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# Enemies terrified of Iran's scientific progress

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## Domestic production saves Iran over €400m in 6 months

TEHRAN- Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani said that relying on domestic production has saved €412 million for the country over the past six months in which six desks have been held on the matter, IRNA reported.

Speaking in a meeting of the ministry's council of deputies on Saturday, Rahmani said the mentioned desks are focused on automotive, petrochemicals, mining,

electricity, electronics and telecommunications industries.

The official also noted that preparations have been made for holding seven more desks for promoting domestic production in the fields of electricity, electronics and telecommunications, petrochemicals, home appliances, utilities, rail and auto industries which will save the country another €490 million. **→ 4**

## Iran defuses 'systematic cyberattack' on government

TEHRAN — The telecommunications minister announced on Sunday that Iran has defused a "systematic cyberattack" aimed at spying on government data.

Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi said in a Twitter post that the attack was identified and defused by a cybersecurity shield named Dejfa.

He said the spying servers were identified and the hackers were also tracked.

Dejfa managed to thwart the attack which had used the "well-known APT27", he said.

Last week, Azari Jahromi said Iran had repelled a cyberattack on its e-governance infrastructure.

He said the cyberattack was launched by a foreign government. **→ 3**

## Abdul-Mahdi censures U.S. blacklisting of counter-terror figures

Former Iraqi prime minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi has condemned a recent decision by the United States to slap sanctions on leaders of the pro-government Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU) or Hashd al-Sha'abi. In a statement released by Iraq's Shafaq News on Sunday, he said those targeted by the fresh American sanctions were the ones involved in operations against the Daesh terrorist group.

"We reject and denounce the inclusion

of Iraqi leaders and figures known for their record and political role in combating Daesh on the list of sanctions and bans by the countries with which we have relations and agreements," he said.

On December 6, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced sanctions on Qais al-Khazali and his brother Laith, two leaders of the Asaib Ahl al-Haq, as well as Hussein Falil Aziz al-Lami of Kata'ib Hezbollah. **→ 13**



**EDITORIAL**  
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## Is prisoner exchange a beginning for U.S.-Iran negotiation?

Dr. Massoud Soleimani, an Iranian scientist who had been held in the U.S. for 14 months, was finally exchanged by a Chinese American spy named Xiyue Wang and released last week. The swap took place in Zurich, Switzerland. The two prisoners were released simultaneously.

The United States, which has not softened its hostile stance on Iran, seeks an opportunity to set in motion a show at the international stage for dialogue with Iran. Washington tried to refer to the prisoner swap as a ground provided for the U.S.-Iran negotiations to gain more votes for Trump in the 2020 polls. A look at successive tweets by Trump, Mike Pompeo and Brian Hook regarding the issue shows that they have made every effort to open negotiations with Iran.

This kind of position taken by U.S. officials coupled with their efforts to open talks has at least two important dimensions:

First, an analysis of the U.S. politicians' behavior over the past 40 years, and even earlier, suggests that they have offered to negotiate whenever they have reached a deadlock. However, the Americans change their approach as soon as they find a chance for hostility, like what happened during the recent riots in Iran.

Second, given the experience obtained due to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran believes that there is no need for re-negotiation. There are preconditions for a possible negotiation. First, the return of the U.S. to the JCPOA and lifting all of previous and new sanctions. Second, a complete halt to the maximum pressure campaign. However, the White House has explicitly rejected these conditions.

In fact, Iran did not accept the prisoner exchange to begin a new phase of negotiations. Rather, Iran agreed to it merely because of humanitarian issues. The exchange took place while Professor Masoud Soleimani was not a criminal. According to Donald Trump, Soleimani was held hostage despite having an official visa to visit the United States.

However, Xiyue Wang, who came to Iran as a Princeton University graduate student, was transferring an archive of the Iranian confidential documents to the Mossavar-Rahmani institution, a partner of U.S.-Israel organizations. Wang was arrested by the Ministry of Intelligence and charged with espionage.

## "I Am a Sheikh": Documentary on Islamic scholars in Qom

By Salman Ansari Javid

**QOM** — "I Am a Sheikh" is a six-minute-long radio documentary about the typical daily life routine of Iranian students at Feizieh Madrasa, a major Islamic seminary in Qom. The documentary, by independent producer Morteza Namazi, went on to win the first award for an Iranian production at the Grand Prix Nova 2018 International Radio Festival in Croatia. It was awarded the second place in the Short Forms category.

Prix Marulic is an annual festival of audio plays and documentaries based on texts from literary and cultural heritage, organized by the National Radio and Television of Croatia, HRT. The festival is competitive and is open to broadcasting organizations and independent producers.

The documentary shows a typical day in the life of an Islamic sciences student starting with the sound of sipping from a cup of tea followed with the words: "In the name of God". The doc examines a typical daily routine in the life of the scholar, with every morning starting at Feizieh and the traditional classes given by famous scholars, continuing with the usual daily routine of shopping in the evening and returning to family and home.

With the sound of a heart beating in the background, the day goes on as the heartbeats become faster. Accompanied with the sound of an electrocardiogram, the interval between the heartbeats become shorter and shorter until the continuous sound of a beep is heard,

depicting a flatline representing mortality.

Describing his experience in Hvar, Croatia, Namazi points out that "it was interesting for Westerners as the word 'Sheikh' usually refers to the ruler of a tribe in the Persian Gulf Arabic states, whereas in Iran the word sheikh refers to a clergyman in the Islamic seminary."

Namazi remembers a member of jury pointing out how interesting it was for him that a scholar's life in Qom is so deeply intertwined with his family.

In his latest work "The True Mystic" Namazi depicts the unique voice and style of prayers of late Grand Ayatollah Mohammad-Taqi Bahjat Fumani. "In this documentary, I focused on his emotional outlet during prayer sermons, which he showed by crying during his prayers." **→ 16**

## Yemeni army warns Saudi-led coalition against further Hudaydah truce violations

The spokesman for Yemeni Armed Forces has warned against the continued violation of a UN-backed agreement signed between representatives from the Houthi Ansarullah movement and the Riyadh-sponsored government of ex-president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, in Sweden last year, saying such infringements have led to the deaths and injuries of hundreds of civilians.

Brigadier General Yahya Saree said on Saturday that the Saudi-led coalition and its mercenaries continue to flout the agreement and keep on implementing escalatory steps in the strategic Red Sea port city of Hudaydah, stressing that such actions will have dire repercussions.

"While our forces committed to implement

the Stockholm agreement, and adopted unilateral measures such as redeployment [of forces] from Hudaydah ports, observation of the ceasefire and maintaining the flow of aid convoys among other steps, the coalition of aggression and its proxies are delaying the implementation of the accord," Saree said.

He noted that the al-Durayhimi district of Hudaydah province is still under siege by the Saudi-led alliance and its mercenaries, and the forces have been preventing the entry of food supplies and medicine destined for the besieged citizens for nearly a year.

Saree highlighted that the continued violation of Hudaydah truce has so far resulted in the deaths of 175 people, including 63 children,

27 women and 85 men. Another 481 civilians, including 169 children, 97 women and 215 men, have sustained injuries as well.

The senior Yemeni military official then held the United Nations and the Security Council responsible for the escalation of the situation in Hudaydah.

"Our forces are ready to respond to any folly or escalatory step. The coalition aggression and its mercenaries will have to bear the brunt then," Saree emphasized.

Ansarullah delegates and Hadi loyalists held a round of peace negotiations in Rimbo, north of the Swedish capital city of Stockholm, last December. The talks resulted in the announcement of a break-through agreement. **→ 13**



Kazem Darabi (R) receives the award in the documentation category for his memoirs "Teahouse Painting" from Culture Minister Abbas Salehi (L) during the 12th Jalal Al-e Ahmad Literary Awards in Tehran on December 14, 2019.

## "Teahouse Painting" honored at Jalal literary awards

TEHRAN — "Teahouse Painting", the memoirs of Kazem Darabi, an Iranian suspect in the 1992 Mykonos Restaurant assassinations case in Berlin, has won the Jalal Al-e Ahmad Literary Award during the 12th edition of Iran's most lucrative literary prize.

In the book, Darabi explains how he was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1997 for having a hand in gunning down four members of the Kurdish opposition in the Mykonos Restaurant in the German capital in 1992 and his life during 15 years in captivity in Germany. **→ 16**



**ARTICLE**  
**Martin Love**  
Political analyst from North Carolina

## Boris Johnson: An unhealthy choice anywhere

British voters know not what they did in elevating the Tories to their biggest victory in decades, and in defeating the Labor party and eliminating a humble, good man — Jeremy Corbyn — from a further role in politics. The voters know not what they did focusing far too much on demands that the country leave the EU, which the winner, Boris Johnson, has pledged to execute early in 2020 while at the same time Labor waffled amid suggestions of holding another referendum on Brexit. This waffling and lukewarm if not cold stance towards the Brexit question was a major factor in Corbyn's defeat, as there are indications those who would have voted Labor foolishly switched their vote to Boris Johnson over this issue alone, disregarding other concerns about Johnson's nefarious plans. But there were other factors, too, just as onerous and disastrous, and anyway no one expected such a lopsided vote.

Disastrous one can say because there are many Brits and many others in the West and across the globe who literally ached for the kinds of potential changes that might have begun had Corbyn become Prime Minister. This election was the one chance the British and much of the world had to begin the establishment of policies of Hope for relief for those under the thumb of Western imperialism and the power of oligarchs like Rupert Murdoch and Sheldon Adelson, to name just two, and their obscene wealth and privileges. The next chance for real change may be in the U.S. election coming next November. And that chance may be the last for many years ahead. The defeat of Trump is for now not assured unless between now and next November the U.S. economy and markets crater. Ejection from office before then is a very bad bet. **→ 11**

## condolences

We extend our heartfelt condolences on the sad demise of Ms. Zahra Abdolmohammadi, Fars News Agency's reporter, to her bereaved family and colleagues. May her soul rest in peace. *Tehran Times management and staff*



## Malaysian PM calls U.S. sanctions on Iran a 'form of dictatorship'

By staff and agency

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has said that Washington's sanctions against Iran are a "form of dictatorship".

"We don't believe in applying sanctions to force countries to accept certain ideologies and to change governments. It is not only the particular country that will suffer, but all the trading partners also will suffer economically. In a way, it is a form of dictatorship. A dictatorship that is worse than that in a country, it is international," he told Aljazeera in an interview published on Sunday.



He added that Malaysia lost out on a big market when the U.S. applied sanctions against Iran.

He also discussed the state of the global economy and its interconnectedness. He argued the U.S. is leading the world in the wrong direction when it comes to multilateralism.

"Becoming very nationalist is good. But not at the expense of other people. Every country should care about itself but that needing to be protective or secure doesn't mean confronting others. It's better if we learn to

work together," he said.

"We were going a long way towards multilateralism. But now nationalism seems to affect many countries," he added.

According to Reuters, Mahathir said during a speech at the Doha Forum on Saturday that the U.S. sanctions on Iran violate the United Nations charter and international law.

"Malaysia does not support the reimposition of the unilateral sanctions by the U.S. against Iran," he said.

"Such sanctions clearly violate the United Nations charter and international law; sanctions can only be applied by the United Nations in accordance with the charter," he added.

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

## 'Failure to join FATF will limit Iran's economic interaction'

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Deputy Chairman of the Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Kamal Dehghani has said that failure to join the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) will limit Iran's economic interaction with the world.

"Definitely, the Expediency Council has prioritized national interests, because according to experts, joining the convention will solve part of problems we are facing; on the other hand, if we do not join it, our economic interaction with the world will be very limited," he told ISNA in an interview published on Sunday.

Abdolhossein Sasan, a political and economic analyst, told IRNA in an interview published on November 25 that refusing to join the FATF will block Iran's financial interaction with other countries.

"Iran is now at a very important juncture in comparison to past years. I believe we can improve our economic situation with making right choices and avoid moving towards isolation," he said.

Gholamreza Mesbahi-Moghadam, a member of the Expediency Council, has said that the council has set aside studying the Palermo bill, which its ratification along the CFT are needed for joining the FATF.

Talking to the Mehr news agency in an interview in November, he said since a one-year time by the council to assess the pros and cons of Palermo with the "country's expediency" has ended its study is actually out of question.

Mesbahi-Moghadam added, "The deadline for the Expediency Council to study CFT has not passed yet."

The overall atmosphere in the Expediency Council is against approving the FATF. The opposition to ratifying the FATF rose after the abrogation of the 2015 nuclear deal by the United States and the return of sanctions.

Mesbahi-Moghadam, a cleric trained in economy, noted, "In a situation in which the country is under the most severe sanctions, joining such conventions is synonymous with self-inflicted sanctions. In the situation in which the United States seeks to limit the country's financial relations, it is not beneficial to join institutions like FATF."

However, Jalal Mahmoudzadeh, an MP representing Mahabad in the parliament, said in November that joining the FATF will reduce effects of sanctions and help economic interaction.

"Foreign investment will increase and economic interaction will expand if Iran joins this international body," Mahmoudzadeh told IRNA.

The parliament ratified the FATF in October 2018, however the oversight Guardian Council rejected the bill.

Whenever there is a dispute between the parliament and the Guardian Council on a bill it is referred to the Expediency Council for final arbitration.

The Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) said on October 18 that it has given Iran a final deadline of February 2020 to tighten its laws against money laundering in compliance with the global watchdog's financial standards.

"If before February 2020, Iran does not enact the Palermo and Terrorist Financing Conventions in line with the FATF Standards, then the FATF will fully lift the suspension of counter-measures and call on its members and urge all jurisdictions to apply effective counter-measures, in line with recommendation 19," the FATF said in a statement, Reuters reported.

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

Mesbahi-Moghadam, who served as parliament representative for two four-year terms, had also told ISNA in an interview last month that the council has set aside studies to approve bills related to the FATF.

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

However, the government is pushing for the approval of the FATF. Talking in a cabinet meeting October 23, President Hassan Rouhani called on the Expediency Council to approve the FATF related bills.

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

He added, "This hurts our country."

Mahmoud Vaezi, the presidential chief of staff, said on October 30 that Iran should use the opportunity to join the FATF in order to avoid self-inflicted sanctions.

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

# Can security be purchased? Zarif asks at Doha Forum



**POLITICAL**  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Sunday that certain countries in the Persian Gulf region, enjoying an abundance of wealth brought by petrodollars, buy the "most sophisticated arms" but asked can security and stability be purchased.

Addressing the Doha Forum, the chief diplomat said, "Sadly, even some foreign policies can be bought by the highest bidder too. But can security be purchased? Can regional stability be bought?"

Following is the full text of Zarif's speech published by the official website of the Iranian Foreign Ministry:

It is a great pleasure to participate in the Doha Forum. I congratulate our Qatari friends for organizing this remarkable gathering and thank them for their gracious hospitality.

While we enjoy tranquility and security here in the heart of West Asia, our region is in severe turmoil.

I believe the root cause of the multiple and chronic crises we face lies in a cognitive disorder: a disorder that is not just afflicting countries in the region but also global powers. And that is why I believe fora such as this prestigious gathering provide unique opportunities to try to uncover our presumptions, deconstruct our assumptions and think together on a way out of the current regional predicament.

The first and most persistent cognitive disorder is the zero-sum approach to global issues. Far too many continue to believe that even in our interconnected world—where everything from trade and the environment to information and even emotions are globalized—one can gain at the expense of others. That one can have security through depriving one's own neighbors of the same. That has never worked. It will never work. Security—just like climate change—does not know borders and is thus indivisible.

But that is not all.

The disparities in power, geographic size, natural and human resources and the like among countries in our region have led to disastrous conclusions.

Some global actors look at these disparities and the unending rivalries in the region as an opportunity: indeed, as providing a fertile ground to expand their military presence and to sell more weapons to nearly all sides in the region. But this outside presence has neither enhanced the security of outside actors, nor that of the region. Indeed, it has only led to disasters, from the downing of an Iranian civil airliner by USS Vincennes in 1988 to the rise in extremism as a natural consequence of the US presence in Iraq and Afghanistan—an outcome we had predicted as early as 2001.

As for weapons trade, the Persian Gulf states accounted for nearly ONE QUARTER of GLOBAL ARMS IMPORTS during 2014-18, almost DOUBLING on average compared to the preceding five years. Unsurprisingly, the United States sold most of these lethal arms. But the real question is: have these vast U.S. arms sales to this region recovered anything even remotely close to the 7 trillion dollars that President Trump himself has acknowledged as having been wasted in our region since 2001?

To be fair, global powers do not have a monopoly over this cognitive disorder. Unfortunately, nobody does.

Some regional actors consider disparities as an opportunity to achieve regional hegemony. Saddam Hussein's invasions of Iran and Kuwait, the Saudi blockade against Qatar and the war in Yemen are but examples of catastrophic miscalculations to use misperceived opportunities to achieve regional hegemony.

And most in this region, enjoying the abundance of wealth brought by petrodollars, believe that everything can be bought. Certainly, arms—including the most sophisticated ones—can be purchased in abundance. Sadly, even some foreign policies can be bought by the highest bidder too. But can security be

purchased? Can regional stability be bought?

None of us—nor the global community at large—have benefitted from this prevailing paradigm. We in Iran—very much like our friends in Qatar—believe that we need a fundamental paradigm shift in our region, based on a cognitive readjustment and recognition of the imperative of a regional security and cooperation arrangement under the UN umbrella. This is not new: indeed, we have been proposing this since 1985.

The recent proposal of President Rouhani to launch the Hormuz Peace Endeavor—or HOPE—is a continuation of our longstanding commitment to an inclusive and comprehensive regional framework for constructive engagement.

HOPE is based on the recognition of the responsibility of every state in the region to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in our neighborhood and benefit from it. It is based on the assumption that the region and the world have a common and vital interest in maintaining freedom of navigation and energy security FOR ALL.

Through HOPE, our aspiration is to promote solidarity, mutual understanding and peaceful and friendly relations and cooperation among all States of the region;

**“Saddam Hussein’s invasions of Iran and Kuwait, the Saudi blockade against Qatar and the war in Yemen are but examples of catastrophic miscalculations to use misperceived opportunities to achieve regional hegemony,” Zarif notes.**

## Iran, Oman voice pleasure as hopes rise over cession of war in Yemen

**POLITICAL**  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** —Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani and Omani Deputy Parliament Speaker Abdullah Al Amri on Saturday expressed pleasure over relative ceasefire in Yemen, underlining their respective countries' support for a peaceful settlement of the war in the country.

The top Iranian and Omani parliamentarians met on the sidelines of 12th plenary session of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) in Antalya, Turkey.

Larijani praised Oman for mediating between the warring sides in Yemen, saying, "Your role was wise and rational. We hope that talks on Yemen would lead to a practical measure and an actual ceasefire."

He stressed that accepting partial ceasefire in Yemen is a "logical path."

Al Amri, for his part, voiced his country's readiness to increase efforts to find a solution to the war in the impoverished Yemen.

"The situation in Yemen is improving. Efforts to settle the conflict have been formed in the most appropriate way possible," he assured.

In April 2015, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad

Zarif submitted a letter to Ban Ki-moon, then UN secretary general, outlining its four-point peace plan for Yemen.

The plan called for an immediate ceasefire and end of all foreign military attacks, humanitarian assistance, a resumption of broad national dialogue and establishment of an inclusive national unity government.

On November 22, United Nations Yemen envoy Martin Griffiths told the UN Security Council that the number of air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition battling Houthis in Yemen has dropped nearly 80% in the last two weeks.

The coalition, which intervened in the war in 2015 to try to restore the ousted Sanaa government, has carried out thousands of air strikes that have killed thousands of civilians at hospitals, schools and markets, drawing international criticism.

De-escalation of hostilities is a major aspect of informal talks that have been going on between Saudi Arabia and Houthi officials on a ceasefire in Yemen since September.

"In what is perhaps an even more important sign that something is changing in Yemen..., in the last two weeks the rate has dramatically reduced: there were almost 80% fewer air strikes nationwide than in the two weeks prior," Reuters quoted Griffiths as telling the Security Council by videocon-

ference from his Amman office.

He added that there had been "entire 48-hour periods without air strikes" for the first time since the conflict began in 2014, when the Houthi movement ousted the government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi from power in Sanaa.

The talks began after the Houthis offered to halt cross-border missile and drone attacks on Saudi cities if the Saudi-led coalition ended air strikes on Yemen.

"We call this de-escalation, a reduction in the tempo of the war, and perhaps a move towards an overall ceasefire in Yemen that...many members of this Council have been calling for a very long time," Griffiths said by a video conference from Amman, where his office is based.

The UN diplomat added that skirmishes between the warring parties in the port city of Hodeidah, where the two sides agreed on a ceasefire last year, have been reduced by 80 percent after the deployment of UN monitors in recent weeks.

The war has killed more than 100,000 people and pushed millions to the brink of famine, according the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, a non-governmental organization.

Griffiths has said he hopes for a resolution to the conflict in the first few months of 2020.

## Rouhani to attend KL Summit

By staff and agency

President Hassan Rouhani will participate in the Kuala Lumpur (KL) Summit 2019, Malay Mail said on Saturday.

The summit will be held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre from Dec. 18 to 21.

Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Hamad Al Thani, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and Rouhani are among the notable Islamic leaders expected to join the summit.

In a video message posted on the

official KL Summit 2019 Twitter account on Saturday, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said the conference will be a significant forum for Muslim leaders to discuss the current situation faced by Muslim community around the world.

"The Muslims are labelled as terrorists, and there is now a feeling of fear of Islam. It is quite obvious to everybody that the situation is getting worse. On the other hand, that oppression does not seem to worry anyone," Mahathir said.

## Top MP criticizes cut in defense budget

**POLITICAL**  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — Head of the Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee on Saturday criticized the government for reducing the defense budget for the next year.

"We are witnessing reduction of defense budget in the next year budget bill," Mojtaba Zolnour said.

The Iranian fiscal year begins on March 20, 2020.

Zolnour said, "In some cases budget of defense sectors has not increased in comparison with the previous years."

He said in view of the existing inflation and

price rises, management of the affairs in the defense sector will be difficult.

"Defense is the most important pillar of the country, so we must not permit anything to weaken the defense sector," Zolnour underlined.

On December 8, President Hassan Rouhani submitted the administration's draft of the national budget bill for the next calendar year 1399, to the Majlis.

The proposed budget amounted to about 1.988 quadrillion rials (about \$473.5 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials), with a 14-percent rise from the current year's approved budget.

## Asia sees regional security dependent on co-op with Iran: Larijani

**POLITICAL**  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said on Sunday that the Asian countries see regional security dependent on cooperation with Iran.

"The Asian countries' general inclination is cooperating with Iran to establish long-lasting security in the region," he told reporters upon back home.

"General inclination of this assembly [Asian Parliamentary Assembly] is towards cooperating with Iran to create a long-lasting security in the region. So, the member states do not accept the United States' behavior in ignoring Iran. They say in different ways that they should have close security and economic relations with Iran," the senior parliamentarian said.

Larijani was in Antalya, Turkey, to attend the 12th plenary of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly.

During a speech at the APA conference on Saturday, he said that the Asian countries must adopt "more active approaches" and take "stronger steps" in countering the West.

"Unfortunately, we have witnessed hostile behaviors. There are many examples

such as starting a trade war with China, imposing sanctions on Russia and Iran... the Western countries cannot tolerate rise of the status of Asian countries," Larijani remarked.

He noted that Iran's parliament has proposed a draft resolution to expand cooperation among the APA member states in order to promote multilateralism.



# Enemies terrified of Iran's scientific progress: Masoud Soleimani

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Masoud Soleimani, the Iranian scientist who was released from a U.S. jail earlier this month, said on Sunday that enemies are terrified of Iran's scientific progress.

"The thing that upsets and terrifies the enemies is Iran's science and it really concerns them because they cannot tolerate the country's progress," Soleimani said while addressing a ceremony at Tehran's Tarbiat Modares University.

"Nothing is more important than standing on our own feet and that can be reached only through science," the scientist noted.

Earlier in the day, Soleimani was hospitalized due to heart problems.

He was scheduled to hold a press conference to answer questions by Iranian and international media outlets, but the presser was canceled, IRNA reported.

However, he was released from the hospital later in the day.

Soleimani, a 49-year-old stem cell scientist, left Iran on sabbatical last year, but was arrested upon arrival in Chicago and transferred to prison in Atlanta, Georgia for unspecified reasons.

