices.

"Our economic condition was stabilized and they saw that they could not succeed and told Saudi Arabia and the Zionist regime that you are wrong and Iran will not surrender and signed the deal in 2015," Rouhani said.

**■ 'Trump was deceived into quitting nuclear deal'**

Rouhani also said that Trump was deceived into quitting the JCPOA.

"They deceived him into quitting the JCPOA and imposing sanctions against Iran to cause collapse of the system... They did not know that the Iranian people stand by their country's independence and dignity," the president remarked.

He also said, "They violated the deal and it should be remained in our historical memory that Iran signed an agreement with six of the world's major powers and violated it. We are still committed to the deal and reducing our commitments is within the framework of the agreement."

In response to the abrogation of the JCPOA by the U.S. and a failure by the remaining parties, particularly the Europeans, to protect Iran's economy from the sanctions effects Iran has started to partially reduce its commitments to the JCPOA in accordance to the paragraph 36 of the multilateral agreement.

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

Iran started to scale down its commitments after waiting for a full year that the remaining parties honor their obligations.

However, Tehran has insisted if sanctions are lifted it will immediately reverse its decisions.

## Zarif condemns medicine embargo on Iran

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday that those countries which seemingly support the 2015 nuclear deal are unfortunately preventing exports of medicines for special patients in Iran.

"As the issue is necessary and important, I am telling to the Europeans another time that Iran does not expect a country which has voiced support for the JCPOA (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) to prevent a pharmaceutical company from exporting medicines for patients suffering from special diseases," Zarif said on the sidelines of cabinet session with a reference to his visit to Sweden.

"Wound-dressing for the children suffering from butterfly disease can't be produced in all countries. Of course, Iran experienced good progress but it is being produced in low quantity. A few number of pharmaceutical companies can produce it," the minister stated.

"A Swedish company that has been exporting it (wound-dressing for butterfly patients) to Iran, is now unable to continue its trade with us due to the U.S. sanctions and oppressive behavior. I have to remind the Europeans that it is very good that you have decided to join INTEX, but as the Americans are claiming that medicines and humanitarian services are not included in sanctions list, you Europeans do not embark on imposing medicine embargo on Iran,"

Zarif said.

Butterfly disease, scientifically called Epidermolysis bullosa (EB), is a hereditary genetic disease characterized by different degrees of skin and mucosal fragility. The pathogenesis of this rare disease involves mutation in skin structural proteins resulting in four major types of EB, including EB simplex, junctional EB, dystrophic EB and Kindler's syndrome based on ultrastructural mutation level in skin and mucosa.

These patients suffer from many physical complications including infection, upper and lower extremities deformities, severe itching, widespread skin ulcerations that make them susceptible to skin cancer, severe chronic constipation, dysphasia and odynophagia due to narrowing of the esophagus. Dental problems, oral mucosal involvements, urinary tract dysfunction and kidney fibrosis are other complications.

Zarif further voiced satisfaction over a positive move by 6 European countries that joined the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) that is supposed to ease trade with Iran regardless of the U.S.

**Zarif says a Swedish company that has been exporting wound-dressing for butterfly patients to Iran "is now unable to continue its trade with us due to the U.S. sanctions and oppressive behavior."**

## Japan say Iran has been informed about sending warships to Middle East

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said that Japan has informed Iran about its decision to send warships to the Middle East to reinvigorate its data and information, noting that Tokyo is still resolved to continue close relations with Tehran.

"We explained it to Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araqchi, during his visit to Japan and his meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, that Tokyo is increasing its defense forces in the Middle East to bolster its data and information (spectrum)," Suga said.

"Abe told Araqchi on Tuesday that Tokyo has decided to dispatch more defense forces (naval fleet) to the Middle Eastern region to promote its capabilities in collecting information to be sure about safe movement of ships in the region," he further said.

In the meantime, Kyodo reported that Japan is trying to have share in protecting fleets passing through the Strait of Hormuz with joining the U.S.-led coalition.



However, Araqchi, who was on an official visit to Japan, told Japan's state TV that his country is opposed to Tokyo's decision of forwarding fleet of warships to the Middle East.

In November, Iran warned that the U.S.-led naval coalition which officially launched operations in Bahrain would further exacerbate the security conditions in the region, calling on

neighbors to rely on their own power.

"History shows that the U.S.-led coalitions have always been nothing but unfit names that have not contributed to security so far and further fomented more insecurity and instability in different parts of the world," Foreign Ministry spokesman Seyed Abbas Mousavi said.

He said the U.S. misuses other countries' name to legitimize its unilateral presence

Mousavi noted that the U.S. leadership of a naval coalition in the Persian Gulf indicates Washington's weakness and lack of international legitimacy.

He called on the regional states to rely on their own and their neighbors' capacities to establish sustainable and all-out security in the region.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran as a country with lengthiest coastline in the Persian Gulf will continue safeguarding its economic and security interests, including the security and safety of shipping, with maximum power," he added.

## Tehran, Baku to deepen defense, security cooperation

**1 →** "Iran is resolved to pave the ground for creation of more capacities and opportunities to promote Tehran-Baku ties," the top Iranian commander remarked.

Mustafayev, for his part, underscored that Baqeri's recent visit to Baku was a milestone in Iran-Azerbaijan relations.

He added, "Major General Baqeri's point

of views and stances have cemented brotherly relations between the two countries that share common history and culture."

In mid-January, Major General Baqeri visited Azerbaijan where he and Azerbaijani Defense Minister Lieutenant General Zakir Hasanov signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to bolster defense

cooperation between the two countries.

During the meeting with Baqeri, Hasanov said Baqeri's visit provided the opportunity to review the activities of Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Defense Commission, saying necessary recommendation has been made to enhance its performance.

The joint commission held its first meeting

in Baku in October 2017, with a high-ranking delegation from Iran's Defense Ministry in attendance.

During his two-day stay in Baku, Baqeri also held talks with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev as well as Chairman of National Assembly Ogtay Asadov and Prime Minister Novruz Mamedov.



# U.S. pressuring pharmaceutical companies to stop Iran sales: minister

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Health Minister Saeed Namaki has said the U.S. is exerting pressure on all pharmaceutical companies to stop the sale of medicine to Iran.

Namaki made the remarks in an interview with Iran Press on the sidelines of the weekly cabinet session.

“They have put pressure on all our financial transactions regarding medicinal drugs and are exerting pressure on all pharmaceutical companies to stop the sale of medicines to us,” he said.

Officials in Washington repeatedly claimed they would not stop the sale of medicines and food to Iran, but they have lied, and the flow of vital medicines has been stopped, the minister explained.

“We buy medicines in various unofficial ways and through brokers, of course, the medicines we buy are original, but with very limited and expensive resources, we never impose this expense on our people.”

Namaki stated, “We called on the World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom, to intervene so that the voices of our oppressed people are heard and America’s bullying against Iranians is exposed.”

The minister asserted that the health of the people should not be the subject of politics.

“We hope that the pressure is lifted on the Iranian people, a nation that has fulfilled



**Saeed Namaki says the health of the people should not be the subject of politics.**

all its obligations,” he added.

President Donald Trump withdrew Washington from the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, in May 2018 and restored

the previous sanctions against Iran and ordered new ones. Trump has described his government’s sanctions against Iran as “economic war”.

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

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

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

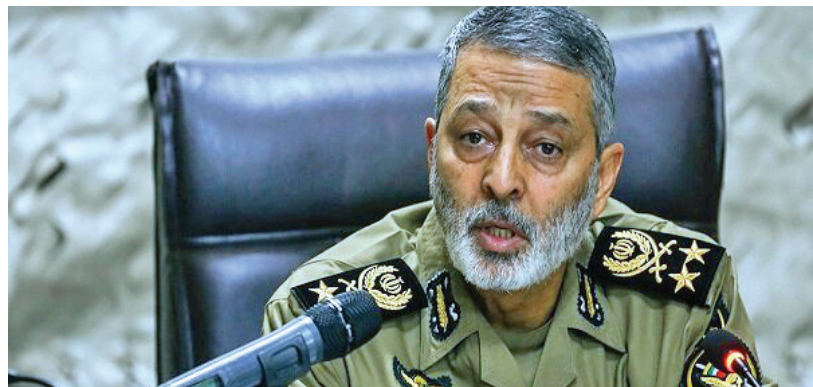
Also on Monday, Zarif urged the European parties to the JCPOA to carry out their “minimal human duty” of selling pharmaceuticals to Iran.

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

“#EconomicTerrorism kills,” he added.

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

## Military outfit means sacrificing oneself for nation: Army chief



**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Army Chief Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi has said the military outfit worn by Iranian servicemen shows that they have chosen the path of sacrificing themselves in order to defend the country and the people.

“We are grateful for the blood of the martyrs, veterans and our predecessors,” General Mousavi said on Wednesday, addressing Army’s servicemen.

“We commit ourselves before the Great God to preserve this legacy better than ever and hand it to you, the youths,” he added, Mehr reported.

The remarks came weeks after protests erupted in some cities in Iran against increasing gasoline price. In certain cases, the protests turned violent as some rioters clashed with police, using knives and guns.

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

The protests lasted just for a few days.

Mousavi said on Monday that the armed forces have been trained to counter the

enemy’s sedition in Iran.

“The necessary training has been given for the forces, and of course the necessary preparedness has been attained,” he said.

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

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

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

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

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

## Nation gave U.S. another slap in the face, says IRGC chief



**I →** “They wanted to tie maximum pressure, which means economic sanctions and psychological pressure, with internal incidents,” Salami said, highlighting the enemy’s failure to reach its goal.

He said the enemy thought the Iranian nation would stand up against their system, but its “assumptions about the Iranian nation is always wrong.”

The Iranian people recognize the implications of U.S. policies and supports, the general remarked.

“Crime, murder and brutality are the fruits of U.S. policies,” he said. “This issue gave the Iranian nation an awareness that the U.S. wants nothing but poverty and backwardness for all nations of the world.”

“This policy is dead in today’s world,” he said, adding, “It is the nations that isolate and undermine the U.S. and drive it to the sidelines step by step.”

Late on November 14, the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPDC) issued a statement to recount details for new prices of fuels in the country, which was followed by

another statement the following day by Management and Planning Organization chief (MPO) Mohammad Baqer Nobakht who said that the revenues from price increase will be paid in form of cash subsidy to 60 million people.

In what followed after the decision, protests erupted in several cities with people calling on the government to reverse course. The demonstrations, however, turned violent in some cities, with clashes between security forces and certain rioters damaging public property.

The damage caused to public and private property is tens of millions of dollars.

In order to put an end to the unrest, people from all walks of life took to the streets across Iran in the following days to condemn the acts of violence in certain cities by some hooligans and anti-revolutionary elements who derailed the people’s legitimate protests.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has urged the authorities to take good care of the affected people and assuage the hardship caused by the move.

## The truth about the incident in Mahshahr

By Mohammad Ghaderi

What happened during the recent incidents in Mahshahr is distorted and widely circulated in the opposition media outlets. The incident represents some important points that can be examined from several aspects.

The recent events in Mahshahr can generally be categorized as follows:

### ■ A) The partial version of the incident

First stage: creating an emotional atmosphere to deepen an extensive psychological operation. At this stage, without providing any clear evidence, it is claimed that the citizens of Mahshahr are living in abject poverty despite living in a rich region that supplies a large amount of the country’s oil and gas. It is claimed that they do not even have access to bathroom!

Second stage: claiming that rioters and armed thugs were ordinary people. At this stage, by playing innocent, it is claimed that the citizens of Mahshahr (not armed thugs who were mainly non-native) blocked the road to Imam Khomeini Port and its petrochemical complexes only by using few rocks and firing some tires because of discrimination and injustice.

Third stage: deliberately ignoring the issue of security threat to petrochemical complexes and blocking the country’s key energy route. It is a critical issue. If it had happened, it would have created a crisis in the country. Interestingly, the opposition media outlets have downplayed the threat and refused to refer to the background of the trained armed rioters and their role in creating an atmosphere of insecurity in the city.

Fourth stage: spreading false news, exaggerating the incident, and claiming mass shooting by police and security forces with an emphasis on the keyword of the “IRGC”. In the incident in Mahshahr, police and security forces protected people’s lives and properties, as well as vital energy production and distribution lines against foreign-affiliated

armed rioters. The opposition media outlets are trying to describe the defense by security forces as an anti-popular and repressive behavior that resulted in murder of people.

In this regard, the necessary actions taken by the forces are being falsely reported by incisive keywords such as “the use of tanks”, “DShK” and “military helicopters”. This is while, in comparison to the similar cases in other countries, the Iranian police and security showed restraint in confronting rioters. The council responsible for security in city or province in no country allows armed thugs to disturb the country’s order and security.

### ■ B) The truth

First: a group of people, like many other parts in the country, publicly protested the imprudence in announcing and implementing the gasoline price reform.

Second: shortly after, several groups derailed popular protests. The groups were affiliated to the Mujahedin-e-Khalq terrorist group, counter-revolutionary currents and some intelligence agencies of neighboring countries. They led the protesters by chanting separatist slogans along with violent behavior.

Third: Some native and non-native rioters were called by social media to join the trained groups. In the next step, rioters blocked crucial roads for transporting energy across the country and attacked military bases and public places.

Fourth: After seeing such violence, the majority of protesters immediately gave up their legitimate grievances and protests. Obviously, this move by people shows that they had no problem with the establishment itself and did not intend to destroy public and private properties.

Fifth: Armed rioters, who were being led by foreign-affiliated elements, turned the city into a battlefield. By blocking the main roads for transferring energy, the rioters practically created a security problem.

Sixth: The protocols regarding security in Iran, like all

other countries, follow particular instructions. Therefore, maintaining and establishing security in Mahshahr and Imam Khomeini Port required more serious action due to their critical sensitivity. In other words, the seizure of these areas means the blockage of the country’s vessels in the field of energy and export. Naturally, no government will tolerate such a disruption. Therefore, police and security forces countered the saboteurs based on legal orders.

There are some important points in this regard that should be considered:

1. Those who had taken anti-security actions were not ordinary people or even protesters; rather they were trained elements who acted in a very clever and well-planned manner.

2. Basically, such actions, which occurred almost exclusively in Mahshahr and Imam Khomeini Port, are by no means comparable to burning banks. Burning banks or other public places has a much more limited effect, while such actions have a national effect. Preventing fuel and other petrochemical products from being transported across the country can both disrupt people’s daily lives and cause mental insecurity. Therefore, it is an irrational expectation to such an action be gently confronted.

3. Those who showed this behavior were all armed with firearms. It is illegal in our country to purchase, possess and use arms, so the anti-security actions completely amounts to moharebeh (waging war against God).

4. According to the examinations, if police and security forces did not take action, not only the entire import from Imam Khomeini Port would have been influenced, but also the death toll would have increased.

Consequently, despite the false propaganda campaign and widespread media warfare against the Islamic Republic, what happened in Mahshahr was not massacre of ordinary people. Iran will take revenge for innocent people who were killed by the rioters.

## Russia warns about attempts to weaken Iran-Iraq ties

By staff and agency

Russia’s Ambassador to the United Nations Vasily Nebenzya has warned about attempts to weaken relations between Iran and Iraq and drag Iraq into a regional confrontation.



“We are concerned about possible negative impact of the situation around Iran that is being inflated artificially on the internal political situation in Iraq. Attempts to drag the country in the regional confrontation destabilize the domestic environment in Iraq,” website of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the UN quoted him as saying on Tuesday at a UN Security Council briefing on Iraq.

“Iraq has the right to build and develop good relations with its neighbors. No one has the right to undermine those relations,” Nebenzya added.

A group of rioters stormed into the Islamic Republic’s diplomatic mission in Najaf on November 27 and set it ablaze. They also replaced the Iranian flag with an Iraqi one. Reportedly, the consulate had already been evacuated of its staff.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Ali al-Hakim apologized to the Islamic Republic for the act.

This was the second attack on an Iranian diplomatic mission in Iraq after its office in the Shia holy city of Karbala was attacked last month.

Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi said on November 28 that the attack was aimed at damaging relations between Iran and Iraq.

“Definitely, the objective behind setting fire on Iran’s consulate in Najaf is damaging good and brotherly relations between the two neighboring countries of Iran and Iraq by certain foreign and internal elements in Iraq,” the ambassador remarked.

Masjedi noted that the good relationship between Iran and Iraq have made certain countries in the region angry.

He called on the Iranian people to practice self-restraint, noting that actions done by a limited number of rioters do not reflect actions of the Iraqi people.

Iranian Ambassador to London Hamid Baedinejad said in tweet on November 29 that British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has expressed concern over attack on Iran’s consulate.

## IAEA chief says may meet Iranian officials in Vienna

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The new UN nuclear watchdog chief said on Tuesday he may hold talks with Iranian officials who will be in Vienna later this week for a meeting of the remaining JCPOA parties.

Rafael Grossi, the director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told Reuters he hopes he can help set a new tone with the Islamic Republic in his first face-to-face talks.



He also described Iran’s nuclear program as one of the priorities he would consider “immediately”.

“I’m the new kid on the block in this relationship. They’ve been there, now they get a new DG, so we have to sit down together, start talking and take it from there,” he said.

“Let me start my conversation with Iran. I don’t think it would be appropriate, and it would be unfair, to pronounce myself about their attitudes before I sit down with them.”

Grossi has said he will be “firm but fair” on inspections generally, including in Iran, without spelling out what that means. He told Reuters he is satisfied with the work the IAEA’s inspections team has been doing.

Under a nuclear agreement Iran signed with the 5+1 nations in July 2015, Tehran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. The IAEA was tasked to monitor Iran’s compliance with the agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

But in May 2018 U.S. President Donald Trump pulled his country out of the JCPOA and reinstituted sanctions on Iran.

Iran and the remaining parties launched talks to save the JCPOA after the U.S. withdrawal, but the three EU parties to the deal (France, Britain, and Germany) have failed to ensure Iran’s economic interests.

Iran started to partially reduce commitments under the nuclear deal exactly a year after the U.S. abandoned the deal and imposed the harshest ever sanctions on the country under the “maximum pressure” policy. At the time Iran announced that its “strategic patience” is over.

So far, Iran has taken four steps in that regard.

However, Tehran has repeatedly said its measures will be reversed as soon as Europe finds practical ways to shield the Iranian economy from unilateral U.S. sanctions.



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	322528.0
IFX	4195.95

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,518 rials
GBP	54,595 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$61.99/b
WTI	\$57.07/b
OPEC Basket	\$62.50/b
Gold	\$1,479.15/oz
Silver	\$817.22/oz
Platinum	\$918.30/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Monthly non-oil exports from PSEEZ rise despite sanctions

**1 →** The official put the weight of the exported products at over 1.6 million tons, saying that “The products included methanol, propane, butane, light and heavy polyethylene, ammonia, sulfur, and styrene.”

The goods were exported to China, UAE, South Korea, India, Japan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Turkey, Egypt, and Kuwait and so on, he added.

Iran exported 80 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$24.5 billion during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22), registering a 17-percent rise in terms of weight.



According to Deputy Industry Minister Hossein Modares Kh- iabani, in terms of value the figure fell 11 percent in comparison to the last year’s same time span.

The official noted that the government has allocated \$70 billion rials (about \$20.7 million) of facilities to be used as incentives for the country’s exporters in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020), adding that such incentives could boost the country’s non-oil exports.

On May 18, 2018, the U.S. President Donald Trump announced his country’s withdrawal from Iran’s nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

The U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA and imposing sanctions in contravention of the UN Resolution, requiring to lift international sanctions on Iran, have been condemned by all the other signatories to the deal, i.e. China, Russia, France, England, and Germany.

Malaysia to open its doors to 16,000 APEC 2020 delegates next year

About 16,000 delegates are expected to make their way to Malaysia for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) 2020.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Darell Leiking said these delegates would attend more than 120 meetings in five cities around Malaysia, scheduled throughout next year.

“This venue has a historic significance of being the host for the APEC Leaders’ Meeting in 1998 that was hosted by our current Prime Minister. Next year, the same Prime Minister will host APEC 2020.

The “hosting of APEC 2020 will emphasize on three main elements – Hospitality, Substance and Inclusivity.”

Guided by the theme “Optimizing Human Potential Towards a Future of Shared Prosperity”, the minister said APEC 2020 would drive the APEC 2020 agenda through three priority areas.

These areas are improving the narrative of trade and investment; inclusive economic participation through digital economy and technology; and driving innovative sustainability.

“In November 2020, we expect to welcome 21 Leaders from APEC Economies to deliver a consensus declaration on the critical issues and launch the new Post-2020 Vision of APEC.

“Adding to the long list of agenda items for APEC 2020, the year 2020 is also the end of the Bogor Goals.

“This means, Malaysia is entrusted with an enormous task of leading the 21 APEC economies to draft the future of APEC beyond 2020,” said the minister, adding that inclusivity was central to APEC 2020.

“In line with the inclusivity agenda, and to ensure appropriate distribution of prosperity, we have made it a point for Malaysian brands and SMEs are accorded special priority to directly benefit from the hosting.

“At the margins of the meetings, there will also be programs arranged for Malaysian businesses, including SMEs, Social Enterprises and Start-ups to showcase their products and capabilities.

The “objective is to incorporate the Malaysia Boleh spirit among us,” he said, adding these efforts were consistent with the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030.

(Source: nst.com.my)

Iran, Kyrgyzstan open new chapter in economic relations

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s capital hosted the 12th Iran-Kyrgyzstan Joint Economic Committee meeting on December 3-4, during which the two sides discussed numerous issues regarding expansion of trade ties.

The event was co-chaired by Iranian Minister of Transport and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami and Kyrgyzstan’s Minister of Transport and Roads Janat Beishenov, the portal of Iran’s Transport and Urban Development Ministry reported.

Speaking in the opening ceremony of the meeting on Tuesday, the Iranian transport minister underlined the two countries’ long history of good economic relations and said holding this joint economic committee meeting three years after the previous meeting is an indication of the two sides’ determination for boosting trade ties.

The official noted that the base for cooperation between the two sides will be



*Iranian Minister of Transport and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami (L) and Kyrgyzstan’s Minister of Transport and Roads Janat Beishenov in the 12th Iran-Kyrgyzstan Joint Economic Committee meeting held in Tehran during December 3-4*

Indigenizing modern technology in steel sector nullifies sanctions

**1 →** “This industry can be still developed and regarding the huge investment made in this sector during the past years, we will soon observe a good balance also in production chain of this metal in the country”, the minister said in a meeting with the members of Iran Steel Association in late June.

“Steel industry is one of the industries in which some good investment has been made and today it has become a production advantage”, Rahmani further underscored.

Indigenizing technology in steel sector today shields this sector from the sanctions, so it is atop agenda for the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade and its subsidiaries.

As IMIDRO head has said, “Today, we are witnessing a national will and determination for self-reliance and promotion of production and indigenizing should be in fact considered as a necessity in this regard”.

And the good news is that based on the released statistics this approach is bringing result, as World Steel Association’s latest report shows that production of crude steel in Iran during the first eight months of 2019 has risen six percent from that of the same period of time in 2018.

The WSA put the country’s crude steel output at 17.188 million tons in the eight-month period of this year, rising from 16.153

million tons in the same time span of the previous year.

Consequently, Iran’s production of crude steel is rising despite the U.S. attempts to [as the U.S. president said] “choke off the country’s largest non-petroleum related sources of export revenue” through imposing new sanctions on Iran’s metals and minerals.

On Sunday, Hossein Modarres Khiabani, Iran’s deputy industry, mining and trade minister, announced indigenizing of the technology for manufacturing of modern equipment required in steel industry and said, “Sanctions could not impede development of Iranian industries, as our industries are

the 10-year cooperation agreement which was inked between presidents of Iran and Kyrgyzstan in 2016.

As a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the trade agreement signed between Iran and EAEU, can boost relations between Iran and Kyrgyzstan, Eslami added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Eslami put the current volume of trade exchanged between Iran and Kyrgyzstan at \$44 million.

For his part, Kyrgyzstan’s Minister of Transport and Roads Janat Beishenov noted that expansion of economic relations with Iran is a priority for his country, and called for the removal of trade barriers between the two countries.

He further criticized the current level of trade between the two countries, saying that the potential of trade between the two sides is much more than the current levels.

He also called for Iranian engineers and experts to take part in various infrastructure projects in Kyrgyzstan.



improving relying on domestic capabilities.”

“Self-reliance and indigenizing in mining industries indicate high potential and capabilities of domestic sectors and their vigorous determination in this due”, the official underlined.

Govt. to provide \$14b for importers of basic goods next year

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s deputy finance and economic affairs minister says the government has provisioned \$14 billion of official-rate foreign currency in the next Iranian calendar year (March 2020-March 2021)’s budget bill for imports of basic goods, Mehr news agency reported on Wednesday.

Importers of rice, barley, corn, edible oils, oilseeds, and livestock feed, as well as medicines and a few other items are going to receive the government support, according to Mohammad-Ali Dehqan Dehnavi.

“The government has identified these goods as the basic needs of the people and has decided to keep the prices of such items low in the market, so \$14 billion of currency with official rates will be provided to the importers of these commodities next year,” Dehnavi said.

The official noted that the mentioned fund is in fact some sort of subsidy which the government pays to support people’s livelihood in the sanctions era.

Iranian government provides the country’s importers of basic goods with foreign currency at a lower exchange rate than



the free market, through a domestic Forex Management Integrated System (locally known as NIMA).

Based on the latest reports by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), NIMA supplied over €20 billion for imports of goods and services since it was launched in April 2018 up to October 2019.

NIMA, which seeks to boost transparency, create competitiveness among exchange shops and a secure environment for traders, is a new chance for importers to supply their required foreign currency without specific problems and for exporters to re-inject their earned foreign currency to the domestic forex market. It was inaugurated to allow exporters of non-oil commodities to sell their foreign currency earnings to importers of consumer products.

China capex growth hits three-year low as weak economy, trade war drag

Capital investment by Chinese firms has ground to its slowest pace in three years, as a weakening economy, tight credit and prolonged trade war with the United States dent sales growth and cash reserves, a Reuters analysis showed.

Companies are also spending more days to turn inventory into sales and eking out smaller profit gains, the analysis showed, in an economy growing at its weakest pace in nearly three decades, with many analysts expecting the slowdown to intensify.

The outlook became even more uncertain on Tuesday after U.S. President Donald Trump said a trade deal with China might have to wait until after the U.S. presidential election in November 2020.

“Things will get much worse before getting better,” economists at Macquarie said in a client note on Monday. Even positive economic data from China recently is volatile and vulnerable to one-off factors such as warm weather, they said.

“After all, the so-called phase 1 deal is mainly about preventing things from getting worse, instead of making things significantly better,” they said, referring to negotiations in a 16-month Sino-U.S. trade war punctuated by tit-for-tat import tariffs.

**■ The weakest growth in three years**  
Chinese firms raised capital spending by 1.6% in the three months through September versus the same period a year prior, the weakest growth in three years, showed a Reuters analysis of about 2,900 firms with market capitalization above \$100 million.

The “weak appetite to invest is a



problem in terms of generating a strong recovery in the Chinese economy,” said senior China economist Julian Evans-Pritchard at Capital Economics.

“Overall credit conditions are still quite tight and credit growth is actually slowing ... because, in particular, the non-bank forms of credit access have become much more restrictive in the shadow banking sector.”

Though the government has taken steps to encourage lending, bankers told Reuters they have little appetite to lend to small firms due to the trade war and uncertain economic outlook, as well as a years-long drive to cut risk in the financial system.

Cash reserves at surveyed firms grew 5.6% on year in the September quarter, the weakest since the first quarter of 2018. Moreover, the average number of days a company holds inventory before sale was 108 in the first nine months of the year, topping an annual average of 100 or less in the last four years.

Revenue grew 6.7%, the weakest in at least three years - the earliest period for which data from a comparable number of firms is available - while net profit rose 7.8% versus nearly 22% two years earlier.

(Source: reuters.com)

Why Latin America should go all in on the sharing economy

While we tend to think of the so-called sharing economy as a new concept — a product of the fourth industrial revolution — its origins are far older, as old as the economy itself.

What’s happening now, rather, is that due to the rise of e-trading and disruptive models that are ending certain logistical chains, the concept is developing and permeating popular speech.

For Latin America, there are both benefits and challenges involved with these economic shifts. But they also offer a real possibility to redevelop our battered economies. In Colombia’s case, like with most Latin American economies, dependence on the sale of primary goods has caused considerable instability.

Dependence on a good, especially commodities or natural resources, destabilizes economic growth in the two other types of goods: secondary and tertiary.

With primary goods (raw materials or renewable and non-renewable resources), prices are usually free-floating and depend on international rates set in this case in U.S. dollars.

The greater our dependence on these goods, the less chance we have of pursuing real economic development, of diversifying, in other words, into industrial production (secondary goods) and providing world-class services (tertiary goods).

**■ The shaken economy**

The dollar’s current price volatility makes diversification even more urgent — so as to avoid its negative effects on an already shaken economy. This is why Latin



American economies should do all they can to seek alternatives. In our case, as I’ve written before, the state needs structural reform. That reform must envisage changes in education, justice, security, infrastructure, and cargo and passenger mobility inside the country.

Colombia also needs to root out corruption and do away with inefficient bureaucracy in both the private and public sectors. And on the financial side, we need to overhaul the system of taxation. If this overhaul were fully implemented, the country’s risk ratings would improve substantially, and that, in turn, would help make the country more competitive.

What we need to drive this scale of economic transformation are more and better jobs. This could be done by promoting private and public initiatives that involve the sharing economy concept. Its essence is fairly simple and based on the integration of producers and consumers in a community. Both sides have a common objective, so creating a collaborative framework between them facilitates their connection and, ultimately, the exchange of products and services.

(Source: qcostarica.com)



# ‘Iran fully self-sufficient in building gas power plants, able to export its technology’

ENERGY  
desk

**TEHRAN** — Managing Director of Iranian Electrical Power Equipment Manufacturing and Provision Company (known as SATKAB) says the country is fully able to produce and export all equipment and services needed for construction of gas power plants.

“Our ability for manufacturing and supplying water and electricity equipment has reached a point where we are not only able to fully meet our domestic demand but also export it to other countries,” Mohammad-Vali Alaedini told IRIB on Tuesday.

“The ministry has set some goals in this regard, which are going to be implemented and achieved by SATKAB,” he said.

He mentioned Iraq, Armenia, Syria and Tajikistan as some of the export destinations for Iranian energy equipment and services, adding “We have achieved 80 percent self-sufficiency in construction of wind power plants, while in construction of gas power plants, hydroelectric power plants and dams we are completely self-sufficient and exporting services to other countries.”

Tajikistan is one of the export destinations



that, considering their satisfaction with the works of Iranian engineers, is forming a joint working group with Iran for further imports of engineering services, Alaedini noted.

Since the electricity sector accounts for the lion's share of Iran's technical and engineering exports, and also given that Iranian companies' presence in water projects of

other countries (construction of dams, water and wastewater treatment plants, and water transferring pipelines) is rising, Energy Ministry of Iran is seriously following up the objective of boosting technical and engineering services exports from electricity and water sectors.

Of the water and electricity projects under implementation by an Iranian company in a foreign country it could be referred to the project for building a dam, a water transferring tunnel and a 120-MW power plant in Sri Lanka which is already 94 percent complete.

According to the Association of Iranian Exporters of Technical and Engineering Services, Iran has the potential and capability to export technical and engineering services worth \$25 billion in a year.

Some Iranian companies including Mapna Group have already had fruitful presence in completion of infrastructure projects in several countries including Iraq and Oman and if such contribution will be expanded it will be a good source of export revenues while job creation.

## Oil ministry to hold innovation event in mid-Dec.

ENERGY  
desk

**TEHRAN** — Iranian Oil Ministry plans to hold the country's first innovation event in the oil industry, in mid-December, Shana reported.

The event dubbed “Petroleum Take-Off”, is going to focus on gathering and integrating various technology fields in the oil industry's supply and demand sectors.

To be attended by the country's renowned oil, gas and petrochemical companies, the event is aimed to improve and promote various factors in the country's oil industry, including development, learning, streamlining, selecting and opportunity-making.

According to Director General of Oil Ministry's Research

Affairs Department Mehdi Ahmad Khanbeigi, the event is meant to address various challenges and innovative requirements in the country's oil industry.

The event consists of four main sections and one side event including a technology supply exhibition (attended by knowledge-based and startup companies), a technology demand exhibition (attended by oil ministry's subsidiaries), the “every challenge-a solution” event (attended by startup groups and scholars), a university student event called “petro-test”, and a technology tour featuring senior executives from the oil industry operations.

## Japan's offshore wind power generates interest in foreign companies

Japan's offshore wind energy arouses a growing interest in foreign companies seeking opportunities in this market, a study by the GlobalData Company said on Tuesday.

The entity's investigation reveals that the Japanese offshore wind power market currently represents 68 megawatts (MW), but there are potentials for 770 MW of capacity in four wind farm projects, all of which are in the permitting stage.

The “offshore wind turbines market in Japan, although currently in an incipient stage, shows more and more positive signals to investors and the recent joint venture between Canadian Energy Company Northland Power and Shizen Energy is a testament to this,” said the Director of Energy of GlobalData, Harminder Singh.

According to the Japanese Wind Energy Association, several foreign developers such as Ørsted, Equinor, wpd and CIP have established branches in the country, showing their intention to invest in this area of the Asian nation.

In January 2019, for example, Danish offshore wind energy company Ørsted signed a memorandum of understanding with Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) to work together on offshore wind energy projects.

### Renewable energy generation

According to the analysis, Japan approved at the beginning of the year a law on the promotion of the use of territorial waters for renewable energy generation facilities on the high seas.

This was followed in July this year by the identification of 11 areas as potentially suitable for the development of offshore wind energy, in four of which the government will carry out geological measurements



and studies.

“Global companies seek to be the first participants in the Japanese market to gain the advantage of being the first to move when the market begins to grow,” Singh said.

The official said that the German electric utility RWE, for example, signed a cooperation agreement with Kyuden Mirai Energy. Also, the Nowegian Equinor energy company believes that because the waters are too deep in Japan, the availability of sites for fixed turbines at the bottom is low, the manager also said.

Therefore, he said, floating facilities could change the rules of the game in the country as the company estimates 3.5 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind potential in Japan by 2030.

According to GlobalData, marine wind capacity installed in Japan is expected to reach about 3.8 GW, which represents a staggering 33 percent of total wind capacity in the country by 2030.

Overall, the weather ahead seems exciting for offshore wind power in the country and developments in the coming years will be interesting to watch, Singh estimated.

(Source: [ewwind.es](#))

## Oil rises before OPEC+ meet, lifted by drop in U.S. crude stocks

Oil prices rose on Wednesday ahead of a meeting of OPEC and its allies to discuss whether to extend production curbs to support the market, while industry data showing that U.S. crude stockpiles fell more than expected helped to lift prices.

Brent crude futures were up 35 cents, or 0.6%, at \$61.17 a barrel by 0246 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were up by 31 cents, or 0.6%, at \$56.41.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allies that include Russia - a group known as OPEC+ - are preparing to approve deeper crude output cuts this week, when they meet in Vienna, according to Iraq, the group's second-biggest producer.

Thamer Ghadhbhan, the oil minister of Iraq, told reporters on Tuesday in Vienna that a “deeper cut is being preferred by a number of key members”.

There is still some skepticism in the market over whether OPEC will cut output further, however, with many analysts expecting only an extension of existing cuts.

“We ... think OPEC could announce an extension to supply cuts to cover the whole of 2020 rather than the three to six months the market is currently factoring in,” BNP Paribas Markets said in a note.

An extension “with an option to review policy at the next meeting, would send a strong message of commitment by signatories of the Declaration of Cooperation,” the BNP Paribas analysts said.

OPEC members meet today and then on Friday the OPEC+ group meets. OPEC+ has been curbing supply since 2017 and is expected to keep the cuts in place to balance out record production in the United States.



Crude oil inventories in the U.S. fell by more than expected last week, according to the industry group American Petroleum Institute (API). Stockpiles of crude oil fell by 3.7 million barrels, more than double expectations of a decline of 1.7 million barrels.

Gasoline and distillate stocks increased, however, and the market looked for confirmation of the crude draw when official figures come out from the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration later on Wednesday.

Keeping a lid on prices are the dwindling prospects of a trade deal between the United States and China. The trade dispute between the world's two biggest economies has weakened the global economy and held back oil demand growth.

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Tuesday an agreement to end the trade dispute may have to be delayed until after the American presidential election in November 2020.

“Both contracts should remain supported at these levels despite the (U.S.-China) trade concerns as the market looks to the start of the OPEC+ meeting today,” said Jeffrey Halley, senior market analyst at OANDA.

(Source: [uk.reuters.com](#))

## Leading fund managers say Aramco is significantly overvalued

By Irina Slav

A day before Aramco is to announce the final price of the shares it will list on the Saudi stock exchange, the list of bad news for the company got longer. A survey among fund managers has shown that most of them believe that the company is overvalued by up to a third.

The survey was conducted among 31 asset managers holding assets of \$3.8 trillion by Bernstein and reported by Fortune. Its conclusion supports what a number of observers have been saying for months now: that interest in Aramco shares among international investors is unlikely to be great because of too many uncertainties, including a lack of the transparency that international investors are accustomed to.

When Aramco last month announced a price range for its float, the mean in it gave the company a valuation of some \$1.7 trillion. That's \$300 billion less than the original target valuation that Crown Prince Mohammed was after for Aramco. It also would mean IPO proceeds of \$100 billion should 5 percent be floated.

However, the original plan has changed. Aramco will offer 1.5 percent of its stock next week, and it will offer them almost exclusively to Saudi investors. That's after talk that Aramco could list more than the originally planned 5 percent, and up to 10 percent.

### In the world of oil

Things can change fast in the world of oil and they changed



fast and for the worse for Aramco two months ago, when its oil field and a processing plant were struck with drones and missiles. The September 14 attacks added another potential problem to the list of problems they might have had with the Saudi company: security of supply. Meanwhile, banks and analysts continued to argue how much Aramco was worth.

Goldman Sachs, one of the organizers of the IPO, has valued Aramco at even more than Riyadh: \$2.3 trillion. Others, however, have valued it at just \$1.2 trillion. Between these extremes, there is a host of other figures. None of them matter, however, if there is no one to buy the shares.

Fortunately for Aramco, there are a lot of people willing to buy its shares. Last week Aramco said it had attracted bids worth \$44.3 billion by the deadline for retail investors to express interest in the listing. And that's just retail investors. The company is also counting on local and regional institutional investors.

The Abu Dhabi Investment Authority — the country's sovereign wealth fund — will reportedly buy shares worth \$1 billion. The Kuwaiti sovereign wealth fund has, according to unnamed Reuters sources, also committed to \$1 billion worth of shares. Other sources said both commitments were even higher, at \$1.5-\$2 billion each.

### Too concerned about transparency

That, however, makes up for a tiny portion of the proceeds Aramco is eyeing. This means it will have to depend overwhelmingly on retail investors or urgently find institutional ones that are not too concerned about transparency. The latter is highly unlikely to happen just days from the official listing unless Riyadh is hiding a couple of investors up its sleeve. This means it will likely have to rely overwhelmingly on retail investors.

These are retail investors who are taking on loans to be able to afford the purchase of Aramco shares. As such, they are also investors who will start selling their shares the moment the price rises after the listing, if it does. And the moment the selloff starts will be the moment the share price will drop.

Now that may be a good time for international investors to buy into Aramco. After all, it is still the biggest integrated oil company in the world with the biggest reserves, possibly the biggest production capacity, and a lot of downstream operations, too. What's not to like?

(Source: [oilprice.com](#))

## Next decade to be pivotal one for energy sector in SEE, IRENA reports

By Vladimir Spasi

The adoption of an energy mix consistent with the Paris Agreement would create a cumulative addition of D 485 billion in gross domestic product between 2019 and 2050 in Southeastern Europe (SEE), according to a report produced by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

The document, announced at a regional workshop in Sarajevo in June, will be presented by Emanuele Bianco from the organization at the regional conference Renewable Energy Sources in District Heating and Cooling Systems to be held on December 5-6 in Belgrade.

The “next decade could prove to be a pivotal one for the energy sector in SEE. The region possesses considerable potential for developing renewable energy and improving energy efficiency. To harness this potential and fully achieve the energy transition, the region will need to set new targets, ensure a sustained investment in variable renewable energy technologies, develop its modern biomass industry and introduce a holistic policy framework,” IRENA advises.

The economies analyzed in the report are EU member states Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia; and the contracting parties of the Energy Community: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia.

Southeast Europe analyzes the energy landscape, the potential and costs for scaling up renewables, together with policy frameworks and investments that are required, and the expected socio-economic impact of transforming the area's energy system.

IRENA estimates shifting the regional energy system to renewables would grow the economy of SEE by 2% by 2040 and 1% from then until 2050, compared to a business-as-usual case. It purportedly translates into a cumulative gain of more than D 485 billion.

### Renewable energy sector

With the creation of new jobs in the renewable energy sector, an energy transition would also help tackle long-standing unemployment and brain drain issues, the authors found. The inclusion of social welfare benefits, such as improvements in health and air quality, ensures that potential gains further outweigh additional costs, IRENA said.

According to the report, the energy transition will involve the phase-out of the aged fossil fuel plants and the introduction of larger shares of renewable energy in SEE's power and energy sectors.

Hydropower is apparently a very cost-competitive option for new power. Data from the IRENA Renewable Cost Database show that the weighted-average levelized cost of electricity or LCOE from hydropower in SEE decreased by a third from the 2011 to 2014 period to the 2015 to 2018 period. During the latter four years, the gauge was D 0.083/kWh.

“Many SEE economies have often overlooked variable renewable energy technologies in their renewable energy plans, favoring the more traditional and established hydropower and biomass technologies, which were perceived as less expensive. Even with a relatively high cost of capital, solar PV and onshore wind remain cost-competitive solutions for electricity generation in the region today, compared to generation from fossil fuels,” the report reads.

The central value for last year's total installation costs for solar PV landed at D 1,215/kW (about 10% higher than the weighted-average of European countries outside SEE). Assuming a 7.5% cost of capital, the range can translate to LCOE between D 0.093/kWh and D 0.130/kWh. For SEE, a central LCOE value of D 0.105/kWh was calculated for 2018. It is 5% higher than the weighted-average value for other European markets.

Driven by a global trend in falling expenses for turbines and project balances, total installed costs in SEE have decreased by 19% since 2010, the findings reveal. The weighted-average value in 2018 was D 2,030/kW, 4% higher than in European markets outside SEE.

The abundance of wind resources in the region has enabled onshore wind to become an increasingly cost-competitive source of new power generation, with suitable locations being developed in recent years, IRENA said. The weighted-average LCOE of onshore wind projects commissioned in SEE during 2018 was D 0.069/kWh, 43% lower than for those commissioned during 2010 and the lowest since then, and 4% lower than the weighted-average for projects in other European countries.

### Solar PV and wind generation

With the fall in costs for solar and wind technologies expected to continue, SEE could benefit greatly from further developing its vast potential, the global organization claimed. Both solar PV and wind generation can be even more cost effective than shown so far in this analysis, provided access to a low cost of capital becomes more prevalent in SEE, the report concludes.

Most of the renewable energy capacity is concentrated in the EU member states of SEE, while the rest of the region has been relatively slow with such endeavors. The countries in the trade bloc benefited from the early adoption of medium-term, technology-specific targets for renewable energy and the introduction of dedicated supporting policies, the analysis indicated.

Between 2001 and 2018, SEE received D 20.7 billion in renewable energy investment excluding large-scale hydro. The timeline starts from zero in 2001 to a 2012 peak of D 3.7 billion. In 2018, total expenditures were D 1.49 billion.

Overall, renewable energy investment remains fragile in SEE, in IRENA's view. The “changing pattern of investment can be attributed to the presence (or lack thereof) of dedicated supporting policies. Without stable policy and regulatory frameworks, regional investment in renewable energy will continue to be sporadic,” the report reads.

The “adoption of the second EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED II) gives governments in SEE the opportunity to update and reset those targets. These updated targets could be designed to make better use of the improved visibility of the energy sector, adopt adaptation measures and realign targets to reinvigorate renewable energy deployment,” the report finds.

The document highlights that solid fossil fuels (hard coal and lignite) account for 43% of power generation and 3% of heat production for residential structures. In 2018, the average age of coal plants was said to be 41 years. According to the report, the aging infrastructure of the facilities and their negative environmental impact reveal the need for rapid shutdown of older plants and the suspension or improvement of the more recent ones.

IRENA suggests redetermining the role of fossil fuel power plants. “In particular, the energy transition will require high levels of flexibility in the power system. System integration costs would decline if investments were oriented towards flexible power plants and other flexible resources,” the report underlines.

(Source: [balkangreenenergynews.com](#))



## Danny Shaw: Ecuador's Moreno great betrayer, useful lackey of IMF

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Danny Shaw, professor of Latin American and Caribbean Studies, says President Lenin Moreno pretended to adhere to country's Citizens' Revolution, but turned out to be a servant of the country's pro-West elites.

In an exclusive interview with FNA, Shaw said the US and its Allies demand their lapdogs in power in Latin America to serve them most, adding the West is afraid of "leadership of popular leaders such as Rafael Correa, Evo Morales and Nicolas Maduro who preserve dignity and sovereignty of Latin American countries."

Danny Shaw is an author and university lecturer teaching Latin American and Caribbean Studies and Race, Ethnicity, Class and Gender at the City University of New York. He has worked and organized in forty different countries. He is also an activist against "inhumane international economic system".

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ What has made Ecuadorians protest against the president they themselves elected?

A: Lenin Moreno started to be continuation of Rafael Correa in the Citizens' Revolution, but he proved to be a great betrayer and a useful lackey of the IMF, the World Bank and the elites of Ecuador. What we have seen in the country was a massive showdown of the millions of impoverished and working class accompanied by the indigenous population against the unpopular rule of Moreno. So now we see with 4.2 billion dollars unleashed by the IMF, Moreno is to a huge step back as he is rejecting the cost he has made, because he does not want hundreds of thousands of Ecuadorians on the street. The showdown between the popular forces of Ecuador and the IMF will continue, as the old saying "the borrower is slave to the lender" is relevant today in Ecuador. The IMF wants to have its way, but the nation are fighting back against the will of IMF.

■ The IMF is an international finance institution. Why has its presence in Ecuador led to the recent protests?