The United States released him in a prisoner exchange, after which Soleimani flew along with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif from Zurich to Tehran on De-



ember 7.

The prisoner exchange happened through mediation efforts by Switzerland.

On the same day, Iran also freed an American graduate student who had been imprisoned in Tehran for more than three years on charges of being a spy.

Xiyue Wang was flown in a Swiss government airplane from Tehran to Zurich,

where he was met by Brian H. Hook, the U.S. State Department's special representative for Iran, according to two senior United States officials.

Zarif said he was happy that Soleimani and Xiyue are joining their families.

"Glad that Professor Massoud Soleimani and Mr. Xiyue Wang will be joining their families shortly. Many thanks to all engaged,

particularly the Swiss government," Zarif tweeted on December 7.

Soleimani has said that during his detention, the U.S. jail wardens told other prisoners that he was a terrorist with a mission to carry out bombings in the United States.

"U.S. authorities in the jail had told prisoners that I was a terrorist who wanted to carry out bombings in America," Press TV quoted Soleimani as saying upon arrival at Tehran's Mehrabad airport.

"They had made such false statements so that other prisoners would not come close to me and keep away from me," he said.

Meanwhile, the United States also dropped charges against two Iranian researchers it had accused of attempting to export chemicals to Iran in violation of trade sanctions.

An Atlanta-based federal judge on Wednesday dismissed sanctions-violation cases against scientists Mahboobe Ghaedi and Maryam Jazayeri, Politico reported on Thursday.

Both women were co-defendants in the prosecution of Soleimani.

In recent days, Iran has voiced readiness for a full prisoner swap with the United States, saying that the "ball is in the U.S.'s court".

"After getting our hostage back this week, fully ready for a comprehensive prisoner exchange," Zarif said via Twitter last Monday.

## Intelligence bodies investigating contaminated cakes: health minister

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Health Minister Saeed Namaki has said Iran's intelligence bodies are investigating the case of contaminated cakes.

"This is a security issue and the Health Ministry along with security and intelligence bodies are investigating this issue," Namaki said on Sunday, Mehr reported.

"A group took systematic actions to manipulate public opinion and cripple the country's food industry, especially the cake and chocolate industry," he said.

"Fortunately, no poisoning or side effect has been reported after consumption of these contaminated cakes," the minister added.

Recently, photos circulated on the internet showing pills inserted in confectionery products such as cakes, biscuits and wafers.

At least 12 Iranian confectionery brands were affected. Contaminated products were found in eastern provinces of Kerman, Hormozgan, and Sistan-Baluchestan as well as the western Ilam province, which borders Iraq.

Iran's Food and Drug Organization spokesperson, Kianoush Jahanpour, said on Saturday the country's food industry was targeted in a bid to spread "terror."

"It's the standing of the whole food and confectionery industry that has been targeted as one of the country's ex-



celling industries," Jahanpour said, according to IFP news.

He added the drugs had "not undergone any changes in their color and composition, signaling that the drugs were placed in various packages after production and during distribution stages."

No narcotics or rumored aluminum phosphide tablets have been found inserted in any of the products, the spokesperson explained.

"Most of the examined drugs have been household drugs

such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, cetirizine, hydroxyzine, metoclopramide and even empty blister packs."

The development comes 19 months after U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and targeted the Iranian nation with its "maximum pressure" policy, which includes harsh sanctions, widespread propaganda, and possible acts of sabotage, among other things.

Tehran has repeatedly said that the U.S. sanctions will prevent it from buying medicine.

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.

Earlier this month, Zarif mentioned U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in a tweet, 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."

"#EconomicTerrorism kills," he tweeted.

## Ashraf Ghani receives credentials of Iran's new ambassador

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Afghan President Ashraf Ghani met Iran's new ambassador to Afghanistan on Sunday and received his credentials.

A day earlier Ambassador Bahador Aminian submitted a copy of his credentials to Afghan acting Foreign Minister Idrées Zaman.

Aminian said that Iran seeks to expand relations with Afghanistan in various areas.

He also said that Iran supports Afghan peace talks.

Zaman praised Iran's support for the Afghan people and government.

In an interview with an Afghan TV channel aired on December 10, Foreign Minister Mo-

hammad Javad Zarif said foreign interference in the Afghan peace talks is "unacceptable".

"Peace is for the Afghans and must be managed by the Afghan government, and the Taliban must be part of this process," IRNA quoted him as saying in the interview.

During a speech at the Ministerial Conference of Heart of Asia Countries in Istanbul on December 10, Zarif said that Iran supports an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process with the participation of all political groups and factions.

"We support an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process with the participation of all political groups and factions including

the Taliban with the Afghan government in the center," he said.

He added, "We believe the United Nations could become active to bring all domestic groups as well as international partners of the Afghan government under one umbrella to facilitate this process."

In a meeting with Afghanistan's Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting in Uzbekistan on November 1, Iranian First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri also said that people in Afghanistan should decide their own fate, reaffirming Tehran's support for Afghan-Afghan peace talks.



## It's time to ditch the failed maximum pressure strategy against Iran and engage in pragmatic diplomacy: National Interest

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — In a commentary in the National Interest published on December 14, Daniel R. DePetris, a fellow at Defense Priorities and a columnist at the Washington Examiner, says the Trump administration's maximum pressure policy against Iran has failed as Tehran has adopted maximum resistance in the face of maximum pressure.

Following is an excerpt of the article headlined "Trump's 'Maximum Pressure' Strategy Against Iran Isn't Working (It's Time For A Change):

More than a year and a half since the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran began, Washington is no closer to taming the country's behavior or getting a "better deal" with Tehran. President Trump needs to accept the reality in front of him: The problems are not going to be solved by more sanctions, isolation, or military deployments. It's time to ditch the failed maximum pressure strategy and engage in pragmatic diplomacy.

The logic behind maximum pressure was simple: By slashing Iran's oil exports, deterring foreign businesses from investing in the Iranian market, and shutting Iran out of the global financial system, Washington would force political leadership in Tehran to come begging for economic relief.

Oil exports have declined from 2.8 million barrels a day in the spring of 2018 to less than 500,000 barrels per day in September, a reduction of more than 80 percent. The International Monetary Fund projects the Iranian economy to contract by more than 9 percent once the year is up, a number that will inevitably worsen the unemployment rate and contribute to a sense of disillusionment among younger Iranians entering the workforce.

All these figures, however, don't make up for the big picture: Despite the stress on Tehran's economy,

maximum pressure is having a counterproductive effect.

It's true the Iranian government is bleeding money. But so are ordinary Iranians, whose lives have gotten tougher as a result of U.S. policy. The value of Iran's currency has atrophied due to an inflation problem authorities have had difficulty controlling. A less valuable currency means goods on the shelf are more expensive; according to Iran's Statistical Center, food prices have risen by 61 percent, and clothing prices have increased by 51 percent over a 12-month period. As is often the case, the poorest Iranians will suffer the most.

Given such poor results, the economic pain the U.S. is inflicting on Iran can hardly be justified. In the 19 months since the administration withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and reinstated economic penalties lifted under the deal, there is no evidence that Iran is more amenable to U.S. demands. Rather than sending representatives to the negotiating room and hashing out a more far-reaching agreement on Washington's terms, Tehran is responding to maximum pressure with maximum resistance.

In retaliation, Iranian officials have spent 2019 systematically reneging on its own commitments — enriching higher-grade uranium, exceeding the uranium stockpile that was capped under the JCPOA; and reinstalling advanced centrifuges previously put in storage. In November, Iran announced the resumption of uranium enrichment operations at its Fordow site. If developments continue, there is a possibility Iran will cease cooperating with the International Atomic Energy Agency, as Iran's speaker of parliament stated this month.

**"Tehran is responding to maximum pressure with maximum resistance."**

## Leader names new chief of the Islamic unity forum

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has named Hojatolislam Hamid Shahriari as the new secretary general of the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought.

In a decree issued on Sunday, the Leader expressed the hope that in his new position, Shahriari would succeed in promoting unity and closeness among different branches of Islam, Mehr reported.



Ayatollah Khamenei also thanked Hojatolislam Mohsen Araki for his efforts as the previous secretary general of the forum.

The World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought is a body that was established in October 1990 by order of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran for the reconciliation between different Islamic schools of thought and branches.

It holds annual international conferences every year in the Islamic Unity Week. In addition to annual conferences, many conferences are held by forum for specific ceremonies.

## Army commander: Enemies resolved to frustrate people

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The Army commander said on Sunday that since the enemies do not dare to wage war on Iran they have decided to frustrate the people, especially the youth.

Major General Seyed Abdolrahim Mousavi made the remarks in a military ceremony in Javad ul A'emeh garrison.

The senior commander said anybody who seeks to disappoint the people is helping the enemy.

"Anybody who embarks on harming the people's hope, intentionally or unintentionally, is moving in favor of the enemies," the Army chief commented.

"Today, the enemies have embarked on waging psychological war (against Iran) by abusing economic problems to target the public opinion. If one day the enemies were targeting the country's vital sites by launching bombs and missiles, now they are targeting the people's hope and motivation" he explained.

"Especially the youth are under the enemies' propagandistic assaults."

On November 25, when people took to the streets in Tehran to condemn violent acts in response to hike in gasoline prices, Mousavi said people are not indifferent to the security of their country.

"People do not keep mum vis-a-vis the rioters who are led by the U.S. and attack the great Iranian nation's lives, properties and honor," General Mousavi said while participating in the massive rallies in Tehran to show allegiance to the Islamic Republic system.

In addition to Tehran, rallies were held in some other cities across the country to condemn violent acts.

In the protests that followed the decision by the government to increase gasoline price, the United States and opposition groups, including the cult group of MKO, monarchists were inciting unrest through their media outlets including the BBC Persian, Manoto, and Saudi-funded Iran International.

Mousavi said the people, despite having many problems, attend rallies to foil plots when they notice the Islamic Revolution is threatened.

On November 15, the government raised the extremely cheap gas price in order to moderate the national consumption rate, which stands at 110 million liters per day, 40 million liters above the maximum domestic requirement.

The measure initially prompted peaceful protests, but riotous elements, abusing the situation destroyed public property, setting ablaze banks and gas stations among other facilities, and opening fire on people and security forces.

## Iran defuses 'systematic cyberattack' on government

**1→** "We recently faced a highly organized and state-sponsored attack on our e-government infrastructure which was...repelled by the country's security shield," Azari Jahromi told reporters after a cabinet meeting last Wednesday.

The major attack was repelled by Dejfa, the minister added. "It was a very big attack," Azari-Jahromi said, adding that details would be revealed later.

Back in June, Washington officials said that U.S. military cyber forces launched a strike against Iranian military computer systems as President Donald Trump backed away from plans for a more conventional military strike in response to Iran's downing of a U.S. surveillance drone in the Persian Gulf.

U.S. officials told Reuters in October that the United States had carried out a secret cyber strike on Iran after the Sept. 14 attacks on Saudi oil facilities, which Washington and Riyadh claimed Iran was responsible for.

In a post on his Twitter account back in June, Azari Jahromi said Iran had managed to thwart about 33 million cyber-attacks against its sensitive sites last year (March 2018-March 2019).

"Last year, we neutralized not a single strike but 33 million attacks with the Dejfa firewall," he wrote, stressing that the U.S. tries hard but has not carried out a successful attack.

Head of the Civil Defense Organization Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali said in October that Iran was taking legal action against the U.S. over repeated cyberattack attempts and threats, while it is putting in place robust security measures to protect its vital infrastructure.

"The Americans have repeatedly threatened and mounted cyberattacks against us," Jalali said.

Tensions have escalated between the U.S. and Iran ever since U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew Washington last year from the 2015 nuclear deal with Tehran and began a policy of "maximum pressure." Iran has since been hit by multiple rounds of sanctions.



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	343291.8
IFX	4449.08

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,705 rials
GBP	55,998 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$65.22/b
WTI	\$60.07/b
OPEC Basket	\$65.81/b
Gold	\$1,477.90/oz
Silver	\$817.02/oz
Platinum	\$932.60/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Over 3,000 km of railways, 1,200 km of freeways under construction in Iran

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Transport Minister Kheirollah Khademi announced that over 3,000 kilometers of railways and 1,200 kilometers of freeways are currently under construction in the country, IRNA reported.



Khademi, who is also the managing director of Iran's Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructures Company (CDTIC), made the announcement on the sidelines of the 4th International Exhibition of Transportation, Logistics, and Related Industries of Iran which is being held in Tehran until Tuesday.

Referring to the motto of this edition of the event which is "Smart, Stable and Efficient Transportation", the official said CDTIC is participating in the exhibition to materialize this motto through cooperation with the private sector and all entities active in the transportation-related industries.

He mentioned the electronic systems that his company will unveil during the exhibition as very significant in line with the e-government policies of the country.

The official further said that the system for electronic payment of the freeway tolls is one of the good measures taken to materialize smart transportation, adding the system is currently applied in four high-traffic freeways of the country and it is being showcased for the public in the pavilion of CDTIC during the exhibition.

Trade deal with China to boost global economy, says Mnuchin

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Saturday a "phase one" trade deal between the United States and China was "very good" for global economic growth, and added that the second phase could come in several steps.



The United States and China cooled their trade war on Friday, announcing a "phase one" agreement that reduces some U.S. tariffs in exchange for what U.S. officials said would be a big jump in Chinese purchases of American farm products and other goods.

Mnuchin said full details of the new deal, or a factsheet on "phase one", would come out later on Saturday or on Sunday after both sides do fact and language checks.

"We expect it will be fully executed in January. And then we get to 'phase two,'" Mnuchin told the Doha Forum conference in Qatar. The "most important issue is — let's make sure we implement 'phase one' with an enforceable agreement, which it is. And then we start negotiating 'phase two'.

"There are important issue left in 'phase two'. And perhaps there will be a 'phase two A', 'phase two B' and 'phase two C'. We will see," he said.

Mnuchin said the deal with China aimed to create more reciprocal trade relations for many years, adding that the deal would be "very good" for global growth.

He said the United States continued to remain the "bright spot" of the global economy, while Europe and Asia were slowing down.

When asked if the trade deal boosts U.S. President Donald Trump's chances of getting re-elected in November 2020, Mnuchin said, the "president will be re-elected almost no matter what occurs. Because he has built an incredible economy and he is very focused on national security."

When asked if Washington's broad and regular use of sanctions against many nations could undermine the long-term status of the dollar as the global reserve currency, Mnuchin said sanctions were often an alternative to open military conflicts.

"But if we are not careful with sanctions, people will start using other currencies," he added.

(Source: tribune.com.pk)

Domestic production saves Iran over €400m in 6 months

**1 →** Improving and boosting domestic production has been one of the major strategies that Iran has been following in the past two years in order to increase its independence.

To this end, Iranian government has put supporting domestic producers atop agenda in the current year.

In late November, Rahmani had said that relying on domestic production will save \$10 billion for the country in the next two years.

Speaking in a ceremony on indigenizing production of telecommunications equipment, the minister said that of the mentioned \$10

billion, some \$500 million is predicted to be earned through domestic production of telecommunications equipment, and \$400 million via indigenizing production of car parts, of which \$300 million has been already achieved.

"Today, all available potentials and capacities in the country are being used to materialize the target of domestic production and the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade will spare no effort in this due", Rahmani further emphasized.

He said the country aims to produce elec-

Trade between Iran, EU at €3.9b in 9 months

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The **d e s k** trade between Iran and European Union countries during the first nine months of 2019 stood at €3.9 billion, ISNA reported.

According to the latest data provided by the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA), despite the EU claims about the implementation of the trade mechanism with Iran (known as INSTEX) the trade between the two sides has witnessed a significant fall compared to the last year.

As reported, Iran exported only €500 million of commodities to Europe in the mentioned period to register a 94-percent fall compared to last year's same period in which the figure stood at €8.6 billion.

EU's exports to Iran also plunged 51 percent in the mentioned period compared to the figure for last year's same time span.

EU countries exported €3.4 billion of goods to Iran in the said time, while the figure stood at €6.9 billion in the last year's first nine months.

The significant drop in EU trade with Iran in 2019, following the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions on Iran, shows that the EU has failed to defend Iran's interests in the context of the nuclear deal despite its promises.

According to the European Union's statistics agency, the trade between Iran



and the EU stood at €2.56 billion during the first half of 2019.

The figure shows 76 percent decrease from €10.67 billion in the first half of 2018.

While Germany, France, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands were respectively the major exporters to Iran; Germany, Spain, Romania and Italy were the top importers from the country in the said time span, this year.

In May 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump formally pulled the United States out of the nuclear deal that was struck between Iran and world powers in July 2015.

Following Trump's decision, in January 2019, France, Germany and Britain (known as the E3) introduced an Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) which was meant to facilitate legitimate trade between European economic operators and Iran in order to convince Iran to stay in the 2015 nuclear deal.

Iran needs over \$42b to complete its transport infrastructure projects

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Deputy Transport Minister for Resource Planning and Management says the county needs over 1.8 quadrillion rials (about \$42.8 billion) of financial resources for completing its transportation infrastructure projects.

Speaking on the sidelines of the 4th International Exhibition of Transportation, Logistics, and Related Industries, Amir Mahmoud Ghaffari said "In this regard, the Transport Development Fund has been established as the only specialized and financial institution in the field, for supporting the Transport Ministry's infrastructure projects and the modernization of the transport fleet."

According to Ghaffari, the main goal of the Transport Development Fund is to create a mechanism for providing sustainable revenue sources for the development of the country's transport infrastructure, equipping its fleet, promoting safety and increasing the level of freight and passenger transport services, while encouraging and supporting investment for construction, development and maintenance of the transport networks and the country's infrastructure.

The official also mentioned a 44-trillion-Yuan funding



by foreign investors in the country's railway projects, saying that the priority projects for this finance include Kerman-shah-Khosravi railway in western Iran, Shiraz-Bushehr railway, Tehran-Qom-Isfahan railway and Tehran-Hamedan-Sanandaj railway.

Back in June, Iran's Transport and Urban Development Ministry announced that the government allocated 190 trillion rials (over \$4.5 billion) for establishing a transport

development fund.

According to Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami, "The establishment of the transport development fund was envisioned in the country's Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021) and 190 trillion rials was allocated in this regard."

Opened by Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami on Sunday, the 4th International Exhibition of Transportation, Logistics, and Related Industries is being held in Tehran and will be wrapped up on Tuesday.

In the past two decades, Iran's transportation infrastructure has gone through major transformation and every year the country is advancing more in this area.

Currently more than 80 percent of the country's roads are paved and the government is also hugely planning on expanding and developing the country's railway network.

Since the country has numerous neighbors with which it has close trade ties, the expansion of land export routes including railway and roads in the border regions of the country have become the Transport and Urban Development Ministry's top priority in the transportation area.



tical, automobile and telecommunications goods and double exports to 15 neighboring countries in order to reach a target value of \$48 billion.

Back in October, Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said government officials should ban the import of goods that are also produced domestically.

Forex market re-stabilized: CBI governor

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Central **d e s k** Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati said the forex market has been re-stabilized in the country.

He made the remarks during a gathering of the country's economists in Tehran on Sunday, CBI's Public Relations Department reported.

In the meeting, which was hosted by the CBI, Hemmati discussed issues like stabilization of the foreign currency exchange market, liquidity control, inflation, and the budget bill with the economists.

The official said that despite the continued pressure from U.S. sanctions, the country's non-oil exports continue to rise and the Forex Management Integrated System, locally known as NIMA, is supplying the importers with their required foreign currency.

Mentioning some rumors about a fall in the country's non-oil exports, Hemmati said the country's non-oil exports increased in terms of weight in the first eight months of the current calendar year (March 21-November 23), however modifying some of the base export prices led to some decrease in the value of exports.

"The country's non-oil export trend is growing and there is no worry about that," he added.

Despite the fluctuations in the foreign currency market in recent weeks, fortunately



the central bank's management has restored balance in this market, he emphasized.

"CBI intends to benefit from other countries' experiences in open market operations by holding workshops in this regard," Hemmati said.

Hemmati also pointed to the month-on-month drop in the producer price inflation in November, saying: "These figures indicate the central bank's success in controlling inflation, and despite recent fluctuations in the currency market and other markets, we strive to keep the markets calm and balanced and consequently keep the inflation down."

The economists at the meeting also appreciated the central bank's efforts for maintaining the balance in the foreign exchange market through setting up the integrated forex market as well as open market operations, saying that these are two of the most important outcomes of CBI's monetary and currency policy making.

A Key to Success: Financial Inclusion, Literacy, Capability or Investor Education?

By Farhad Morsali Pavarsi

**TEHRAN** — These days, many people and entities are talking about or doing something about enhancing "financial literacy", but few are seen touching upon, as much as they do on financial literacy, other pertinent and perfectly-correlated concepts, i.e. financial inclusion, financial capabilities, and investor education (current and potential).

These topics, which some people mistakenly consider the same, should be allocated an equal amount of attention and time. Holding events and delivering speeches are not the only way to "enhance financial literacy". The focal areas some international associations such as IOSCO and IFIE have mentioned in their reports are as paramount. These areas include investment knowledge and understanding, financial skills and competence, program design, delivery and measurement. We should adopt a normally-distributed approach to all these areas should we seek to reach an acceptable level of financial literacy, inclusion and capabilities.

The level of financial literacy is usually measured by questionnaires, the questions of which ask about numeracy and capacity to do calculations related to interest rates, such as compound interest, understanding inflation, and understanding risk diversification.

The benefits of investor education and

financial literacy, among others, encompass helping improve financial outcomes for retail investors, more informed saving and investment decision-making, better financial and retirement planning, greater confidence and higher participation in the securities markets, increased awareness of investor rights and responsibilities, addressing any misalignment of investor and industry interests, particularly with respect to information asymmetry, reducing both the propensity for investors to mis-buy investment products and services, and for intermediaries to mis-sell products and services, fewer investor complaints, helping investors better assess the appropriateness and suitability of investment advice, investment products and services, detect and avoid suspected fraudulent activity, and distinguish between regulated and non-regulated activity, reduce investor losses.

Generally, the entities in charge of investor education and financial literacy enhancement stick to a set of programs and try to bring the targeted audience together through different channels, some of which include incorporating financial topics in school curricula, organizing events (conferences, seminars, forums, exhibitions, workshops...), publications (books, brochures, booklets...), competitions, gamification, animations and infographics, and humors.

Financial literacy enhancement programs in Iran mainly carried out by SIDSCO, an affiliate to the SEO of Iran, have been tailor-made based on the standards set by IOSCO and IFIE. These programs include:

- \* organizing competitions such as the League of Stock Exchange Stars and Algorithmic Trading,
- \* Publishing capital market books for different ages,
- \* IREVEEX: a virtual mock exchange where investors can log in and start trading before entering the real market.
- \* Press Festival,
- \* Benchmarking and Membership in International Associations such as IOSCO, IFIE, and the Financial Literacy Task Force in COMCEC,
- \* FINEX: as the biggest annual financial market exhibition,
- \* Gamification: including financial questions in some already-launched games and game shows including Quiz of Kings and Barandebash game show,

Based on a report named "Financial Literacy Around The World" released by The Standard & Poor's Ratings Services in 2017, the level of financial literacy in Iran is around 20% which places Iran around rank 130 in the world.

With the recent steps in the capital market and also the data from Central Securities

Depository of Iran (CSDI) that the number of trading accounts has dramatically increased and above all the upward trend in the capital market index, it seems a tangible improvement has been made in financial literacy and inclusion. Furthermore, the number of the trading accounts in Iran is around 12 million which is approximately equal to the number in India, based on the data released by the SEBI, the supervisory and regulatory authority to the Indian capital market.

Education plays a pivotal role in enhancing the level of financial inclusion, literacy, and capability. If investors and financial services consumers are not targeted and educated well, no tangible outcome will be accomplished and as a result there will be just a series of erratic and haphazard events. Therefore, more needs to be done in Iran so that the market enjoys better-aware and informed investors. For instance, the Ministry of Education, Central Bank of Iran, Securities and Exchange Organization of Iran should hammer out a short, medium, and long-term program incorporated with detailed instruments and resources to achieve a more literate and capable investment society and ultimately a better and more thrived financial market in Iran.

*The author is the head of Securities and Exchange Organization of Iran's international relations department*



# Iranian bank allocates \$1.54b for manufacturing dual-fuel cars

**E N E R G Y** **TEHRAN** – Iran’s Mellat Bank has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) to allocate 65 trillion rials (about \$1.54 billion) for manufacturing dual-fuel vehicles for the country’s public transportation fleet, IRNA reported.

The MOU was signed by the Managing Director of the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPODC) Amir Vakilzadeh and Managing Director of Mellat Bank Mohammad Bigdeli on Sunday in Tehran.

The signing ceremony was attended by senior officials including the Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, the Head of Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran (ISIRI) Nayereh Pirouzbakht and NIORDC Head Alireza Sadeqabadi.

Based on the MOU the bank will fund the project to add 1.46 million dual-fuel vehicles to the country’s public transportation fleet.

Last week, NIORDC and Iran’s state-owned Iran Khodro Company (IKCO) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to co-manufacture dual-fuel vehicles for the



Managing Director of Mellat Bank Mohammad Bigdeli (R) and Managing Director of National Iranian oil products Distribution Company (NIOPODC) Amir Vakilzadeh sign a memorandum of understanding for manufacturing dual-fuel cars, on Sunday in Tehran.

country’s public transportation fleet.

Implementation of the mentioned MOU is going to reduce the country’s daily gasoline consumption by 10 million liters and save the government 200 trillion rials (about \$4.7 billion) every year.

Iran has recently started a program for the rationing of subsidized gasoline and increased fuel prices to reduce the energy subsidies and to use the revenue for supporting underprivileged families.

According to the spokesman of Iranian Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Products Exporters Union (OPEX), the gasoline rationing scheme has made it possible for the country to export 25-30 million liters of gasoline every day.

Currently, Iran is exporting two groups of oil products namely “special products” such as bitumen, paraffin and base oil, and “specific products” including gasoline, diesel and fuel oil to other countries.

Iran produces 115 million liters of gasoline per day, of which 60 to 65 million liters are provided as subsidized fuel and another 20 million liters are sold in the free market, the rest which is about 30 million liters is exported.

## Iran’s daily gas refining capacity reaches 900 mcm

**E N E R G Y** **TEHRAN** — Daily processing capacity of Iranian gas refineries has reached 900 million cubic meters, according to the head of National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC)’s Production Coordination and Supervision Directorate, IRIB reported on Sunday.

Mentioning NIGC’s complete readiness for sustainable gas supply throughout the country during winter, Masoud Zardovian said “With the steps taken in the country’s gas refining sector, we will have no problem regarding the production of natural gas in the winter.”

He further mentioned the refining operations in South Pars gas field in southern Iran and noted that so far 10 refineries in the vicinity of the field have become operational and four more refineries will come on stream by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020) and another one will be inaugurated next year.

gured next year.

Back in November, Iranian Gas Transmission Company (IGTC)’s managing director had said his company was completely prepared for sustainable gas supply throughout the country during the cold season.

Saeid Tavakoli said besides repairing several gas pipelines throughout the country, IGTC has carried out other measures in order to ensure sustainable and secure gas supply to Iranian subscribers in the country during winter.

Earlier that month, NIGC’s dispatching director said with the recent increases in South Pars gas field output and new lines and pressure boosting units going on stream along the national gas network, NIGC is ready for sustainable gas supply during the cold season.

According to Mehdi Jamshidi Dana the annual over-haul program for the gas network’s refineries and transmission lines is underway since the beginning of the



current Iranian year (March 21) and has progressed more than 95 percent.

## Wind Turbine Market to reflect impressive growth rate by 2023

The global Wind Turbine Market is estimated to reach D xx million by 2023 and is anticipated to grow at a CAGR of xx% during the forecast period, according to a comprehensive study added by Report Ocean.

The report offers an in-depth analysis of major driving factors, segments, regions & countries and key players in the market.

Moreover, the report also outlines the competitive scenarios across different geographies along with key developments which include mergers and acquisitions, new product or services development, R&D activities, thus giving insights to the market players about the major regions gaining traction.

There are certain limitations in adopting this technology, as the technology is dependent on wind, which might not blow equally strong in all the respective places.

There is another factor that would hinder the growth and that is the ill effect of wind turbines on the health of the people living near to the installation of the turbines. Due to these factors, the growth of wind



turbine market is hampered.

The worldwide Wind Turbine market research report provides a deep-dive analysis of the present market situation and future market trends. The analysis provided in the report help the manufacturers, companies, service providers, etc. as a major guiding factor for decision making and analyzing the current and future market situations. The report also analyzes the major players operating in the market.

The capacity to generate electric energy with the help of wind turbines grew tremendously. During 2013, 296’255MW

electricity was generated with the help of wind turbines, out of which, 13’980 MW was generated in the first half of 2013.

### ■ Wind turbines installed

All wind turbines installed worldwide, during 2013, helped in meeting 3 to 5% of global electricity demand. Currently, world’s business activities are largely dependent on electric energy.

Limited amount of natural resources such as gases and fuel would influence the overall growth of the world’s economies. These are the major driving forces, which are motivating governments to take initiatives to explore alternative energy solutions to cater to the increasing demand for electricity.

As per Global Wind Energy Council, wind power is expected to deliver 12% of global electricity in 2020 and is going to create 1.4 million new jobs worldwide. Increased use of wind power would also influence the natural environment positively, by reducing the CO2 emission by 1.5 billion tons per year.

An in-depth analysis of global wind

turbine technology market by considering adoption rate in various geographic regions and application segments.

Government policies, regulations and social acceptance of wind turbine is being dealt in an in-depth manner to help companies make region specific business plans.

A deeper understanding of the impact of wind turbine technology on CO2 emission and its effects on the future business models are discussed.

The Global and regional market perspectives and industry deployment of wind turbine technology is explicitly discussed to give region specific understanding of the market.

Estimations are made for the wind turbine market for the analysis period of 2013-2020 (2012 as the base year), by considering historical, current and potential future investment in market.

Market share of top companies is showcased to give new entrants deep-dive intelligence about the potential competitors in the wind turbine market.

(Source: filmibaba.com)

## OPEC+ ‘cuts’ apply to mature fields in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan

By Robert Boslego

In the “Declaration of Cooperation,” OPEC and non-OPEC oil producing countries made a commitment to adjust their respective oil production levels, either voluntarily or through “managed decline.”

Two non-OPEC members of the OPEC+ petroleum regulation club are reducing production through the “natural decline” of mature fields, making the “cuts” easier to achieve. In the case of Azerbaijan, crude production peaked years ago and so it has even “overcomplied” because it could not maintain production. In the case of Kazakhstan, its cuts only apply to older fields, and its new fields, which are increasing the country’s production, are exempt in their eyes.

Kazakhstan became a non-OPEC party to the cutback deal that was agreed in December 2018. It was assigned a quota of 1.860 million barrels per day, which was a cut of 40,000 b/d.

But the country’s production has been rising instead. In July, it was reported that production average 1.940 million barrels per day, a 40,000 b/d increase over the base volume.

A provisional loading program of crude exports, mainly comprised of Kazakh crude, from Novorossiysk, a port on the Black Sea, are set to reach a record 1.5 million barrels per day in December. The recent reduction in production was due to maintenance at various Kazakh fields.

### ■ The largest fields

Kazakhstan does not consider its largest fields to be affected by its commitments to OPEC. It considers its mature fields bearing the brunt of the cuts by way of natural decline.

In January-November 2019, preliminary oil production in Kazakhstan was reported at 82.5 million tons. The “country’s oil production plan for 2019 is 89 million tons, and until the end of the year, it is expected that the oil



production plan will be slightly exceeded to reach 90.5 million tons,” Vice Minister of Energy Asset Magauov said at a press conference on December 6.

“Due to the project of the future expansion of Tengiz field and expansion of capacities for gas re-injection of the Kashagan field, production is projected to increase to 100 million tons from 2023.”

Kazakhstan’s oil supply in the current year will grow by 0.01 mb/d to average 1.82 mb/d. For 2020, Kazakhstan plans to start production from a satellite oil field, Kalamkas-Sea, as well as ramp up production in the Kashagan field.

Oil production peaked years ago. Its production has been in a natural decline and OPEC was keen to add them as a non-OPEC member to contribute their decline to non-OPEC cuts.

Azerbaijan had a benchmark of 796,000 b/d and requirement to cut production by 20,000 b/d to 776,000 in 2019. From January through October, it implemented a cut of 145 percent of its requirement, as production fell to 718,000 b/d in October.

To ensure balance and stability in the market is the main

goal of our cooperation. Azerbaijan is interested in participating in this cooperation as a country that has supported all initiatives so far within the OPEC+. We believe that as OPEC+ countries, we should continue our loyalty to our solidarity and commitments,” Azerbaijani Energy Minister Parviz Shahbazov said at the OPEC meeting.

### ■ Additional 7,000 barrels

Azerbaijan will reduce its daily oil production by additional 7,000 barrels to meet OPEC’s new requirements with regards to oil output, local media has reported.

At the December 6th OPEC+ press conference, Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman stressed to the media that the new cuts were “fresh barrels” and that they were not just “fiddling with numbers.” But in the case of the Caspian producers, it does appear to be a shell game.

OPEC determined that it would allow countries to meet their commitments by using “natural decline” as their cuts. Of course, this would happen with or without OPEC+ agreements, and therefore the cuts are no more than window-dressing for OPEC+ announcements.

The case of Kazakhstan claiming that new production from its new fields does not count is an interesting twist. It demonstrates how insincere some OPEC+ cuts really are.

To guide investors who are interested in profiting from outstanding opportunities in the energy sector, I provide a service on Seeking Alpha’s Marketplace oriented toward individual investors, Boslego Risk Services. A long/short Model portfolio is continuously updated, along with on-going analysis of the oil market.

I am now accepting new members to Boslego Risk Services and invite you to sign-up. There are monthly and annual pricing options as described here. You may also read reviews posted by members here.

(Source: seekingalpha.com)

## Lethbridge will soon feature Canada’s largest scale model of the solar system

The Lethbridge Astronomy Society came up with the idea, and city council approved the project last week.

Tom Anderson, president of the society, told the Calgary Homestretch that the dome will act as the imaginary sun and the centre of the system.

A few blocks down the street, there will be a pedestal with a scale model of Mercury — at three quarters of an inch in diameter, it will be in scale with the diameter of the sun.

The whole point, Anderson said, is to show how big the sun is and how small the planets are.

Earth, for example, will be the size of a tennis ball in relation the size of the “sun”. Mars will be inside city limits. Neptune, the furthest planet, will be about 10 kilometers outside city limits.

The “idea is to build a scale model of the solar system in the middle of Lethbridge, and what we’re going to be doing is modelling it after the size of the dome,” Anderson said. “So we have this heritage building that was built in 1913. It’s got this big clock tower on it, and there’s a dome on the top which is 5.5 metres in diameter.

“If we imagine that to be the sun, then we can calculate the size to scale of each of the planets, and where their orbits would be.”

### ■ The whole installation

There will be a brochure and an app to explain the whole installation.

“It’s going to unfold throughout the city, and part of it’s going to be in Lethbridge county because the solar system is a really big place,” Anderson said. “And that’s the point of the whole exercise, is to give people a more real experience of how vast just our little corner of the universe is.”

Neptune will be in a provincial park called Park Lake, about 20 kilometres away from the sun model.

“So those are the kind of distances that we’re talking about — 5.5 meters for the sun, and you’ve got to go 20 kilometers to get to the edge of the solar system.”

The planets themselves will be sitting on pedestals, and each will be to scale. Earth, for example, will be about the size of a tennis ball.

The budget is between \$30,000 to \$40,000 for the project. Funding has been secured through a number of community partners, Anderson said.

### ■ Sparking the imagination

“Everybody we’ve talked to has been very excited,” Anderson said. “You know it really sparks the imagination and that’s the whole point.”

Anderson said the project will be a boon for the whole city, not just people who are into science.

“If you were going to do a walking tour of just the inner planets — and by that I mean Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars — you could probably do that in half an hour to an hour depending on how long you linger at each location,” he said.

“We could probably set up a pretty nice little marathon run. There are all kinds of spinoffs here.”

Anderson said he also expects the solar system to be a real tourist draw.

“This is going to be the biggest one in Canada,” he said. “There’s a number of these at various locations throughout the world. Sweden has a huge one. But in terms of the Canadian context, this is going to be the biggest one in Canada.”

The Lethbridge Astronomy Society hopes to have the solar system installation in place by the end of next summer. (Source: cbc.ca)

## Venezuela increases oil output amid drive to keep world inventories low

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) on Wednesday announced that oil pumping in Venezuela in November reached 697,000 bpd. But one country’s increase in production may not have a positive impact in the near future in view of OPEC’s decision to curb output in an attempt to keep inventories at a level that holds profit margins attractive.

OPEC has also reported a gradual recovery in Venezuela’s oil production in Venezuela with a figure of 912,000 barrels per day (bpd), 151,000 above October’s output, as the Venezuelan Government continues to target February’s 1.4 million barrels.

OPEC’s Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo underlined that Venezuelan oil played a crucial role for the development of the world and insisted the economic sanctions imposed by the United States affect the well-being of the South American country.

“Being able to meet the future global demand for oil depends on countries like Venezuela. This means that the imposition of sanctions on Venezuela is also an imposition on OPEC, the other producing countries and in the world oil industry in general,” Barkindo was quoted as saying by the Venezuelan media outlet TELESur.

The “best years for (Venezuela) are yet to come, Venezuela has a bright future, it is a very rich country, with a very enterprising and educated people,” he added.

In spite of OPEC’s latest agreement with its allies to further reduce the output of crude oil, inventories could go up worldwide, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said Thursday.

Analysts also estimated in London Thursday that a cut in pumping planned by the United States and other countries outside OPEC further lead expectations in that direction.

“Despite the additional reductions (...) and a reduction in our forecast of supply growth outside of OPEC in 2020 to 2.1 million barrels per day (bpd), global crude oil inventories could amount to 700,000 bpd in the first quarter of 2020,” said the Paris-based IEA in a monthly report.

Meanwhile, in Tokyo, crude oil prices rose on Thursday, recovering some of the losses on the previous day after the increase in inventories in the United States, as the market changed its tone and opted for relief after that OPEC predicted a supply deficit next year.

Brent international benchmark futures earned 28 cents Thursday, or 0.44%, at \$ 64 a barrel, after losing 1% on Wednesday due to the increase in oil inventories in the United States, while the futures of the West Texas Intermediate in the United States (WTI) improved 8 cents, or 0.14%, to \$ 58.84 a barrel, after yielding 0.8% the previous day. (Source: en-mercopress.com)



By Mohammadreza Farahzadi

**TEHRAN**—Bernie Sanders still hopes for victory in the Democratic primary. Polls show that Sanders and Joe Biden both have good standing in the Democratic Party. That could provide him with a good chance of winning the election in the near future. Here's a look at the latest Bernie Sanders status in surveys and analytics:

■ **New poll finds Sanders surging to within 7 points of Biden in South Carolina**

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) has cut former Vice President Joe Biden's lead in South Carolina down to single digits, according to a new poll showing the Vermont Independent making inroads in the early-nominating state. A Change Research—Post and Courier survey released Friday found Sanders with 20 percent support among likely primary voters, second only to Biden's 27 percent. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) was third with 19 percent. No other candidate was in double digits. The results from Change Research, a left-leaning pollster, showed Sanders performing better than in state surveys conducted by other polling outfits. A Quinnipiac University poll last month found Biden with a 20-point lead over Warren, who had 13 percent support. Sanders was third with 11 percent.

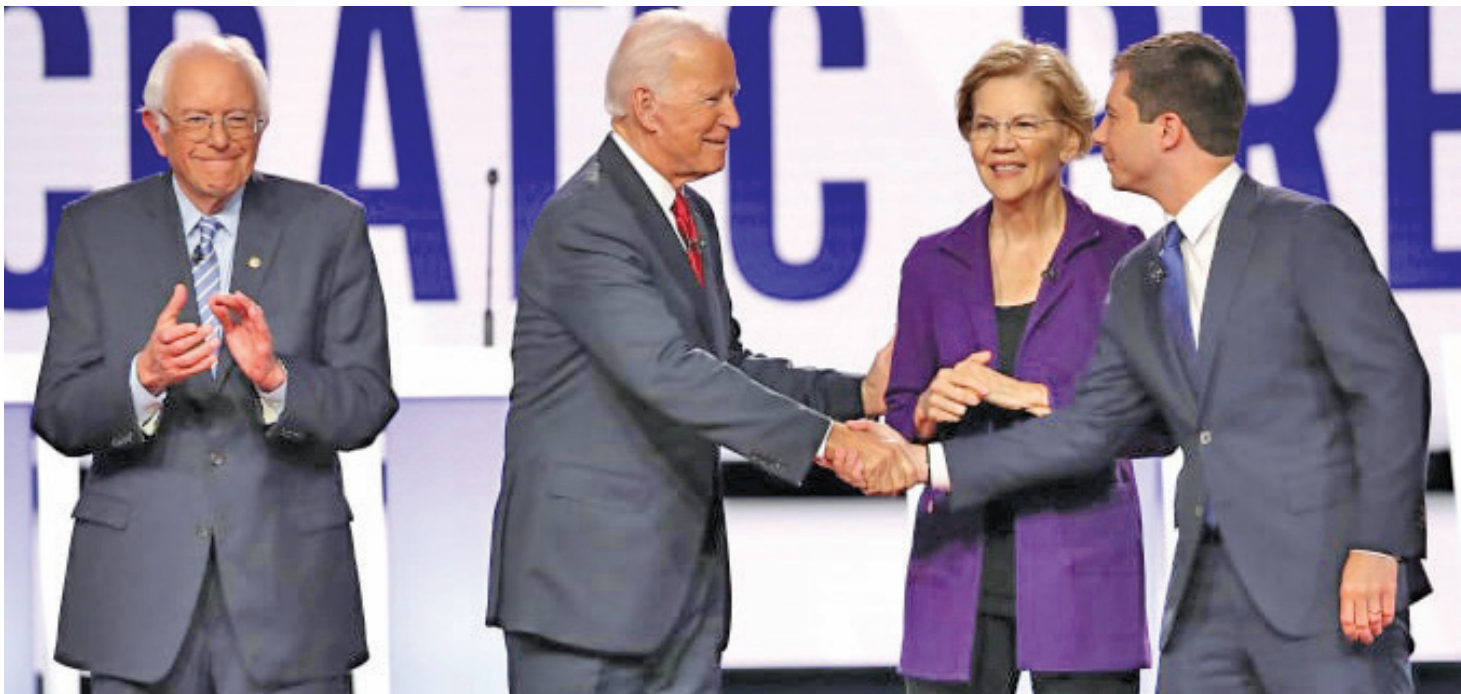
But the new survey shows a surging Sanders when compared with a Change Research—Post and Courier poll from October, when Biden was at 30 percent, followed by Warren at 19 percent and Sanders at 13 percent. The most recent Change Research survey was conducted Dec. 6–11 among 998 likely primary voters with a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. Among the early-nominating states, Biden has been expected to have his strongest showing in South Carolina, in part because of his popularity among black voters. An Economist-YouGov national poll this month found that 49 percent of black voters said Biden was their first choice among the Democratic presidential candidates. In contrast, only 13 percent chose Warren, while 11 percent picked Sanders.

■ **Bernie Sanders Makes a Comeback as Elizabeth Warren's Poll Numbers Slip**

As Bloomberg reported, Two months ago, Bernie Sanders' presidential bid seemed to be faltering. His progressive rival Elizabeth Warren had surged past him in the polls and he suffered a heart attack that raised serious questions about his durability. He seems to have rebounded in recent weeks as he's stuck to Medicare for All while other candidates have softened their stances and as he's gained star endorsements from the younger faces in the movement. National surveys released Tuesday by Quinnipiac and Monmouth show him slightly ahead -- but within the margin of error -- for second place among Democrats, behind Joe Biden.

And he's going strong in the early nominating states. Recent polls place him second in Iowa — where he's returning for several events this weekend — and statistically tied for the lead in New Hampshire and second in Nevada. And he's statistically tied with Warren for the lead in California, a Super Tuesday state that provides 10% of the delegates to the Democratic nominating convention. He has been aided by endorsements from young progressive stars like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and by staying out of clashes that have enveloped his three main rivals Warren, Joe Biden and Pete Buttigieg. He

# Sanders remains hopeful



retains a loyal base, a valuable asset in a crowded field that could split the Democratic vote. Yet Democratic strategists say he is still being underrated.

"Folks who think he can't win are either not paying attention or are in some kind of crazy denial," Rebecca Katz, a progressive Democratic strategist, wrote on Twitter. Dan Pfeiffer, a former senior adviser to President Barack Obama, said Sanders has the "best chance" to sweep the first three states and that his odds are "underestimated and under-discussed."

Even so, the obstacles that impeded him in the past remain. Sanders' support is concentrated among young people, who are less reliable voters. His self-identification as a democratic socialist is a turnoff for moderate Democrats and older voters who turn out more consistently. And while polls show him performing about as well as Biden in head-to-head matchups against Donald Trump, some Democrats harbor doubts about his "electability."

But even if he comes up short, Sanders' durability could earn him a kingmaker role when it comes to influencing the policy agenda of the nominee — and the official Democratic Party platform at the 2020 convention in Milwaukee. The nominee would risk a similar fate to Hillary Clinton's in 2016 if younger and disaffected voters who favor Sanders fail to turn out. One way to avoid that outcome is a strong Sanders endorsement, which might mean adopting some of his progressive ideas.

Sanders' campaign manager, Faiz Shakir, said the Ocasio-Cortez endorsement — which landed shortly after Sanders' heart attack in early October — was "a big moment" in the campaign that "gave him a lift" and prompted other prominent figures to consider supporting him. Two other first-term Democrats who have generated enthusiasm on the left — Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar — also backed

him. Sanders has benefited from Warren's stumbles on the Medicare for All legislation that he crafted, which corresponded with her recent drop in polls. She initially embraced it without equivocation but later distanced herself by saying she would defer its implementation until her third year in office, a move that sparked some criticism from the left.

Shakir said Sanders is "the last man left on the island" who's clearly backing Medicare for All, which has robust support among voters. A Kaiser Family Foundation poll in November showed that three-quarters of Democrats "strongly favor" or "somewhat favor" the proposal, which would create a government-run health care system that abolishes private insurance.

"We started the campaign with a lot of people together for Medicare for All. But everyone else has either evolved, moved, modified their stances on the damn bill he wrote," he said. "It has only clarified in everybody's minds that Bernie Sanders is consistent and reliably a fighter for Medicare for All."

Sanders' path to the Democratic nod is tricky, but there's an opening if Biden loses in both Iowa and New Hampshire. Then, said former Clinton aide Brian Fallon, black voters in South Carolina who are now firmly backing the former vice president might be looking for an alternative, and Sanders and Warren might be able to pick up some of that support. Buttigieg, who barely registers among black voters, is probably too far behind to benefit much, Fallon said.

Sanders always can rely on a base of supporters that will "hang with him through thick or thin," said Democratic strategist Joe Trippi, though he expressed some doubt whether Sanders can push too much beyond the 20% to 22% range in such a crowded field. But Trippi said the early contests have a history of unpredictability. That's especially

true in Iowa where in virtually every instance the national Democratic front-runner at this point in the race has never been the victor. Trippi was the campaign manager for Howard Dean in 2004, who led early surveys there but fell toward the end and lost the caucuses. He warned against counting out Sanders. "It's very dynamic in Iowa," Trippi said.

■ **Bernie Sanders Should Be Democrats' First Choice**

Less than two months out from the Iowa caucus, the Democratic primary has become a four-way race featuring Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Pete Buttigieg. But while a recent war of words between Warren and Buttigieg has done little to bolster the prospects of either, it has served to underscore what makes Sanders such a unique candidate—more specifically, his remarkable consistency.

In case you missed it, Warren said this about Buttigieg last Thursday: "The mayor should be releasing who's on his finance committee, who are the bundlers who are raising big money for him," adding that Buttigieg should "open up the doors so that the press can follow the promises he's making in these big-dollar fundraisers." Earlier, Warren had complained that Buttigieg had "not released the names" of his corporate clients when he worked for three years at the controversial McKinsey & Co. consulting firm. Warren was completely correct here. In the face of demands for transparency, Buttigieg had declined to name his corporate clients, claiming he was bound by a non-disclosure agreement. On Monday, amid sustained public pressure, Buttigieg released a full list, including Blue Cross Blue Shield Michigan, Best Buy and the Canadian supermarket chain Loblaw's, among others.