A: The IMF, World Bank and US-based development banks are in fact "undo-development" banks. They are based on oppression, exploitation and disempowering the popular forces of any country. We should look at the IMF records in the Caribbean, Africa, South East Asia and Latin America. The IMF policies of cutting subsidies, education, etc. lead to massive rebellion on the part of everyday people. The IMF and World Bank have very bad records in the oppressed countries. Their message is if you do not play ball with us, we will isolate you and cut you off the financial world. That is why we see blockade of Cuba, Venezuela, DPRK and Iran, precisely because these countries are outside of the influence of the IMF, World Bank, the US government and military, which is why there is this propaganda and economic war against these countries which refuse to genuflect to the US power.

■ How do you evaluate IMF loans and deals?

A: Cutting a deal with the IMF and its international lending institutions is like cutting a deal with the devil. They are not giving these loans for free, but with high interest rates. The Ecuadorian people have to pay off this debt in the years and decades to come. Historically, the post-World War II US imperialism and its allies have controlled other countries through the international banking system. So, of course that is why Rafael Correa, Hugo Chavez, and those who refuse to play ball instead of preserving dignity and sovereignty of Latin American and other oppressed countries of the third world were constantly punished. If you look at recent Ecuadorian history, the US media make full scale attacks against Rafael Correa and the Citizens' Revolution because they stood up for international justice and dignity. They had Julian Assange for several years protected in their embassy in London, which humiliated the US. Any time there is a popular leader like Hugo Chavez, Nicolas Maduro, Rafael Correa, Evo Morales, they are very afraid of this type of leadership. They want Sebastian Pinera in Chile, Lenin Moreno in Ecuador and Mauricio Macri in Argentina who are their puppets.

## NATO is a brain dead, obsolete, rabid dog. Euthanize It.

By Thomas Knapp

On November 27, US president Donald Trump signed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act. In early November, French president Emmanuel Macron complained that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is experiencing "brain death" as its member states go their own ways, with "no coordination whatsoever of strategic decision-making." US president Donald Trump's reply: "Nobody needs NATO more than France." The two continued their duel over NATO's future at an early December meeting of the alliance's members in London.

Unfortunately, 2019 Trump isn't nearly as smart as 2016 Trump, who noted that "NATO is obsolete." In fact, became obsolete 25 years before Trump called the fact to our attention. The Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact — the two enemies NATO was supposedly formed to protect Europe from — dissolved in 1991.

Wars of offensive choice, rather than defensive necessity, followed in the Balkans and Libya. NATO participated for more than a decade in the US occupation of Afghanistan. Its current direction includes dangerous membership overtures to Ukraine and Georgia — countries bordering, and overtly hostile to, Russia. NATO's claim to be a "defensive" alliance of any kind has long ceased to pass the laugh test.

If the organization was merely brain dead or obsolete, that would still be good reason to dissolve it. But it's actually far worse than that.

If there's any real logic to NATO's continued existence, that logic probably centers around its \$1 trillion annual expenses. That's a lot of money fed into the maws of various military industrial complexes by an entrenched multi-national bureaucracy who love their own paychecks, pensions, and prerogatives.

Maintaining those two welfare programs requires NATO to operate as an active and perpetual threat to world peace, a rabid dog wandering the globe in foaming-mouthed search of opportunities to "defend itself" against opponents who represent no threat whatsoever to it or to its member states.

Even if it attempted to maintain a truly defensive posture, NATO would still be too dangerous to keep around. Its 29 member states, stretching as far east as Turkey, each have their own grudges among each other and with external parties. Sooner or later, an otherwise insignificant spark is bound to set the whole book of matches alight.

When a person is brain dead, we mercifully turn off the ventilator. When an organization is obsolete, we shut it down and move on. And when a rabid dog threatens the neighborhood, we shoot it before it can bite us or our neighbors. Nearly 30 years late is better than never. Let's euthanize NATO.

# Moral injury and America's endless conflicts



By Arnold Isaacs, Nick Turse and Tom Engelhardt

**ANTIWAR** — Many men do monstrous things. And some men are very nearly monsters, capable of killing without compunction or remorse. In the everyday civilian world, we generally seek to lock them up. In war, they have a chance to fully flower. And if they serve in militaries that fight serial conflicts where the laws of war are considered mere suggestions, they can be all that they can be.

I investigated such a man once. He fought his way across Asia in the Chinese civil war, the suppression of the Huk rebellion in the Philippines, and the Korean and Vietnam wars. He spent 10 troubled years in the Marines before joining the Army and then was hailed as a super soldier, even as allegations of murder swirled around him.

In March 1968, a member of Sergeant Roy Bumgarner Jr.'s scout team went to military authorities to report multiple murders of Vietnamese civilians. "I've got nothing against Sgt. Bumgarner except this mad urge to kill," Private Arthur Williams told an investigating lieutenant colonel. "I don't want him to get in trouble, but I can't know of what is happening and say nothing. More people will be killed." The Army did nothing.

One morning in early 1969, Bumgarner detained an unarmed Vietnamese irrigation worker and two teenage boys tending ducklings. Marching them to a secluded spot, he and one of his men opened fire. A military court convicted him of manslaughter, but he served no prison time, remained in Vietnam, and reenlisted approximately six months later. He became one of the last U.S. infantrymen to serve in that war.

By the late 1960s, Bumgarner was said to have a personal body count of more than 1,500. Sometimes, his six-man "wildcat" team logged more kills than the rest of his 500-man battalion. I often wondered how many of those dead were enemies and how many just teenage duck herders and middle-aged farmers. Bumgarner died before I had a chance to ask him. His court-martial transcripts, though, don't give the impression of a man carrying a heavy psychological burden or regretting anything he had done.

Some men do, however, kill while in government service and pay a psychological price. We now call that "moral injury" and understand (as Homer did in writing about Achilles in the Iliad) that victimizers can also be victims. Today, TomDispatch regular Arnold Isaacs, who covered the Vietnam War for the Baltimore Sun, takes us in a striking fashion to the frontlines of the battle to overcome — or at least mitigate — the toll on the consciences of the men and women fighting America's twenty-first-century wars: a "Moral Injury Symposium."

If "perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations" can cause profound psychological damage to soldiers, imagine what Phan Thi Dan, the widow of that irrigation worker, went through when she saw her husband lying on the ground with his head blown off. She stood frozen for a moment, then fainted. On coming to, she tried to attack an American on the scene but was restrained. "When I get flashbacks, that fit of fury still arises in me," she told me nearly four decades later. No doubt, many Afghans, Iraqis, Somalis, Syrians, Yemenis, and Libyans have had similar experiences at the hands of soldiers. One day, maybe we'll convene a symposium for them and their psychological injuries, too. ~ Nick Turse

### ■ A Legacy of a New Kind of War

As Arnold R. Isaacs wrote, When an announcement of a "Moral Injury Symposium" turned up in my email, I was a bit startled to see that it came from the U.S. Special Operations Command. That was a surprise because many military professionals have strongly resisted the term "moral injury" and rejected the suggestion that soldiers fighting America's wars could experience moral conflict or feel morally damaged by their service.

Moral injury is not a recognized psychiatric diagnosis. It's not on the Veterans Administration's list of service-related disabilities. Yet in the decade since the concept began to take root among mental health specialists and others concerned with the emotional lives of active-duty soldiers and military veterans, it has come to be fairly widely regarded as "the signature wound of today's wars," as the editors of War and Moral Injury: A Reader, a remarkable anthology of contemporary and past writings on the subject, have noted.

For those not familiar with the tag, moral injury is related to but not the same as post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, which is a recognized clinical condition. Both involve some of the same symptoms, including

depression, insomnia, nightmares, and self-medication via alcohol or drugs, but they arise from different circumstances. PTSD symptoms are a psychological reaction to an experience of life-threatening physical danger or harm. Moral injury is the lasting mental and emotional result of an assault on the conscience — a memory, as one early formulation put it, of "perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations."

The idea remains controversial in the military world, but the wars that Americans have fought since 2001 — involving a very different experience of war fighting from that of past generations — have made it increasingly difficult for military culture to cling to its old manhood and warrior myths. Many in that military have had to recognize the invisible wounds of moral conflict that soldiers have brought home with them from those battlefields.

That shift was evident at the moral injury symposium, held in early August in a Washington, D.C., hotel. The feelings and experiences I heard about there were not necessarily representative of the climate in the wider military community. The special operations forces, which put on the event, have their own distinctive character, culture, and experiences, and a disproportionate number of the 130 or so attendees were mental-health specialists or chaplains, the two groups that have been most open and attuned to the very idea of moral injury. (A military chaplain in the Special Operations Command, in fact, first had the idea for the symposium.)

Still, the symposium emerged from the same history the rest of the military has lived through: 18 years of uninterrupted violence, of war without end in distant lands, that has killed or wounded some 60,000 Americans and a far greater number of foreign civilians, while displacing millions more and helping drive the worldwide refugee population to successive record-setting levels. Against that backdrop, those two days in Washington proved gripping and thought provoking in their own right. What follows are some of the thoughts they provoked in my mind as I listened or when I later reflected on what I heard.

### ■ Something Said, Something Unsaid

In the sessions I attended, virtually every speaker mentioned one relevant fact about our present wars and the soldiers who fight them. But a different relevant fact on the same subject was almost completely missing.

Again and again, participants spoke about the great change in how soldiers experience war. In past generations, for the great majority of service members, war was a one-time event. In the 18 years since 9/11 and the invasion of Afghanistan, war has become a permanent part of soldiers' lives in a continuing cycle of repeated deployments to battle zones. (And that's not to mention the even more startling change for those who see combat remotely, sitting in front of screens and firing missiles or dropping bombs from unmanned aircraft flying over targets thousands of miles away.) As nearly all the symposium speakers pointed out, that change in the war-fighting experience has also changed the nature of combat trauma and the military culture's understanding of and attitudes toward it.

Here's the reality that almost nobody mentioned, though it's closely related: the reason these wars have lasted this long and have become a permanent part of soldiers' lives is that they have not been successful. My notes record only one presentation where that connection was even touched upon, and then only implicitly, not directly.

That single indirect mention came in a discussion group conducted by Air Force Lieutenant Colonel David Blair, the commanding officer of a Florida-based remotely piloted aircraft squadron. He mentioned that his MQ-9 Reaper drone crews increasingly have come to prefer missions in theaters other than Afghanistan. Specifically, he said, they were most positive about strikes against ISIS in Iraq and Syria where they "could see the front lines moving." (That suggests he was referring mainly to the 2016-2017 period when those Reapers were supporting American and Iraqi ground forces recapturing territory that had been under ISIS occupation.) Those missions led to "less trauma" for his operators, he said. At another point, he added that "if it [an engagement] ends well, they look back on their lives differently."

Other than that single remark about his crews preferring missions in other theaters, Blair never made any explicit comparison between Afghanistan and any other conflict zone. However, what he did say sounds like plain common sense. It's logical that when a mil-

itary operation is relatively successful, it's easier for soldiers to explain to themselves and live with their own actions. It must help mitigate moral injury symptoms, at the very least, if they can tell themselves that a greater good was accomplished.

Conversely, if you did something that leaves you with doubt or regret but achieved no positive results, that would lead to more painful feelings and less defense against them. So, in one way, it seems odd that, except in those few moments, I didn't hear anyone make the connection between the lack of victory in America's wars and the incidence of trauma.

On the other hand, it's not so surprising that such connections were not made more often or more clearly. They would only have reminded the participants of an uncomfortable reality: that America's wars in the present era have, on the whole, fallen far short of producing any greater good that would help justify the moral injury so many soldiers are struggling with, not to mention all the other human damage those wars have caused.

I can't know their inner feelings, but I can guess that it would have been painful for many symposium participants to admit that fact out loud or to let themselves think it at all. Probably it wasn't something the organizers would have liked to hear either or remember when they face troubled soldiers in the months and years to come.

### ■ Moral Clarity Versus Moral Injury

Another moment in that same session suggested a different but related link between the nature and circumstances of a military operation and the likelihood of trauma. This one had to do with the moral perception of the operation itself.

Since his crews are not physically at risk when carrying out their missions, Lieutenant Colonel Blair pointed out, the traditional "kill or be killed" formula of the battlefield can't help them explain their war to themselves. Instead, the drone fighter's explanation has to be "kill or someone else will be killed." In turn, that determines not just what they do, but who they feel they are. "Being a protector of others," Blair said, becomes their "core identity."

A couple of quotes in a December 2017 article on an Air Force website show how the missions against ISIS strongly validated that identity — and, indirectly, suggest why operations in other theaters have not.

The article, which I found after the symposium ended, was a feature about a remotely piloted aircraft unit (not Blair's) that supported the ground operation to recapture Raqqa, the Syrian provincial city that ISIS designated as the capital of its so-called caliphate. One quote is from a squadron commander: "It wasn't our aircrew just striking ISIS targets. We also were safeguarding and watching over [friendly Syrian troops] as they cleared civilians moving out of the city to safe locations." The article also quoted a sensor operator: "My favorite part of this job is that I'm able to help civilians be safe and I'm able to help liberate whatever city we need to. There's no better feeling than knowing you can directly impact the battlefield and other people's lives."

Obviously, when their screens showed them the civilians they were helping, and not just the enemies they were killing, those crewmen found moral clarity, rather than moral conflict, in their experience. From Blair's comments, one can surmise that was true for his crews as well, presumably for similar reasons.

Sadly, it is also pretty obvious that such a sense of clarity has been the exception, not the rule, in the wars Americans have been fighting for nearly two decades. That doesn't automatically mean those wars were not moral, but whatever their moral nature, it would only rarely have shown up on the drone operators' screens — or in the sightlines of soldiers looking at actual battlegrounds in real space — as clearly as it did for those airmen remembering their Raqqa missions. (Not that Raqqa raised no moral questions at all. Yes, the fighting there liberated its inhabitants from an exceptionally brutal occupation. But it also destroyed most of their homes, largely in air strikes by U.S. and allied planes that, by one estimate, dropped 20,000 bombs on the city. By the time the campaign was over, Raqqa, like a number of other Syrian and Iraqi cities, was in almost complete ruins.)

### ■ A Question, Maybe Farfetched...

I didn't frame it this way when I was at the symposium, but this question later came to mind: Has the U.S. military as an institution, not just its individual service members, morally injured itself over the last 18 years?

This is a military force that never stops declaring it's the best and strongest in the world, but has not successfully concluded a significant war for nearly 30 years or maybe longer. (The first Gulf War of 1990-1991 looked like a great win at the time, but appears like anything but an unequivocally positive accomplishment in retrospect.) It may sound farfetched, but is it unreasonable to wonder if that dissonance, that wide gap between goals and actual accomplishments, might leave a collective sense of sorrow, grief, regret, shame, and alienation? That's the list of feelings that Glenn Orris, a Navy chaplain, displayed on a chart in his symposium presentation and specified as the ones that keep morally injured service members awake at night.

I'm posing this as a question, not offering it as an answer. Certainly, at various moments during the symposium, I had a sense not just of individual but of collective trauma. As an outsider in that world, I can't and won't venture to evaluate the emotional state of the military as a whole. Still, the question doesn't seem ridiculous.

### ■ A New Idea of What Moral Injury Really Is

The final event of the second day — an unusual closer for a professional or academic conference — was a reading of Sophocles' play Ajax, as rewritten by Bryan Doerries. After the reading, Doerries, artistic director for Theater of War, the company that put on the performance, moderated a discussion with a panel of four recent veterans and members of the audience. → 11



# Who wins the UK election?

## Political ambiguity in London

By Saeed Sobhani

**TEHRAN** — The UK general election is being held as many polls show the Conservative Party over the Labor Party. However, many political analysts believe that, as of now, Boris Johnson cannot be considered the definitive winner of the UK general election. Here's a look at some of the latest news and analysis on the UK general election:

### ■ How Britain's political parties got their colors

As CNN reports, with the UK's general election less than two weeks away, British voters have seen their TV screens, mailboxes and newsfeeds fill with color. Just like commercial brands, political parties know that using a single, bold shade can make them easier to recognize -- whether that's out on the campaign trail or checking the latest polls.

If the last election is anything to go by, the blue of the ruling Conservatives will go head-to-head with the red of Labour. Yellow and orange (the Scottish National Party and Liberal Democrats, respectively) will likely make up the race for third. Elsewhere, the British political system offers a veritable kaleidoscope of differing -- and sometimes duplicate -- colors. The newly formed Brexit Party uses turquoise, Change UK has opted for black and white, while Northern Ireland's Sinn Féin and Wales' Plaid Cymru are represented by nearly identical shades of green.

A poll conducted by the BBC is projected on to Big Ben at the moment voting finished for the 2010 general election.

Although the older, established parties trace these associations back to their foundation, the importance of color in campaigning blossomed with the advent of new technology and advertising between the 1950s and 1970s, explained Dominic Wring, a professor of political communication at the UK's Loughborough University. "The advertising industry itself underwent a change around the introduction of color television, so, increasingly, colors and more ambitious or innovative designs became quite significant," he said in a phone interview, adding that, during this time, "parties began to simplify their messaging."

Beyond simple brand recognition, certain colors have long been associated with various values and ideologies. Yellow, for instance, is often linked to liberalism, while black has traditionally represented anarchism or fascism -- especially in Britain, where followers of the British Union of Fascists in the 1920s and 1930s were known as "Blackshirts."

Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn wears a red tie to deliver a speech in Northampton, England.

Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn wears a red tie to deliver a speech in Northampton, England. Credit: Darren Staples/Getty Images

For the Labour Party, the use of red was a natural choice for a group allied with trade unions, social democrats and democratic socialists. Since the French Revolution, the color has been widely associated with left-wing politics, symbolizing the blood of workers who died in the struggle against their oppressors.

Upon Labour's inception at the beginning of the 20th century, the party used a red flag as its official logo. "The color is central and symbolic to the labor movement, and has been since that period," said Wring, noting that the party logo has since changed to a red rose.

The Conservative Party, meanwhile, has historically adopted all the colors of the United Kingdom's flag -- red white and blue -- in order, perhaps, to promote itself as a defender of British values. Of those three colors, an ultramarine blue emerged as its predominant shade (though the party's current tree logo is a paler shade than some of its predecessors). Traditionally the most expensive color to produce, blue has long held connotations of wealth and conservatism.

British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, delivers his keynote speech at the Conservative Party Conference.

Among the smaller parties, color choices have sometimes been relatively straightforward -- the Green Party uses green, unsurprisingly, due to its obvious connections with environmentalism. Others have been more pragmatic. Take the Liberal Democrats' orange, for instance, which emerged from the combination of the two parties it was created from: the Liberal Party (yellow) and the Social Democratic Party (then associated with the red of Labour, which it broke away from in the early 1980s).

Yet for the Liberal Democrats -- the UK's third largest party until the 2015 election -- the color orange had another benefit: it was otherwise unclaimed. With the Scottish National Party growing in prominence in the 1970s, switching from a clashing yellow made it easier for the Lib

Dems to differentiate themselves.

Indeed, for recent newcomers -- like the short-lived Referendum Party in the 1990s (pink), or the UK Independence Party (purple) -- distinct colors may simply help them stand out in a crowded political marketplace.

The Liberal Democrats' leader Jo Swinson steps off an orange bus to be greeted by supporters.

while some colors have historical links, none are indelibly tied to ideologies. Elsewhere in Europe, orange is associated with both the Christian Democrats and, in the east, post-Soviet uprisings (see Ukraine's so-called "Orange Revolution"). In other countries, green may represent Islamic parties rather than environmental ones. And while brown has longstanding links to Nazi groups, it also features prominently in the logo of the Marijuana Party of Canada.

Even the simple idea that blue and red represent right and left-wing parties, respectively, is inconsistent. In the US, Democrats are blue while the more conservative Republicans are red (though before the 1988 presidential election, TV networks often did the opposite, and the current notion of "red states" and "blue states" only came into common parlance until the 2000 presidential run-off).

Of course the irony, in both the US and Britain, is that despite the color-coded campaigning, when people get to the polling booths on voting day, the various shades won't be displayed for their final, crucial decision -- that's because the ballot papers are printed in black and white.

### ■ UK election: the tactical fight to beat Boris Johnson

As Fainancial Times reported, When pollsters asked voters in Finchley and Golders Green in early October how they would vote in a possible general election, 41 per cent backed the Liberal Democrats ahead of 29 per cent for the ruling Conservative party. Labour trailed in a distant third.

The constituency -- a Conservative-held marginal seat in north London -- has been shared in recent elections by the two main UK parties. But the internal Lib Dem polling appeared to vindicate the decision to parachute in Luciana Berger as the party's candidate. The former Labour MP quit the party in February over its failure to address anti-Semitism within its ranks. Finchley and Golders Green, which voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU at the Brexit referendum, has the largest Jewish population of any seat in the UK.

Yet five weeks later, by which time the election had been called, a second survey, conducted by a different pollster, Deltapoll for The Observer newspaper, asked 500 constituents the same question. This time the Conservatives led on 46 per cent, the Berger campaign had slipped to 32 per cent and Labour was even further behind.

The two polls graphically illustrate the huge uncertainty surrounding next week's British general election. They highlight the volatility of the electorate -- the 17-point gain for the Conservatives between two surveys just five weeks apart is unprecedented -- in a campaign which has been dominated by Brexit and the breakdown in traditional party loyalties it has created.

They also help explain why tactical voting is set to be one of the decisive factors in the election. The latest polls indicate the Conservatives could be on track for a majority because the party has managed to consolidate a large section of voters who supported leaving the EU in 2016 behind its "Get Brexit Done" sloganeering. The final result, however, could depend on whether Remain supporters, armed with opinion poll data, will vote tactically for the party most likely to beat the Conservative party led by Prime Minister Boris Johnson -- which in most constituencies is either Labour or the Lib Dems.

Yet its 2017 success has given a sense of infallibility to MRP that its record elsewhere doesn't necessarily warrant. YouGov was not the only pollster using MRP in 2017 -- the other, Michael Ashcroft's company, forecast a hefty 64-seat Tory majority.

Outside the UK, MRP polling has been most accurate in strict two-party systems where the link between politics and demographics tends to be nearer, but unlike the UK where several parties from the Lib Dems to the Brexit party who could all have an outsized impact on the outcome.

"MRP won't work as well for smaller parties," says Kevin Cunningham, an independent political statistician who built one of the MRP models being used in the 2019 election. "A party on 15 per cent may not even appear [among the respondents] in many constituencies."

This imprecision is clear in the MRP models that are circulating. YouGov's model estimates that the Lib Dems are running in second place in 117 constituencies, but another model, carried out by data analytics company FocalData on behalf of pro-Remain tactical voting site Best for Britain, gives them only 96



second-places.

Yet, there is consensus among pollsters, political scientists and statisticians that MRP is the best available election-forecasting tool for estimating at scale what is happening in individual seats.

The core challenge of modelling how different people will vote, comes down to which factors -- from education to ethnicity and past voting records -- the model-builders allow into their calculations. Another issue -- one that thwarted some pollsters in 2015 and 2017 -- was modelling turnout. "The people who are very hard to poll are also very unlikely to vote," says Mr Lauderdale, "so you end up missing out on parts of the population that don't vote and don't show up in the poll."

These decisions on factors can influence the shape of the electoral results map that each model generates, and there are early signs that some of the models circulating in public are falling into the trap of producing unnatural swings in vote share between parties.

"This can happen if you have a model that is failing to capture the ways that Labour voters in really Labour places are different from Labour voters in places that were less Labour," says Mr Lauderdale. "That's not to say it's not happening, but it's probably not happening to that extent."

### ■ UK election: halt US trade talks until NHS off table, Corbyn tells Johnson

As Guardian reported, Jeremy Corbyn has urged the prime minister to break off trade talks with Donald Trump until any reference to pharmaceuticals is struck out of Washington's negotiating objectives.