Meanwhile, big money continues to flood into the South Bend, Indiana, mayor's campaign from

corporate executives, lobbyists and billionaires. While Warren and Sanders don't hold events for wealthy donors, Buttigieg and Biden do. But unlike Biden, Buttigieg had denied the press access to those events. On Monday afternoon, the Buttigieg camp gave into Warren, announcing it would name its bundlers and allow reporters into his numerous high-dollar fundraisers.

Returning fire at Warren last week, the Buttigieg campaign labeled the Massachusetts senator a "corporate lawyer" and demanded that she release her tax returns prior to 2008—years in which she earned outside income representing corporations as a law professor.

Warren did work for some big corporations while also representing consumer interests, and on Sunday, she provided the details of her legal work, compensation included. Warren, it should be said, has been far more transparent than Buttigieg. Still, it probably wouldn't hurt for her to further discuss her legal career, particularly when she was a registered Republican. While I'm impressed by Warren's campaign and supportive of her far-reaching proposals to tax the wealthy to fund programs benefiting poor, working-class and middle-class people, Buttigieg highlighted—albeit in a hypocritical and overheated fashion—the main concern I have about her: Her past career as a legal scholar who supported the "Law and Economics" movement that preached a corporate-friendly, free-market ideology.

Both Biden and Sanders have longer and more consistent histories than either Warren or Buttigieg. But while the former has spent his career defending corporate interests, the latter's history is unabashedly progressive. Biden was among the minority of Democrats in Congress who supported the devastating NAFTA trade pact; Sanders led its opposition. The then-senator of Delaware also voted for media conglomeration via the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and supported Wall Street deregulation that led to the Great Recession. Biden has long served the interests of banks and credit card companies and was instrumental in the passage of a 2005 bankruptcy bill that continues to harm those with student debt. Warren, for her part, vigorously opposed the legislation.

Biden's civil rights record is spotty at best. He has proudly championed the notorious 1994 crime bill as the "Biden Crime Bill," diverging sharply from Sanders at the time. In 2002, Biden was the most prominent Senate Democrat to push for George W. Bush's disastrous invasion of Iraq, while the Vermont senator helped lead the anti-war opposition in Congress.

Sanders' history, by contrast, is beyond reproach. He's been a fighter for the most vulnerable Americans his entire life in public office, not to mention a champion of civil rights since his college days. He has not only defended the environment and unions but resisted business-friendly trade deals that undermine workers and the planet alike. His anti-imperialist bona fides speak for themselves, and as the longest-serving independent in Congress, he's proved himself a uniquely skilled legislator willing to pull all of the levers of power at his disposal. The Democratic establishment may bleat that he's not even a member of the party, but it is his independence that attracts the young and the disaffected. If defeating Donald Trump is their first priority, Warren and Buttigieg supporters would be wise to take note.

**GLOBALTIMES** — Britain was scheduled to go to the polls on Thursday for the country's 2019 general election. Our era is undergoing tremendous changes - Britain, the once all-powerful empire, can only retreat to the sad situation of using Brexit to attract global attention today. A tediously long farce has been staged in Britain since the 2016 Brexit referendum, and many people have already become impatient and indifferent. Is the UK declining? Probably yes. But in the mid-19th century, the UK took the lead in completing the first industrial revolution and quickly became the leader of the world. Compared with today's global status of the US, the UK used to be more competitive back then.

However, compared to the bright period of the Victorian era, today's UK no longer leads the world in military strength, political system, economy or culture. The time when the sun never set on the British Empire has long passed. Brexit has further dragged the UK into a downward spiral. Brexit shows the defect in the UK's political system. Politicians transfer too much power to the people only to protect the system and fawn on the people for the sake of political interests. This has made Brexit a complete farce and a dilemma. Back in the 19th century, Europe regarded the then backward Asia as the opposite of civilization. But in the 21st century, the UK's decline seems to reflect Asia's rise. As Asia rises, global wealth and power will accelerate to transfer to the continent.

The Financial Times published an article in March titled "The Asian century is set to begin," in which it said 21 of the world's 30 largest cities are in Asia, and Asian economies will be larger than the rest of the world in 2020. Indeed, people are now looking eastward because Asia shows a strong momentum in economic growth.

We must admit that the UK, in its heyday, left many precious legacies for later periods such as industrial technology, management model and the common law system.

Meanwhile, the once splendid empire has also left many troubles. For example, colonial Britain is responsible for many border issues in Asia, such as China-India

border disputes and Pakistan-Afghanistan border disputes. These unsolved problems are still tormenting these Asian countries. Solving these remaining problems is the key to Asia's rise in the future. China and other Asian countries should seize the historic opportunity, focus on their own development and try to let Asian countries have a larger say in the world. When Asian countries stop following the West, the real "Asian century" will begin. China is the most important and the fastest-rising country in Asia. As the world's second largest economy, China will play an important role in building a new Asian order and maintaining peace and stability in the future.

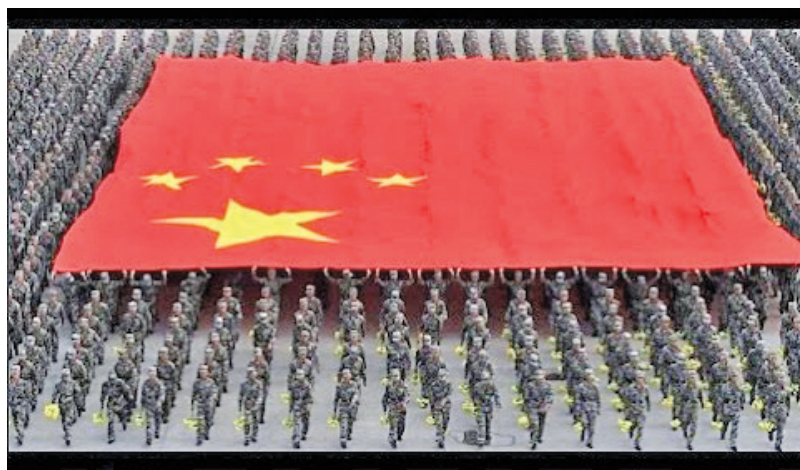
■ **Talks, not confrontation, the way out of Korean Peninsula nuke issue**

North Korea's recent moves and rhetoric have attracted wide global attention. Pyongyang reportedly carried out a "very important" test on December 7 and another "crucial test" on Friday at the Sohae Satellite Launching Station. Kim Song, North Korean Ambassador to the UN, said on December 7 that "denuclearization is already gone out of the negotiating table."

However, the Northeast Asian country may attempt to pressure the US with regard to talks, rather than refuse to sit across the table. By making those adventurous moves, Pyongyang may seek to express dissatisfaction with US President Donald Trump's revived threats of military action against it on December 3.

Two points are worth noting about Kim Song's remarks on shelving denuclearization talks.

First, the message it revealed was just taking denuclearization off the negotiating table, instead of refusing to talk with Washington. Talks had covered the normalization of ties, lifting economic sanctions slapped by the US on North Korea, and denuclearization on the peninsula. Pyongyang still hopes to negotiate the first two domains with Washington.



Second, North Korea has been using nuclear weapons/missiles as a "means of deterrence" against US military threats. Thus, when Trump raised the possibility of using military force against North Korea, as a response, Pyongyang proposed to take denuclearization off the negotiating table. Yet it doesn't imply Pyongyang would not negotiate with Washington anymore, or abandon its commitment to denuclearization. In an April speech, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un said he would "wait with patience until the end of the year for the US to come up with a courageous decision." Although the year-end deadline is approaching, the possibility of bilateral negotiations remains. Recent moves by North Korea and the US did lead to an uptick in bilateral tensions, but neither country has indicated shutting the door on talks completely.

What kind of a "Christmas gift" North Korea will send to the US has been discussed. Pyongyang has warned it could take a "new path" amid stalled talks. North Korea's ruling Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) will hold its fifth plenary meeting of the seventh Central Committee of WPK later in December, according to North Korean media reports. One of the crucial

points on the agenda might be what kind of "new path" is to be taken and whether it will at all be taken.

Will the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue affect the outcome of the 2020 US presidential election? Actually, it is not pivotal to the vote. Whether the two countries can make breakthroughs or disagree on denuclearization will not affect the electorate's decision.

On the other hand, the impact of US presidential election on denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula would also be limited. It may be one of the subjects in presidential debates, but won't be a core one. The debates would mainly focus on key domestic issues and US ties with major powers, especially China. Based on the practice by three US presidents over the last 24 years, two of whom were from the Republican Party and one from the Democratic Party, there have not been evident changes in their North Korea policies, despite some differences. Even if Democrats win the election, there will not be substantial change in their policy, such as piling pressure on North Korea to denuclearize.

Currently, both Pyongyang and Washington are engaged in a game of

brinkmanship, a practice of attempting to reach a favorable negotiating position by forcing the bilateral interaction to the threshold of confrontation. The strategy is risky and both countries should be cautious lest they should fall into confrontation. Some analysts worry about current Pyongyang-Washington ties and denuclearization of the peninsula, but I am not pessimistic. Both sides hope to break the stalemate and achieve a deal through negotiations, and neither of them wants to resort to war. North Korea can neither normalize relations with the US, nor coerce it to withdraw the sanctions by launching a war. Meanwhile, Washington cannot achieve denuclearization of the peninsula through military means, either. Peaceful negotiations are the only way to tackle differences; otherwise, bilateral ties would forever be in a stalemate.

■ **Economic blueprint reassures Chinese public**

The annual Central Economic Work Conference wrapped up on Thursday. Going through a statement released after the meeting, one would be deeply impressed with the central government's objective judgment on the economic situation and its determination to face various challenges. The measures put forward during the conference connote a strong spirit of seeking truth from facts. Next year must be a year of hard work and everything would be pushed forward in an orderly way.

For a big country like China, what it needs to avoid the most is the risk of large systemic fluctuations in the economy. The Central Economic Work Conference is believed to have reassured the Chinese people. The Chinese system has a strong planning ability, which injects stable development into the Chinese economy. This is a major advantage of China amid global uncertainties.

Cold winds were blown into the world economy. But the Central Economic Work Conference has come up with a promising

plan which embodies new development concepts. It put forward concrete measures to fight the "three tough battles," continue to improve the people's livelihood, propel industrial and consumption upgrades, and promote high-quality development. Deepening economic system reform has set a clearer requirement for a high-standard market system.

This is China. While ruling parties in many countries are busy bragging about themselves and different parties are engaging in fierce political struggles, China's ruling party has elaborately charted a course for the country's economic and social development and is doing its utmost to create conditions conducive to the rapid development of the country. The basic orientation of Chinese politics is different from that of some high-profile countries. While the latter focuses on partisan struggles, China emphasizes problem-solving and expanding consensus in society.

The Chinese public has high demands on the ruling party, hoping that it's faithful to its words and firm in its purposes. Empty slogans are unpopular in China. The ruling party knows this very well. Therefore, the work conference this time stressed the importance of putting an end to all forms of formalism and bureaucracy and stated that the implementation of new development concepts should be taken as an important yardstick to test leaders at all levels. The meeting has shown that the central government fully understands the call of society for economic development, prioritizes people's demands and has played a central role in uniting, inspiring and leading society to overcome various challenges. China is a powerful community that can constantly unleash its strength to meet difficulties. We have clear goals and capabilities.

There have been many discussions on whether China's economic growth would fall below 6 percent next year. If we can put the spirit of the Central Economic Work Conference into practice, the continuous improvement of quality and efficiency of the Chinese economy will gain momentum and little attention will be paid to the 6 percent growth benchmark. The Chinese economy will constantly rise to new heights and the Chinese people will benefit from it.

## East Asia at the glance

### China will lead new Asian order, 'Asian century'



# American rejected record in the Afghan war

By Morteza Helali

**TEHRAN** — The war in Afghanistan has become a symbol of failure in US foreign policy equations. Both the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States are now accused of lying to public opinion around the world, including American citizens. In recent days, numerous articles and analysis have been published in the US media about the Afghan war. These cases show that the anger of the American people over the lies that George W. Bush, Obama, and Trump have made about the Afghan war is increasing:

■ **We have just been handed the pentagon papers of our generation**

ANTIWAR reported: I remember the day I broke. I was a young captain in command of an 82-man cavalry troop in the heart of Taliban country—in Kandahar, Afghanistan—and I was deep into one of my regular manic episodes. At that moment, I was in the midst of writing an angry—definitely hopeless—stream-of-consciousness screed, which topped out at some 8,000 words, to my sociopathic squadron commander. My verbose, yet well-argued, treatise expressed my opposition to his next planned assault (with my unit in the lead) into yet another remote, abandoned, booby-trap-riddled village. I was by then obsessed with protecting my troopers from needless death or maiming. Mid-sentence, one of my subordinate lieutenants rushed into the office to remind me: “Sir, you have to give a memorial address in like 30 minutes!” Shaken out of my trance, I remembered (had I really forgotten?) that it was almost time to give my obligatory speech in remembrance of one of my young soldiers, blown to pieces just days before.

I hid my surprise, assured the lieutenant I’d be ready soon, and pulled out a 5? x 7? index card to hastily jot down some bullet notes for my impending address. Normally, I thrive in public speaking, but suddenly I drew a frightful blank. I don’t know anything about this kid, I realized. He was young, new to the unit, and—though I’d heard glowing reports on his discipline and work ethic—I couldn’t conjure a single personal detail about, or one-on-one interaction with, him. Maybe a better officer would have. Still, I threw something together, gave a passable speech—which was, as always, filmed for the soldier’s family—then retreated to the designated “smoke pit” to share some cigarettes with his platoon mates. They were sort of numb, frightened for their own fates, yet alarmingly resigned to their personal hellscape. None, not a one, had any particular affinity for the Afghan people, nor did they believe in the mission. I listened carefully as they swapped stories about their fallen friend. Then it struck me: I’d never be able to explain to this kid’s mother just what he’d died for on that dusty trail in rural Afghanistan.

That was back in 2011, year 10 of what has become America’s 18-year war—and its longest ever. Unlike the war in Iraq, which I’d joined just after West Point graduation, I’d entered Afghanistan already skeptical of the nation’s post-9/11 wars. The trick was to escape a year-long tour with as many of my troopers’ lives (and limbs) as possible. When our unit finally made it home in January 2012—though with three fewer lives and several fewer limbs—I rapidly fell apart. It was a legitimate, if sudden, mental health collapse, brought on, I suppose, the moment I stopped white-knuckling it through 18-hour days borne under the substantial weight of command responsibility. In the years that followed, I lost two wives and never quite shook bouts of crippling depression and anxiety. And the war, it never stopped churning. But I also became an outspoken anti-war activist, criticizing the wars—in Afghanistan, in particular—which I long knew were unwinnable and based on lies.

Earlier this week, we learned that our leaders also knew the war was a fiasco, doomed to fail. But, unlike many of us, they chose not to speak out. Instead, as The Washington Post revealed in a series of stunning articles based on what it has labeled the Afghanistan Papers—a trove of previously classified documents that it is calling a “secret history of the war”—dozens of consecutive generals and senior US officials had repeatedly lied about, omitted, and obfuscated the facts to give an illusion of progress in that war.

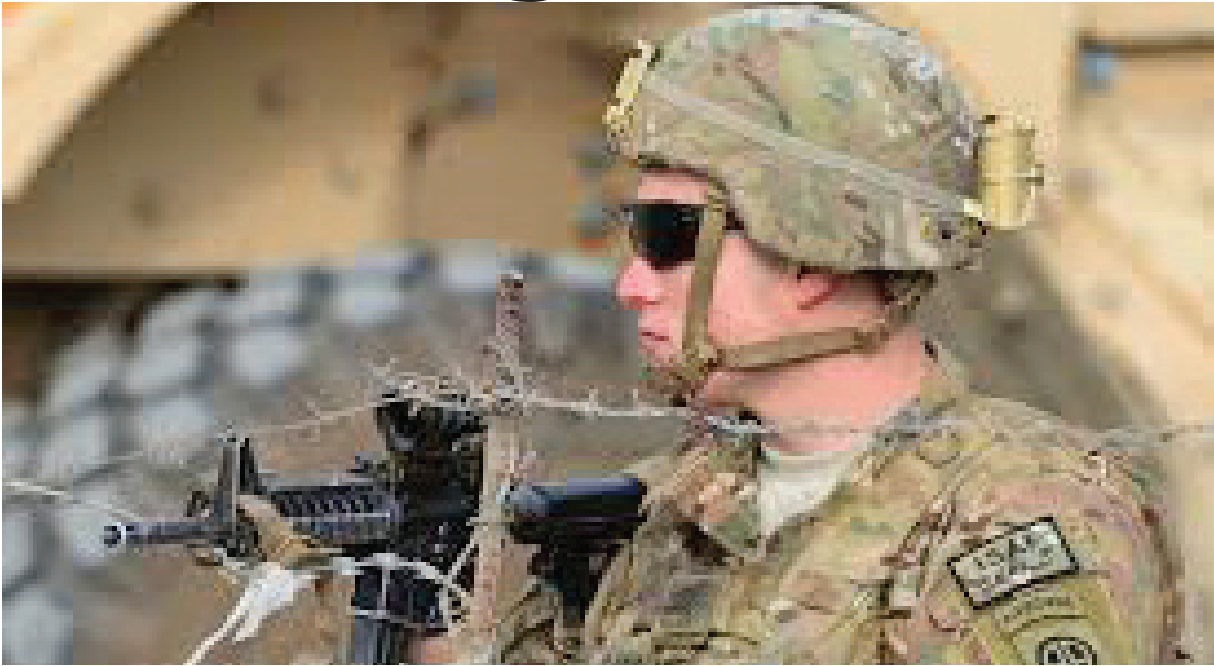
Examples abound. As early as 2003, Bush’s hawkish secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld, apparently admitted, “I have no visibility into who the bad guys are” in Afghanistan. More than a decade later, during the late Obama years, retired Army Lt. Gen. Doug Lute (once the Afghan War “czar”), conceded to one of the interviewers, “We didn’t have the foggiest notion of what we were undertaking.” Perhaps even more troubling, in a throwback to Vietnam War—era stat-fudging, one unnamed army colonel confessed, “Every data point was altered to present the best picture possible.”

As I read through these confessions, I felt somewhat vindicated, but mostly I felt deeply sad. What had it all been for—the 2400 American lives lost, the trillion dollars spent? And what of the cost to the real victims—the Afghan people? More than 100,000 Afghan civilian and security force personnel have been killed thus far. The US military wasn’t responsible for all those deaths—the vicious Taliban have been gleeful contributors to the carnage—but 2018 wasn’t just the deadliest year of the war; it was also the first in which American and allied Afghan troops killed more civilians than the Taliban did.

The Afghanistan Papers don’t try to answer these bigger questions, and perhaps they can’t, but their significance is nonetheless profound. At 2,000 pages, they are nothing less than the Pentagon Papers of my generation. These documents, however, are hitting the news in a very different time and context. In 1971, there were still tens of thousands of anti-war protesters in the streets, and Daniel Ellsberg’s leak of the documents inflamed the movement. Today, in the absence of a broad military draft, and with President Trump’s impeachment-as-entertainment hearings dominating the airwaves, I’m not so sure the Afghanistan Papers will make much of a splash.

In a real republic, these papers would be explosive, triggering investigations, denunciations, and serious policy conversations. The Senate would hold a lengthy inquest, such as the Fulbright hearings on Vietnam or the Church Committee on CIA abuses, in addition to producing substantive reports similar to the 9/11 commission or the McCain/Feinstein CIA torture report. But I’m skeptical. If this Afghan disclosure doesn’t generate thorough investigation and accountability, can the concerned citizenry ever again count on Congress? Probably not.

The same question might be asked of our news media. Major publications still give prominent placement to the vacuous mea culpas from prominent Afghan war commanders, like David



Petraeus, and the big three cable networks offer unlimited time to the should-be-discredited likes of Petraeus, Stanley McChrystal, and a litany of other Bush/Obama-era military and intelligence officials. Meanwhile, folks like myself, Scott Horton, Matthew Hoh, retired colonels Andrew Bacevich, and Daniel Davis—who were right all along about the war in Afghanistan—struggle mightily to place a rare column in the major newspapers. The game is rigged.

Still, try as they may (and they will), the lying, failed generals, can’t escape the people they sent into war. (Unfortunately, the people they made war on is a different matter). Just last week, I randomly bumped into General Petraeus in line for the bathroom at LaGuardia airport. I thought it odd that no one seemed to recognize the man—who did more to prolong the forever wars than any other public figure—but I did. Against my better instincts, I stopped him. “Hello, general. I’m sure you don’t remember me, but we briefly met in Iraq in 2007,” I said. Though he was cordial at first, I noticed him gazing at my chest and then he quickly hustled off. I looked down and had to laugh. I’d completely forgotten that I was wearing my “Iraq Veterans Against the War” T-shirt.

“King” David Petraeus can comfortably hide behind his seven-figure salary think-tank/consulting jobs and unlimited access to the mainstream media. So can his entire generation of flag officers who lost two wars, and not one of whom resigned in protest in the face of unwinnable forever conflicts. But every once in a while, they have to look me, and hundreds of thousands of broken vets like me, in the eye.

Long ago, after the insane, absurd advice he received from his senior military advisers in the Bay of Pigs and Cuban missile crisis fiascos, President John F. Kennedy, himself a decorated World War II veteran, wisely concluded, “The first thing I’m going to tell my successor, is watch the generals, to avoid feeling that just because they’re military men, their opinions on military matters are worth a damn.”

I, for one, will be hard-pressed to ever trust them again. Much of the blood of a war that shouldn’t have been fought, and that they might have stopped, lies on their hands.

■ **The Afghanistan Papers Confirm America’s Longest War Is a Lie**

Also Truthdig reported that The Washington Post’s Afghanistan Papers, detailing a true history of the nation’s longest official war, reveals nothing new about the war’s futility or about the fact that it was doomed to failure from almost the beginning. The Post fought a legal battle for three years to obtain the documents from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), a federal government watchdog agency that interviewed hundreds of officials about their honest assessments of the war.

What the Afghanistan Papers do offer is a confirmation of what critics had already been asserting for nearly two decades: that there is no clearly defined goal or endpoint to the war to help determine when to stop fighting, and that our efforts have been futile at best and deeply destructive at worst. More than 10 years ago I wrote, together with James Ingalls, a critical assessment of the Afghanistan war. The title of our book was Bleeding Afghanistan: Washington, Warlords, and the Propaganda of Silence (Seven Stories, 2006). Those last three words, “the Propaganda of Silence,” are a direct reference to poor media coverage and the irresponsible manner in which the press took an uncritical view of the war. The evidence was there for all to see that the U.S. war was doomed to failure once you scratched beneath the surface of officials’ rosy rhetoric. The most important function of the Afghanistan Papers is to confirm that government officials have been utterly dishonest with the public about U.S. achievements and progress in Afghanistan. John Sopko, the Special Inspector General at SIGAR, admitted to the Post that the documents prove that “the American people have constantly been lied to.”

The picture that emerges of how insiders have viewed the war is startlingly similar to how critics have portrayed it over the years. Earlier this year I wrote a “Brief History” of the Afghanistan war for Truthdig in which I assessed the early years of the conflict:

The Bush plan to build a stable Afghan government as a bulwark against the Taliban and al-Qaida failed for reasons that had as much to do with imperial hubris as it did with the practical shortcuts taken by an outsider to patch together a precarious government—as if that were a sufficient substitute for real democracy.

In comparison, one economist told SIGAR, as revealed in the Afghanistan Papers, that he:

... blamed an array of mistakes committed again and again over 18 years — haphazard planning, misguided policies, bureaucratic feuding. Many said the overall nation-building strategy was further undermined by hubris, impatience, ignorance and a belief that money can fix anything. In my history of the war, I also wrote: “Obama’s strategy included a temporary increase in troops, as if throwing more American soldiers at the problem would help any one of his goals stick.” But, I continued,

“The Taliban appears to have had a ‘wait it out’ strategy with respect to Americans, stringing along the U.S. and the Afghan government over several years of talks until it had the upper hand to return to power.”

By comparison, the Afghanistan Papers revealed that “Obama’s strategy was also destined to fail,” as it relied on “a massive counterinsurgency campaign, backed by 150,000 U.S. and NATO troops.” In the end, I concluded: “Obama tried to set artificial dates for ending the war before it was over. All the Taliban had to do was wait him out.”