As the US president prepared to fly in on Monday evening to attend the Nato summit alongside other world leaders, Corbyn wrote to Boris Johnson to urge him to give fresh reassurances about NHS privatisation.

The Labour leader has repeatedly accused the prime minister of preparing to sell off the NHS, and Labour activists at recent rallies have taken up a chorus of "Not for sale! Not for sale!"

Johnson has described Labour's claims as "total nonsense". But in the letter, sent on Monday, Corbyn called on him to take a series of concrete steps to show he is serious. These include bringing all services back-in-house; repealing the Health and Social Care Act, and suspending trade talks until Washington changes its negotiating objectives.

Corbyn says Johnson should decline to press ahead with talks on a bilateral trade deal unless Trump excludes any reference to pharmaceuticals from US negotiating plans and accept the role of the regulator -- the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in setting drugs prices.

Washington's negotiating objectives, a public document, include the demand that "state-owned enterprises" should "accord non-discriminatory treatment with respect to the purchase and sale of goods and services".

It also calls for "full market access for US products", for what it calls "government regulatory reimbursement regimes" for pharmaceuticals and medical devices.

Trump's public appearances during his visit will be scrutinised closely for any comments about a future trade deal. When he and Johnson met at the Biarritz G7 meeting in August, the US president lavished praise on Johnson, saying: "I've been saying it for a long time: he's the right man for the job." He has also criticised Corbyn in the past. Labour hopes switching the debate back to the NHS will help it to persuade traditional supporters to stick with the party.

The Unite general secretary, Len McCluskey, acknowledged in an interview with HuffPost on Monday that Labour-held seats across the Midlands and the north were the party's "achilles heel" at this

general election.

"Our achilles heel is in our communities, in what's known as our heartlands, that voted leave and are not quite sure yet whether they will give their vote to Labour," he said.

"If we can engage people listening to what's on offer, what type of Britain and country we want as we go into the future, then we are on a winner. It's very much a question of how we do that, whilst at the same time tackling the very real issues we've got over Brexit and with Jeremy in some places."

Some Labour candidates fear the party's blizzard of generous spending pledges, the most recent being a 30% cut in rail season ticket prices, are raising questions among some voters about whether they could be delivered.

At a press conference last week, Corbyn produced 451 pages of uncensored documents, which showed that between July 2017 and July 2019, senior UK and US trade officials discussed the NHS, drug patents, the pharmaceutical industry, health insurance and medical devices as part of the post-Brexit trade deal.

Experts have warned that the documents show the US wants the UK to rip up the way it sets drug prices -- potentially leading to billions of pounds a year in added costs for the NHS.

### ■ Can Jeremy Corbyn Lose the British Election and Still Win?

But The New Yorker reported that ritish politicians tend to avoid December elections. Darkness falls early, the weather is bad, and optimism is hard to come by. The last one was in 1923, when the recently installed Conservative Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, called an election four years earlier than necessary, in order to rally the country behind a contentious trade policy that he was pursuing. It was a terrible idea. The Conservatives lost power and the Labour Party formed a government for the first time. In theory, it's not hard to imagine something similar happening to Boris Johnson, on December 12th. Like Baldwin, Johnson wants the upcoming contest to have a single focus--his Brexit deal--but he and the Tories have other things to answer for.

Conservative Prime Ministers have led Britain since 2010. During that time, the Party's signature policy has been a program of austerity that has protected the country's finances at an immense human cost. Crime has risen, schools have suffered, and poverty is increasing. Patients arriving in the emergency rooms of the National Health Service are facing the longest waiting times since 2004. Average wages in Britain, unlike in the U.S., are yet to recover to their level before the financial crisis. And that's before you even get to the soul-grinding shit show that is Brexit, which has been a Tory production from start to finish, except that it hasn't finished yet. Under vaguely normal political conditions, the Conservatives wouldn't stand a chance in next month's election. Johnson has his talents but he is hardly a flawless candidate. It might not tell you everything about a Prime Minister if he won't tell you how many children he has, but it must tell you something. Last week, during the first televised debate of the campaign, Johnson was asked whether the truth mattered. "I think it does," he replied. "I think it's very important." The audience burst out laughing.

But these are not vaguely normal conditions. Johnson's main opponent is Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party. Since he was elected to the post, four years ago, Corbyn, a seventy-year-old socialist Member of Parliament, has remained almost uniquely unimaginable as a British Prime Minister. Most voters look at Corbyn and simply can't picture him doing the things that Prime Ministers do: living in Downing Street, hobnobbing with the Queen, taking charge in an emergency.

Corbyn is more your guy for a rally or a picket line, or a chat at the bus stop. This hasn't always counted against him. In the spring of 2017, Theresa May, who was every inch an orthodox Prime Minister, gambled that she could crush Corbyn in a general election. Early in the campaign, Labour was twenty points behind in the polls. But Corbyn's underdog status--combined with some popular left-wing policies, like nationalizing the railways and providing free college tuition, which seemed both radical and achievable--turned him into a low-risk, feel-good alternative for many voters. There was a chant, "Oh, Jeremy Corbyn," to the tune of "Seven Nation Army," by the White Stripes. There was a Stormzy meme. Corbyn is relatable; he seems to care. May was stilted and dour. Labour gained thirty seats and the election ended in a hung Parliament. May's authority--and her command of Brexit--never recovered.

Since Johnson called an election, last month, the question has been whether Corbyn and Labour can pull off a similar performance. But the past two years have been awful for almost every well-known British politician, caught up in the inertia and viciousness of Brexit. When I wrote a profile of Corbyn, shortly before the Brexit vote, he was still riding a bicycle to appointments and knocking around in mismatched jackets and pants. These days, he is mostly crammed into a dark-blue suit. Since the spring, he has worn a pair of corrective glasses for muscle tiredness in his right eye. One of Corbyn's telling characteristics is his seeming passiveness, his tendency to shrink at vital moments. Earlier this month, at a campaign stop in Blackpool, in the north of England, John Crace, the Guardian's parliamentary sketch-writer, was struck by Corbyn's lifelessness. "He could barely keep his eyes open as he introduced a showcase programme for lifelong education that should be at the heart of his party's manifesto," Crace wrote. "It was almost as if he was punch-drunk. Years of being the underdog, of disproving the doubters, of always bouncing back, have finally taken their toll. Now it looked as if he had had enough." In recent weeks, most national polls have had the Conservatives ahead by at least ten per cent. On November 14th, John Curtice, a professor at the University of Strathclyde who is regarded as Britain's preeminent polling expert, described the chances of Labour winning a majority in December as "as close to zero as one can safely say." While Johnson's net approval rating hovers around zero, Corbyn's is minus sixty.

Last week, I went to Birmingham to see Corbyn launch the Labour Party's election manifesto. The event took place in the atrium of a faculty building at Birmingham City University, overlooking a construction site for HS2--an eighty-billion-pound high-speed-rail project championed by the Conservatives. Unlike May, who was fiscally cautious, Johnson is promising voters both tax cuts and higher public spending, which gives the campaign the feel of competing Christmas lists, after years of gruel. Corbyn appeared on the stage, which was decked out in clashing pinks and reds, just after 11 a.m. Students peered down from the floors above and he raised two thumbs up to greet them. At his best, Corbyn is personable and direct, possessed of moral certainty. He held up a copy of the Labour manifesto, a red booklet marked with "For the Many, Not the Few," the Party's slogan under his leadership. "Labour's manifesto is a manifesto for hope," Corbyn told the audience. "But you can't have it." He paused for effect. "At least, that's what the most powerful people in Britain and their supporters want you to believe."

To take on Johnson's Conservatives--who raised £5.67 million in the first week of the election campaign, twenty-six times

the £218,500 raised by Labour--Corbyn has adopted a newly confrontational tone toward Britain's elites. At the beginning of his speech, he assailed "the tax dodgers, the bad bosses, the big polluters," and the "billionaire-owned" media. He quoted Franklin Delano Roosevelt. "They are unanimous in their hate for me, and I welcome their hatred," he said. And then Corbyn outlined a plan, in his words, to "rewrite the rules" of the British economy. In 2017, Labour's electoral promises implied an extra seventy billion pounds of public spending--around a ten-percent increase in the government budget. Last week, Corbyn doubled down, with proposals that would come to more than a hundred and thirty billion pounds a year. There was truly something for everyone: thirty hours a week of free child care for two-to four-year-olds; more nurses for the N.H.S.; a hefty increase in the minimum wage; more generous pensions and a halt to a rising retirement age; free college (again); free fibre-optic broadband; free music lessons for children; a "green industrial revolution," promising a million new jobs; partial re-nationalization of the nation's railways, post office, and energy suppliers; and a reinstatement of trade-union rights. "Ignore the wealthy and powerful who tell you that's not possible. The future is ours to make, together," Corbyn said. He quoted Pablo Neruda. "You can cut all the flowers but you cannot keep spring from coming."

In the mouth of a different candidate--an Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, or an Elizabeth Warren--Corbyn's agenda could sound very different, even transformative. Labour's plans are meant to address inequality and to undertake a British equivalent of the Green New Deal. Even Corbyn's much-derided Brexit policy--negotiate yet another deal and put it to the British public for a vote--isn't much crazier than Johnson's promise to secure a new trade deal with the E.U. by the end of 2020. But the messenger matters, and Corbyn is Corbyn. He and John McDonnell, Labour's shadow Chancellor and the architect of its economic policies, are veterans of strikes and internecine Labour disputes about wealth creation and the role of the state that go back to the early seventies. Unfairly or not, whenever Corbyn speaks about setting up a new "National Education Service" for adult learning, or bringing utility companies into public ownership, he evokes an age of high taxation, inefficient bureaucracy, and national stagnation.

"These are vast numbers, enormous, colossal," Paul Johnson, the director of the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies, said, of Labour's declared spending plans. Johnson described Corbyn's claim that its policies could be funded by tax increases on the richest five per cent of the population as "simply not credible." Beyond the economy, the inclusiveness of Labour's policies--toward migrants, disabled people, and other minorities--is undermined by Corbyn's continuing failure to disentangle anti-Semitism from the Party's left-wing turn under his leadership. Earlier this month, two Labour parliamentary candidates were forced to withdraw from the election, one for using the term "Shylock" during a council meeting, the other for claiming that allegations of anti-Semitism within Labour were "orchestrated by the wealthy establishment." This week, Britain's chief rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, described the anxiety felt by many Jews about the prospect of Corbyn becoming Prime Minister. "A new poison--sanctioned from the top--has taken root in the Labour Party," he wrote in the Times of London, warning voters that the "the very soul of our nation is at stake." Whenever Corbyn is challenged about the most troubling aspect of his record, he adopts a more or less rote response. He raises his voice and declares angrily that the scourge of racism and anti-Semitism is unacceptable in all walks of life. And then it happens again.

During Corbyn's first months as leader of the Labour Party, people in Westminster used to compare him to Chauncey Gardiner, a character in the 1979 film "Being There," in which a homely gardener (played by Peter Sellers) is almost accidentally elevated to the U.S. Presidency. He was a blank, seemingly genial man on whom it was possible to project all kinds of things. In the past four years, the public sense of Corbyn has narrowed, while the scale of his job has grown. Holding together the Labour vote in Britain--and growing it sufficiently to dislodge the Conservatives--is not dissimilar from the challenge facing the Democratic Party, as it tries to muster a coalition to defeat Donald Trump in 2020. The Party is increasingly torn between its younger, more diverse urban voters and its traditional working-class base, in the Midlands and the North. The Brexit vote made Labour's internal tensions explicit. ➔11



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# NASA delays Boeing Starliner test flight to ISS due to rocket issue

Delays are pretty much the norm for complex space missions. NASA announced on Tuesday that the upcoming launch of Boeing's uncrewed Starliner to the International Space Station has been pushed back to Dec. 19.

The delay is due to a "purge air supply" issue with United Launch Alliance's Atlas V rocket, NASA said.

ULA issued an update on Tuesday saying, "Additional time was needed for the ULA and Boeing teams to complete an analysis of the issue, replace the duct and complete processing ahead of launch."

The two-day delay is minor compared with some of the rescheduled launch dates we've seen already. The test flight was originally set to happen as early as March 2019. "Both the rocket and the spacecraft are healthy and moving through standard pre-launch processing," Boeing Space said in a tweet.



Boeing is hoping to prove Starliner's space-worthiness with this Orbital Flight Test before launching actual astronauts to the ISS, likely in 2020. NASA contracted with both Boeing and SpaceX through the Commercial Crew Program to bring ISS astronaut launches back to US soil for the first time since the end of the Space Shuttle era in 2011.

NASA intends to end its reliance on Russian Soyuz spacecraft, but the crew program has seen a string of delays. NASA and SpaceX still hope to launch astronauts to the ISS in a Crew Dragon capsule in early 2020, but that launch depends on Crew Dragon passing a series of safety tests.

Boeing's upcoming flight test will mark a major milestone for the program if it is successful. We just have to wait a couple of extra days.

(Source: msn)

## Hubble spots two galaxies rubbing off on each other

Size is always relative, and that's especially true when it comes to outer space. We're tiny creatures, so we think of the Earth as this incredibly large thing, with our solar system being almost impossibly large. The size of our home galaxy, the Milky Way, is hard to wrap our heads around, so when we peer into space and spot a pair of galaxies cuddling up close to each other it's a difficult thing to grasp.

In this image captured by the Hubble Space Telescope, the cosmic feature known as Arp 293 is presented in gorgeous detail. Arp 293 is actually two separate galaxies that have drifted so close to one another that they've begun to share some of their material.

The two galaxies that makeup Arp 293 are NGC 6285 (on the left in the image) and NGC 6286 (on the right). From our point of view, they're sitting virtually side-by-side. They're far closer to one another than many galaxies we can observe from Earth, and while they're still separated by



many millions of light-years, their respective gravitational pulls are acting on the other.

As you can see in the image released by the ESA and NASA, material from both galaxies has begun to drift into space between the pair. This appears as a bluish haze in the image, and it's made of various clouds of dust and gasses that are being pulled back and forth.

Our own Milky Way is actually going to eventually interact with a neighboring galaxy itself. Right now, as you sit and read this, our home galaxy is on a course to collide with the larger galaxy known as Andromeda. While this might sound scary, the huge space between stars in both galaxies means that the likelihood of collisions between stars will be very small. On top of that, the actual merger won't take place for another 4.5 billion years or so, so it's really not worth worrying about.

(Source: msn)

## SpaceX's 19th cargo launch will carry high-tech toolbox for spacewalks



By Paul Brinkmann

SpaceX plans to launch its 19th cargo mission to the International Space Station, carrying 5,700 pounds of supplies, experiments and a new high-tech toolbox that will keep robotic equipment ready for spacewalks.

NASA said the mission will carry a hyperspectral imaging system for the Japanese government capable of scanning the Earth's surface for types of geologic processes in mineral and oil resource exploration.

Liftoff is planned for 12:51 p.m. from Launch Complex 40 at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla. The Air Force said weather is 90 percent favorable for launch, with a backup date Thursday, if needed. Launches to the space station have instantaneous launch windows to catch the station in orbit.

There is, however, a risk of strong upper level winds, Air Force and SpaceX officials said.

"If we look at the predictions, we think we are OK," said Jessica Jensen, a mission management director with SpaceX. "We launch data balloons to measure actual winds. We won't know until tomorrow."

NASA has names the new toolbox Robotic Tool Stowage Assembly, or RiTS, and nicknamed it a "Robot Hotel" because it will store robotic equipment in ideal conditions, outside the station. That will mean such equipment will be in tip-top shape for spacewalks, but it will also free up room inside the station and avoid the need to carry such tools through the equipment airlocks.

"The purpose is to protect sensitive tools and make them more accessible and easier to use," Mark Neuman, RiTS project manager for Northrop Grumman. "The Japanese airlock for equipment is very popular, very busy."

Two robotic leak detectors will be stored in the toolbox, for example. The leak detectors have mass spectrometers that can find leaks from the space station, NASA officials said.

The leak detectors until now have required 12 hours of preparation time in space, once brought through airlocks, to be usable.

Neuman said the toolbox might stow camera inspection equipment, wire cutters or other robotic equipment in the future.

The tool stowage assembly was developed at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md., in partnership with NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston.

Experiments also doubling as marketing efforts that are being sent to the space station include Anheuser-Busch launching more than 3,500 barley seeds. Twenty seeds will be sprouted or grown out. The beer giant said in 2017 that it wants to be the first beer on Mars.

The mission is to launch on a new Falcon 9 rocket that hasn't been used. Many recent SpaceX launches have employed reused rockets. The Dragon capsule that will carry the cargo previously flew on SpaceX's CRS-6 and CRS-11.

In January, the capsule is scheduled to re-enter Earth's atmosphere and splash down in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Baja California with 3,600 pounds of return cargo.

## New silicon device converts blue photons into red photons



By Brooks Hays

Researchers have developed a new hybrid device — pairing silicon with organic, carbon-based molecules — that can convert blue photons into red photons, paving the way for more efficient solar energy conversion.

Silicon's electronic properties make it a popular choice for a variety of technologies. The material, one of Earth's most abundant, is used to make everything from semiconductors to solar cells. But silicon isn't great at turning light into electricity.

While silicon can convert red photons into electricity just fine, its attempts to convert blue photons, which carry twice as much energy as red photons, yields mostly wasted thermal energy.

For the new device, engineers paired silicon with a carbon-based material called anthracene that converts blue photons into red photons, which the silicon can more easily convert into electricity.

The device can work in reverse, too, which could prove useful to medical imaging and quantum technologies.

"The organic molecule we've paired silicon with is a type of carbon ash called anthracene. It's basically soot," lead researcher Sean Roberts, an assistant professor of chemistry at the University of Texas, said in a news release. "We now can finely tune this material to react to different wavelengths of light. Imagine, for quantum computing, being able to tweak and optimize a material to turn one blue photon into two red photons or two red photons into one blue. It's perfect for information storage."

Scientists have long considered the possibility of pairing silicon with organic, carbon-based molecules, but attempts to layer the two materials failed to yield the "spin-triplet exciton transfer" needed to convert blue and green light into red.

For the new device, described this week in the journal Science Advances, researchers used tiny chemical wires to link silicon nanocrystals and anthracene molecules, enabling the novel form of energy transfer.

"The challenge has been getting pairs of excited electrons out of these organic materials and into silicon. It can't be done just by depositing one on top of the other," Roberts said. "It takes building a new type of chemical interface between the silicon and this material to allow them to electronically communicate."

Scientists studied the efficacy of their new wire links using laser imaging. The observations showed the interface enables 90 percent of the energy to move between the silicon nanocrystals and anthracene molecules.

Researchers suggest the breakthrough could enable the production of miniature electronics, as well as enable applications in medicine, bioimaging and solar cell technologies.

"The novelty is really how to get the two parts of this structure — the organic molecules and the quantum confined silicon nanocrystals — to work together," said Lorenzo Mangolini, an associate professor of mechanical engineering at the University of California, Riverside. "We are the first group to really put the two together."

## Satellite broken? Smart satellites to the rescue

When satellites break, which is surprisingly often, there isn't much you can do about them.

They become expensive and dangerous flotsam, orbiting Earth for years or generations until gravity eventually draws them to a fiery death in the atmosphere. University of Cincinnati professor Ou Ma is engineering robotics technology to fix orbiting satellites in his Intelligent Robotics and Autonomous Systems Lab. He envisions robotic satellites that can dock with other satellites for repairs or refueling.



The most useful repair satellite will be able to complete multiple tasks, Ma said. During his career, he has worked on various projects relating to the robotic arms aboard the International Space Station and the former space shuttle program. His signature is floating in orbit on a piece of equipment aboard the space station.

In his lab, Ma and UC senior research associate Anoop Sathyan are developing robotic networks that can work independently but collaboratively on a common task.

For their latest study, Ma and Sathyan put a group of robots to the test with a novel game that uses strings to move an attached token to a designated spot on a table.

Since the robots each control just one string, they need the other robots' cooperation to move the token to the right spot by increasing or relaxing tension on the string in response to each robot's actions.

Using an artificial intelligence called genetic fuzzy logic, the researchers were able to get three robots and then five robots to move the token where the researchers wanted.

Their results were published this month in the journal Robotics. The researchers found that by using five robots, the collective could accomplish the task even if one of the robots malfunctioned.

"This will be especially true for problems with larger numbers of robots where the liability of an individual robot will be low," the researchers concluded.

Ma said a million things can go wrong with every satellite launch. But for most of those glitches, nothing can be done once the satellite is deployed.

A \$400 million Intelsat satellite the size of a small school bus malfunctioned this year after reaching a high elliptical orbit, according to SpaceNews. A few of the first 60 Starlink satellites launched by SpaceX malfunctioned as well this year, but their low Earth orbit is designed to decay to oblivion in just a few years.

Perhaps the most famous satellite glitch of all time occurred in 1990 when the Hubble Space Telescope was deployed only for NASA to learn its pricy mirror was warped. A subsequent repair mission aboard the space shuttle Endeavor in 1993 replaced the mirror to provide astonishing images of the universe.

Sending humans to space for satellite repairs is prohibitively expensive, Ma said. Four subsequent Hubble service missions costing billions of dollars combined were performed by astronauts from the space shuttle.

Faulty satellites have dogged most international space programs from Japan to Russia. The problem isn't limited to Earth orbit. In 1999, a NASA orbiter crashed into Mars because engineers used pounds instead of metric newtons in thruster software. The thrusters fired with four times less force than anticipated and the spacecraft's orbit was critically low.

The inability to repair satellites becomes a more pressing concern with every launch, Ma said.

"Big commercial satellites are costly. They run out of fuel or malfunction or break down," Ma said. "They would like to be able to go up there and fix it, but nowadays it's impossible."

NASA is hoping to change that. In 2022, the agency will launch a satellite capable of refueling other satellites in low Earth orbit. The goal is to intercept and refuel a U.S. government satellite. The project called Restore-L is expected to provide proof of concept for autonomous satellite repairs, NASA said.

A Colorado company called Maxar is providing the spacecraft infrastructure and robotic arms for the project.

Most satellites fail into disuse because they exhaust their supply of fuel — not from a critical malfunction, said John Lymer, chief roboticist for Maxar. Refueling alone would be a boon for the industry, he said.

"You're retiring a perfectly good satellite because it ran out of gas," he said. Lymer said he's familiar with the work Ma is doing in his Intelligent Robotics and Autonomous Systems Lab.

"Ou Ma, who I've worked with for many years, works on rendezvous and proximity organization. There are all kinds of technical solutions out there. Some will be better than others. It's about getting operational experience to find out whose algorithms are better and what reduces operational risk the most."

Lymer said the industry is poised to take off, creating a boon for aerospace engineering students like those at UC.

"I think it's the future. We're going to crawl into it — not leap," he said.

In Ma's lab, students are working on the automated navigation that satellites will need to dock with other satellites in space. It's tricky business since an inadvertent bump in zero gravity can send one or both vehicles tumbling.

"It's easy to make it tumble in space because nothing holds it. Then the satellite becomes even more difficult to grab. If it starts to tumble, it can tumble forever basically. It won't stop on its own," Ma said.

Engineering simulations can predict the dynamic behavior of a target satellite so an approaching satellite can safely arrest it, he said.

"We have simulation tools so from there we can accurately predict its behavior," he said.

"To grab something in space is really difficult. And grabbing something that's tumbling in space is even more difficult."

Time is of the essence. With every launch and every failed satellite, low Earth orbit is approaching the Kessler effect, the theory by Donald Kessler that satellite collisions could create a cascade of debris hampering the safety of future launches as depicted in the fictional 2013 Oscar-winning film "Gravity."

"Think of the speed of these objects. We're not talking about highway speed or even aircraft speed. They're traveling at 17,000 mph," Ma said.

(Source: Science Daily)

## India's crashed Vikram Moon lander spotted on lunar surface

A NASA satellite orbiting the Moon has found India's Vikram lander, which crashed on the lunar surface in September, the US space agency said on Monday.

NASA released an image taken by its Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) that showed the site of the spacecraft's impact and associated debris field, with parts scattered over almost two dozen locations spanning several kilometers.

In a statement, NASA said it had released a mosaic image of the site on 26 September, inviting the public to

search it for signs of the lander.

It added that a person named Shanmuga Subramanian contacted the LRO project with a positive identification of debris — with the first piece found about 750 meters north-west of the main crash site.

Blasting off in July, emerging Asian giant India had hoped with its Chandrayaan-2 ("Moon vehicle 2") mission to become just the fourth country after the US, Russia and regional rival China to make a successful Moon landing,

and the first on the lunar south pole.

The main spacecraft, which remains in orbit around the Moon, dropped the unmanned lander Vikram for a descent that would take five days, but the probe went silent just 2.1km above the surface.

Days after the failed landing, the Indian Space Research Organization said it had located the lander, but had not been able to establish communication.

(Source: The Guardian)



## International arrivals in Iran reach 6.7 million since March

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Some 6.7 million foreign nationals have visited Iran since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21), IRNA reported.

“Since the beginning of this year, 6.7 million foreign nationals holding visas have arrived in the country,” said Mojtaba Karimi who presides over Foreign Ministry’s visa and passport department.



He made the remarks in a two-day national conference on ecotourism which kicked off in the city of Mashhad on Wednesday.

Iran welcomed some 7.8 million foreign nationals last year, achieving 52.5 percent increase year on year. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, Iraq was the main source of tourism for Iran in 2018, constituting 24% of all inbound visitors. Azerbaijan with (17%), Turkey (8%), Pakistan (4%) and Bahrain (2%) constituted other major sources while the remaining 46% came from the rest of the world.

## Disney announces New Star Wars hotel to open in 2021

This is the vacation Star Wars fans have been looking for. Soon, guests will be able to take the ultimate trip to a galaxy far, far away aboard Star Wars: Galactic Starcruiser—aka Walt Disney World’s new Star Wars hotel.

Dubbed a “space cruise,” this experience is more than just a hotel, it’s a two-night itinerary that fully immerses travelers in their own Star Wars Story.

And we’ve just learned that these space cruises will begin taking flight in 2021.

Similar to a traditional cruise, intergalactic travelers will all arrive together to the terminal, near Disney’s Hollywood Studios, on their departure day. So the story goes, your space cruiser, the Halcyon, is much too big to land on any planet, so guests will have to blast off in a launch pod to reach the ship. On your way, you’ll see stars zooming by before attaching to the Halcyon.

Enter the atrium through whooshing “Star Wars doors,” and you’ll find droids, aliens, and fellow travelers. You’re also liable to run into some trouble—Kylo Ren and his villainous First Order stormtroopers have been known to make their way onto ships like this one.

(Source: MSN)



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Cistercian Abbey of Fontenay

Located in the Bourgogne Franche-Comte region in the Cote-d’Or Department in the commune of Marmagne, the Cistercian Abbey of Fontenay was founded in 1119 by St Bernard in a marshy valley of Bourgogne. With its austere architecture, church, cloister, refectory, sleeping quarters, bakery and its ironworks, it illustrates the ideal of self-sufficiency as practiced by the earliest communities of Cistercian monks.



Built between 1139 and 1147 by Abbot Guillaume thanks to the generosity of Ebraud, Bishop of Norwich, the Abbey of Fontenay was consecrated by Pope Eugene III, a Cistercian and former disciple of St Bernard. This form of Romanesque Cistercian church is of great simplicity and strict modesty with its basilica design in the form of a Latin cross, its blind nave, and transept devoid of a tower. The perfection of the proportions, the rigor of the wall openings and the science of the vaultings, the beauty of the wall masonry which places impeccable courses of ashlar side by side with crude rough-cut rubble constitute the value of this architecture.

The cloister and the chapter house have remained intact and were inspired from the same principles. Within its enclosing wall, the Abbey still retains other communal buildings: monks’ day room and dormitory, warming room, refectory, guest house, bakery and iron works. This last building, dating to the end of the 12th century, recalls the part which the Cistercians played in the technological progress of the Middle Ages, and is one of the oldest industrial buildings in France.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Tehran, Tashkent discuss enhanced tourism, cultural heritage co-op

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan and Uzbekistan’s ambassador in Tehran Bakhodir Abdullaev exchanged views to strengthen mutual ties in the arenas of tourism, cultural heritage, and handicrafts.

In a meeting in Tehran on Tuesday, Mounesan invited Uzbekistan to attend Tehran International Tourism Exhibition, which is scheduled to be held in February 2020, ILNA reported.

He urged the need for holding various meetings between Iranian and Uzbek travel businesses, saying, “To increase cooperation in the field of tourism, it is necessary to hold face-to-face meetings between Iranian and Uzbek tourism companies, which can take place on the sidelines of the Tehran International Tourism Exhibition.”

“Holding joint museum exhibitions with different countries are on the agenda of this ministry. Given the cultural richness of Iranian museums, we are ready to hold a joint museum exhibit between Iran and Uzbekistan.”

Talking on health and medical tourism, the Iranian minister added that Uzbek health travelers can choose Iran as their destination as it is one of the most advanced countries in this regard and patients can enjoy advantages such as pocket-friendly costs, high quality services, close distance as well as experienced medical staff.



Iran’s tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan (R) meets with Uzbekistan’s ambassador in Tehran Bakhodir Abdullaev at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, December 3, 2019.

Abdullaev for his part welcomed Mounesan’s proposals, expressing hope to deepen ties in tourism, cultural heritage

and handicrafts within the framework of setting up a joint economic committee by the two countries.

## Chabahar to host IORA tourism ministers’ meeting

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Tourism ministers from the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) will come together in Iran’s port city of Chabahar in the next Iranian calendar year (March 2020-March 2021), CHTN reported on Tuesday.

“The first meeting of tourism ministers of the countries bordering the Indian Ocean will be held in Chabahar [in Sistan-Baluchestan province] next year,” provincial tourism chief Alireza Jalalzai pointed out without mentioning the exact date of the event.

In addition to tourism and business, the summit is aimed to explore social interactions that could bring together various cultures of the Indian Ocean states, he official explained.

Iran is connected with some one third of the world’s population, which are members of the IORA through Sistan-Baluchestan, he noted, adding that such a capacity will be a good opportunity for the province to attract travelers from the association’s member states.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Jalalzai pointed to significant changes the province has been embraced in tourism and hospitality sectors over the past couple of years, saying, “The



Holidaymakers hike across a desert route in Sistan-Baluchestan province, southeast Iran.

mental image of Sistan-Baluchestan has been changed.”

Having a number of distinctive natural and historical attractions, Chabahar could be named as one of the most underrated destinations in Iran. However, in recent years

various measures have been taken to promote Iran’s sole oceanic port as a safe and hospitable choice for both domestic and foreign visitors.

The province was long shunned by potential foreign travelers though it is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites, namely Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut desert, shared between it and Kerman province.

For mainstream Iranians, the name of Sistan-Baluchestan conjures up stories of drought, desiccated wetlands and dust storms. In the international scale foreigners may consider it a reminiscent of the big red blot on the Iran safety map.

Established in 1997, the Indian Ocean Rim Association is a dynamic inter-governmental organization aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean region through its 22 Member States and 9 Dialogue Partners. Home to nearly 2.7 billion people, Member States, whose shores are washed by the ocean, are including Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Oman, South Africa, Thailand and Iran.

## Iran tourism: Sector may get huge boost from China in defiance of U.S. sanctions

By Palash Ghosh

Despite the imposition of U.S. sanctions on various sectors of its economy, Iran is enjoying something of a boom in its tourism industry – with China possibly preparing to play a big role.

Ali Asghar Mounesan, Iran’s minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts spoke to Chinese officials in Beijing over the weekend to ask them to invest in Iran’s growing tourism industry, citing the ever-closer economic ties the two Asian giants are developing.

“If Chinese investors agree, we can provide them with a parcel of land to invest in the field of construction [and] operation of tourism sites and complexes,” Mounesan told an audience that included Chinese Minister of Culture and Tourism Luo Shugang.

Mounesan further said Iran would like China to engage in research and renovation of ancient Persian monuments -- as Iran has similar cultural ties with Germany, France and Italy.

Chang Hua, China’s ambassador to Iran, who recently visited Iran’s Golestan province to discuss the tourism potential of the northeastern Iranian region bordering the Caspian Sea, told the local governor-general Hadi Haqshenas that “Iran and China are two ancient civilizations and have been trading on the Silk Road for many years, and we are pleased that these exchanges are increasing day by day.”

Haqshenas noted that with imminent air flight traffic between Gorgan in Iran’s Golestan province and Aktau, Kazakhstan, “we are ready for the presence of Chinese tourists in the Golestan province.”

Chang also criticized the sanctions imposed by the U.S. on Iran. “We have always been opposed to unilateral sanctions and expressed our support for Iran,” he said.

Haqshenas cited China’s well established joint venture in the Pakistani port of Gwadar, and suggested China and Iran could arrange a similar endeavor along the coast of the Caspian Sea.

Vali Teymouri, Iran’s deputy director for tourism affairs, said he hopes Iran could attract up to 1 million Chinese tourists per year, citing that Teheran’s government commenced a new visa waiver program

for Chinese visitors in July 2019.

That 1 million figure would represent a huge jump from the 52,000 Chinese who visited Iran in 2018.

“We believe that the two countries have had common cultural and trade communications for a long time. So we should facilitate and improve mutual collaborations, especially in the tourism industry,” Teymouri said.

But Mounesan is even more ambitious – he said he hopes the relaxed visa rules eventually helps to attract 2 million or even 3 million Chinese tourists to Iran annually.

“We believe that the tourism industry is [capable of] generating more income than the oil industry, and that sanctions do not work in the tourism sector,” Mounesan said. “So we should facilitate and improve mutual collaborations, especially in the tourism industry.” Of course, China already has established deep economic links with Iran’s energy industry.

Earlier this year, China agreed to invest \$400 billion in Iran’s oil and gas, petrochemicals, transport and manufacturing sectors in the next 25 years.

While U.S. sanctions did lead to a temporary reduction in Chinese imports of Iranian oil from 2017 to 2018, Chinese companies nonetheless received waivers from the bans – as a result, Chinese purchases of Iranian oil has varied widely.

For example, between September 2018 and August 2019, monthly Chinese imports of Iranian crude has ranged from as high as 800,000 barrels per day in April to as low as 100,000 barrels per day in August.

As for tourism, Iran now has the world’s third fastest growing travel sector, said Afar, a U.S.-based travel magazine, behind only Tajikistan and Ecuador.

Iran attracted about 7.3 million tourists in 2018 – a nearly 50% hike from the prior year. In the first five months of this year, Iran attracted about 4 million foreign tourists, a 30% increase from the same period last year.

“Thanks to a simpler visa process and a major slide in the value of the Iranian rial, travel to Iran has grown easier and more affordable for international visitors,” Afar wrote.

Indeed, the value of the rial plunged by about two-thirds against the dollar last year



File photo shows Chinese citizens in Tehran with Borj-e Azadi “Azadi Tower” in the background

Although the U.S. State Department advises U.S. citizens not to travel to Iran, Afar noted it’s still possible for Americans to get an entry visa. GeoEx, a high-end luxury tour operator, has been taking travelers to Iran since 1993, “making it the longest-operating U.S. tour company in Iran.”

However, partly due to U.S. sanctions, few westerners are travelling to Iran anymore. Most tourists to Iran come from neighboring countries. The World Travel & Tourism Council reported that Iraq was the largest source of tourism to Iran in 2018, accounting for 24% of all visitors.

Iraq was followed by Azerbaijan (17%), Turkey (8%), Pakistan (4%) and Bahrain (2%). Indeed, the tiny Arab state of Oman sent more visitors to Iran (30,000) than did western Europe (26,000) during that period.

Teymouri noted the number of Turkish visitors jumped by 35% in just one year – despite the continuing turmoil in adjacent Syria. In 2018, Iran’s travel and tourism sector contributed about 1.16 trillion rials (\$8.83 billion) to the economy, or 6.5% of overall gross domestic product.

Under Iran’s “2025 Tourism Vision Plan,” the country hopes to reach 20 million

“We are interested in using Iranian expertise for restoring monuments, but in this regard an agreement must be signed by authorities of the two countries.”

The Islamic republic hosted a record high of nearly 600,000 medical travelers during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-July 21), nearly equal to the figure for the whole past year, according to an Iranian association for the health tourism promotion.

Many domestic experts say that medical tourism in Iran produces win-win outcomes as the country yields considerable benefits to international health-care seekers, offering affordable yet quality treatment services. The country has set its goals to exceed its yearly medical travelers to around 2 million in [calendar year] 1404 (March 2025-March 2026).

Back in September, the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked Iran first in the world as a pocket-friendly destination. “Iran ranks 1st globally [in the category of Price Competitiveness], thanks to low ticket taxes and airport charges (7th), fuel prices (5th) and high purchasing power (5th).”

The Islamic Republic boasts hundreds of historical sites such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 22 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

tourist arrivals in 2025 – boosted partly by the Chinese.

“The development of tourism infrastructure, the considerable volume of investments in tourism sector, along with the issuance of electronic visa and visa waiver for target countries could be considered as the main causes of the growth in foreign travelers,” Mounesan said.

To prepare for an influx of tourists, 12 hotel projects valued at 16 trillion rials (\$380 million) have commenced in northwest Iran. These properties are expected to create a total capacity of 961 beds and about 2,000 new jobs.

Aside from U.S. sanctions, Iran’s repressive government and status as an alleged sponsor of terror in other countries has created a very negative image of Iran in many western minds.

“It is a country that is often portrayed as unwelcoming, but the reality is quite the opposite,” said Jenny Gray, the global product and operations manager of Intrepid Travel of Australia. “Iranians are warm, friendly and eager to show off their country to foreigners. The feedback from our travelers is a testament to this.”

(Source: International Business Times)



# East Asia at the glance

## China-Russia natural gas pipeline a great success

The China-Russia east-route natural gas pipeline officially begins service on Monday. This is a major event in the promoted economic cooperation between Beijing and Moscow and diversifies Russia's energy exports as well as China's energy imports. It is an achievement of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era in the economic and trade field.

With a total length of more than 8,000 kilometers, the pipeline is the longest natural gas pipeline in the world today. Negotiations alone over the project had been going on for 18 years. But after that, a fruitful result was quickly reached in the following years. Obviously, the process has been encouraged by the strengthening of China-Russia strategic mutual trust.

Once it starts to run at full capacity, the pipeline will be able to supply 38 billion cubic meters of gas annually to China. This accounts for 14 percent of natural gas that China consumed in 2018 and 28 percent of natural gas that China imported in the same year.

Previously, Russian natural gas was mainly delivered to Europe. Russia was supposed not to be worried about relevant exports. However, large-scale US exploitation of shale gas and rapid changes in global energy structure have gradually shaped a buyer's market. Combined with the West's sanctions against Russia, the latter's natural gas exports to Europe face new challenges. Opening up the Chinese market will greatly improve Russia's status in negotiations with Europe.

This is a win-win cooperation between Beijing and Moscow. Strengthening collaboration between the two not only creates substantial quantities of direct benefits, but also often plays a positive role of leverage in their third-party market cooperation.

The comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Russia will benefit the two peoples. To befriend a distant country and be hostile to neighbors has been the usual geopolitical pattern, which is quite common in Asia. In this context, China-Russia ties have set a good example.

As mutual trust strengthens, the two countries will have more space for trade cooperation. Cross-border pipeline and bridge infrastructure improve the two sides' all-round cooperation. This will probably structurally affect geo-economics in the entire region. The pipeline will economically energize the places it goes through in Russia. For China, many cities will enjoy clean energy from Russia, which will help the environment in Northeast and East China.

China is upholding people-centered development, an idea - if internationalized - that maximizes equal and mutually beneficial cooperation among countries. The pipeline benefits the two peoples. There should be more such pipelines and bridges in the world. The mind-set that hinders such projects should be history.

### Countermeasures show China's firm will to defend sovereignty

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced Monday that China would suspend reviewing applications for US warships and aircraft to make port calls in Hong Kong and will impose sanctions on five NGOs, including the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and Human Rights Watch. These measures, the first wave of countermeasures against the "Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act," will have a real impact on related departments and organizations.

The measures demonstrate Chinese government's determination to not allow certain US and Western forces to wantonly make waves on the Hong Kong issue. If the US side continues to provoke on Hong Kong, it is expected that China will take follow-up actions. Because of "one country, two systems," the US can exert some influence in Hong Kong. But Washington shouldn't get the illusion that it can turn the influence into jurisdiction over Hong Kong, and make the city its sphere of influence.

The measures announced on Monday are mild, as China has exercised restraint so far, but it doesn't mean Beijing won't hit back with harsher measures,



if necessary.

The five NGOs such as NED are closely connected to US authorities, whose funding directly or indirectly comes from US government allocations. These organizations are at the forefront of US values infiltration to advance American national interests. These organizations have played a disgraceful role in stirring social turmoil in many countries.

This is the first time that China has openly imposed sanctions on US NGOs, which doesn't imply that Beijing thinks riots in Hong Kong were solely caused by external factors. But certain forces from the US did exert a disruptive impact. Sanctioning them is a naturally result of China's national strength and sovereignty will.

The US side shouldn't feel surprised by Beijing's announcement to suspend port calls of US warships and aircraft. The US military may feel inconvenient since they traditionally stop in Hong Kong for maintenance, but they can argue with the US Congress and the White House.

The countermeasures announced on Monday also sent a clear signal to radical forces in Hong Kong that they shouldn't count on external forces to dictate the Hong Kong situation. The city is part of China and no force can change or weaken this reality. China has abundant capability to adopt tough measures when necessary to stop external forces from causing any real harm to China's sovereignty.

The People's Liberation Army is also stationed in Hong Kong. It is not a decoration, but provides fundamental support for Hong Kong's stability. Hong Kong, under China's rule, connects China and the West. If the US wants to broaden communication through Hong Kong, we welcome it. But if Washington wants to abandon this platform, so be it. It is also our attitude to other Western countries.

It's Hong Kong's tradition to connect China and the West. However, if Hong Kong society can't stop internal disruptive forces and the city can no longer perform such a function, then the city will experience an economic structural adjustment. No force should ponder the idea of undermining China's sovereignty over Hong Kong. The path is a dead end.

### Targeting China will mean self-isolation for NATO

NATO's 70th anniversary meeting is scheduled on Tuesday and Wednesday in London. Troubled by internal and external problems, the organization seems not in a mood to celebrate. The US-based Defense News even predicts that "politics could make the situation feel more like a funeral."

The organization is already dragged by several internal disputes such as defense budgets, and is

also frustrated by external challenges, including the Middle East situation.

Even so, Washington still seemingly considers NATO not in enough trouble and has recently started to find the organization a new enemy - Beijing. On November 20, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called for member states' attention to the "current and potential long-term threat" posed by China at a NATO foreign ministerial meeting. A senior US administration official again said Friday that the China-posed challenges, including its "dominance of 5G telecommunications networks" is a "very, very high priority" and will be discussed by President Donald Trump with allies at the NATO summit.

The US is building NATO as an ideology-based alliance aimed at containing China, with 5G as its major focus. During his European visit in September, US Defense Secretary Mark Esper urged NATO members to ban Chinese companies from their 5G networks. Similar statements have been made by quite a few US officials.

NATO has always been a tool utilized by Washington to support its own interests. The US is now attempting to draw other countries over to its side and pursue its strategic goal of keeping China down. Europe should not be fooled by US tricks. It is time for these member states to seriously consider the situations and make the right choice. European nations are now faced with two options: blindly following the US or cooperating with China despite US preaching.

Taking sides with the US is not in line with Europe's interests. Making this choice will only turn Europe, a significant world power, into a US puppet. Is this a scenario the once strongest continent wants to see? And if European countries shut their door on China's 5G technology, will they be able to bear the potential losses? But recognizing the reality and cooperating with China will make a different story. In 2018, China was the second-largest partner for EU exports and the largest partner for EU imports.

Future cooperation will only bring more benefits to both sides. It is possible that the US will create difficulties for China-Europe collaboration, but China is ready to make efforts to strengthen exchanges.

Facing the two choices, those with discerning eyes can easily tell which to choose. "Is our enemy today Russia? Or China? Is it the goal of NATO to designate them as enemies? I don't believe so." French President Emmanuel Macron has already made this clear.

What good does making an enemy do? Targeting China is a doomed way, as breaking off cooperation with the world's second-largest economy is like self-imposed isolation. Europe should think it over.

## Moral injury and America's endless conflicts

**6 →** Essentially, he attempted to draw out the panelists and the audience on what the play was trying to say and how that 2,500-year-old story of a warrior's depression, madness, and suicide might connect to their own experience. Listening to various responses, I found myself thinking that perhaps the main purpose of his, if not Sophocles's, version was to make the audience think about what war is. What it really is, not the heroic myth humans have made of it from ancient times on. And then I thought, maybe that's what we'd been talking about for the previous two days. Maybe that's what moral injury is: realizing the true nature of war.

Along with that thought came another, one that first occurred to me nearly 45 years ago when, as a reporter for the Baltimore Sun, I personally witnessed the disastrous end of the Vietnam War. I've believed ever since that covering war from the losing side gave me a truer knowledge of its nature than I'd have gotten from that or any other war's winning side. Maybe I should say darker, not truer, since I suppose the winners' war is real, too. But whichever word you choose, my experience, I felt, gave me a more unobstructed view of war. I could see it more clearly for what it was precisely because there was no good result to balance against the death and loss and terror and despair. There was no excuse to explain away the human disaster I'd seen and written about for several years, no way to tell myself that the war was necessary or had served any purpose.

That bit of personal history makes me think it's not accidental that our present consciousness of moral injury has come out of wars we didn't win. They haven't been lost in the same clear-cut way that the war in Vietnam was. They haven't (yet) ended in the kind of catastrophically decisive final act I witnessed there in the spring of 1975 in the weeks that led to Saigon's surrender. But these recent wars haven't accomplished their goals either, or given our soldiers a worthwhile reason for what they've gone through, which is surely a key piece of the moral injury story.

I was a civilian journalist, not a soldier. I went to Vietnam to report, not to fight. I didn't come home with any trauma symptoms. But I have all the feelings that Chaplain Orris listed as identifying markers for moral injury: sorrow, grief, regret, shame, and alienation. Those emotions come from what I learned about war, not from anything I did, and that makes me believe it may not be wrong to think that what we call moral injury might not be just one person's response to particularly troubling events, but a symptom of something larger, of seeing war individually and collectively for what it truly is.

### A Last Thought

In closing, I will turn back to the editors of War and Moral Injury. In their introduction, Douglas Pryer, a retired army intelligence officer and Afghanistan and Iraq veteran, and Robert Emmett Meagher, a classicist and professor of humanities at Hampshire College, pointed to an aspect of war that is missing in their anthology, the symposium, and in American culture more broadly:

"We must acknowledge a great gap in this text as in nearly every other on the subject of America's wars and veterans: the deaths and wounds, physical and spiritual, inflicted on the 'others,' our enemies, especially our 'civilian enemies.'"