In 2015 I wrote in another piece for Truthdig titled “We Have Failed Afghanistan Again and Again,” that:

Despite spending billions of dollars—the U.S. offered its largest share of foreign aid to Afghans last year—there is little to show for it. Nearly \$10 billion was spent on arming and training Afghan forces. But as the dismal state of the Afghan National Army shows, that money may as well have been poured down the drain.

By comparison, the Afghanistan Papers reveal that officials privately knew they were fueling corruption, and that “Much of the money ... ended up in the pockets of overpriced contractors or corrupt Afghan officials, while U.S.-financed schools, clinics and roads fell into disrepair, if they were built at all.”

The U.S. has also been lining the pockets of Afghanistan’s most notorious warlords, who have a long and bloody history going back to the era of Soviet occupation, when the CIA doled out cash to fight its Cold War enemy. In my 2006 book, my co-author and I warned against this practice, devoting a whole chapter to it, titled “Replacing One Brutal Regime With Another.” We suggested that instead of rewarding them with cash and government positions, the U.S. ought to disarm the warlords and help Afghans bring them to justice. The U.S. did the opposite, and the result was entirely predictable. The Afghanistan Papers confirm that:

According to the interviews, the CIA, the U.S. military, the State Department and other agencies used cash and lucrative contracts to win the allegiance of Afghan warlords in the fight against al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Intended as a short-term tactic, the practice ended up binding the United States to some of the country’s most notorious figures for years.

One senior government official told SIGAR, “We were giving out contracts to pretty nasty people, empowering people we shouldn’t have empowered, in order to achieve our own goals.” American tax dollars have lined the pockets of mass killers to an unimaginable extent. In my 2015 article, I referred specifically to Abdul Rashid Dostum, who was elevated to the position of vice president even though he had been “implicated in numerous atrocities and mass killings.” Among the few new revelations from The Washington Post’s investigative report is the assertion that “the United States and other sources had been giving Dostum \$100,000 a month ‘to not cause trouble.’”

Now the Trump administration is hoping to resume peace negotiations with the Taliban with a plan to reinstall the very regime the U.S. claimed was harboring terrorists and harming Afghans. If the point of the war was to go from point A to point B and then back to point A, with an unimaginably high death toll in between, then by that measure alone the U.S. war in Afghanistan has been a success.

What American officials and the mainstream media has consistently failed to do in Afghanistan is actually pay attention to what ordinary Afghans say and want. The biggest toll of the failed American war has been the death and destruction of lives in a country that was already torn apart by years of war in 2001. We may never get a full accounting of how many Afghans have died or been maimed for life as a direct result of a war that insiders knew was a mistake. But what we do know is all armed forces in Afghanistan are implicated in war crimes. In 2018, in a little-covered story, Afghans submitted a whopping 1.17 million complaints to the International Criminal Court that “include accounts of alleged atrocities, not only by groups like the Taliban and the ISIS, but also Afghan Security Forces and government-affiliated warlords, the U.S.-led coalition, and foreign and domestic spy agencies.”

The Post’s investigative series is a welcome addition to mountains of evidence that the Afghanistan war is a failure. But it was clear to those of us who had been paying attention that U.S. officials were lying about the war for nearly two decades. The important question today is: Will the Afghanistan Papers bring about the end of the longest war?

■ **Afghanistan: Oh, when will we ever learn?**

“U.S. officials failed to tell the truth about the war in Afghanistan throughout the 18-year campaign,” the Washington Post’s Craig Whitlock reports, “making rosy pronouncements they knew to be false and hiding unmistakable evidence the war had become unwinnable.”

Whitlock bases that claim on a collection of candid, confidential interviews with more than 400 military and political “insiders” conducted by Congress’s Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

Not that we really needed “The Afghanistan Papers” to tell

us the war was unwinnable. That was clear from the beginning. Any mission beyond quick strikes on al Qaeda’s facilities and operators in Afghanistan was doomed to failure. The idea of taking over the country and making it into a “western democracy” was transparent foolishness. More than one empire has foundered on the rock that is Afghanistan, and the American military adventure there was never going to be the exception.

Nor do “The Afghanistan Papers” tell us anything else we shouldn’t have already known. They merely confirm a lesson we should have learned nearly 50 ago. In 1971, the New York Times published the Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force, better known as “The Pentagon Papers.”

That report, leaked to the press by American hero Daniel Ellsberg, revealed (in the words of the Times’s R.W. Apple) “that the Johnson Administration had systematically lied, not only to the public but also to Congress,” about the progress and prospects of the US war in Vietnam. War is always ugly. Optional and prolonged wars with nebulous objectives are always built on lies — lies stacked sky-high atop one another for no other purpose than to keep the ugliness going for as long as possible.

The prettiest answer, and it’s not pretty, is that generals and politicians hate to admit defeat. They can always be relied upon to convince themselves — and try to convince us — that “a corner has been turned” and that “there’s light at the end of the tunnel,” at least until they’ve managed to bequeath the losses to, and blame the losses on, their successors. The uglier answer is that war is profitable all around for politicians who want to be re-elected, officers who want to be promoted, and “defense” contractors who want to sell more guns, more bombs, more planes, more everything.

It’s not so good for the rest of us, though. At a conservative estimate, the US government has burned through more than a trillion dollars dragging out the fiasco in Afghanistan. You’re on the hook for that bar tab. And you’re getting off easy. More than 3,500 “coalition” troops, most of them Americans, and somewhere between 100,000 and half a million Afghans (depending on whose figures you believe) have paid with their lives. Next time the politicians want to drum up or continue an optional war, they’ll tell us the same lies they told us this time, and last time, and the time before that. We’ve got to stop believing those lies.

■ **Key Takeaways in Newly Released Documents Detailing Failures of War in Afghanistan**

New York Times reported that New documents reveal extraordinarily detailed warnings of failure from officials at the highest levels of the United States government about the 18-year war. Obtained by The Washington Post, the documents are part of an investigation by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction that sought to identify lessons learned in the war so that they might not be repeated in future American conflicts. Some of the broad strokes of the findings were well known. But they are sure now to fuel a simmering debate over when, and how, to end the United States’ war in Afghanistan. American and Taliban negotiators are trying anew to broker a peace agreement that would see the withdrawal of the 13,000 forces currently in Afghanistan, as President Trump has pledged.

At times, some American officials wanted the focus on installing democracy in the tribal culture; others wanted women’s rights to be firmly enshrined before the United States stepped back. And some officials saw the American role in Afghanistan as an opportunity to reshape a larger strategy for regional security. “What are we trying to do here? We didn’t have the foggiest notion of what we were undertaking,” Douglas Lute, an Army lieutenant general who advised both Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama on the war effort, told investigators in 2015, according to the documents. The United States confronted a dizzying array of potential adversaries in Afghanistan and, according to the documents, could not decide who among them were foes. Assistance was needed from leaders in neighboring Pakistan, but American officials didn’t trust them. Money was thrown at Afghan warlords who, in any other circumstance, would be considered adversaries. And an array of foreign militants — including the Islamic State — rushed to the battlefield to prove themselves.

The confusion was evident early on: “I have no visibility into who the bad guys are,” Donald H. Rumsfeld, then the defense secretary, wrote in a memo Sept. 8, 2003.

For years, the strategy for when American forces should leave largely became a chicken-and-egg debate. A military withdrawal before Afghan troops were able to defend their own country could result in the United States’ return years later, after losing all the gains that have been made since 2001. (Witness the Islamic State’s rampage in Iraq after American troops left in 2011.)

“We are never going to get the U.S. military out of Afghanistan unless we take care to see that there is something going on that will provide the stability that will be necessary for us to leave,” Mr. Rumsfeld told aides in 2002. But military officers also reported widespread failures in training Afghan security forces — a necessary step, officials believed, in helping stabilize the country.

Many Afghan troops were seen as inept or lazy or. In some cases, they were nonexistent; their commanders had padded the ranks with so-called ghost soldiers and kept the extra pay they received from American trainers. Other Afghan troops were believed to be drug addicts, thieves and even Taliban sympathizers.

Some estimates put the spending total in Afghanistan by the United States since 2001 at approximately \$2 trillion. The bloated bottom line was in part caused by what one official at the United States Agency for International Development described as “lost objectivity.”

“We were given money, told to spend it, and we did — without reason,” the unidentified official told investigators in a 2016 interview. An unidentified contractor reported being told to give out \$3 million each day for projects in a single Afghan district. The documents describe American officials ignoring widespread skimming by the Afghan government that, ultimately, undermined the war strategy. One retired Army colonel who advised three American generals said that the problem persisted not just among judges and security officials, but became a “kleptocracy” throughout the government of former President Hamid Karzai. “The kleptocracy got stronger over time, to the point that the priority of the Afghan government became not good governance, but sustaining this kleptocracy,” the retired American colonel, who was later identified as Christopher Kolenda, told investigators in 2016.



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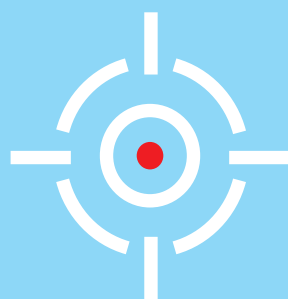
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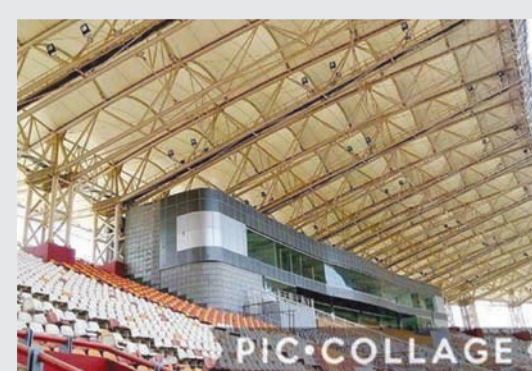
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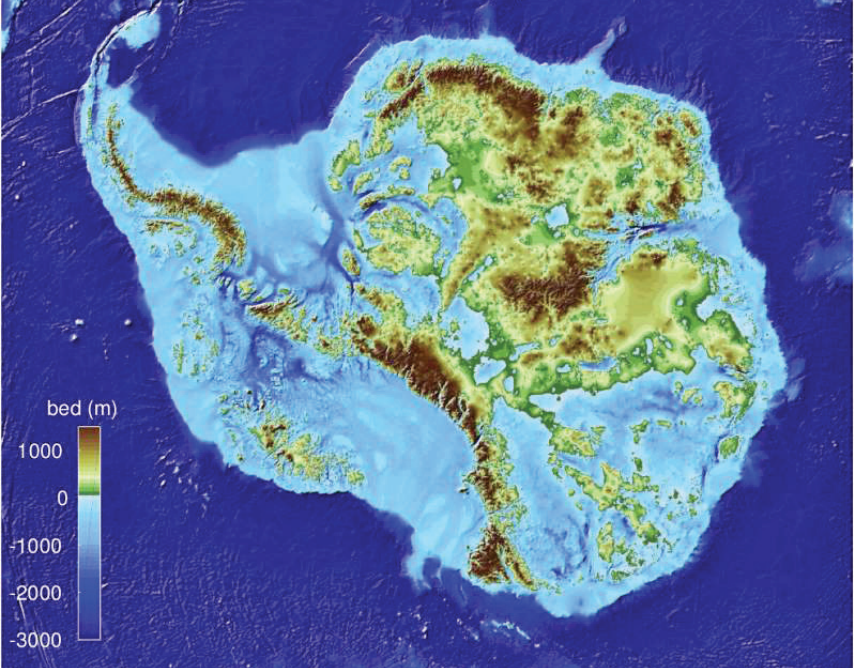
# Scientists found the deepest land on Earth

A new map of the mountains, valleys and canyons hidden under Antarctica’s ice has revealed the deepest land on Earth, and will help forecast future ice loss.

The frozen southern continent can look pretty flat and featureless from above. But beneath the ice pack that’s accumulated over the eons, there’s an ancient continent, as textured as any other. And that texture turns out to be very important for predicting how and when ice will flow and which regions of ice are most vulnerable in a warming world. The new NASA map, called BedMachine Antarctica, mixes ice movement measurements, seismic measurements, radar and other data points to create the most detailed picture yet of Antarctica’s hidden features.

“Using BedMachine to zoom into particular sectors of Antarctica, you find essential details, such as bumps and hollows beneath the ice that may accelerate, slow down or even stop the retreat of glaciers,” Mathieu Morlighem, an Earth system scientist at the University of California, Irvine and the lead author of a new paper about the map, said in a statement.

The new map, published Dec. 12 in the journal Nature Geoscience, reveals previously unknown topographical features that shape ice flow on the frozen continent.



The previously unknown features have “major implications for glacier response to climate change,” the authors wrote. “For example, glaciers flowing across the

Transantarctic Mountains are protected by broad, stabilizing ridges.”

Understanding how ice flows in Antarctica becomes increasingly important as Earth warms. If all of Antarctica’s ice were to melt, it would raise global sea levels by 200 feet (60 meters), according to the National Snow and Ice Data Center. That isn’t likely anytime soon, but even if small fractions of the continent were to melt, it would have devastating global effects.

Included in the data is evidence for the deepest canyon on planet Earth. By studying how much ice flows through a particular, narrow region known as the Denman trough each year, the researchers realized it must dive at least 11,000 feet (3,500 meters) below sea level to accommodate all the frozen water volume. That’s far deeper than the Dead Sea, the lowest exposed region of land, which sits 432 meters (1,419 feet) below sea level, according to the Israel Oceanographic and Limnological Research center.

The map offers a wealth of new information on precisely which regions of the continent’s ice are at most risk of sliding into the ocean in the coming decades and centuries, the authors wrote.

(Source: msn)

## Cyclone size of Texas discovered on Jupiter by NASA’s Juno mission

NASA’s Juno mission spotted a new cyclone the size of Texas during a close flyby of Jupiter in November.

The gas giant is already home to several giant cyclones, and this newly discovered storm will offer even more insight into Jupiter’s atmosphere.

Juno’s cameras spied giant cyclones gathered at Jupiter’s poles soon after its arrival in July 2016 -- nine to the north, and six to the south. The central cyclone at the heart of the gathering was as big as the United States.

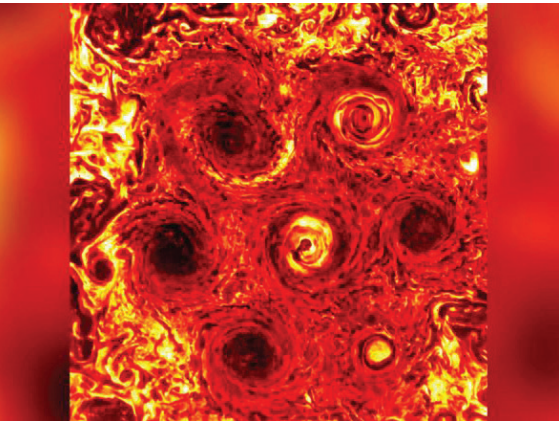
Five giant cyclones seemed to hold court at the south pole, keeping in tight, stable formation around a sixth central cyclone and not allowing other nearby cyclones to join their pentagon-like formation.

“It almost appeared like the polar cyclones were part of a private club that seemed to resist new members,” said Scott Bolton in a statement, Juno principal investigator from the Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio.

But on November 3, Juno flew a daring 2,175 miles above Jupiter’s clouds and conducted its 22nd flyby since its arrival. This latest flyby revealed that a new, small cyclone had been allowed to join the exclusive group.

“Data from Juno’s Jovian Infrared Auroral Mapper [JIRAM] instrument indicates we went from a pentagon of cyclones surrounding one at the center to a hexagonal arrangement,” said Alessandro Mura, a Juno co-investigator at the National Institute for Astrophysics in Rome. “This new addition is smaller in stature than its six more established cyclonic brothers: It’s about the size of Texas.”

Only time will tell if the small cyclone will grow to reach the size of its neighbors. It already has a similar sustained



velocity of 225 miles per hour.

Cameras on Juno were able to take a deeper look at the atmospheric process happening on Jupiter and peek inside the weather layer 30 to 45 miles beneath the cloud tops. Combined, this data not only offers insight about Jupiter but also about other gas and ice giants in our solar system, as well as how the atmospheres of exoplanets may behave and even similar storms on Earth.

“These cyclones are new weather phenomena that have not been seen or predicted before,” said Cheng Li, a Juno scientist from the University of California, Berkeley. “Nature is revealing new physics regarding fluid motions and how giant planet atmospheres work. We are beginning to grasp

it through observations and computer simulations. Future Juno flybys will help us further refine our understanding by revealing how the cyclones evolve over time.”

But detecting the cyclone was only possible because engineers helped the solar-powered spacecraft navigate an eclipse that could have ended the mission by freezing it out.

“Ever since the day we entered orbit around Jupiter, we made sure it remained bathed in sunlight 24/7,” said Steve Levin, Juno project scientist at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. “Our navigators and engineers told us a day of reckoning was coming, when we would go into Jupiter’s shadow for about 12 hours. We knew that for such an extended period without power, our spacecraft would suffer a similar fate as the Opportunity rover, when the skies of Mars filled with dust and blocked the Sun’s rays from reaching its solar panels.”

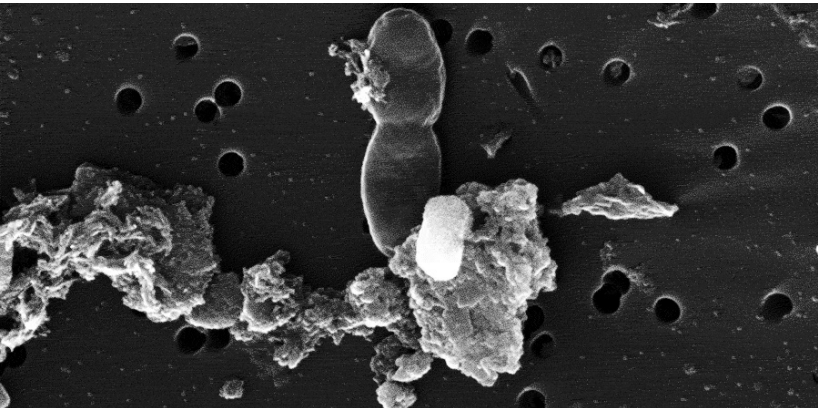
Inside Jupiter’s shadow, Juno would face temperatures far colder than it was tested to withstand, which strains its batteries past the point of recovery. The mission team strategized a way for Juno to “jump the shadow,” according to NASA, to just miss the eclipse. A system burn helped it jump ahead and avoid the eclipse.

“The combination of creativity and analytical thinking has once again paid off big time for NASA,” said Bolton. “It was nothing less than a navigation stroke of genius. Lo and behold, first thing out of the gate on the other side, we make another fundamental discovery.”

Happily, Juno can continue to orbit and study Jupiter until the mission’s end in July 2021.

(Source: CNN)

## Water from South African mine may contain life that was isolated for 2 billion years



Two miles under a grassy plain in South Africa, pockets of water lie trapped in the rock. Scientists think the pockets might have been isolated from the surrounding environment for 2 billion years. These liquid time capsules are hot, salty, and devoid of nutrients from the surface, and they may be chemically similar to water deposits on Mars.

Now, researchers think they may have found things living in this long-sequestered water.

“There is a potential that [the pockets] were isolated over that long time scale. So this would be a unique opportunity to see life, essentially, evolving in a bubble,” said Devan Nisson, a graduate student at Princeton University in New Jersey, who conducted the research with colleagues, including Esta van Heerden from North-West University in South Africa. Nisson presented preliminary findings from the ongoing research project this week at a meeting of the American Geophysical Union in San Francisco.

Supported by funding from NASA and the National Science Foundation, the researchers collected samples in 2018 and 2019 by descending into a gold and uranium mine operated by Harmony Gold. The water lies in rock fractures accessed through boreholes, allowing the researchers to release some of the pressurized water and filter out material for analysis.

When they examined the material under

a scanning electron microscope, they saw rodlike shapes that appeared to be bacteria or similar-looking microbes called archaea. One of the cells was pinched in the middle, apparently in the process of dividing.

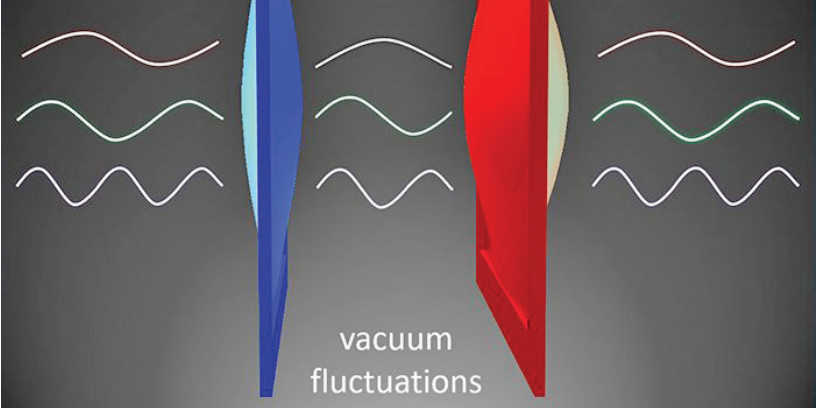
It’s possible the shapes were minerals, noted Nisson. To determine for sure whether the water contains living cells, Nisson and her colleagues plan to try to extract and sequence DNA. Genetic data would also help reveal whether the cells are indeed creatures that have been isolated for billions of years, or whether they are more familiar microbes introduced when miners drilled into the chamber.

But even without DNA, the researchers can still get clues about whether life might be able to survive there. Water in the pockets is about seven times saltier than seawater and reaches temperatures of up to 129 degrees Fahrenheit, right at the edge of what life is thought to tolerate. But Nisson and her colleagues have found an abundance of small organic acids that could supply the carbon required to build and maintain cellular structures. They have also found ions such as nitrate and sulfate, which some microbes can use in metabolic processes to generate energy.

Together, the findings suggest that life could survive in extreme environments such as deep under South Africa - adding hope that it could survive on Mars and other extraterrestrial bodies as well.

(Source: Inside Science)

## Heat energy has leapt across an empty vacuum



Quantum physics has up-ended classical physics again, this time enabling heat to transfer across empty space without any of the atoms or molecules that would usually be needed for such a push.

The research taps into a particular bit of quantum weirdness known as the Casimir effect: the idea that empty space isn’t really empty, but filled with tiny electromagnetic fluctuations that can interfere with the objects around them.

Scientists have previously demonstrated how the Casimir effect can move nanoparticles in a vacuum, and push two objects closer together; this latest study demonstrates how it can work with heat transfer, too.

This discovery could influence the way that nanoscale electronic components and even quantum computers are designed, managing heat across the smallest scales as our devices shrink down.

“Heat is usually conducted in a solid through the vibrations of atoms or molecules, or so-called phonons – but in a vacuum, there is no physical medium,” says mechanical engineer Xiang Zhang from the University of California, Berkeley. “So, for many years, textbooks told us that phonons cannot travel through a vacuum.

“What we discovered, surprisingly, is that phonons can indeed be transferred across a vacuum by invisible quantum fluctuations.”

The point was proven by two gold-coated

silicon nitride membranes placed a few hundred nanometers apart inside a vacuum chamber. Even with complete nothingness between the membranes, and negligible light energy, heating up one membrane caused the other to warm up too.

At larger scales this wouldn’t happen – it’s why the pocket of vacuum between the two walls of a thermos keeps your coffee warm, because the heat can’t easily cross the gap – but at the tiniest of scales the implications could be profound.

Everything about the experiment had to be carefully configured and controlled: from precisely controlling the temperature of the membranes, to keeping the lab chamber completely free of dust.

Although the distance that the heat travelled is very small, relatively speaking, it was far enough to rule out other causes for the transfer of heat, such as energy from electromagnetic radiation (which is how the Sun warms Earth through the vacuum of space).

And the scientists behind the study think that there could be more to come – if heat can travel through empty space then perhaps sound can, too. After all, they both rely on molecular vibrations to get around.

That will have to wait for another experiment. For now, the team is looking at ways this special quantum effect could be used to manage thermal flow in the computers and electronics of the future.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

## Newfound Martian aurora actually the most common sheds light on Mars’ changing climate

A type of Martian aurora first identified by NASA’s MAVEN spacecraft in 2016 is actually the most common form of aurora occurring on the Red Planet, according to new results from the mission. The aurora is known as a proton aurora and can help scientists track water loss from Mars’ atmosphere.