Pryer and Meagher are right. Such an acknowledgement is almost entirely absent from the national discourse about our wars and their legacy. But without it, no moral wound, whether an individual's or a society's, can truly be healed.

## Who wins the UK election?

**7 →** In 2016, around a third of Labour voters chose to leave the E.U. (Corbyn himself is a long-term Euroskeptic). In the election next month, some sixty per cent of Labour-controlled constituencies will have a majority of Brexit voters. The big story of British politics recently has been about how the main parties have adapted to the new, tribal identities of Leave and Remain and how they go about amassing those voters into a parliamentary majority. Under Johnson, the Conservatives are now an unambiguously pro-Brexit party. Under Corbyn, Labour has attempted to make room for everybody, which is either unifying or a disastrous misjudgment, depending on your point of view.

In late October, political analysts described the figure of "Workington Man" as vital to both parties' chances. Workington is a seaside town in Cumbria, on England's northwest coast, which has voted Labour in every general election since 1918. This spring, however, the Brexit Party won the European parliamentary election. "Workington Man" is a white, male voter, older than forty-five, with a high-school education, who voted for Brexit and is hesitant about sticking with Labour under Corbyn. The term was coined by Onward, a center-right think tank, and expresses a hope, pursued by the Tories in recent years, that the Labour coalition is about to collapse. "Brexit has unlocked a load of voters for the first time," Will Tanner, Onward's director, told me. "If you look at some of the Labour Party's policies and, specifically, their tone, they are clearly focussing quite heavily on a socially liberal, probably metropolitan-dwelling, probably not very old socialist. It's not about working-class politics at all." Tanner used to be one of May's senior advisers and witnessed her failure, close up, to win those voters. But Johnson is a more adept and vigorous campaigner. The day before Corbyn's manifesto launch, the Prime Minister was in Teeside, a historically Labour-voting region in the country's industrial northeast, accidentally letting slip a tax cut that will benefit lower earners.

The truth is that both of the main parties are going to find it very difficult to win in December. The more that Johnson looks like a populist Brexiteer, the more he risks alienating traditional, middle-class Conservative voters, of whom about four and a half million voted Remain. The Liberal Democrats, who want to cancel Brexit altogether, are chasing those votes in the South and the West of England. The reach of Corbyn's state-building radicalism, meanwhile, may have found its natural limit. Last week, in the first round of polls after the manifesto launch, Labour's share of the vote barely moved, leaving the Conservatives still some twelve points ahead. But unstable loyalties around Brexit and the oddities of the British electoral system mean that it is almost impossible to translate national polls into an accurate prediction of seats in the House of Commons. "There are lots of dynamics at play which should make the Conservatives worry or at least be very careful," Tanner said. One of those dynamics is that, if Johnson falls short of an outright majority, Corbyn would be strongly placed to lead a loose coalition, made up of Labour, the Scottish National Party, and the Liberal Democrats—all opposed to Brexit in one form or another. It would be an unusual way for a veteran socialist to enter Downing Street, but nothing stranger than what happened at Britain's previous December election. Tanner brought up what happened in 1923. "The Conservatives throwing away a majority and the first Labour government ever being ushered in with the support of the Liberals," he said. "History doesn't repeat itself but it does rhyme."

## China welcomes six European states joining INSTEX

By staff and agency

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said on Tuesday that China highly commends efforts to implement the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) and welcomed six new European states for joining it.

"INSTEX marks an important effort on the European side to safeguard the JCPOA [the 2015 nuclear deal]. It reflects a determination to uphold multilateralism and the international order based on international law. China highly commends that," she told a press conference, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a report on its website.

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

Hua said, "We welcome this decision made by the six countries and support efforts to move forward the INSTEX. It will help promote cooperation between Europe and Iran and ensure the implementation of the JCPOA. We hope this mechanism will soon cover more areas and open up to non-EU countries as third parties to facilitate the normal economic and trade cooperation between Iran and the international community."

INSTEX barter mechanism, introduced



on January 31, is designed to circumvent U.S. sanctions against trade with Iran by avoiding use of the dollar.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom issued a statement on Saturday welcoming the decision by the six countries.

"As founding shareholders of the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), France, Germany

and the United Kingdom warmly welcome the decision taken by the governments of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, to join INSTEX as shareholders," read the statement published by website of the UK Foreign Ministry on Saturday.

It added, "This step further strengthens INSTEX and demonstrates European efforts to facilitate legitimate trade

between Europe and Iran and is a clear expression of our continuing commitment to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

However, the mechanism is not operational yet and the Europeans have said it is for trade of humanitarian goods.



## Tehran’s air pollution mitigation needs \$4 billion

**ENVIRONMENT desk** **TEHRAN** — The Municipality of Tehran has prepared a comprehensive plan to mitigate air pollution in the metropolis, based on which a total budget of 174 trillion rials (nearly \$4 billion) is required over the course of four years.

The plan, proposed by the municipality’s transportation and traffic organization, focuses on reducing particulate matter and the concentration of PM 2.5, so it reduces primary PM sources and secondary precursors like nitrogen oxides (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), ISNA news agency reported on Wednesday.

It has envisaged that primary PM sources will be reduced by 55 percent and secondary precursors by 45 percent. In this line, \$1 billion should be financed in the first year.

The plan claims that the main reasons behind air pollution intensification in the capital is lack of clean and cheap public transport, overcrowding the transport fleet, poor quality vehicles, extremely old public transportation fleet and violation.

However, controlling and removing air pollution sources, fining the industrial units for emission generation, and development of public transportation and the human-centered infrastructure are the main policies of the plan.

According to the plan, all vehicles, regardless of their type, contribute to production of particulate matter by 70 percent, and heating devices produce 2 percent of pollution, while power plants, refineries and industries are responsible for air pollution by 27 percent.

And in the category of vehicle emissions, trucks with 23 percent, public transport buses 12 percent, other buses 18 percent, motorcycles 10 percent, minibuses 4 percent, contribute to the production of particulate matter.

The plan suggests to renovate 8,200 buses in the public transport fleet and 4,800 buses in the private sector.

In another part of the plan, the importance of diesel particulate filter installation is emphasized and it is estimated that the average price of each filter is around \$23,000, full implementation of which costs \$47.5 million that reduces 3 percent of the PM emissions.

The program further emphasizes on considerable share of trucks in air pollution, which can be mitigated by retrofitting or installing filters, while it requires a budget of 62 trillion rials (about \$1.5 billion).

The plan also refers to diesel engine motorcycles as a source of pollution due to emitting 10 percent primary PM and 18 percent secondary PM, so 800,000 of these motorcycles should be replaced with electric ones, which needs 36 trillion rials (about \$850 million).

The proposed plan emphasizes to scrape 3 million clunker cars and replace them with new ones which will cost 42 trillion rials (about \$1 billion), and 30,000 taxi catalysts have to be replaced, which can reduce gas emissions by 2.5 percent.

■ **Air pollution kills 5,000 Tehrani citizens annually**  
Some 4,000 to 5,000 Tehrani citizens die each year from direct exposure to PM emissions, and air pollution brings Iran a loss of over \$2.6 billion per year, or about \$ 2,000.

■ **Polluted air haunted the capital for 49 days**  
Tehran air quality index (AQI) reached an unhealthy level of pollution for 49 days since the beginning of this year (March 21), according to a report published by the Tehran Air Quality Control Company.

An AQI is used to communicate to the public how polluted the air currently is or how polluted it is forecast to become.

The index categorizes conditions according to a measure of polluting matters into excellent (0-50), good (51-100), lightly polluted or unhealthy for sensitive groups (101-150), moderately polluted (151-200), heavily polluted (201-300) and severely polluted (301-500).

During the aforementioned period, 47 days got lightly polluted, while air quality reached unhealthy levels for 2 days which was almost dangerous for all the residents.

This is while, over the same period last year, Tehranners did not breathe a single day of heavily polluted air.

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### Watergate anniversary

(June 17, 2002)

Today marks the thirtieth anniversary of Watergate, the most famous political scandal in American history. What began as a burglary led to the downfall of US President Richard Nixon. It also revealed a web of political spying, sabotage and bribery. This report from Ian Pannell in Washington.

It was June 17th 1972, early on a Saturday morning. Five intruders were caught inside the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee, adjusting **bugging equipment** and photographing documents. The Republican Party, the FBI, the CIA, the Justice Department, the **attorney-general**, the White House and eventually, the president of the United States, all became **embroiled in** the ensuing scandal. Eventually, Richard Nixon was left with no choice but to resign. Three decades later, and the story still holds much fascination. But it also continues to **inform** today’s political climate. The recent reform of campaign finance was partly the result of continuing efforts to make public life at least appear cleaner. There continued to be **large doses of public skepticism** about politics and politicians, born out of the Vietnam war but cemented in Watergate. The willingness to speak out against President Bush and his policies in the midst of the war on terrorism is perhaps the best indication of this. But Watergate was about more than just skepticism. It was also about **restoring faith in** a political system that limits and divides power between the **executive**, the **legislature** and the **judiciary**. It’s this which many see as the **abiding legacy** of Watergate.

■ **Words**  
**bugging equipment**: hidden microphones used secretly to listen to private conversations  
**attorney-general**: the chief law officer in the US, who also advises the government  
**embroiled in**: deeply involved in (usually something bad - like an argument or a scandal)  
**inform**: here, influence  
**large doses of**: large amounts of  
**skepticism**: a skeptical attitude; doubt as to the truth of something  
**restoring faith in**: if you restore someone’s faith in something, you help them trust it again  
**executive**: the part of government which makes sure that laws are carried out  
**legislature**: the part of government which makes laws  
**judiciary**: all the country’s lawyers and judges are known together as the judiciary  
**abiding legacy**: lasting influence

(Source: BBC)

# International Cheetah Day: running fast toward extinction

**ENVIRONMENT desk** **TEHRAN** — Asiatic cheetah, the planet’s fastest mammal, are facing extinction as their population has dramatically shrunk to less than 7,000 in the world over the past few years, with a small remaining population in Iran.

Cheetahs (Acinonyx jubatus) have long, slender bodies covered with unique black spots scattered across their tan coats. The name cheetah comes from the Sanskrit word “chitraka,” which means “the spotted one,” according to the World Wildlife Fund.

With aerodynamic bodies, long legs and blunt, semi-retractable claws, cheetahs are formidable carnivores that can sprint at speeds of up to 60 to 70 mph (96 to 112 km/h), according to the Smithsonian National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s (IUCN’s) Red List of Threatened Species, most cheetah subspecies are considered vulnerable as all populations of them are on the decline.

Cheetahs are found across Africa especially in northern part of it; and a scattered population of them can be found across eastern and southern Africa, once they had been found in a wide range of Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

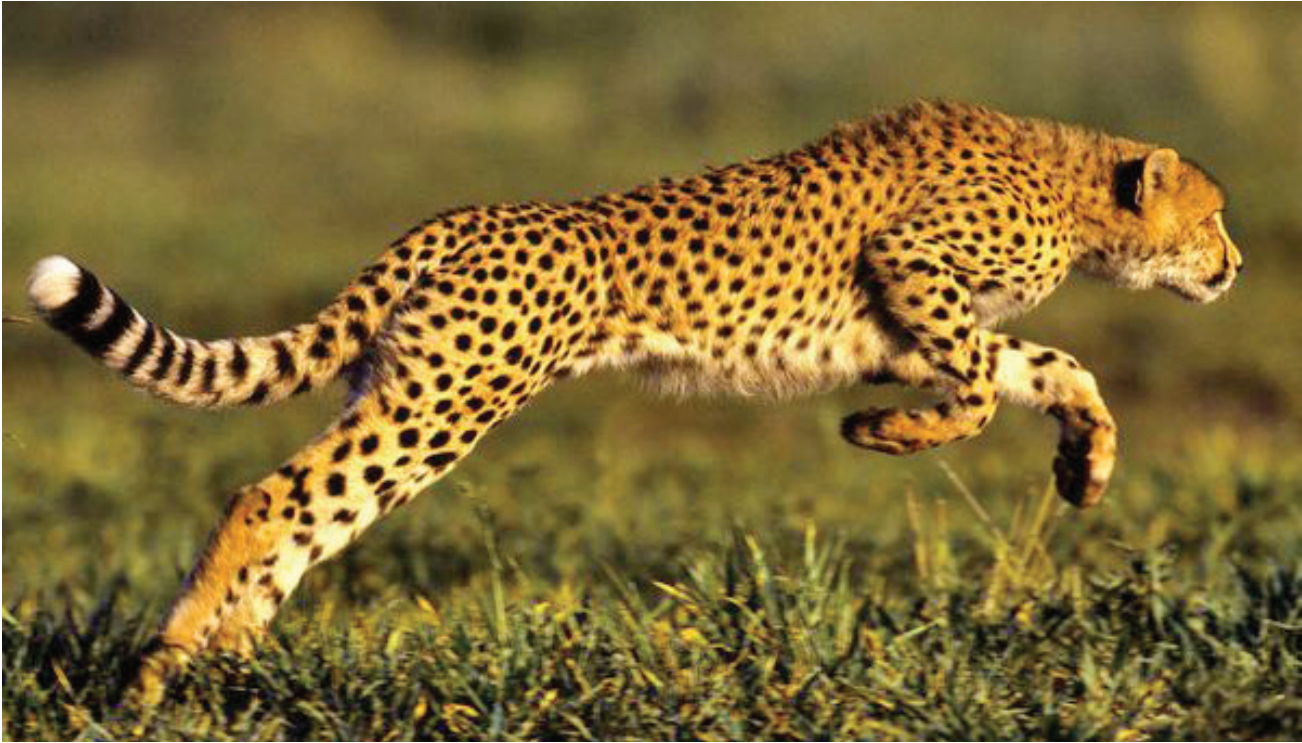
In 2010, Cheetah Conservation Fund designated December 4 as the International Cheetah Day.

The Iranian cheetah population seems to be in trouble; incidental killing of cheetahs by people or livestock guarding dogs, habitat fragmentation and loss of biological corridors and prey base depletion, mining activity and road construction were among the main factors that threatened the lives of these valuable species.

Baqer Nezami, conservation of Asiatic cheetah project manager, told IRNA on Wednesday that cheetah population in our country is affected by many factors and unfortunately not only did not improved after 18 years of conservation plan implementation but it is currently dropping.

There are no accurate statistics on the population of cheetahs in the country since the last time the camera traps installed to determine their distribution 10 years ago, which has never been repeated, but it seems that there are 30 individuals in Iran, he stated.

During past years, herd dogs have always been the major contributors to the cheetah fatalities and have caused the most casualties,



with other factors affecting the population of cheetahs as well, he lamented.

Cheetahs need a large area to live in, so they cannot be kept in one place or area, even for example, Khar Turan National Park, which covers more than 1.4 million hectares, is not a permanent habitat for the cheetahs, he noted.

Referring to prey population as a threatening factor, he said that over the past years, the population of prey has improved to some extent due to an increase in populations of small- to medium-size animals, such as gazelles, hares, Persian fallow deer and birds.

Nearly one-third of the protected areas are cheetah habitats, and in all of these areas, prey population has been improved and poaching have declined in comparison to other areas, he added.

North Khorasan, South Khorasan, Semnan, Isfahan, Kerman and Yazd are 6 provinces in which the cheetahs breed, and other areas are where the cheetahs probably go in some seasons and come back to the breeding habitat again to regenerate, which causes most of the cheetahs to die whether while crossing the roads or in conflict with human or poachers, he explained.

## Let’s mind the soil as it truly matters

➡ The soil captures and stores water, making it available for absorption by crops, thus minimizing surface evaporation and maximizing water use efficiency and productivity. Healthy soil with a high organic matter content can store large amounts of water. This is beneficial not only during droughts when soil moisture is crucial to plant growth but also during heavy rainfall because the soil reduces flooding and run-off by slowing the release of water into streams.

Considering the criticality of the soil to keep the life-cycle chain unbroken, all of us must keep in mind that the soil is a finite resource and its loss is not recoverable within a human lifespan.

In many regions of the world, erosion is the greatest threat to soil health and soil ecosystem services.

Erosion removes fertile surface soil, incorporates denser subsoil into the surface layer, reduces optimum rooting zone for extraction of water and nutrients from soil, loses the charged organic materials from the surface soil horizon,

transfers sediment and sediment-bound contaminants to water bodies, decreases the surface water infiltration and water-holding capacity of soil, transfers the particles and releases organic carbon from the soil and degrades the water and nutrient supply of the soil.

All these processes lead to yield reduction, climate change intensification, agrochemical contamination of waterways and last but not least desertification; the changes that put food security at risk and cause serious economic losses.

Impacts of erosion are not limited to environmental or economic spheres. Erosion visibly degrades landscapes through the exposure of subsoil, presence of rills and gullies, or the occurrence of dust storms and subsequently affect the physical and psychological experiences of local communities who retain strong links to their home places.

How can we save our soil?  
Promoting sustainable management of soil can contribute to healthy soil and thus to the effort of eradicat-

ing hunger and food insecurity and to stable ecosystems. There is an urgent need to stop land degradation and soil erosion in their various forms and establish frameworks for sustainable soil management systems.

Governments also must increase the area under sustainable soil management practices, enhance the restoration of degraded soil, and promote sustainable production intensification.

FAO urges its member states to provide and adopt suitable technologies, sustainable and inclusive agricultural policies, effective extension programmes and sound education systems so that more is produced with less.

FAO supports the development of national soil information systems to assist decision-making on sustainable land and natural resources use.

Today we celebrate World Soil Day calling people and stakeholders all around the world to take action to “Stop Soil Erosion” to “Save Our Future.”

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → C

## Tehran short of 12,000 classrooms

Considering the current population of students educating in Tehran, there is a shortage of 12,000 classrooms which will increase to 18,000 over the next few years, director of the organization for renovation of Tehran schools has stated.

Currently, 8,500 classrooms are beyond repair and must be reconstructed, while 14,500 others need retrofitting, ISNA quoted Ali Shahri as saying on Wednesday.

There is also a high density of students in the capital, and despite the average capacity of classrooms accommodating 24 students, the number of students in some areas is twice the average, he lamented. Referring to the current construction projects, he said that there are 110 projects under construction, half of which will be completed by the new school year (September 23).

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “im-, in-”

- **Meaning**: into
- **For example**: Claudia *inserted* her key in the lock.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Pep something up

- **Meaning**: to make something or someone more active or interesting
- **For example**: The team needs a few new players to pep it up.

## IDIOM

### Not cut out for something

- **Explanation**: If you are not cut out for something, you are not the sort of person to succeed or be happy in a particular activity
- **For example**: I started studying medicine but I knew immediately that I wasn’t cut out for it.

## کمبود ۱۲ هزار کلاس درس در پایتخت

مدیرکل نوسازی مدارس استان تهران اظهار کرد:با توجه به جمعیت فعلی دانش آموزی به ۱۲ هزار کلاس درس جدید نیاز داریم که البته با احتساب رشد جمعیت به ۱۸ هزار کلاس طی چندسال آینده می‌رسد.

علی شهری در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا، گفت: ۸۵۰۰ کلاس درس در تهران باید مورد تخریب و بازسازی قرار گرفته و ۱۴ هزار و ۵۰۰ کلاس درس مقاوم سازی شوند همچنین با تراکم بالای جمعیت دانش‌آموزی در استان روبرویم و علیرغم آنکه تراکم میثگیکن در مدارس کشور ۲۴ نفر است، شاهد دوبرابر این میزان تراکم در برخی مناطق هستیم.

مدیرکل نوسازی مدارس استان تهران تاکید کرد که در حال حاضر ۱۱۰ پروژه نیمه تمام دیگر داریم که امیدواریم نیمی از آنها را تا مهر ماه به مرحله بهره‌برداری برسانیم.



# Trump impeachment probe to enter new phase with landmark hearing

The Democrat-led U.S. House of Representatives is set to reach a turning point in its inquiry into whether President Donald Trump improperly pressured the government of Ukraine to interfere in U.S. politics, moving from an investigative phase to deciding whether Trump should be impeached.

With the president abroad at the NATO meetings in London, the shift marks a perilous moment in his troubled presidency after the release on Tuesday of a 300-page report by House Intelligence Committee investigators describing Trump's months-long effort to pressure Ukraine.

The report issued by the House Intelligence Committee, together with the Foreign Affairs and Oversight committees, alleges Trump "subverted U.S. foreign policy toward Ukraine" and "undermined" U.S. national security by seeking two politically motivated investigations to "help his presidential re-election campaign".

It also accuses Trump and his lawyers of obstructing the House impeachment investigation.

In a landmark hearing on Wednesday, four constitutional law scholars will discuss whether the case against Trump meets a political and legal test for impeachment.

"The big issue facing the Judiciary Committee is, what constitutes an impeachable



offence," said Melissa Murray, a professor of law at the New York University law school.

## ■ 'Stress test'

The U.S. Constitution provides for the removal of a U.S. president for commission of treason, bribery or "high crimes and misdemeanors", a phrase that invokes politics as well as law, Murray told Al Jazeera.

"What do these words mean? How have these words been interpreted? What did our founders mean by these words in the 1700s? The model was English common law and removal of a member of Parliament," she said.

The four constitutional scholars who are scheduled to testify are Noah Feldman of Harvard Law School, Pamela Karlan of

Stanford Law School, Michael Gerhardt, of the University of North Carolina School of Law and Jonathan Turley at George Washington University Law School.

Feldman has previously said Trump's violation of informal democratic norms is a "stress test" for the constitution and that Trump's pressure on Ukraine was an impeachable "abuse of power". Turley leans towards Republicans' narrative and has previously criticized the Democrat's case as incomplete and short of "proof of an impeachable offence".

"We have finished the investigative phase and now we are on to the charging phase where you take all the facts and present to a jury and ask what do we have here," Barbara McQuade, a professor of law at the University of Michigan told Al Jazeera.

Republican allies of Trump issued a 123-page advance rebuttal of the Intelligence Committee report on Monday saying Democrats "have been working to impeach President Trump since his election" in an "orchestrated campaign to upend our political system". The case against Trump is "based on the accusations and assumptions of unelected bureaucrats who disagreed with President Trump's policy initiatives and processes".

(Source: al Jazeera)

## Putin says U.S. ramping up its military forces for space

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that the United States was rapidly developing its military forces for potential operations in space and that Washington openly viewed space as a potential theater of war.

Putin, who was speaking in the

Black Sea city of Sochi in southern Russia, said that Moscow categorically opposed the militarization of space but that the U.S. moves meant Russia had to further develop its own space sector.

(Source: TASS)

## Lebanon's Aoun calls for consultations to designate new PM

Lebanese President Michel Aoun called for formal consultations on Monday with lawmakers to designate a new prime minister, a statement from the presidency said on Wednesday.

Aoun is required to designate the candidate with the greatest support among

Lebanon's 128 lawmakers. The prime minister must be a Sunni Muslim according to Lebanon's sectarian system of government.

Saad al-Hariri, the outgoing prime minister, quit on Oct. 29 in response to protests against the ruling elite.

(Source: Daily Star)

## Harris says U.S. not ready for black woman president

Kamala Harris withdrew from the race for Democratic presidential nominee after falling in the polls, disappointing liberal media, and running out of money. The botched campaign is a lesson in the limitations of identity politics.

Over the course of a campaign that was kicked off with an Oakland, CA, rally of an estimated 20,000 enthusiastic supporters, Kamala Harris's presidential run lost momentum as the candidate floundered in attempts to define a clear message and to distinguish herself as a viable challenger to Donald Trump — perhaps the most loathed president of all time among Democratic voters.

Harris stumbled on health care, half-heartedly defended her career as an attorney general of California, missed chances to debunk frontrunners, and finally proved unable to separate herself from the field of progressives on one side, and moderates on the other.

Harris entered a crowded field as a "top-tier" candidate. She could boast of being only the second black woman to become a U.S. senator. She represented California, a Democratic stronghold and the nation's most populous state. Her political success and identity as a black woman even led some to dub her the "female Obama" — at the time the highest recommendation for a Democrat.

Harris gained ground in the first debate with an effective smack-down of former Vice President Joe Biden over the racially charged issues of student busing and Biden's earlier friendliness with racial segregationists. Post-debate numbers showed Harris soaring past Elizabeth Warren to second or third place, with the support of anywhere between 11 to 15

percent of registered Democratic voters. Some saw Harris as the Democrats' best chance to defeat Trump in 2020.

But the California senator's busing policies were soon called-out by critics, who noted that her stance was hardly distinguishable from Biden's. She had fumbled and missed an important opportunity to differentiate herself from the moderate frontrunner on the solid ground of racial politics, while she could have also maintained a safe distance from the economic progressives, including Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren.

Striking back in the second debate, Biden pounced on Harris for her "double talk" on health care, attacking her ill-defined proposal, which called for the elimination of private insurance and came at a cost of \$30 trillion a year. Biden then returned to the busing issue, challenging Harris for failing as California attorney general to make legislative attempts at desegregating the San Francisco and Los Angeles public schools. Biden also attacked Harris for her record as a draconian prosecutor who threw people in prison despite exculpatory evidence, which played poorly in a Democratic primary race that put a premium on social justice.

Harris also found herself fending off challenges from Rep. Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii, a party outsider and critic of Democratic hawks like Hillary Clinton. This sparring could do little to help while potentially harming Harris.

Harris's slide in the polls continued through poor performances in subsequent debates, and with the slipping poll numbers she also lost the support of potential donors. New challenges to the moderate wing



came from others, including Mayor Pete Buttigieg, and most recently, billionaire and former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

The California senator and others have suggested that Kamala Harris paid a price for her identity as a black woman. But the prevalence of identity politics within the party, the two-term presidency of Barack Obama, and the fawning media that greeted Harris' candidacy suggest otherwise. In the end, Harris failed in her Democratic primary run in spite of her identity, not because of it. Kamala Harris's aborted campaign highlights the limits of identity politics in the absence of clear policies, soaring rhetoric, and compelling vision.

(Source: RT)

## Saudi king invites Qatar's emir to PGCC summit in Riyadh

Saudi King Salman has invited Qatar's emir to an annual meeting next week of the Gulf regional bloc in Riyadh, the Qatari foreign ministry said, amid a two-year-old diplomatic crisis in the region.

The 40th session of the six-nation Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) summit is scheduled to take place in the Saudi capital on December 10.

"The Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, received a written message from ... King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ... to attend the GCC Supreme Council 40th session," Qatar's foreign ministry said on its website on Tuesday.

"The message was received by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, during his meeting today with the PGCC Secretary-General Abdullah bin Rashid Al Zayani," the statement added.

It did not specify if Doha had accepted the invitation, which comes amid signs of a thaw in tensions that have fractured the regional bloc.

Since June 2017, PGCC members Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, along with Egypt have imposed a land, air and sea blockade on Qatar over accusations

of "supporting terrorism", a charge repeatedly and vehemently rejected by Doha.

However, the three Persian Gulf blockading countries are currently participating in a regional football tournament in Qatar, having announced their participation at the last minute.

Saudi Arabia, which has also sealed its land border with Qatar, will play the hosts in the semi-finals on Thursday.

There were also reports of Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani making an unannounced visit to the Saudi capital last month.

The PGCC is a bloc comprising Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Its 40th summit next week "will review regional and international political developments as well as the security situation in the region and its effects on the security and stability of the PGCC countries," the body's secretary-general said in a statement on Sunday.

A Qatari delegation headed by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Soltan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi represented the country at last year's GCC summit, which was also held in Riyadh.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## Trump calls Canada's Trudeau 'two-faced' after summit video

➔ The protests were started, he says, by ordinary Iranians upset over their economic circumstances and outsiders did not lead them.

But one comment by Rezaian is so very far off the mark that it lacks credibility and thus seems to destroy a good portion of his own credibility. He wrote flatly that the current Iranian government "has never valued human life".

It's quite fair to say that ANY government anywhere trying to preserve itself and/or its nation will demonstrate in extreme circumstances (or not) a varying degree of respect for human life. On this score, the Islamic Republic's "respect for human life" far surpasses the respect for human life shown by its enemies, especially the United States and its "allies", in particular for examples in the Mideast Israel and

Saudi Arabia. Is it necessary to point to what everyone can readily see if only they would admit to the truth: the U.S. having butchered millions of innocent lives (all told) over decades in places like Iraq, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Syria (by proxies), Libya, Yemen and elsewhere...while Iran has NOT attacked any country on offense nor expressed extra territorial ambitions in well over 200 years? Is it necessary to point out again the butchering of human lives by the Saudis in Yemen and in Arabia, or the nearly genocidal activities of the Zionists west of the Jordan River and its offensive attacks on Syria, Lebanon and even Iran, not to mention its illegal land grabs with U.S. support? And the U.S. is and will be ultimately responsible for the ramping bloodshed in places like Bolivia, or the potential for same in Venezuela, as it has been

responsible ultimately for the bloodshed in Ukraine during and after the U.S. fomented coup there.

And it must be said, finally, that if ever there is ever serious protest by the disenfranchised and relative poor in the United States, the resultant action by the U.S. government is going to be far more violent and bloody than any reaction by Iranian authorities has ever been. It's hard to say whether the U.S. is close to or far from a serious upset or insurrection, but Washington has sure been fertilizing the field for it with the absence of smart domestic policies and actions that might address the widening social and economic gaps between the haves and have nots inside the U.S. and its offensive foreign policies. It's anyone's guess what lies ahead everywhere, but the declining Empire of Chaos is a dangerous animal indeed.

## 'Foreign agents kill protesters, security forces in Iraq'

➔ "However", she lamented "they are paying an unimaginable price for their voices to be heard", pointing out that since 1 October, over 400 people have been killed and more than 19,000 injured.

She explained that although today's youth has no recollection of life under the former dictator Saddam Hussein, who was executed after being found guilty of war crimes in Iraq in 2006, they are aware of what was promised after his death and "through the power of connectivity, they know perfectly well that a better future is possible".

"The current situation can hardly be judged without putting it in the context of Iraq's past", Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert said, "but what we are witnessing is an accumulation of frustration over the lack of progress for so many years".

(Source: agencies)

## Moscow vows retaliation after berlin expels 2 embassy employees

German media has reported that the national chief prosecutor suspects Russian intelligence agencies of having ordered the killing of a former Chechen military commander. The Kremlin has described the allegations as baseless.

Russia's Foreign Ministry has criticized Germany's decision to expel two employees of the Russian Embassy in Berlin in connection with the assassination of a former Chechen insurgent.

The Foreign Ministry said it views the move as "unsubstantiated and unfriendly."

Russia will respond in kind if the Russian diplomatic workers they turn out to have diplomatic passports, Andrei Klimov, the deputy chair of the upper house's Committee on Foreign Affairs, has said.

"There is an international rule, it was not made up by us, where expulsion of diplomats in response is expected, among other things. So Russia has all the reasons to do that," Klimov said.

The German Foreign Ministry announced earlier in the day that it was expelling the two diplomatic workers because Russian authorities allegedly failed to cooperate with the investigators looking into the murder Zelimkhan Khangoshvili, despite Berlin's requests.

## ■ What happened in Berlin?

Khangoshvili, a 40-year-old Georgian citizen who was a commander of a unit that fought Russian troops in the conflict in Chechnya, was shot dead in a Berlin park on 23 August. The following day, German police said they had detained a 49-year-old Russian citizen suspected of killing Khangoshvili.

The German prosecutor general's office said it had evidence to suggest that the "state bodies of Russia or Chechnya" were behind the murder.

(Source: Sputnik)

## Ending divisive meeting, NATO agrees to Baltics defense plan

Following a day of drama that revealed deep wounds within NATO, members of the military alliance meeting near London attempted to put on a united front by adopting a common summit statement as they agreed to an updated defense plan for the Baltics and Poland, which Turkey had previously threatened to block.

NATO leaders said in a concluding statement on Wednesday that Russia's "aggressive actions" were a threat to Euro-Atlantic security, and that China's growing influence presented challenges for the alliance.

"Our solemn commitment as enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty that an attack against one ally shall be considered an attack against us all," they said.

Turkey had warned it would refuse to endorse the plan to bolster defense in Baltic states neighboring Russia and Poland, with President Tayyip Erdogan demanding the alliance recognize groups that Ankara deems terrorists, including the YPG militia.

But NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters on Wednesday that "we stand together, all for one and one for all. Our commitment to Article 5, the collective defence clause of our alliance, is ironclad."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov responded to the developments, saying on Wednesday that Russia would not get involved in an arms race with NATO, even if the alliance increased its military spending.

Stoltenberg has claimed that European allies and Canada have added \$130bn to their defense spending since 2016. Peskov said NATO's increased spending "reinforces" the Kremlin's concerns.

According to Reuters news agency, Stoltenberg said members did not discuss the YPG militia on Wednesday.

Al Jazeera's James Bays, reporting from Watford, said: "Stoltenberg said they were moving forward with the protection of Poland and the Baltic states, but it was not really clear whether there was a total resolution. It is clear he's trying to paper over the differences we've seen in the open since NATO leaders arrived here."

On Tuesday, US President Trump and his French counterpart clashed over NATO's role and its future, with the US leader entering a war of words between Emmanuel Macron and Erdogan.

Trump tore into Macron during a 52-minute press conference, rallying against European tax policies and criticizing the French leader's remark that NATO was "brain dead" as "very, very nasty." Macron stood by his comment and, referring to Turkey, said members disagreed over the definition of terrorism with regard to the YPG militia.

The French president first made his assessment of NATO in a November 7 interview with The Economist, as he criticized a lack of coordination between members of the alliance over Turkey's recent operation in Syria.

Erdogan later responded, challenging Macron to check his own "brain death".

Several other NATO members also disagreed with Turkey's operation, with some suspending arms sales to Ankara.

Elsewhere on Wednesday, Stoltenberg said members declared space as the "fifth operational domain", as they agreed to prepare for conflicts in space, the Arctic and computer networks, as well as traditional land, sea and air battles.

NATO also warned China for the first time that it is monitoring Beijing's growing military might.

(Source: agencies)



## ‘See you soon in Italy’: Ibrahimovic fuels talk of Serie A return

Sweden footballer Zlatan Ibrahimovic has fuelled speculation that he is set to return to Italy, where he has played for AC Milan, Inter Milan and Juventus, by saying in an interview: “see you soon in Italy”.

The 38-year-old striker confirmed his departure from Los Angeles Galaxy last month following the club's elimination from the Major League Soccer playoffs.

“I’ll join a club which must get back to winning, which must renew its history and is in search of a battle against everyone and everything,” Ibrahimovic told GQ Italia.

“That is the only way I’ll be able to find the necessary motivation to surprise you again.

“It’s not just about choosing a team, as there are other factors that need to line up, including in the interests of my family.

“I’ll see you in Italy soon.”

According to reports in Italy, Ibrahimovic has been offered a six-month deal to come to the aid of struggling former giants AC Milan, who are 11th in the Serie A table.

Napoli are also a possible destination as last season’s runners-up sit seventh, after a run of six league games without a win.

“I love to make the difference,” he added. “I don’t just want to do one or two things well, I want to do all of it.”

Ibrahimovic played for two seasons between 2010 and 2012 with AC Milan, helping them to their last Serie A title, and scoring 42 goals in 61 league appearances.

He also won three league titles with Inter Milan, and two with Juventus, which were both revoked following the ‘Calciopoli’ match-fixing scandal.

(Source: Daily Mail)

## Jesus aspires to rival City team-mate Aguero in scoring stakes

Gabriel Jesus ended his eight match goal drought with a brace in Manchester City’s 4-1 victory over Burnley on Tuesday and hopes this can spark him into emulating team-mate Sergio Aguero’s scoring rate.

The 22-year-old Brazilian has got his chance to lead the City line, and will do so again in the Manchester derby on Saturday, because record goalscorer Aguero is injured.

Jesus -- bought for a reported £27 million (\$35 million) from Palmeiras in the January transfer window in 2017 -- said he is confident in his abilities as a goal scorer but just needs to follow 31-year-old Aguero’s example.

Aguero, who is out with a thigh injury, has scored nine goals in 12 Premier League appearances this season and 173 in 251 league games overall for City at a rate of 0.69 per match.

“I know my qualities -- I know I can score,” Jesus said after the match.

“I have to score when I play. Sergio scores every time. That is my ambition. I want to play and score every time.”

Jesus said the victory was also a confidence booster for the defending champions after an indifferent run which brought one victory in five games in all competitions prior to the Burnley clash.

City reduced the deficit between themselves and leaders Liverpool to eight points, although it can go back to 11 if the Champions League holders beat city rivals Everton later on Wednesday.

“It is a confidence (booster) for us. This time the Premier League is so difficult,” he said.

“Liverpool are now eight points in front of us. We have to play all the matches like a final to win.”

(Source: Mirror)

## Bale on Bernabéu boos: “I didn’t really know how to deal with it”

Bale says as he has gotten older he has learned how to deal with whistles from Real Madrid fans and also says backs Mourinho for Tottenham success.

Gareth Bale thinks Jose Mourinho is an “amazing statement” of Tottenham Hostpur’s intentions. Speaking to BT Sport, via football. london, Bale also commented on the whistles he has been subjected to by Real Madrid fans in the wake of the ‘Wales, golf, Madrid’ flag.

“I think the first time it happened [being booed], it was a bit of a shock. I didn’t really know how to deal with it,” he told Robbie Savage. “But as I’ve got older, it’s happened one or two more times and you understand how to deal with it.

“Now I just shrug it off. In way, with respect it’s the best place to get whistled if you don’t perform which I understand.

“Obviously I have to just keep working hard and keep proving to the fans what I can do. Eventually the whistles do stop and you get on with your career like normal.”

Mourinho replaced Mauricio Pochettino on the bench for Spurs recently with the Argentine being sacked after a five year stine with the club. Mourinho, who has won league titles in three different countries, is tasked with getting the team back into the Champions League places.

“Having [Jose] Mourinho there is an amazing statement from the club, I think he’s a serial winner,” Bale said.

“Tottenham want to win trophies and I don’t think there’s a better partnership than Mourinho and Tottenham together to try and win some trophies.”

(Source: AS)

## Fraud case against Messi foundation reopened

Fraud charges against Lionel Messi’s charity have been reopened by a Spanish court.

A Barcelona judge dismissed a complaint filed by Federico Rettori, a former employee of Messi’s foundation who had accused the non-profit organisation of fraud, embezzlement and money laundering, in September due to a lack of evidence

Following an appeal, a high court in Madrid has decided to reopen the case in order to allow the plaintiff, Rettori, to give evidence before judge Maria Tardon, a court spokesperson told ESPN FC.

In dismissing the case in September, the judge wrote that the complaint “was based on an account put together from stories in the press, without bringing even a single element that was personally and directly known” by the plaintiff.

In his complaint, Rettori claimed that Messi’s foundation invested a minimum part of what it collected to social causes and stated that funds were diverted for private activities.

In October 2018, Messi lost a court case in Spain against two journalists that reported “irregularities” in the finances of his foundation.

(Source: ESPN)

# Radiation hot spots found at Tokyo 2020 torch relay start - Greenpeace

Radiation hot spots have been found at the J-Village sports facility in Fukushima where the Tokyo 2020 Olympic torch relay will begin, Greenpeace Japan said on Wednesday.

Greenpeace found that radiation levels around the recently refurbished venue, which also hosted the Argentina team during the Rugby World Cup earlier this year, were significantly higher than before the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor meltdown following the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Greenpeace’s survey found radioactivity readings taken at J-Village on Oct. 26 as high as 71 microsieverts per hour at surface level.

People are exposed to natural radiation of 2,000-3,000 microsieverts a year, so anyone staying in the vicinity of J-Village for two or more days could be exposed to more than that.

These readings, although not deemed life-threatening if exposed for a short length of time, are 1,775 times higher than prior to the March 2011 disaster, according to the NGO.

The Olympic flame is due to arrive from Greece in Japan on March 20, with the torch relay officially starting from J-Village on March 26.

Greenpeace said in a statement that it had sent its findings to Japan’s Ministry of



Environment, but had received no response.

“There is a risk that heavy rain will spread these higher levels of contamination on public roads, and thus re-contaminate already decontaminated surfaces,” warned Greenpeace nuclear specialist Shaun Burnie, team leader of the J-Village survey, in a

statement.

An ministry official acknowledged to Reuters on Wednesday that the ministry had been alerted to higher radiation level readings in an area surrounding J-Village and that decontamination measures had been taken.

## Copa America draw decided with Australia and Qatar added to the mix

COPA AMERICA ARGENTINA 2020 GUAYMALA GRUPOS					
GRUPO A			GRUPO B		
1		ARGENTINA	1		COLOMBIA
2		AUSTRALIA	2		BRASIL
3		BOLIVIA	3		QATAR
4		URUGUAY	4		VENEZUELA
5		CHILE	5		ECUADOR
6		PARAGUAY	6		PERÚ

Argentina will open the 2020 Copa America with a blockbuster clash against Chile in Buenos Aires.

In a rematch of this year’s third-place play-off, which Argentina won as Lionel Messi and Gary Medel were sent off, the teams will meet again at the El Monumental on June 12 next year.

While the draw took place on Tuesday, the nations already knew almost all of their opponents with teams split into zones for next year’s tournament in Argentina and Colombia.

However, Australia – playing at their first Copa America – were drawn into Group A, which features Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, Chile and Paraguay.

Qatar, the other invited nation, will meet Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador and Peru. Brazil will go into the tournament as defending champions after their success at home this year.

The Selecao beat Peru 3-1 in the 2019 Copa America final having also seen off Argentina and Paraguay on their way to the decider.

Qatar made their debut at the tournament this year, drawing their first match against Paraguay before falling to Colombia and

Argentina.

Japan, the other invited nation, also failed to win any of its games as it was held to draws against Uruguay and Ecuador following a heavy 4-0 defeat against Chile in their opening match.

The Copa America has also previously invited Costa Rica, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama and the United States to compete in the tournament with El Tri finishing as runners up twice.

Following the 2020 Copa America, the tournament is set to be held every four years with the next edition scheduled for 2024.

Uruguay are the most successful nation when it comes to Copa America having won it 15 times, one more than next best Argentina.

Messi will be hoping his nation can lift the trophy again next year as the 2019 Ballon d’Or winner looks to secure some long awaited success with the national team.

Despite winning honours regularly with Barcelona, Messi is yet to win anything with Argentina’s seniors side, though he did claim a gold medal with the U23 team in 2008 Olympics and lifted the U20 World Cup in 2005.

(Source: Goal)

## Rockets hopeful NBA acts after James Harden dunk not counted



The Houston Rockets are optimistic the NBA office will take action after referees mistakenly did not count a James Harden dunk in Tuesday night’s 135-133 double-overtime loss to the San Antonio Spurs, sources told ESPN.

The Rockets are hopeful the league office will either award the victory to Houston due to the Rockets outscoring the Spurs in regulation or order that the final 7 minutes, 50 seconds be replayed at a later date, sources said.

Harden’s breakaway dunk with 7:50 remaining would have given the Rockets a 104-89 lead. The ball whipped through the net and back over the rim before bouncing off, and the officiating crew mistakenly ruled that Harden missed the dunk and denied Houston coach Mike D’Antoni’s attempt to challenge the call.

“When the play happened, Harden goes in for a dunk, and then the ball appears to us to pop back through the net,” crew chief James Capers told a pool reporter. “When that happens, that is basket interference. To have a successful field goal, it must clear

“The ministry cooperated with related groups to decrease radiation levels in that area,” said the official.

“On Dec. 3, Tokyo Electric Power (Tepco) took measures to decrease radiation levels in said area.”

The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear station, located about 220 km (130 miles) northeast of Tokyo, was rocked by a magnitude 9.0 earthquake and subsequent tsunami in March 2011, sparking three reactor meltdowns.

More than 160,000 residents fled nearby towns in the aftermath as radiation from the reactors contaminated water, food and air.

Greenpeace called on the Japanese government to conduct more extensive radiation surveys in the area and the NGO planned to return to J-Village soon to “determine if subsequent decontamination attempts have been adequately conducted.”

Tokyo 2020 organizers could not be immediately reached for comment.

Worries that local food could be contaminated by the nuclear disaster has prompted plans by South Korea’s Olympic committee to buy radiation detectors and ship homegrown ingredients to Japan for its athletes at the Tokyo Games.

(Source: Reuters)

## Doping casts shadow over Putin’s hopes for sporting prestige

A proposed four-year doping ban on Russian athletes would deal a huge new blow to President Vladimir Putin’s efforts to use sport to boost national prestige and his own reputation.

But experts say the Russian leader could also turn the ban to his advantage -- by portraying it as a politically motivated attempt by the West to once again humiliate the country at the expense of athletes.

The executive committee of the World Anti-Doping Agency will meet in Lausanne on December 9 to consider a recommendation for the ban, which would exclude Russians from major sports events including the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

A WADA review panel has accused Moscow of falsifying laboratory data handed over to investigators as part of a probe into the doping allegations that have plagued Russia for years.

In power for nearly 20 years, Putin has made sport and healthy living a cornerstone of his popularity and is regularly shown on state television taking part in judo matches or on the ice for hockey games.

His government poured enormous resources into Russia’s hosting of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics -- the first Olympics in Russia since 1980 -- but the Games were tainted by claims of widespread, state-sponsored doping.

Russian athletes faced a series of bans over the next few years and were forced to participate in the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games as neutral competitors.

### ■ ‘Headed for catastrophe’

Redemption seemed on the way with Russia’s successful hosting of the 2018 football World Cup, and the reinstatement the same year of its RUSADA anti-doping body.

But if the allegations of tampering with laboratory data are true, Russian authorities have managed to re-ignite



the scandal, observers say.

“I fear that we’re headed for catastrophe, everything was done too cynically and grossly,” Sergei Medvedev, a professor at Moscow’s Higher School of Economics, wrote in Facebook post.

The avid sports enthusiast compared the doping scandal to Russia’s handling of the assassination attempt of defector Sergei Skripal in England and its denials of supplying separatists in eastern Ukraine with the missile that shot down flight MH17.

In both instances Russia shifted blame with vehement denials and finger-pointing.

But in this case, Medvedev said, Russia will not get away “with a smirk from Putin” and a generation of Russian athletes could be prevented from pursuing their dreams.

Sports commentators were hard on Russian authorities in the wake of the potential ban being announced, with many blaming criminal investigators who were responsible

for handling the data.

“I am sure our officials will never recognise that they have disgraced themselves and will never ask for forgiveness,” sports commentator Alexei Durnovo told AFP.

“We will never know the names” of those responsible, he added.