At Earth, aurora are commonly seen as colorful displays of light in the night sky near the polar regions, where they are also known as the northern and southern lights. However, the proton aurora on Mars happens during the day and gives off ultraviolet light, so it is invisible to the human eye but detectable to the Imaging UltraViolet Spectrograph (IUVS) instrument on the MAVEN (Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution) spacecraft.

MAVEN’s mission is to investigate how the Red Planet lost much of its atmosphere and water, transforming its climate from one that might have supported life to one that is cold, dry, and inhospitable. Since the proton aurora is generated indirectly by hydrogen derived from Martian water that’s in the process of being lost to space, this aurora could be used to help track ongoing Martian water loss.

“In this new study using MAVEN/IUVS data from multiple Mars years, the team has found that periods of increased atmospheric escape correspond with increases in proton aurora occurrence and intensity,” said Andréa Hughes of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. Hughes is lead author of a paper on this research published December 12 in the Journal of Geophysical Research, Space Physics. “Perhaps one day, when interplanetary travel becomes commonplace, travelers arriving at Mars during southern summer will have front-row seats to observe Martian proton aurora majestically dancing across the dayside of the planet (while wearing ultraviolet-sensitive goggles, of course). These travelers will witness firsthand the final stages of Mars losing the remainder of its water to space.” Hughes is presenting the research on December 12 at the American Geophysical Union meeting in San Francisco.

Different phenomena produce different kinds of aurora. However, all aurora at Earth and Mars are powered by solar activity, whether it be explosions of high-speed particles known as solar storms, eruptions of gas and magnetic fields known as coronal mass ejections, or gusts in the solar wind, a stream of electrically conducting gas that blows continuously into space at around a million miles per hour. For example, the northern and southern lights at Earth happen when violent solar activity disturbs Earth’s magnetosphere, causing high velocity electrons to slam into gas particles in Earth’s nightside upper atmosphere and make them glow. Similar processes generate Mars’ discrete and diffuse aurora -- two types of aurora that were previously observed on the Martian nightside.

Proton aurora form when solar wind protons (which are hydrogen atoms stripped of their lone electrons by intense heat) interact with the upper atmosphere on the dayside of Mars. As they approach Mars, the protons coming in with the solar wind transform into neutral atoms by stealing electrons from hydrogen atoms in the outer edge of the Martian hydrogen corona, a huge cloud of hydrogen surrounding the planet. When those high-speed incoming atoms hit the atmosphere, some of their energy is emitted as ultraviolet light.

When the MAVEN team first observed the proton aurora, they thought it was a relatively unusual occurrence. “At first, we believed that these events were rather rare because we weren’t looking at the right times and places,” said Mike Chaffin, research scientist at the University of Colorado Boulder’s Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics (LASP) and second author of the study. “But after a closer look, we found that proton aurora are occurring far more often in dayside southern summer observations than we initially expected.” The team has found proton aurora in about 14 percent of their dayside observations, which increases to more than 80 percent of the time when only dayside southern summer observations are considered. “By comparison, IUVS has detected diffuse aurora on Mars in a few percent of orbits with favorable geometry, and discrete aurora detections are rarer still in the dataset,” said Nick Schneider, coauthor and lead of the IUVS team at LASP.

The correlation with the southern summer gave a clue as to why proton aurora are so common and how they could be used to track water loss. During southern summer on Mars, the planet is also near its closest distance to the Sun in its orbit and huge dust storms can occur. Summer warming and dust activity appear to cause proton auroras by forcing water vapor high in the atmosphere. Solar extreme ultraviolet light breaks the water into its components, hydrogen and oxygen. The light hydrogen is weakly bound by Mars’ gravity and enhances the hydrogen corona surrounding Mars, increasing hydrogen loss to space. More hydrogen in the corona makes interactions with solar-wind protons more common, making proton aurora more frequent and brighter.

“All the conditions necessary to create Martian proton aurora (e.g., solar wind protons, an extended hydrogen atmosphere, and the absence of a global dipole magnetic field) are more commonly available at Mars than those needed to create other types of aurora,” said Hughes. “Also, the connection between MAVEN’s observations of increased atmospheric escape and increases in proton aurora frequency and intensity means that proton aurora can actually be used as a proxy for what’s happening in the hydrogen corona surrounding Mars, and therefore, a proxy for times of increased atmospheric escape and water loss.”

This research was funded by the MAVEN mission. MAVEN’s principal investigator is based at the University of Colorado’s Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics in Boulder, Colorado, and NASA Goddard manages the MAVEN project. NASA is exploring our Solar System and beyond, uncovering worlds, stars, and cosmic mysteries near and far with our powerful fleet of space and ground-based missions.

(Source: UPI)



## Iranian arrivals in Georgia plunge 34.5% in October

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Iranian arrivals in Georgia has decreased 34.5 percent in October from a year earlier, according to data compiled by the National Statistics Office of Georgia.

A total of 12,792 Iranian nationals visited Georgia last October that shows a 34.5 percent decrease year on year, Mehr reported on Sunday.



The remote Saphara monastery near Akhaltsikhe, Georgia.

The country welcomed 120,978 travelers from Armenia, 119,540 from Azerbaijan, 118,252 from Russia, 86,726 from Turkey, and 19,452 from Ukraine, the report added.

Deputy tourism minister Vali Teymourli said in October that the country's travel balance remained positive in the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21).

"Getting over the last year's economic shock and experiencing relative economic improvement let 4,258,944 people travel abroad in the first six months of this year, which represents a 15.95 percent increase [year on year]," the official said.

He put the number of international arrivals at 4,998,215 for the six-month period, noting a 26 percent increase in comparison with the same period last year.

The official forecasted the rise would continue in the second half of the Iranian calendar year.

## Airport creates 'dangerous' Christmas tree made from knives and other confiscated items

A Lithuanian airport is getting in the holiday spirit with a Christmas tree made entirely of confiscated items that surely landed some passengers on Santa's naughty list this year.

Vilnius Airport transformed a "Bah! Humbug" moment into a festive display of knives, toy guns, bullet cases and corkscrews — all taken from passengers' carry-on luggage during security screenings over the year.



"We can guarantee - you haven't seen anything like this," Lithuanian Airports shared on LinkedIn Monday. "With knives, scissors, lighters, blades and all other sorts of dangerous goods on it - this Christmas tree has it all."

But, the Christmas tree serves as more than just holiday decoration. Lithuanian Airports said it's a friendly reminder on "the importance

of aviation security."

"The Aviation security officers at Vilnius Airport opted for an unusual take on the Christmas classic, aiming to send an educational message" the post said. "So if you don't want your personal, yet prohibited, belongings to land on our next year's Christmas tree - better check out the baggage requirements before you pack for your next flight. Safe travels!"

(Source: MSN)



## ROUND THE GLOBE Old Town of Corfu

The ensemble of the fortifications and the Old Town of Corfu is located in a strategic location at the entrance to the Adriatic Sea.

Historically, its roots go back to the 8th century BC and to the Byzantine period. It has thus been subject to various influences and a mix of different peoples.



From the 15th century, Corfu was under Venetian rule for some four centuries, then passing to French, British and Greek governments.

At various occasions, it had to defend the Venetian maritime empire against the Ottoman army.

Corfu was a well thought of example of fortification engineering, designed by the architect Sanmicheli, and it proved its worth through practical warfare.

Corfu has its specific identity, which is reflected in the design of its system of fortification and in its neo-classical building stock. As such, it can be placed alongside other major Mediterranean fortified port cities.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Tehran intl. conference to discuss tourism digital marketing

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — A number of international academia and experts have been invited to deliver lectures at the 6th Digital Marketing & Tourism Industry Conference, which will be held at Tehran's Espinas Palace Hotel on January 17, 2020.

The invitees include Pawel Chrzan, who has been a Google business analyzer; Christian Farioli, a digital marketing genius strategist, consultant of companies such as Huawei, Burj Al Arab, Buyer, Armani; Massimo Burgio, founder of Truly Social Media, and Chief Strategist of Global Search Interactive; Orazio Spoto, founder of Instagrammers, professional Instagram teacher and Blogger.

The event will be also attended by CEOs, chief business officers, government officials, public relations managers and sales experts who are active in various businesses.

According to organizers, the conference is scheduled to put focus on topics such as the role of digital marketing in improving the branding process, identifying the potentials of online businesses in urban economy, recognizing innovative product and service marketing

patterns using new internet marketing methods, exploiting the power of social networks and online marketing in attracting and expanding tourism, ways to set up online businesses in line with entrepreneurship development, increasing sales and development of export markets through digital marketing, the impact of the tourism industry on branding and penetration of Iranian culture in the world.

Successful international companies, latest Google algorithms, popular brands in increasing sales through digital marketing, data analysis, tourism development through social networks, and international businesses are amongst other topics to be reviewed in the event.

Some 6.7 million foreign nationals have visited the country since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year, Mojtaba Karimi, who presides over Foreign Ministry's visa and passport department, was quoted by IRNA as saying on December 4.

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



A poster for the 6th Digital Marketing & Tourism Industry Conference, which will be held at Tehran's Espinas Palace Hotel on January 17, 2020.

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.

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots, including 22 ones that have been placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

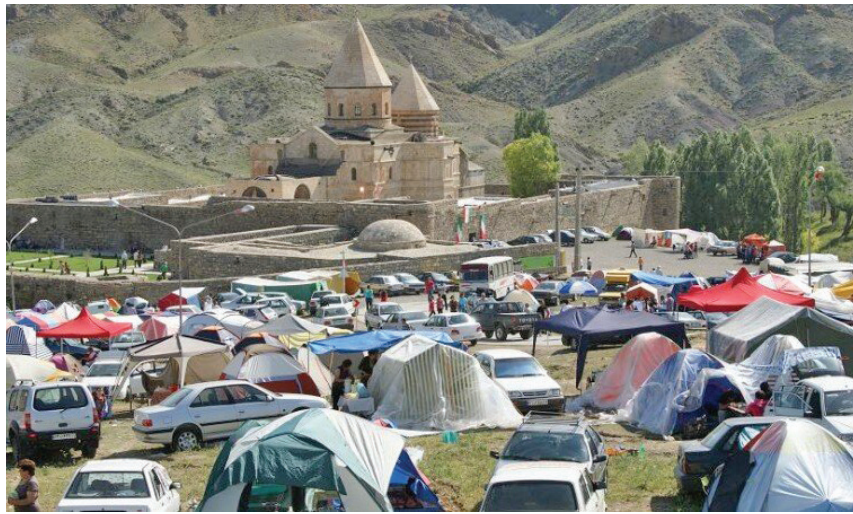
## Travelers' camp to bring comfort to visitors of Saint Thaddeus monastery

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — A travelers' campsite is to be established adjacent to the Monastery of Saint Thaddeus, northwestern Iran, in order to bring comfort to the visitors of the UNESCO-registered place of worship.

"The scheme is aimed at providing recreational and amusement facilities to domestic and foreign tourists visiting the World Heritage," Chaldoran Governor Hassan Mohammadzadeh said, adding that construction operations will be commenced early next [Iranian calendar] year (starting March 20, 2020), ISNA reported on Sunday.

He noted that 10 billion rials (about \$240,000) will be invested in the project.

Each summer, hundreds of Christian worshippers and pilgrims from Iran, Armenia, Syria, Lebanon, the Netherlands, France, Austria, Germany, Canada and some other countries come together at St. Thaddeus to observe a religious ceremony, which is passed down from generation to generation.



File photo depicts people visiting the Monastery of Saint Thaddeus in northwestern Iran.

The festivity is of high importance for Iranian-Armenians who mostly come

from the cities of Tabriz, Urmia, Tehran, Isfahan and Qazvin, to stage the reunion

in groups and families. It also provides them opportunity to go on holiday and visit distant relatives.

Also known as the Qareh Klise ("the Black Church"), the church is one of the oldest surviving Christian monuments in the country. It is situated in West Azarbaijan province, some 20 kilometers from Maku, adjacent to the borders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey.

The ancient Church shows off elaborate bas-reliefs of flowers, animals and human figures on its facade and exterior walls. It bears verses of Old and New Testament in Armenian calligraphy as well.

Together with St. Stepanos Monastery and the Chapel of Dzordzor, Qareh Klise was placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2008 under the name "Armenian Monastic Ensembles of Iran".

UNESCO says that the churches bear examples of outstanding universal value of the Armenian architectural and decorative traditions.

## Tehran exhibit to highlight maritime history in Iran

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — Thousands of years of human interaction with the sea is to be showcased at an exhibition titled "Human and Sea" which opened yesterday at the National Museum of Iran in downtown Tehran.

It is the first time that the national museum hosts an exhibition on maritime culture and the relationship between human and the sea with a focus on archaeo-

logical findings, ILNA quoted director of the museum Jebrael Nokandeh as saying on Saturday.

The official also voiced hope that the event will open up a new window on such a rich and ancient heritage, the report said.

Over 160 relics, which date from pre-historical times to the Islamic era, will be put on show at the event that also has professional meetings and workshops on

its timeline.

Of the objects are two petroglyphs that bear ancient maritime figures, animals and ships. They belong to a large collection of corresponding artifacts found in Deh Tall rural district, southern Hormozgan province.

Organized in close collaboration with the Ports and Maritime Organization, the exhibit will be running through February 14, 2020.

## How to make your Instagram travel photos really stand out

Recently, InterContinental Hotels & Resorts released the results of its InterContinental Icons Research Study, revealing the most over-Instagrammed spots in seven popular cities around the world.

In Paris, the Eiffel Tower took the number one spot, followed by the Louvre Museum, Arc de Triomphe, Luxembourg Gardens and the Catacombs. In London, it was Buckingham Palace, then Tower Bridge, the London Eye, the River Thames Walk and the Wellington Arch.

Down Under, the number one spot went to the Sydney Opera House, followed by Sydney Harbour (and its magnificent Bridge), Bondi Beach, Manly Beach and the Queen Victoria Building. In Shanghai, the honor went to The Bund, followed by the Oriental Pearl Tower, Shanghai Tower, the Nanjing East Road Pedestrian Street, Shanghai World Financial Center and Yuyuan Old Street. In Dubai, Burj Khalifa was the most-tagged spot, followed by the Dubai Desert, Burj Al Arab, Sheikh Zayed Mosque and the Palm Islands.

Mexico City's top spot was the ancient pyramids at Teotihuacan, followed by Palacio de Bellas Artes, Angel de la Independencia, Castillo de Chapultepec and Centro Histórico. New York City was the only one on the list to not feature a building and instead found Central Park to be its most photographed site, followed by Times Square, the Brooklyn Bridge, the Statue of Liberty and Top of the Rock at Rockefeller Center.

The survey showed that people are flocking to the same tried-and-true tourist destinations and while they're popular for a reason, Instagram is quickly becoming saturated with



The Eiffel Tower in Paris is the most over-Instagrammed place in the world. Who knew? (Photo credit: GETTY)

the same exact travel photos of the same exact places. So, what can you do to make sure your pics really stand out? Start with these four easy tips from Lindsey Olander, Senior Editor of travel inspiration site Jetsetter.com.

### Horizontal or vertical? Choose wisely

Decisions, decisions. Instagram allows for horizontal, vertical and square oriented photos, so the world of camera angles is your oyster and the best way to present your image is up to you, the photographer. "Travel photography on Instagram is all about finding that perfect angle, deciding whether a sweeping landscape or small detail works better to

capture the moment or the mood," said Olander. "Although shooting horizontally can capture more in a single frame, posting vertical shots on Instagram allows more flexibility when it comes to cropping."

### Stick to the rule of thirds

Who says the most important part of your photo has to be front and center? When shooting travel photos, you can never go wrong with the Rule of Thirds. Just think of two sets of imaginary horizontal and vertical lines being drawn across your photo and focus the most important elements of your image to be in the places where they meet. "We always follow the Rule of Thirds, using the Instagram grid to crop photos in an interesting way, straighten out horizon lines and focus on color—something that will pop out from the rest of the feed," said Olander.

### Experiment with your camera's features

Don't be afraid to try out all your camera's features to get the right angle and quality for your photo. "Whenever you're capturing something in action—an animal or someone walking—burst mode is a godsend," said Olander. "It allows you to pick exactly which moment in time works best."

### Shoot with your phone's camera, not Instagram

Taking photos with your smartphone's actual camera offers more flexibility when it comes to testing out different modes and sizes, resulting in better-quality photos. "Lastly, never use the camera inside the Instagram app," said Olander. "Your phone's native camera is much more high-quality—if you're not using a more professional camera, that is."

(Source: Forbes)



# Boris Johnson: An unhealthy choice anywhere

➔ One can strongly blame the interference of Zionists and their co-conspirators in British politics. Alleged Russian meddling anywhere is nothing compared to what the Zionists have been doing. No candidate, perhaps ever, has suffered such outrageous attacks as Corbyn did given year all false claims he was in bed with “anti-Semites” simply because he has long insisted on an equitable solution to the plight of Palestinians and the end of the apartheid system in Israel, as well as an end to U.S. and NATO warmongering in the Middle East. Heck, Corbyn probably would have even released the world’s Number One journalist and chronicler of U.S. war crimes and other abuses, Julian Assange, from his torture in Belmarsh dungeon in London and thus obviated extradition to further torture and imprisonment in the U.S.

Corbyn’s advocacy for the many, for the People, versus the oligarchs and plutocrats, the very few, was nullified by the imperialists including especially the Israel lobby. But the election is done now and the question is whether the few (not the many) have gained an even stronger mandate with their allies in the corrupted and bought media, and not just in Britain, to continue wrecking the world for selfish ends. One would have to conclude “yes” for now, but perhaps, perhaps, not forever. The victory in Britain by Power and the powerful, even as they may be strengthened by the possible reelection of Trump next year, who is reaching out to bolster his base of Christian evangelicals and fundamentalists, the utterly ignorant in the U.S., may, with some luck, prove to be their undoing in time even as the Zionists and warmongers for now are gloating over the election results.

Corbyn made errors, aside from not coming out strongly for Brexit, as that has been apparently desired by a majority of Brits. He has not been one not to rage against even his opponents such as the Zionists and against the smears he has suffered. One might say that being relatively “nice” does not work against such vile detractors. So will Senator Bernie Sanders, who could be nominated by the Democrats with some luck, take a lesson from the Johnson victory in Britain? He, a Jew, is already being set up for the same kind of abuse Corbyn failed to counter effectively from the Zionist lobby, and such smears would only be amplified



if somehow he wins the nomination to run against Trump. But perhaps for now it’s better to examine the incitements of Johnson’s victory.

At the top of the list is whether Britain overall will benefit from Johnson’s Brexit? This is unlikely, especially from an economic standpoint, but the jury may remain out on this for a long time. Also, Scotland’s nationalist party, the SNP, looks likely to fight to remain in the EU and for independence, for one thing, and the Irish seem to be studying unification with Northern Ireland and their own independence from London. Both the Irish and the Scots appear to be appalled with the election results. Moreover, Boris Johnson, an uncouth champion of the rich, has positioned Britain to become more of a poodle, if more poodle behavior is possible, to U.S. control and the Trump Administration’s malignant designs. Britain may be severed from the EU, but this merely establishes what amounts to slavery to the demands of the Republicans and Wall Street in the U.S.

Privatizing Britain’s beloved National Health Service at the behest of U.S. corporate plunderers may now be inevitable, and once that begins, even partially, and British citizens could be forced to buy health insurance, there may be a huge backlash against Johnson’s government. In sum, what happens when the public, whether in Britain or the U.S., finally wakes up to the evils of full-blown Facism (which both Trump and Johnson are essentially implementing)? And what happens when the remains of benevolent public institutions and programs in both countries are further eviscerated along with the shredding of the vital social safety nets? Is this not a recipe for revolution in some fashion in the future, especially by those who have sought peace and justice in foreign affairs and domestic relief from plutocratic predators on both sides of the Atlantic? One can only hope, but for now the British elections casts a darker pall everywhere, including over Iran.

## 4 years after Zaria Genocide: A demand for justice

By Yusuf Abdullah

**NIGERIA/ ZARIA** — In the name of Allah Who states “And think not that Allah is unaware of what the wrongdoers do. He only gives them respite till the day on which the eyes will fixedly stare” Q14:42

Peace and blessings of Allah be upon His noble servant, our master Muhammad and his purified progeny.

The piece for this week is on the 4 years after the Zaria genocide and Sheikh el-Zakzaky’s illegal detention along with his wife and other disciples since the unfortunate Zaria pogrom where about a thousand innocent Nigerians were killed by those constitutionally mandated to protect them. The remembrance is marked across the world irrespective of tribal, religious or geographical differences. Individuals and organizations from all walks of life unanimously cry out in quest of justice with regard to the Sheikh, his wife and other oppressed fellows. The fundamental rights of speech and expression among others is used to draw the attention of the Nigerian authority and its masters on the repercussion of the tyranny meted against the Islamic Movement especially in acclaimed democratic setting mandated to respond to the needs and yearnings of the citizenry.

The London-based Islamic Human Rights Commission, an august umbrella of about 30 Islamic and other collaborating nongovernmental organizations as part of Global network for justice at the forefront, calls for international protests to mark the unfortunate event. Beside Nigeria, Iran, Britain, America, Iran, among others remarkable commemorate the genocide which can never be justified “And they ill-treated them For no other reason than That they believed in Allah, Exalted in power, Worthy of all praise! Q85:8. The seven lettered word is the central philosophy behind the establishment of all authorities. According to a popular adage, justice delay is justice denial and injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. So, justice is the key to peace and stability of all nations.

No doubt the unanimous sympathy to the unique scholar, notwithstanding humanitarian nature owes a lot to his responsible and insightful leadership widely known and hailed in the unity, peaceful coexistence and ethno-religious tolerance in Nigeria. Since the unfortunate massacre, the demands of Islamic Movement apparently remain unchanged: unconditional release of the Sheikh, his wife and other



detainees; handing over the bodies of the slaughtered and mass grave to the Movement for proper Islamic burial; compensation of the destructions made, and of course the urgent need to bring the mass murderers of peaceful and innocent citizens to book.

Rallies and peaceful protests were incessantly organized by the Movement and all justice loving people across the world. Even though the calls fall flat to the ears of intended authorities, no matter how long, hope is never lost in the struggle for justice and there is always limit to oppressions. Despite the contemptuous nature of the government, the Movement is optimistic no matter what Allah the Most High is with the oppressed. A very important point reminds the world at this juncture was the government’s total disregard to the Justice Kolawale Abuja Court 6 verdict to release the ailing Sheikh and his wife unconditionally, provide a befitting house and security for them with a compensation of fifty million Naira, which is a blatant disrespect to the rule of law.

Among other endless questions are; on what ground was the Sheikh initially arrested? In whose interest is the detention of the elderly and ailing Sheikh and his wife? What is the government’s stand on the Federal High Court verdict? Why shouldn’t the government respond to the call of millions in Nigerians and beyond to allow him go to the country of his choice without interference? And to what extent should detention continue? What is the stand of the government on the over one thousand Nigerians killed in the Zaria pogrom and related incidences? In the latest development unfortunately, the Sheikh was recently transferred to Kaduna central prison with their

dilapidated nature and regardless of his compounded problems. Does the government really wants solution to this problem? If peace, unity and progress of this country were the uncompromising yardsticks to assess significant relevance of the citizenry, who can dare to compare the august Shaikh with any scholar, politician or else in the history of Nigeria? Using my constitutional right as a concerned citizen that contributes his best to the progress of the nation in a multi-faceted dimension, I draw the attention of those in authority on the above subject as the unique Sheikh and his patient wife clock 4 years in illegal detention, in defiance of the valid federal high court order. The indifference on the side of the government cannot help the country at all. No doubt, justice is the key to the much-needed peace and stability of our nation which the Sheikh apparently symbolizes.