Popular sports commentator Vasily Utkin even urged athletes to sue Russian authorities, who he said “were genetically linked to the security services”.

At the same time, analysts said the crisis was unlikely to seriously affect Putin’s personal popularity.

### ■ Athletes ‘betrayed’

Denis Volkov, deputy director at pollster Levada, said authorities and state-controlled media would bill the ban as a new move by the West to humiliate Russia -- and that the majority of Russians would accept that line.

“The authorities will use this to their advantage,” Volkov told AFP. “All of this will be interpreted in the sense of the West always against Russia.”

The question will be whether Russia’s athletes buy it. Maria Lasitskene, a three-time world high jump champion, has already warned she would quit Russia and train elsewhere so as not to miss the Tokyo Olympics.

Along with hurdler Sergey Shubenkov and pole vaulter Anzhelika Sidorova, the 26-year-old missed the Rio Olympics in 2016 because of the doping scandal.

“I do not intend to miss a second Olympics in a row because of some strange people who cannot do their job honestly,” Lasitskene has said on Instagram.

Russian rugby star Vasily Artemyev said the country’s athletes have been “betrayed”.

The Russian men’s rugby sevens team is already out of contention for the Tokyo Games but the women’s team is still hoping to qualify.

(Source: AFP)



# Iran football federation cancels contract with Marc Wilmots: report

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) has reportedly canceled its contract with Team Melli coach Marc Wilmots.

In a meeting took place in Istanbul, Turkey, FFIRI president Mehdi Taj reached an agreement with the Belgian coach to terminate the contract.

The football federation has already said there are no legal obligations to pay a compensation for cancelling the contract.

Wilmots was appointed as Team Melli coach in mid-May on a three-year-contract but failed to meet expectations.

He replaced Carlos Queiroz who left Team Melli after the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

Wilmots had already said Iran football federation has created contractual violations for him.

“I have taken note of the rumors published in the Iranian press, which are incorrect. The truth is that Iran football federation has created serious contractual violations for me and my staff. We face an intolerable situation,” Wilomots wrote.

Under coaching of Wilmots, Iran have defeated Hong Kong and Cambodia and lost to Bahrain and Iraq in the 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asia Cup qualifiers.

Team Melli sit in third place in Group C with six points, five points adrift of



leaders Iraq. A source close to Iran football federation said the 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 beat S. Korea at IWBF Asia Oceania C’ships

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s men earned a big win against powerhouse South Korea at the 2019 International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF) Asia Oceania Championships in Thai city Pattaya on Wednesday.

Omid Hadiazhar led Iran with 23 points while Dong Hyeon Gim scored 22 points for the Korean team.

Iran will meet China on Thursday.

Iran’s women’s team also beat Afghanistan 41-25.

The Iranian team will face India on Thursday.

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 wom-

en’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.

## Foolad held by Saipa in Iran Professional League

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Foolad football team were held by Saipa in the Iran Professional League (IPL) on Wednesday.

Foolad moved to fourth place with 20 points. Sepahan sit top of the table with 23

points and two games in hands.

Also, Pars Jonoubi was held to a 1-1 draw by Machine Sazi at home game.

On Thursday, Esteghlal will host Shahr Khodro in Tehran and IPL leaders Sepahan meet Nassaji in Ghaemshahr.

Persepolis will face Zob Ahan in Isfahan.

“We are ready for the match since we have not won Zob Ahan in Isfahan for nine years. After our match against Nassaji was cancelled, the team trained well and we are ready to beat

Zob Ahan,” Persepolis coach Gabriel Calderon said.

Gol Gohar will play Naft Masjed Soleyman in Sirjan, Sanat Naft entertain Paykan in Abadan and Tractor host Shahin Bushehr in Tabriz.

## Tributes paid to Afghanistan Paralympic Committee President



Tributes have been paid after the death of Afghanistan Paralympic Committee President Amir Mahmoud Mahmoudi.

The official passed away after suffering a heart attack on December 1.

He was described as a «significant figure in the development of Para-sports in his country» by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) who expressed their «great sadness».

IPC President Andrew Parsons also made his own tribute.

«I and the whole IPC Governing Board would like to express our deep and sincere condolences to Mahmoudi’s family, as well as to his close friends and colleagues at the Afghanistan Paralympic Committee

and Asian Paralympic Committee,» the Brazilian said.

«The work he has delivered as part of the Afghan Paralympic community has had a profound impact on Para-athletes and society as a whole, and for that he will always be remembered.

«He will be sorely missed.

«The Paralympic Movement has lost a true friend and a passionate advocate for the rights of people with disabilities.»

Afghanistan has competed at five Paralympic Games: Atlanta 1996, Athens 2004, Beijing 2008, London 2012 and Rio 2016.

(Source: Insidethegames)

## Rapinoe calls on Messi, Ronaldo to help in fight for equality



U.S. women’s national team captain Megan Rapinoe has urged male superstars such as Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi and Zlatan Ibrahimovic to do more to tackle issues such as racism and sexism in modern football.

Rapinoe, 34, won the female Ballon d’Or award -- only the second in history -- on Monday after winning the World Cup, Golden Boot and Golden Ball in July.

Speaking with organizers France Football after her Ballon d’Or triumph, Rapinoe challenged Ronaldo, Messi and Ibrahimovic to follow her lead and be more active against problems in the sport.

“I want to shout: ‘Cristiano, Lionel, Zla-

tan, help me!” she said. “These big stars do not engage in anything when there are so many problems in men’s football.

“Do they fear losing everything? They believe that, but it is not true. Who will erase Messi or Ronaldo from world football history for a statement against racism or sexism?”

Rapinoe helped the United States to its second World Cup title during her era with six goals and three assists, with one strike coming in the final and four more in the latter stages. She picked up the player of the match award in the final.

(Source: ESPN)

## Iran runners-up in three-nation futsal tourney

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran national futsal team failed to win Mashhad Cup 2019.

Team Melli, who are getting ready for the 2020 AFC Futsal Championship, lost to Belarus 3-2 in their must-win game in Mashhad’s Shahid Beheshti Hall on Tuesday.



Iran had started the three-nation campaign with a 5-5 draw against Slovakia, while Belarus beat the European team 4-1.

Iran became runners-up with a better goal difference than Slovakia.

Belarus claimed the title with two wins.

The 2020 AFC Futsal Championship will take place in Turkmenistan from 26 Feb. 26 to Mar. 8.

## Iran sends six wrestlers to Alans tournament in Russia

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran wrestling federation has released the roster of six wrestlers who will be competing at the Alans tournament.

The competition will be held in Vladikavkaz, Russia from Dec. 5 to 8.

The team is headed by Ebrahim Mehrban and Oveis Mallah.

The tournament in Ossetia is now in its third year and has quickly become one of the toughest in the world. In just two years, there have been six world champions to compete in it and not win.

Iran men’s freestyle roster

**57 kg:** Alireza Sarlak

**61 kg:** Majid Dastan

**65 kg:** Amirmohammad Yazdani

**92 kg:** Mohammadjavad Ebrahimi

**97 kg:** Abbas Forootan

**125 kg:** Amirhossein Zare

## Iran hockey to participate at Men’s Junior AHF Cup 2019

**TASNIM** — Iran will take part at the Men’s Junior Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) Cup 2019.

The competition will be held in Muscat, Oman from December 5 to 14.

Iran have been drawn in Pool A along with China, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Uzbekistan.

The Persians will start the campaign with a match against Thailand on Thursday.

Pool B consists of Oman, Singapore, Chinese Taipei and Hong Kong.

The competition will be held at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex which is the most important stadium in the city of Muscat.

The top four teams from this tournament will qualify for the Men’s Junior Asia Cup 2020 and will join the teams of Bangladesh, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Pakistan who are already qualified.

Also, the Men’s Junior Asia Cup 2020 is a qualifier round for the Hockey Junior World Cup 2021.

## Esteghlal forward Diabate a doubt for Shahr Khodro match

**PLDC** — Esteghlal striker Cheick Diabate is injury doubt for the match against Shahr Khodro.

The Blues will entertain Iran Professional League leader Shahr Khodro in Tehran’s Azadi Stadium on Thursday.

Diabate suffered a rib injury in Esteghlal’s training on Tuesday after colliding with teammate Sajjad Aghaei, leaving him with a gash to his head.

Aghaei also is doubtful for the important match.

The 31-year-old Malian forward has played a key role in the recent weeks, helping Esteghlal to move up to third place in the table.

Diabate has scored five goals in four matches in the current season.

His absence will be a big blow as Esteghlal looks to go top of the table after many years.

## Roозbeh Cheshmi on Trabzonspor’s radar

Turkish Super Lig football club Trabzonspor have set sights on signing Iran international midfielder Roозbeh Cheshmi.

The Turkish football club are going to sign the player as a free-agent player.

Esteghlal are going to win Iran Professional League after seven years and Cheshmi is an important player for Italian coach Andrea Stramaccioni.

Cheshmi can join his former teammate Majid Hosseini in the Turkish football team.

The 26-year-old represented Team Melli at the 2018 FIFA World Cup and 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

(Source: Gazete Damga)

## Iraq match part of Bahrain’s growing process, says Sousa

Bahrain’s 2019 Persian Gulf Cup semi-final on Thursday will be part of the team’s learning process said head coach Helio Sousa as his side prepare to face Iraq.

Bahrain defeated Kuwait 4-2 in their final Group B match on Monday to advance to the last four stage, where they will meet Group A winners Iraq.

Exciting Iraq will be a test but it is one that Sousa reckons Bahrain need as they continue growing.

“Our next opponents Iraq are a strong team and they have had great performances in the competition,” said Sousa.

“At the moment they are one of the best teams in Asia while we are building a new team and we must keep growing to compete with such strong teams.”

It will be fourth meeting between the two since August, with Bahrain defeating Iraq 1-0 in the 2019 WAFF Championship final.



The two met twice in Group C of the Asian Qualifiers, with both matches ending in draws.

Something has to give on Thursday, with the winners to face either hosts Qatar or Saudi Arabia in Sunday’s final but as far as Sousa is concerned, it is the long term that matters.

“We have 23 players in our squad who are ready to play at any time,” he said. “I’m working to make a special identity for the team by making all the players capable of playing.”

Bahrain opened their 2019 Gulf Cup campaign with a 0-0 draw against Oman, which was followed by a 2-0 defeat to Saudi Arabia before their heroics against Kuwait.

Iraq stunned Asian champions Qatar 2-1 and United Arab Emirates 2-0 before playing to a 0-0 draw with Yemen, with Srečko Katanec’s side playing with 10 men for more than 80 minutes after Mustafa Mohammad Jaber was sent off.

(Source: the-afc)



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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Fear the suspicion of believers, for, God has placed truth on their tongues.

Imam Ali (AS)

Culture Ministry excludes high income artists from tax exemption: official

**A R T** TEHRAN — Deputy Culture Minister d e s k for Legal Affairs has said that artists and cultural organizations with high incomes are excepted from any tax exemption.



Auctioneer Hossein Pakdel takes a bid for the sale of a painting during the 11th Tehran Auction at the Parsian Azadi Hotel in Tehran on July 5, 2019. (Mehr/Asghar Khamseh)

“We as the major cultural organization of the country believe actors, singers, institutes or any other organizations with a high income must pay tax, but their incomes should be investigated,” Ali-Asghar Karandish told the Persian service of FNA on Wednesday. Based on Article 139, Section L of Iran’s tax law, 273 cultural and artistic activities being performed under the authorization of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance are exempted from paying the tax. Earlier last week, some reports published on Iran’s budget bill for the upcoming year announced the government’s plan to reduce the tax exemption to 50 percent. Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi stepped into the issue on Saturday by requesting a continuation of the tax exemption for cultural and artistic activities in letters sent to President Hassan Rouhani, First Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs. Consequently, Vice-President Mohammad-Baqer Nobakht, who is also the director of the Management and Planning Organization, announced on Sunday that the government is extending the tax exemption for artistic and cultural activities. However, Karandish said that the issue should be discussed in meetings between the Culture Ministry and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs. “It’s not right and proper to cancel the exemption or add to it as result of a media frenzy,” he noted.

IIDCYA introduces books for visually impaired people

**CULTURE** TEHRAN — Iran’s Institute for Intellectual d e s k Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) has published a selection of 22 books by Iranian children’s authors for visually impaired people. The collection was introduced during a ceremony at the IIDCYA art and cultural center in Fadak Park on Tuesday, IIDCYA announced in a press release published on Wednesday.



IIDCYA officials unveil selection of books by Iranian children’s authors published for visually impaired people during a ceremony on December 3, 2019. (IIDCYA/Mahmud Rahimi)

Writer Majid Amiq expressed thanks to IIDCYA for its endeavors in publishing books for the blind, and hoped the institute would expand its activities and publish books with varied topics. One of the children read part of Sepideh Khalili’s “Tickle” written in Braille alphabet for the participants at the ceremony. IIDCYA director also noted that the institute has released many audio books during the past year and hoped to publish books for children with low visual acuity and low hearing ability.

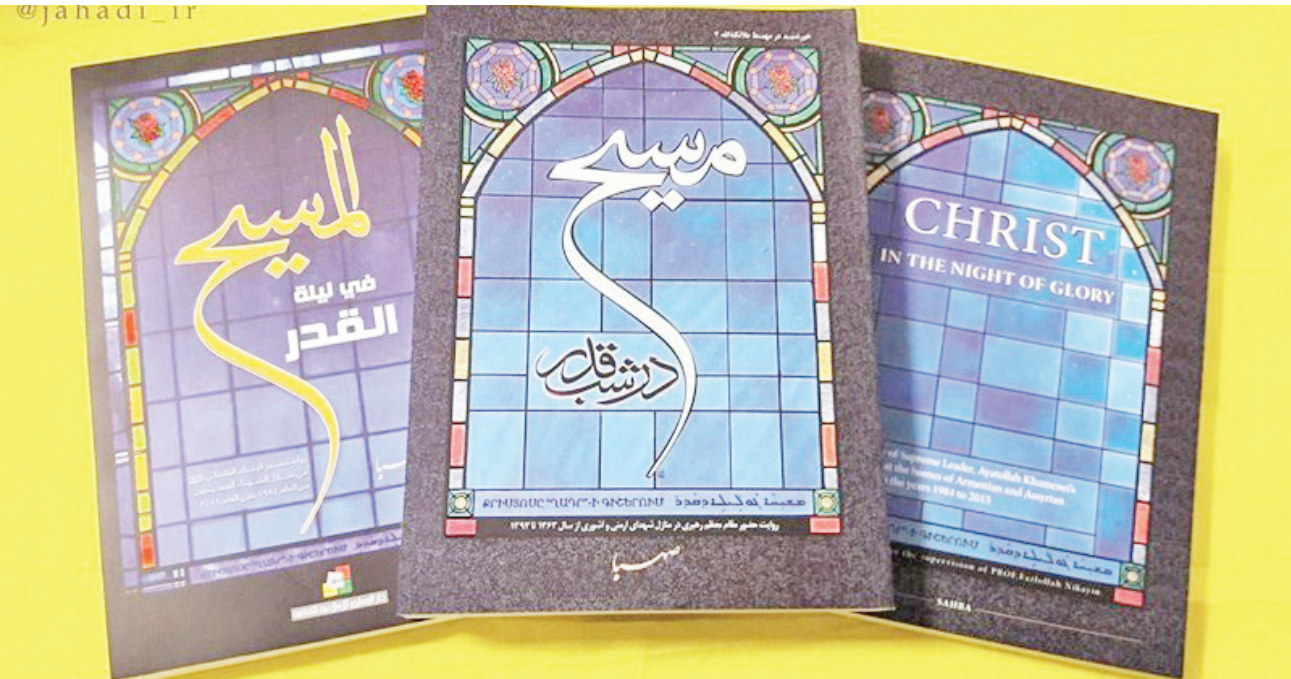
“Christ in the Night of Glory” distributed in Iraq, Lebanon, England

**CULTURE** TEHRAN — Arabic d e s k and English versions of “Christ in the Night of Glory” have been distributed in Iraq, Lebanon and England.

The book containing the stories of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei’s meetings with the families of the Armenian and Assyrian soldiers that were martyred during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war was published by Sahba Publications in 2014.

“Two new meetings of the Leader are due to be added to the book in its new edition,” Hassan Adibzadeh, the managing director of Sahba Publications, has said in a press release. The book has been translated into English by Fazlollah Nik-Ain.

The night of glory refers to the nights of the 19th, 21st, and 23rd of Ramadan, which are known as the “grand nights”, during one of which the entire Quran was sent down to the Prophet Muhammad (S). It is believed that Allah is extremely merciful to his servants on these nights.



This photo shows the Arabic, Persian and English versions of “Christ in the Night of Glory”.

Cinematographer Nemat Haqiqi’s awards donated to Film Museum of Iran



Pictured above are the awards director and cinematographer Nemat Haqiqi won at the International Children and Youth Film Festival and the Sepas Film Festival.

**A R T** TEHRAN — Late Iranian d e s k cinematographer Nemat Haqiqi’s national and international awards have been donated by his ex-wife, Lili Golestan, to the Film Museum of Iran, the museum announced on Wednesday. The best cinematographer awards were presented to him at the Sepas Film Festival for “Dash Akol” in 1971 and “Curse” in 1973. Haqiqi also directed “Coin” in 1977, which won the award for best film at the International Children and Youth Film

Festival. This award is also among the objects donated to the museum. Born in 1939, Haqiqi worked as a cinematographer in more than 35 films and TV series, including Masud Kimiai’s “The Deer”, “Dash Akol” and “Baluch”, and Behruz Afkhami’s “The Bride” and “Hemlock”. His son, Mani, is the director of several acclaimed Iranian movies including “Pig”, “A Dragon Arrives”, “Canaan”, “Abadan” and “Men at Work”. Haqiqi passed away of a heart attack in 2010.

D.C. Fontana, pioneering “Star Trek” writer, dies at 80

**NEW YORK (Hollywood Reporter)** — Dorothy Catherine “D.C.” Fontana, the first female writer for “Star Trek” who penned a number of classic episodes, has died Monday evening following a short illness, according to the science fiction property’s official site. She was 80. A trailblazer for female writers in sci-fi television, Fontana crafted numerous stories for the original Star Trek TV series, including 1967’s “Journey to Babel,” which introduced Spock’s father Sarek and mother Amanda. The episode was credited with allowing audiences to see Star Trek’s characters as more than just their jobs but as actual people. Fontana also went on to work on the animated series, and she penned the classic 1973 episode “Yesteryear” in which Spock travels back in time to rescue a younger version of himself. In 1987, Fontana helped launch a new era of “Star Trek” when she co-wrote “Encounter at Farpoint,” the two-part pilot for “Star Trek: The Next Generation,” which introduced the world to Patrick Stewart’s Captain Picard and earned a Hugo nomination, which she shared with co-writer and Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry. “She was a pioneer. Her work will continue to influence for generations to come,” William Shatner said Tuesday via Twitter. Fontana wrote under the name “D.C.” to help prevent discrimination based on her gender when submitting pitches around Hollywood. She already was a working writer who had sold a few scripts when she first met Roddenberry, who at the time was overseeing the NBC military series “The Lieutenant”. In 1963, Fontana was working as a production secretary to one of the producers of “The Lieutenant” and she ended up reporting directly to Roddenberry when his secretary was hospitalized for two months.



D.C. Fontana. (Getty Images/Albert L. Ortega)

Soon after, Roddenberry brought her along to “Star Trek” to work as his production secretary and asked her to choose a story to write for season one. “Charlie X”, an episode about the Enterprise picking up an unstable teen boy with powerful mental abilities, would become her first sci-fi credit and would make her a rare breed at the time: a woman who wrote sci-fi TV stories. “At the time, I wasn’t especially aware there were so few female writers doing action adventure scripts,” Fontana recalled in 2013. “There were plenty doing soaps, comedies, or on variety shows. By choosing to do action adventure, I was in an elite, very talented and very different group of women writers.” She also contributed to “Star Trek: Deep Space Nine”, and worked on the web series “Star Trek: New Voyages”. In addition to “Star Trek”, Fontana’s credit included such shows as “The Waltons”, “Bonanza” and “The Six Million Dollar Man”, among others.

Iranian director to raise “The Unburied Dead” in Tehran



Iranian stage director Sina Rastgu in an undated photo.

**A R T** TEHRAN — Iranian d e s k director Sina Rastgu plans to stage French philosopher and playwright Jean-Paul Sartre’s “The Unburied Dead” (“Les Morts Sans Sépulture”) at a Tehran theater. The director has renamed the play “The Small Symphony of Silence” to perform it in Iran. The 1946 play is about five resistance fighters during the World War II in France, who are taken prisoners by the Nazis and locked in an attic. One after the other, they are taken away, interrogated, tortured and

then taken back to the room. Unexpectedly, the leader of their group is also arrested and taken to the attic but as the Nazis are unaware of his true identity, he is likely to be released soon. Now, the five other prisoners are facing the temptation to reveal the true identity of this man to obtain their release. All, however, refuse to do so, except for the youngest, terrified by the prospect of being tortured and executed. So the leader kills him to prevent him from speaking. Rastgu’s troupe is rehearsing the play, which will be staged in the near future.

With strong accent, Hugh Grant ‘went for it’ in Ritchie’s “The Gentlemen”

**LONDON (Reuters)** — Hugh Grant is best known for playing the bumbling Englishman in romantic comedies so when the role of a cockney-accented private investigator in Guy Ritchie’s new crime caper came up, the actor was a little hesitant to portray someone so different. Grant plays the shady Fletcher in “The Gentlemen”, a far cry from his roles in “Four Weddings and a Funeral” and “Notting Hill.” “That was part of the appeal but also part of the fear,” Grant told Reuters at a screening of “The Gentlemen” on Tuesday. “I thought, I’m 59 now. Is it too ludicrous to suddenly be this guy completely from the other side of the tracks with a full-on London accent? Guy said ‘No, no, no, no. You can do it. You can do it. Just own it.’ So I went for it.” The film marks the return of Ritchie to his crime film roots as he helms a comedy-drama filled with fishy characters. Matthew McConaughey plays American Mickey Pearson, who has built a marijuana business in Britain. When he tries to sell it, others want to capitalize in any way they can. Ritchie found fame with “Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels” and “Snatch” before directing “Sherlock Holmes” and Disney’s live-action version of “Aladdin.” “I’m not sure if I missed (crime capers), it’s just as you get older ... I want to manifest more work,” he said. “This is a script I wrote 15 years ago ... The genesis of it was ... from a while ago and it just felt like now was the time to make it.” The cast includes Colin Farrell as a no-nonsense boxing coach, Charlie Hunnam as Pearson’s right-hand man, Henry Golding as a gangster and Michelle Dockery as Pearson’s glamorous wife. Fletcher works for a tabloid newspaper and Grant, who was a victim of phone-



Actor Hugh Grant and his wife Anna Elisabet Eberstein pose as they arrive for a special screening of “The Gentlemen” in London, Britain December 3, 2019. (Reuters/Henry Nicholls)

hacking by reporters, said he drew from his past for inspiration. “I’ve come across a lot of private investigators who work for tabloid newspapers ... and some of them I had lunch with before the film. We’ve sort of become friends. Weirdly, these are people who hacked my phone. Some of them have been to prison for it, but now I’m quite friendly with.” Grant has made British headlines for his campaigning against the return of a Conservative government and a hard Brexit in the Dec. 12 election. “I panicked about the future of this country,” he said. “I think we’ve got eight days left to save it really from disaster.”