In its forty years of existence, the Islamic Movement was never found wanting in vandalism or bloodshed. The Shaikh is widely credited for unequalled role in the promotion of peaceful coexistence and ethno-religious tolerance. He is deeply concerned on the wellbeing of the country and its citizens as his Movement was described as the most organized Muslim group in Nigeria. Allah states “O you who believe! Stand out firmly For Allah, as witnesses To fair dealing, and let not The hatred of others To you make you swerve To wrong and depart from Justice. Be just: that is Next to piety: and fear Allah, For Allah is well - acquainted With all ye do” Q5:8

The Sheikh is well known for sincerity, broad mindedness in theoretical and practical teachings of Islam. He is particularly known for cordial relations

and ethno-religious tolerance. Basing his teachings on the Ahlul-bait perspectives, the Sheikh has drawn the attention on the saying of Ameerul mumineen that “a man is either brother to you in religion or a partner in creation among others”. As such, he is the champion of Muslim unity evident in his annual Unity week and other related programmes. He is particularly known in the face of fighting tyranny and oppression, for which he suffers untold hardship for the past four decades. He is apparently a sincere, honest and indefatigable Islamic scholar worthy of the world’s respect. And in contrast to the brutal treatment meted against the renowned Sheikh, he doubtlessly, deserves most famous of the country’s national awards.

In the compendium of thirteen speeches delivered at Najaf in 1970, Imam Khomeini stated; “The scholars of Islam have a duty to struggle against all attempts by oppressors to establish a monopoly over the sources of wealth or to make illicit use of them. They must not allow the masses to remain hungry and deprived while plundering oppressors usurp the sources of wealth and live in opulence”. He also said “A clergyman should be such that when the people see him, they should remember the messenger of Allah (S). You have accepted this heavy responsibility and it is you that should guide this people to the end”.

The well-known concept of Wilayatul faqih - governance of the jurist- was built on this basis. Sheikh el-Zakzaky has been rightly on this track enduring oppression on himself and creating public awareness. It is imperative to commend those putting hands for justice to prevail across the globe. That was the rationale behind all prophetic mission. Allah states “Verily, We sent Our Messengers with manifest signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance that people may act with justice .....” Q2:247. In an oft repeated quote, Sheikh Usman Bn Fodio - the great revivalist of Islam in West Africa - said “a kingdom can endure with unbelief, but it cannot endure with injustice.

As Muslims, most importantly, we believe that Allah has prohibited oppression and injustice, and everyone will account for his/her deed here and hereafter. No doubt, millions of the Sheikh’s followers and other justice seeking people across the world deserve to be listened immediately!

At this juncture, as usual I wish to emphasize the urgent need for the ailing Sheikh’s unconditional release along with his wife, other disciples and for justice to be done.

## Indian Citizenship Bill will Ghettoize Muslims

By Asif Durrani

**DAILY TIMES** — The passage of Citizens Amendment Bill (CAB) 2019 by the Indian Parliament allowing Indian citizenship to minorities facing persecution in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan is yet another tool acquired by the Hindutva regime to malign Islam and persecute Muslims in India. The bill identifies Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis (Zoroastrians) and Christians as minorities facing persecution in these countries and allows them to get refugee status in India and Indian citizenship.

The intriguing question is as to why India had to discriminate against the Muslims while allowing citizenship to other minorities and that too from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan? One may wonder why would a Muslim from a majority Muslim country take asylum or seek Indian citizenship when Muslims of that country face discrimination and are treated as second-rate citizens. The only intent of this piece of legislation could be to show these three Muslim countries in bad light. One may understand Indian bias against Pakistan, but naming Afghanistan and Bangladesh is surprising especially when the leadership of these countries receive political and financial support from India. Afghan Charge d’ Affaires in New Delhi Tahir Qadyri took strong exception to the CAB and Indian claims of mishandling of minorities in Afghanistan. Already Afghans are miffed over negative portrayal of Ahmad Shah Abdali in the new Indian movie “Panipat”.

The international reaction to CAB has yet to come. However, the US International Commission on Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has expressed deep concern about the Bill and contemplating to recommend sanctions against the Home Minister Amit Shah and other top leaders of India. USCIRF, an independent bipartisan federal government body, called Bill’s passage “deeply troubling”. In its statement the USCIRF rightly pointed out that “in conjunction with the ongoing National Register of Citizens (NRC) process in Assam and nationwide NRC that the Home Minister seeks to propose, USCIRF fears that the Indian government is creating a religious test for Indian citizenship from millions of Muslims”.

Within India, opposition parties have condemned the bill but seem to have been marginalized due to overwhelming majority the ruling BJP enjoys; Modi government got 311 votes in Lok Sabha (lower house) in support of the bill against 80 while in Rajya Sabha (upper house) it got 125 against 105 votes. Congress leader Sonia Gandhi described passage of the bill as “a dark day in the constitutional history of India”. There have been violent demonstrations in Assam and other North Eastern states against the CAB as this legislation while disenfranchising Muslims would grant citizenship to Hindus migrating from Bangladesh. Maharashtra IG Police Abdur Rehman tendered his resignation protesting against the passage of CAB. He contended that if NRC and CAB are implemented jointly, the people belonging to the non-Muslim community even if unable to produce the required documents will be declared refugees and will be given Indian citizenship. This means the real burden will be only on Muslims to prove their citizenship. This will cause statelessness and hardships to Muslims who have been living in India for thousands of years and majority of them are the original inhabitants of India.

Home Minister Amit Shah, however, defended the bill, saying “the bill has nothing to do with the Muslims in the country...the Muslims in the country would be able to live here with dignity, are living here, and will continue to do so”. Prime Minister Modi described passage of CAB in his twitter message as “...in line with our ethos of assimilation and compassion, it ensures a better life for persecuted minorities from other nations”.

From international human rights law perspective, approval of Citizens Amendment Bill (CAB) is in violation particularly of the (a) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Articles 7 & 15); (b) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Articles 20 & 26); (c) International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Article 4), and (d) Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (Articles 1 & 3). These international conventions and instruments provide, among other things, that (i) all persons are to be treated equally before the law; (ii) no one should be discriminated, and (iii) legal protection must be provided against discrimination. The CAB, however, denies Muslims the right of refuge or citizenship which is against the basic human rights.

Moreover, 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons provides the definition of a “stateless person” and the foundation of the international legal framework to address statelessness. Similarly, 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness is the leading instrument that sets rules for the conferral and non-withdrawal of citizenship to prevent statelessness. Therefore, Indian legislation is not only discriminatory against the Muslims but in contravention of international norms in the conduct of international relations.

There is another aspect of Indian duplicity while enacting CAB; 1951 Refugee Convention talks about refugees fleeing war or persecution. India is not party to Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol and does not have a national refugee framework. Secondly, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families aims to promote “equality of opportunity” and “treatment of migrant workers”. India is not a party to it either. Therefore, even if CAB does not violate the text of these laws in strictest of legal terms, it is in violation of the spirit of all human right treaties and instruments. Perhaps the movers of CAB legislation forgot to take into account India’s international obligations on refugees and citizenship issues.

It is now becoming clear that Hindutva agenda is based on creating fear psychosis amongst the minorities, which is particularly blatant towards Muslims because of their substantive number (200 million) but equally patronizing towards other minorities. The Muslims of India have been squeezed and pushed to the corner. The next move by the Hindutva forces would be to squeeze them economically and confine them to ghettos. It reminds of the days when Nazi Germany displayed a sense of superiority and discriminated against the Jews. Since the major powers of the time tried to appease instead of reprimanding Hitler they had to repent later and bear the brunt of Second World War with massive death and destruction. Indian action is no different and its appeasement could be a precursor to the ensuing disaster which not only will create fissures in the Indian society but also engulf the entire region and the world. The Hindutva agenda and its promoters must be preempted now; there is no room for complacency.



## Khwarizmi Youth Award announces winners

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The 21st Khwarizmi Youth Award announced the winners during a ceremony held in Tehran on Sunday with Science Minister Mansour Gholami in attendance, IRNA news agency reported.

During the ceremony, 35 Iranian laureates received awards for their scientific achievements, 10 awardees were selected among researchers and technologists and 25 others among students.



Khwarizmi Youth Award is a national version of Khwarizmi International Award which only Iranians who are less than 30 years old can participate. The national award started in 1999 to honor young scientists and embolden them to keep taking even bigger steps in their research career.

On the other hand, the Khwarizmi International Award, which was named in memory of Abu Ja'far Mohammad ibn Mousa Khwarizmi, the great Iranian mathematician and astronomer (770-840 C.E), is given annually by the Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technology (IROST) to both Iranian and foreign individuals who have made outstanding achievements in research, innovation and invention, in fields related to science and technology.

The first edition of the Khwarizmi Award, in 1987, called for Iranian nationals to present their outstanding contribution, invention or innovation.

## Australia set to face its hottest temperatures on record

Australian forecasters have warned the country could be facing its warmest day on record as a summer heatwave moves across the country. Temperatures are likely to significantly exceed 40C in many areas, according to the country's Bureau of Meteorology.

The highest ever maximum temperature for the continent stands at 50.7C, set on 2 January 1960.

Health and animal welfare warnings are in place for extreme weather which is expected to affect large portions of the country mostly during the second half of next week.

"We've seen extraordinary temperatures over Western Australia over the past few days," said Diana Eadie of the BOM.

"They'll continue over those parts of the country over the weekend. "As we head towards next weekend, that heat will extend further to the east before really intensifying towards the latter part of next week," she told the ABC.

"At this stage with these sorts of temperatures that we're forecasting ... it looks like we could break that record over a number of consecutive days towards the end of next week.

"We will potentially see the hottest day on record across all of Australia."

She said many parts of the country could expect to see temperatures in excess of 45C from Wednesday onwards.

Australia could also see its highest average temperature record broken. This measure takes all the maximum temperatures recorded on single day and finds the average, which currently stands at 40.3C measured on 7 January 2013.

(Source: The Independent)

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### California gets landmark green law

(July 22, 2002)

One of the first laws to tackle greenhouse gasses in the United States, The Clean Cars Act, is due to come into effect today. The law is something of a snub to President Bush, who recently refused to sign up to an international treaty reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This report from David Willis:

The Clean Cars Act is the first law in America **to force** car manufacturers to find ways of reducing the **emission of greenhouse gasses**, including carbon dioxide, which cause global warming. Amongst the ideas already **mooted**, vehicles which are lighter and more aerodynamic and therefore **consume** less fuel or **imposing a surcharge** on some of the larger cars and vans in order **to deter** people from buying them.

In California, more than half the **motoring population** drive what is known as a sports utility vehicle -- trucks which average around twelve miles to the gallon (approximately 0.43km/l). Yet surveys showed the majority of people here favor measures to reduce global warming. The big car manufacturers, of course, are not so keen. They spent millions of dollars in an attempt to defeat this legislation, warning it would cut their profits and raise the cost of new cars. Now they're considering forcing **a state-wide referendum** on the subject in an attempt to get the law overturned.

Although the US produces nearly a quarter of the world's carbon emissions, President Bush has refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol, committing rich countries to reducing air pollution. Some believe California's move will **shame** other states and eventually the federal government into action on the matter.

■ **Words to force:** to make someone do something, even if they don't want to  
■ **emission of greenhouse gasses:** release of harmful gasses into the air  
■ **mooted:** suggested  
■ **consume:** use  
■ **imposing a surcharge:** making the price artificially higher  
■ **to deter:** if you deter someone from doing something, you encourage them not to do it with the threat of some negative action – here, the threat is that they will have to pay more  
■ **the motoring population:** people who drive  
■ **a state-wide referendum:** a vote held across the whole state to see if the public agree  
■ **shame:** if you shame someone, you make them feel embarrassed or guilty about their actions

(Source: BBC)

# €100m proposed to mitigate SDSs

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** — The national budget bill for the next calendar year (starting on March 20, 2020) has proposed €100 million from National Development Fund to tackle sand and dust storms (SDSs), IRNA reported on Saturday.

Last year, €100 million from National Development Fund was earmarked to SDSs mitigation, however, 50 percent of which was provided, Ali Mohammad Tahmasebi, head of the national working group for SDSs mitigation, said.

He further expressed hope that the proposed budget to be approved and provided.

Over the past three years, actions have been taken in three areas of preventive, reformative and revitalizing, and most of which was done by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Department of Environment., he said.

Sections also concerned the Ministry of Health, Meteorological Organization, Geological Survey and Mineral Explorations, which was very broad and varied in its importance and scope, he added.

He went on to explain that 27 provinces are dealing with sand and dust storms; prevention measures have been taken like launching a warning system, operational activities including runoff management, dredging and moisturizing the dried wetlands which are SDSs hotspots.

Facilitating the entry of water to restore vegetation in dried areas giving raise to SDSs, including, planting seedlings and saplings, he noted.

Last year a series of actions were defined for rangeland and watershed management, including irrigation and planting, which yielded good results, but a number of tasks such as grazing management were also carried out, which was also effective in addition to low cost, he also explained.

Next year, we will be looking for both highly effective and economical solutions, such as grazing management, and limiting livestock entrance to SDSs hotspots, he stated.

■ **34.6 million ha of land turned into SDSs sources**

According to the latest statistics, 34.6 million hectares of land has been identified that generate dust, however, internal sources are less severe than the surrounding external hotspots, Tahmasebi said.



**According to the latest statistics, 34.6 million hectares of lands have been identified for dust generation across Iran, 15 to 20 percent of which are highly active, 25 percent are moderately active, about 60 percent of the sources are slightly active.**

He went on to note that 15 to 20 percent of these hotspots are highly active and 25 percent of which are moderately active, about 60 percent of the sources are slightly active, "so we should definitely be alert to SDSs hotspots with low dust generation to prevent them from intensity."

SDSs hotspots are spread across 25 provinces of the country, varying in size from province to province, as 5,000 to nearly 6 million hectares identified in each province, therefore, considering the intensity and dispersal in each province, a ten-year plan must be developed to clarify the actions and implementation period, he suggested.

"We work more on internal hotspots, of course, we started cooperation with IMO to identify external dust sources and hot-

spots around the country, once the results have been determined, we will try to take action on external hotspots in the context of bilateral and multilateral negotiations and requesting help of international bodies in Iran," he concluded.

■ **Sistan-Baluchestan hit hardest by dust storms**

Sistan, located north of Sistan-Baluchestan province, is frequently hit by sand and dust storms.

It was announced that strong SDSs with as fast as 100 kilometers per hour speed have stricken Sistan-Baluchestan province over 19 times since last year.

PM concentration even peaked at 60 times above the safe levels in the region.

The sources of SDSs are both internal and external that usually raise from external

## Experts raise new fears about killer air pollution in UK

The UK's failure to meet World Health Organisation standards limiting the amount of ultra-fine particles in the air represents a major danger to health that is only now being recognised, experts claim.

Studies published this year link the particles to cancers, lung and heart disease, adverse effects on foetal development, and poor lung and brain development in children. They are considered a key threat to health because they go deep into the lungs and then reach other organs, including the brain. But European standards allow the levels of particles in the air to be 2.5 times higher than those stipulated by the WHO.

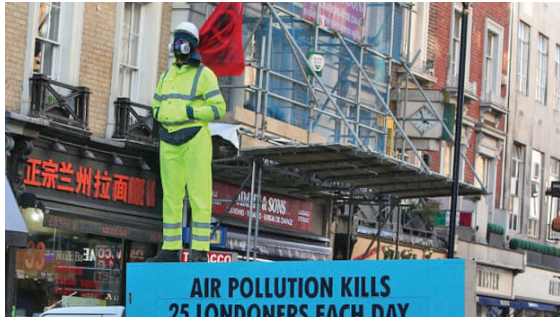
Professor Annette Peters, director of the Institute of Epidemiology at the Helmholtz Zentrum, Munich, said Europe – and the UK – urgently needs to introduce tougher standards. She said: "Particles are a major and invisible danger to our health, especially in London and our big cities.

The US has a standard of 12 micrograms of ultra-fine particles per cubic metre, while the WHO standard is 10 micrograms.

"We [the UK and EU's limits] are currently at 25 micrograms per cubic metre – double the US standards," said Peters, who warned that scientific evidence confirming the threat they pose to human health "has really strengthened this year".

"We initially had evidence of the effect on the lungs and heart, but now we also have evidence that it alters the metabolism as well as impacting the brain."

Vehicle emissions are predominantly to blame, but domes-



tic heating systems and industrial pollutants are also factors. "Recent studies from London and our work in a medium-sized community in southern Germany show there really is evidence that the ultra-fine particles go beyond the lungs," Peters said.

"Colleagues of mine have been able to show that ultra-fine particles are able to reactivate the herpes virus which lies dormant among carriers." She said urgent studies were needed to look at the impact of fine particles on cognitive development, especially in children. Studies have documented that adverse health effects are observed even at concentrations well below the recommended WHO levels. According to a paper, written by Peters and published in the Lancet, ambient air pollution now ranks among the top 10 major risk factors for attributable death world-

wide and leads to an average loss of life expectancy of approximately one year in Europe.

Peters said ultra-fine particles could carry several thousand kilometres. "In most times you don't see or smell it, the pollution, so it's clear, if you look to India or the far east, the pollution is very visible. Here, we have blue skies but that doesn't mean we have truly clean air."

Studies in London confirm wide geographical variations in the amount of fine particles in the air. While Oxford Street suffers major concentrations, nearby Hyde Park is considered far cleaner.

Professor Jon Bennett, consultant respiratory physician and chair of the British Thoracic Society's Board, described the particles as "a real and present health danger to society".

"It is really concerning that babies and children are particularly susceptible as air pollution can impair immune-system development in the womb and adversely affect children's cognitive development," he said.

A WHO report estimated that in 2016 air pollution contributed to more than half a million deaths from respiratory tract infections in children under five years of age.

"Everyone should have the right to breathe clean air," Bennett said. "We must have a harder-hitting and better-funded national strategy that really tackles this issue across the board – including fast-tracking the delivery of more clean air zones in our most polluted cities and areas."

(Source: The Guardian)

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ↔ ع

## Clean air days double for Tehraners this year

Tehrani citizens have experienced a 2-fold rise in the number of clean air days since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2018) compared to the same period last year, an official with Department of Environment has said.

Since the aforementioned period, clean air stayed in the capital for 27 days, while last year, during the same period, Tehraners breathed clean air for only 14 days, IRNA quoted Shina Ansari as saying on Sunday. Also, the air quality of the capital was healthy for 262 days, while being unhealthy for sensitive groups for 59 days, she said, adding that compared to the same period last year, Tehran's air quality reached healthy levels for 229 days and 97 days of unhealthy for sensitive groups has hit the capital.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “-plast, -plasty, -plastic”

■ **Meaning:** living cell or particle  
■ **For example:** The next approach is **angioplasty**, in which a catheter is used to balloon open the arrowed part of the artery.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Head something off

■ **Meaning:** to prevent something from happening, especially something bad  
■ **For example:** The President intervened to head off the conflict.

## IDIOM

### Nip something in the bud

■ **Explanation:** to prevent something from becoming a problem by stopping it as soon as it starts  
■ **For example:** Try to nip this kind of bad behavior in the bud.

## تهرانی‌ها امسال دو برابر بیشتر روزهای پاک داشتند

مدیرکل دفتر پایش فراگیر سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست گفت: تهرانی‌ها از ابتدای امسال تا امروز (۱۲ اسفند ۹۷) نسبت به مدت مشابه سال گذشته، دو برابر هوای پاک تنفس کردند.

شینا انصاری روز یکشنبه در گفت‌وگو با ایرنا افزود: تهران از ابتدای امسال تا امروز، ۲۷ روز هوای پاک داشته در حالیکه سال گذشته در مدت مشابه، تعداد روزهای پاک ۱۴ روز بوده است.

وی اظهار داشت: همچنین از ابتدای امسال تاکنون، کیفیت هوای پایتخت برای ۲۶۲ روز قابل قبول و ۵۹ روز ناسالم برای گروه‌های حساس بوده که در مدت مشابه سال گذشته به ترتیب ۲۲۹ و ۹۷ روز بوده که هشت روز نیز ناسالم برای تمام گروه‌ها بوده است.



## New leaks provide further evidence that OPCW suppressed & altered findings on Douma ‘chemical attack’

A new cache of internal documents reveal that members of the OPCW team tasked with probing the Douma “chemical attack” protested the organization’s final report on the incident, which they said misrepresented their conclusions.

In a memo addressed to OPCW Director General Fernando Arias, one scientist who participated in the OPCW’s fact finding mission (FFM) wrote that there are “about 20 inspectors who have expressed concern” over how the OPCW presented its findings on the alleged Syrian chemical attack. According to the memorandum, the organization’s final report does not reflect the FFM’s findings, presented in their interim report, which is also part of the new document dump.

The new documents, released by WikiLeaks, are the latest evidence undermining the OPCW’s final report on the Syrian attack.

The April 2018 incident reportedly killed dozens of Syrian civilians, and was used by the United States and several NATO allies to justify airstrikes against Syrian military targets. The OPCW was later sent to the site to investigate, and the organization’s final report gave credibility to the accusation that



Damascus had used chemical weapons.

The memo goes on to state that the final report “does not reflect the views of all the team members that deployed to Douma.” In fact, the team on the ground in Douma was apparently excluded from drafting the final report – only one member of the

fact finding mission, a paramedic, directly contributed. The final document was instead authored by a separate group that had operated from “Country X,” believed to be Turkey.

The team’s findings, outlined in their preliminary report, illustrate some of these

inconsistencies. For example, the team expressed uncertainty about the origin of the cylinders which were allegedly used to release chlorine. Washington and its allies claim that the cylinders were dropped from the sky, pointing to Damascus as the culprit.

However, the original interim report said that there was no strong evidence to support this theory. In fact, a follow-up investigation into the matter concluded that it was more likely that the cylinders “were manually placed... rather than being delivered from aircraft.”

After the conclusions failed to make it into the final report, a FFM team member attempted to archive the analysis of the cylinders in a secure registry, known as the Documents Registry Archive (DRA). According to journalist Peter Hitchens, a senior OPCW official ordered his subordinates to “remove all traces” of the findings from the archive.

The documents support allegations made by whistleblowers – and corroborated by previous leaks – that the OPCW excluded and manipulated key findings in its final report on the incident.

(Source: RT)

## India: Several killed in Assam protests against citizenship law

The death toll from violent protests against a new citizenship law in India has risen to six, including four shot by police, with authorities maintaining internet bans and curfews in some northeastern regions.

Tension remained high for a fifth straight day in Assam state’s biggest city, Guwahati, as four people died in hospital after being shot, while another died when a shop he was sleeping in was set on fire and a sixth after he was beaten up during a protest, the AFP news agency quoted the local officials as saying.

Some 5,000 people took part in a fresh demonstration in Guwahati on Sunday, with hundreds of police watching on as they sang, chanted and carried banners with the words: “Long live Assam”.

Officials said oil and gas production in the state was hit by the curfew, although the restrictions were eased during the day on Sunday with some shops opening.



Violent protests have raged in Assam since India’s Parliament passed the new law on Wednesday, which allows New Delhi to grant citizenship to undocumented immigrants who entered India from three neighboring countries on or before December 31, 2014 - but not if they are Muslim.

Critics say the law, pushed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Hindu nationalist government, violates the secular principles of India’s constitution by discriminating against a community.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## French union calls for break in transport strikes over Christmas

France’s CFTD union is opposed to transport strikes over the Christmas period but will call for new actions in January if the government does not drop a pension reform proposal that would encourage more years of work, its leader said on Sunday.

In a major overhaul of its pension scheme, the French government has proposed that people work two years longer to get a full pension, drawing a hostile response from trade unions who said they would step up strike action to force an about-face.

The reform-minded CFTD had stayed out of the strike, which has caused travel chaos across the country since Dec. 5. But it said a “red line” had been crossed and called on members to join mass protests on Tuesday.

“Let’s be clear: CFTD railway workers do not want a blockage during the holi-

days. Then in January (...) if the text has not changed, the CFTD will continue to mobilize,” CFTD Secretary General Laurent Berger told Journal du Dimanche.

“We should not make users pay the bill. It would be unbearable if they could not spend this holiday season with their loved ones. We have to break the deadlock,” he also said.

In contrast, hardline CGT union on Thursday had warned that there would be no break for Christmas unless the government dropped the whole pension reform plan.

Prime Minister Edouard Philippe told Le Parisien Dimanche he would meet unions next week and asked everyone to take responsibility ahead of Christmas.

“I don’t think the French would accept that some people could deprive them of this moment,” Philippe said.

(Source: Reuters)

## UK opposition chief Corbyn ‘sorry’ for election wipeout

Britain’s main opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn apologized Sunday for waging a disastrous campaign that handed Prime Minister Boris Johnson a mandate to take the UK out of the EU next month.

But the veteran socialist defended his far-left platform and blamed the media for helping relegate his century-old party to its worst performance since before World War II.

“I will make no bones about it. The election result on Thursday was a body blow for everyone who so desperately needs real change in our country,” Corbyn wrote in the Sunday Mirror newspaper.

“I wanted to unite the country that I love but I’m sorry that we came up short and I take my responsibility for it.”

Thursday’s snap general election turned into a re-run of the 2016 EU membership referendum in which Johnson championed the Brexit cause.

Johnson now commands an 80-vote majority in the 650-seat House of Commons -- a margin last enjoyed by the late Tory icon Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s.

A somber but combative Corbyn said Friday that he will step aside once Labor completes a period of “reflection” about its mistakes.

The party is expected to have a new leader in place before England votes yet again in local polls in May.

Yet the 70-year-old has no clear successor after a year of infighting between a protectionist old guard backed by the unions and more metropolitan members with pro-European views.

Corbyn tried to find a balance between the two camps by taking a neutral position on Brexit -- a decision that Labor

finance spokesman John McDonnell proved to be fatal.

“What we tried to do is bring both sides together and we failed,” McDonnell told the BBC.

Labor’s campaign was also dogged by allegations of anti-Semitism that forced a handful of senior lawmakers to resign.

Corbyn tried to shift the campaign’s focus on bread-and-butter social issues important to Labor voters.

“But despite our best efforts, this election was ultimately about Brexit,” Corbyn admitted in his letter.

“The Tory campaign, amplified by most of the media, managed to persuade many that only Boris Johnson could ‘get Brexit done’,” he said in reference to Johnson’s campaign slogan.

“We will learn the lessons of this defeat.”

The soul-searching and recriminations have been accompanied by questions in other Western countries about how far left traditionally liberal voters are prepared to go.

“Look what happens when the Labor party moves so, so far to the left,” US Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Biden warned Friday.

Yet Corbyn signalled Sunday that he wanted to leave behind a radical legacy that keeps Labor’s focus on vast social spending and redistribution of wealth.

He came under intense criticism from more moderate supporters Sunday for claiming that his platform ultimately proved right.

“I am proud that on austerity, on corporate power, on inequality and on the climate emergency we have won the arguments and rewritten the terms of political debate,” he



wrote in a separate column in The Observer newspaper.

Several prominent Labor members who are viewed as potential leaders sharply disagreed.

“It’s time to try something different, rather than re-enacting old battles,” lawmaker Jess Phillips wrote in The Observer.

“Everywhere I campaign, I heard the same thing. It was less about Brexit and more about belief. In these places of generations of Labor voting, they did not believe a Labour government would or could deliver for them.”

Labor parliamentarian Lisa Nandy agreed that the party had “lost touch with the day-to-day... experience of many of the people we want to represent”.

“If we are going to represent the country, we need to understand it, to see it as it really is, not how we might imagine it to be,” she wrote in The Observer.

(Source: AFP)

## Turkish ships chase Israeli vessel out of Cypriot waters

Turkish navy ships have intercepted an Israeli research vessel in Cypriot waters, over which Ankara claims jurisdiction, forcing it to leave the area in a move that could negatively impact an ambitious Israeli project to pipe natural gas to Europe.

Quoting unnamed senior Israeli officials, Israel’s channel 13 news reported Saturday that the rare incident occurred two weeks ago when Turkish vessels approached Bat Galim.

Turkish navy officers radioed the Israeli ship and demanded to know its business in the area, and then ordered it to leave. The Israeli vessel had no choice but to comply

and depart, said the report.

According to the report, the Israeli ship was conducting research in coordination with Cypriot officials and the Cypriot government.

Over the past year, Turkey has sent military ships as well as drilling ships to search for crude oil in the waters.

Recently, tensions have risen between Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus regarding gas fields discovered in the eastern Mediterranean.

In an interview with Reuters in September, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan accused Greek Cypriots of trying to deprive

Northern Cyprus of its rights.

EU member Cyprus and Turkey have argued for years regarding the ownership of fossil fuels in the eastern Mediterranean, where Ankara says Turkish Cypriots are entitled to a share of the resources.

Tensions rose again last month when Turkey signed agreements with Libya on maritime boundaries and military cooperation in the Mediterranean.

Erdogan said the maritime deal with Libya -- which maps out a boundary between the two countries in the energy-rich eastern Mediterranean close to the Greek island of Crete -- was in line with international law.

Israel’s Channel 13 said tensions could negatively affect an Israeli project to pipe natural gas to Europe. The pipeline is set to pass through Cyprus and Greece’s territorial waters.

According to the report, an Israeli embassy official in Ankara was summoned last week to be warned that the pipeline would require Turkey’s approval since it has to pass through Turkey’s economic waters.

“The Turks are trying to establish themselves as the ones running the show, and that is very worrying,” an Israeli official told Channel 13.

(Source: agencies)

## UK PM Johnson cannot keep Scotland in union against its will: Sturgeon

Scotland’s first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, warned Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Sunday that he could not keep Scotland in the United Kingdom against the country’s will.

Johnson and his government have repeatedly said they will not give the go ahead for another referendum on Scot-

tish independence, but Sturgeon said after the Scottish National Party won 48 of Scotland’s 59 seats in the UK parliament, her party had been given a mandate for one.

“If he thinks ... saying no is the end of the matter then he is going to find himself completely and utterly wrong,” Sturgeon told the BBC’s Andrew Marr Show.

“You cannot hold Scotland in the union against its will ... If the United Kingdom is to continue it can only be by consent. And if Boris Johnson is confident in the case for the union then he should be confident enough to make that case and allow people to decide.”

(Source: Reuters)

## Abdul-Mahdi censures U.S. blacklisting of counter-terror figures

➔ Both factions are part of Hashd al-Sha’abi, an umbrella paramilitary group that has actively cooperated with the national army in sweeping counter-terrorism operations.

Iraqi businessman and political figure Khamis al-Khanjar was also included in the U.S. sanctions list over alleged bribery.

The U.S. Treasury accused the individuals of “widespread forced disappearances, abductions, killings, and torture,” saying the punitive measures block their financial transactions with and travel to America.

“I’m embarrassed. Designate me a terrorist! A global terrorist. What is this Treasury list? That means the money we have in U.S. banks will go,” he said sarcastically.

Khanjar’s party condemned the accusations leveled against him as “extremely funny and illogical.”

“He was never an official, nor was his party part of the government,” it added.

On Saturday, thousands of Iraqis took to the streets of Baghdad to protest the sanctions and Washington’s interference in their country’s internal affairs.

They trampled on giant U.S. flags and staged mock hangings using effigies of U.S. President Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Over the past weeks, Iraq has witnessed street protests over unemployment and a lack of basic services.

The rallies have, however, taken a violent turn, with some participants vandalizing public property and opening fire on demonstrators.

(Source: Press TV)

## Yemeni army warns Saudi-led coalition against further Hudaydah truce violations

➔ The document includes three provisions: a ceasefire along the Hudaydah front and the redeployment of armed forces out of the city and its port; an agreement on prisoner exchange; and a statement of understanding on the southern Yemeni city of Ta’iz.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched a devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing the government of Hadi back to power and crushing the Ansarullah movement.

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

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

(Source: Press TV)

## Hariri set for PM appointment

Saad Hariri is “likely” to be designated as Lebanon prime minister next week, a source from the presidency said.

Hariri, currently the caretaker PM, returned as the most likely candidate following the withdrawal of businessman Samir Khatib last week.

However, Hariri faces a daunting task of forming a new government if he is nominated by MPs. President Michel Aoun has called for binding parliamentary consultations on Monday.

“He [Hariri] is likely to be designated on Monday, but we don’t know the form of the next government or who will be in it,” so it’s likely to take “some time” for the next government to be formed, the Baabda Palace source told The Daily Star.

“Nothing has been agreed upon,” the source added, in reference to the type of government that will be formed.

Aoun has been unsuccessful in trying to reach an agreement on the type of government before a premier is designated.

Hariri wants to head a government made up of experts, independent from political parties. But Aoun - with Hezbollah and Amal Movement - has expressed wanting a government made up of political representatives and independent experts.

Aoun’s son-in-law, Gebran Bassil, who also heads the Free Patriotic Movement, said his party wouldn’t participate in a government headed by Hariri.

(Source: Daily Star)

## U.S. to announce 4,000-troop drawdown from Afghanistan: media

The Trump administration will announce as early as this week plans to withdraw around 4,000 troops from Afghanistan, U.S. media reported.

Talks between the United States and the Taliban resumed a week ago as the parties sought a path to reduce violence or even reach a ceasefire.

They were paused by Washington Thursday, however, after an attack by the militant group near a key U.S. air base north of Kabul that left two civilians dead and dozens injured.

There are 13,000 U.S. troops currently in Afghanistan. NBC on Saturday cited three current and former U.S. officials as saying the Trump administration intends to announce the drawdown of 4,000 troops from Afghanistan.

Two of those said some of the troops would be redeploying early, while others would not be replaced when they end their term. CNN cited one official in the Trump administration as saying the announcement on a drawdown could happen this week, but that the “timing remains in flux.”

The State Department did not reply to an AFP request to comment on Sunday, and the Pentagon referred questions to the White House, which had no immediate comment.

According to a draft agreement from September -- reached after years of negotiations -- the Taliban would be required to commit to certain security measures, agree to talks with the Afghan government and promise a reduction of violence in exchange for a U.S. troop withdrawal.

(Source: AFP)



## Momota wins 11th badminton title for record-breaking year

World number one Kento Momota fought back from a game down to win a record 11th title of the year on Sunday with victory at the BWF World Tour Finals.

The peerless Japanese player defeated Indonesia's Anthony Ginting 17-21, 21-17, 21-14 in 87 high-quality minutes in the final at the season-ending showpiece in Guangzhou.

Momota celebrates a new mark in men's badminton, overtaking Malaysian great Lee Chong Wei's 10 tournament wins in 2010.

"At this World Tour Finals I played carefully from the first match partly with the aim of winning an 11th title," the 25-year-old Momota said. "Even in tough games I did not give up."

Momota was pushed all the way by the speedy Ginting and the Japanese fell 12-5 down in the deciding third game to the world number eight.

However, the reigning two-time world champion surged back. Ginting was trailing 17-14 when he called the doctor on court for treatment on his right foot.

The fading Indonesian continued but Momota rammed home his advantage to seal a stellar season in style.

The 23-year-old Ginting has now tasted defeat in all five of his finals this year.

"He led (in the deciding game) but I was patient," said Momota, who was banned for a year in 2016 for illegal gambling.

"And then I got to know that he was suffering pain so all I needed to do was stay calm."

(Source: Eurosport)

## Lampard wants Chelsea players to show more personality

Chelsea manager Frank Lampard said he understood the frustration of supporters after his side failed to excite them once again in their 1-0 Premier League home defeat by Bournemouth on Saturday.

Lampard's fourth-placed team suffered their fourth loss in five games with midfielder Dan Gosling sealing all three points for the visitors, who ended their five-match losing streak.

Former England international Lampard said that his youthful team, which had racked up a string of victories earlier in the campaign, lacked the urgency and personality needed to carve open struggling Bournemouth.

"In front of our fans we're not playing well enough and getting enough results," Lampard told reporters.

Chelsea suffered a similar 1-0 home defeat against West Ham United last month and were comprehensively beaten 3-1 at Everton after another lackluster performance last weekend.

"The fans shouldn't be excited if we're playing 10 balls across our back four. That's not a team I want to manage," Lampard added.

"Some responsibility is on the players to excite them and have the personality to take the ball and beat someone.

"I can't find anyone wanting in terms of how we apply ourselves but what we do on the pitch is the main thing, and at the moment it's not good enough."

Lampard's side visit London rivals Tottenham Hotspur next Sunday, before hosting relegation-threatened Southampton and travelling to Arsenal later this month.

(Source: Reuters)

## Champions League expansion plan angers Klopp

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp has reacted angrily to a proposal that could see the Champions League group stage transformed into a 32-team division.

Reigning European champions Liverpool already have a packed fixture programme, with the runaway Premier League leaders due to fly to Qatar for the Club World Cup less than 24 hours after Saturday's 2-0 win over Watford at Anfield.

Indeed so congested is their schedule that Liverpool have two games in as many days next week, with Klopp set to field a youth side for the English League Cup quarter-final against Aston Villa on Tuesday before the senior team plays in Doha on Wednesday.

Against this background, it was no surprise that Klopp was decidedly unimpressed by talk of an increase in Champions League matches that would lead to a fresh fixture pile-up.

"Today I read the top clubs want more games in the Champions League -- I am not involved in these plans but that is absolute bollocks," he told reporters after the Watford game.

"The fixtures are like they are. You all like watching us suffering. That is how it is."

The German added: "You (the media) always look concerned but no-one cares. We speak about it and no-one else speaks about it. We have to do what we do and are quite positive about it."

Klopp's mood was not improved by that fact that the Khalifa International Stadium in Qatar will host five matches -- including two semi-finals, a third-place playoff and the final -- in as many days during the Club World Cup because the Education City Stadium is not ready for the tournament.

(Source: Mirror)

## Verona three-goal comeback stuns Torino

Hellas Verona battled back from three goals down with all three substitutes scoring in a 15-minute second-half spell to hold Torino 3-3 in Serie A on Sunday.

Torino had taken a comfortable lead at the Stadio Bentegodi after Christian Ansaldi scored a double with Alex Berenguer also on target for the visitors.

But the hosts hit back with three goals after 69 minutes from players who all came off the bench.

Ansaldi broke through after 36 minutes with Berenguer, adding a second ten minutes after the break.

Ansaldi then volleyed in his second just after the hour, as Torino looked on course for a third consecutive win for the first time this season.

But the match swung Verona's way after Giampaolo Pazzini converted a penalty on 69 minutes after Gleison Bremer was deemed to have used his elbow to beat the ball.

Pazzini was then involved in the second with Valerio Verre smashing in off a rebound.

Mariusz Stepinski added a third punching on a defending error from Torino's Ola Aina to finish off.

Torino are ninth with Verona two points behind in 11th position, in the hosts' final match before the winter break.

Torino next play SPAL on Saturday.

Serie A leaders Inter Milan travel to Fiorentina later on Sunday with champions Juventus, two points behind before their game at home against Udinese.

(Source: Football Italia)

# Sources: Barca turning to FA after penalty no-call



ogy is being applied in Spain, pointing out that Barca were among those who supported its introduction into La Liga.

Mikel Oyarzabal's early penalty had given La Real the lead but Barca fought back with goals from Antoine Griezmann

and Luis Suarez.

The home side levelled just after the hour mark through Alexander Isak and both sides had chances to win the game, but it was Barca who were left unhappy as their late penalty shout fell on deaf ears.

"There's always going to be controversy," midfielder Busquets told reporters. "For their penalty, there's a clash [between two of us]. Maybe I have grabbed [Llorente] but if you set the bar there it's going to be difficult [to remain consistent]."

"The proof of that comes with Pique, because it's clearer than mine. I don't know why VAR didn't review it. Those moments have to be looked at by VAR."

"But we don't know what's going on in the referee's head or when VAR should get involved. We don't know and we're not going to know because they don't say. They don't make any comments [about the decision process]."

The draw could see Barca give up top spot to Real Madrid if Los Blancos can win away at Valencia on Sunday.

Barca and Madrid then meet on Wednesday at Camp Nou in the first Clasico of the season, a game which has been rearranged having been called off in October due to the political unrest in Catalonia at the time.

(Source: Soccernet)

## Tokyo unveils heat-busting stadium, 7 months before Olympics



Tokyo formally unveiled its 60,000-seater main Olympic Stadium Sunday, more than seven months before the 2020 Opening Ceremony -- with a host of special features to beat the feared heat.

Built on the site of the former national stadium used for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, it has five floors above ground and two below, with greenery planted on the decks to provide shade from the scorching summer sun.

The eaves around the outer perimeter keep out sunlight and rain and will help channel breeze into the stadium. There are also eight mist spraying facilities, 185 fans and 16 air-conditioned lounges.

Opening the facility, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe hailed its "top-level universal design" and "harmony with its surrounding environment."

Renowned architect Kengo Kuma designed the stadium along traditional Japanese lines, with the use of wooden eaves and domestic lumber helping it to blend into the surroundings in central Tokyo.

The stadium will host the opening and closing ceremonies plus the flagship

athletics events.

However, the marathon will not have its traditional finish there, as the event has been moved to Japan's northern island of Hokkaido to avoid the expected heat and humidity of the capital.

The unveiling will come as a relief after the humiliation in September 2016, when Abe scrapped the original plans from late Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid as the costs soared beyond \$2 billion.

The stadium was also lowered to a height of 47 meters (154 feet) from the original design of 70 meters, which was criticized as too high and for being a potential eyesore on Tokyo's skyline.

Total construction costs including design and supervising fees came to 156.9 billion yen (\$1.45 billion), within the budget, according to officials.

The stadium will see its first sporting action on December 21 when former sprint champion Usain Bolt will take the track for a special exhibition relay.

The first competitive action there will be the Emperor's Cup football final on New Year's Day.

(Source: AFP)

## Pinturault crushes field for Val d'Isere slalom victory



Home favourite Alexis Pinturault crushed the field to notch a comprehensive victory in the men's World Cup slalom in Val d'Isere on Sunday.

Pinturault, first out of the gate, led after what he called a "demanding" first run and held his nerve in the second run in sunny, cold conditions for his first World cup slalom win since 2014.

The 28-year-old clocked a combined time of 1min 47.91sec, a massive 1.44sec ahead of Sweden's Andre Myhrer, Italian Stefano Gross (+1.47) rounding out the podium.

Pinturault said he had to learn from his mistakes after failing to qualify for the second leg in the season opener in the Finnish resort of Levi in November.

"Only idiots don't learn," the Frenchman said. "I must draw conclusions from it."

"I made some mistakes at the start of the season, but I did some good things as well. I just have to be more regular, less of the rollercoaster as I've been doing up until now."

In the absence of now-retired Austrian legend Marcel Hirscher,

Pinturault acknowledged the World Cup was "of course, more open".

"The important thing is to ski fast," he said, adding he had refocused on the slalom in training.

"I had tough seasons in 2016 and 2017 and even 2018... Last season we spent an enormous amount of time working on the slalom, we had to do it over and over again."

Pinturault's fancied teammate Clement Noel was one of a number of skiers who bombed out in the first run, while Norway's Henrik Kristoffersen was left with a huge task after finishing 27th, almost three seconds off Pinturault's blistering early pace.

American Luke Winters ripped up the form book by finishing second in the first leg, at 0.59sec, having started with a rank outsider's bib number of 40. Swiss Ramon Zenhausern was third, at 0.72sec.

It was Kristoffersen who produced the fastest second run, of 53.72sec, enabling the Norwegian to hold the lead until the ninth fastest from the first leg came down.

(Source: Sky Sports)

## Chinese TV pulls Arsenal match after Ozil's Uighur comments

Chinese state broadcaster CCTV has pulled a game between Arsenal and Manchester City from its programme after the Gunners midfielder Mesut Ozil expressed support for Uighurs in Xinjiang.

Ozil, a German of Turkish origin, condemned China's crackdown on Muslim minorities in the western region in a tweet on Friday, while criticizing Muslim countries for failing to speak up against abuses.

Sunday's Premier League game in London between Arsenal and Manchester City was initially scheduled to be broadcast live by CCTV's sports channel shortly after midnight on Monday, according to a schedule published earlier on the league's official Weibo account.

However, by Sunday CCTV replaced the match on its schedule with a pre-recorded game between Tottenham and Wolverhampton Wanderers.

"Korans are being burnt... Mosques are being shut down ... Muslim schools are being banned ... Religious scholars are being killed one by one ... Brothers are forcefully being sent to camps," Ozil wrote in Turkish on his Twitter account Friday.

"The Muslims are silent. Their voice is not heard," he wrote on a background of a blue field with a white crescent moon, the flag of what Uighur separatists call East Turkestan.



China has faced growing international condemnation for setting up a vast network of camps in Xinjiang aimed at homogenizing the Uighur population to reflect China's majority Han culture.

Rights groups and experts say more than one million Uighurs and people of other mostly Muslim ethnic minorities have been rounded up in the camps in the tightly

controlled region.

After initially denying the camps existed, China now describes them as vocational schools aimed at dampening the allure of Islamist extremism and violence.

Arsenal on Saturday distanced itself from Ozil's comments, saying it has "always adhered to the principle of not involving itself in politics".

Ozil's comments drew anger online, with some users on Weibo calling for a ban on his games.

Nationalist tabloid Global Times called Ozil's comments "false" and said in a tweet on Sunday that he had "disappointed Chinese fans and football governing authorities".

The cancellation prompted further criticism of Ozil, including from Arsenal fans.

"If it hadn't been for Arsenal's Ozil making trouble out of nothing, would the broadcast of the entire team's match have been blocked in China?" one user asked on Sunday.

"(Ozil) published inappropriate comments on foreign social media that would greatly hurt the feelings of Chinese fans," another user said.

Arsenal is the latest foreign team to face the ire of Chinese broadcasters and audiences due to a player's political stance.

The NBA in October sparked a backlash in China after Houston Rockets general manager Daryl Morey tweeted in support of Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters.

In response, CCTV cancelled its broadcasts of two NBA pre-season games in China, and the Rockets have been absent from CCTV and internet giant Tencent's programming schedule so far this season.

(Source: France 24)



# Hamid Estili not satisfied with Iran U23's preparation

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran coach Hamid Estili has expressed dissatisfaction with his team's preparation for the 2020 AFC U23 Championship.

Iran have been handed a tough group in the competition, where they are drawn in Group C along with defending champions Uzbekistan, China and South Korea.

The competition will be held in Thailand from Jan. 8 to 26 and the top three teams of the tournament will qualify for the 2020 Summer Olympics men's football tournament in Japan as the AFC representatives.

"We have started our training from Saturday but I am not satisfied with the way we train because the camp is not holding with all players. According to a previous agreement between football federation and clubs, the Iran league had to be stopped but it didn't happen and some clubs including Esteghlal and Sepahan don't release their players to join us," Estili said.

"We have to travel to Doha on Dec. 20 but our team are not complete in the nine-day camp since some payers will remain in Iran for club duty. It makes it hard for us and I hope that the football federation changes the schedule" he added.

"Iran have a difficult task in Thailand because we have been drawn in a tough group and need to more preparation for the competition. The most of participant teams are preparing for the event with their full squad," Estili continued.



Iran have not been in the Olympics since the 1976 games in Munich. Estili's team will start the campaign on Jan. 9 with a match against Uzbekistan.

The 2020 AFC U23 Championship will be the 4th edition of the AFC U23 Championship, the biennial international age-restricted football championship

organized by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) for the men's under-23 national teams of Asia. A total of 16 teams will compete in the tournament.

## Hertha Berlin's under-16s walk off due to alleged racist abuse

Hertha Berlin's under-16 team stopped playing a game against regional rivals Auerbach after its players were allegedly subjected to racist abuse from their opponents on Saturday.

The Bundesliga club said in a statement that "several players from our team were racially abused by their opposing players."

Hertha officials informed the referee of the alleged abuse and decided to stop playing in the 68th minute while leading 2-0 "because we as Hertha BSC condemn racism and

discrimination in every form."

Hertha executive board member Paul Keuter called it "the only correct decision, not to continue with the game." The club released a statement on Twitter which read: "There are times when football doesn't come first. Racism has no place in our society."

Hertha under-23 player Jessic Ngankam said he was targeted with monkey chants and called an "ape" by an op-

posing player during his side's fourth division game against Lokomotive Leipzig on Dec. 6.

"Insults are unfortunately an everyday occurrence in football, and I can put up with them," he told broadcaster MDR. "But racist abuse is a no-go."

Both Hertha and Lokomotive condemned the alleged abuse.

(Source: ESPN)

## Lucescu: Al Hilal deserved to win

Head coach Razvan Lucescu said Al Hilal SFC deserved their 1-0 win against Esperance de Tunis in the second round of the FIFA Club World Cup Qatar 2019 at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium on Saturday.

Al Hilal owed their win to French forward Bafetimbi Gomis, who came off the bench to score the only goal in the 73rd minute to steer the 2019 AFC Champions League winners into the semi-finals.

Romanian Lucescu said Al Hilal created many chances and deserved the win which set up a semi-final clash with South American champions Flamengo on Tuesday.

"We deserved this victory as we controlled the ball more and we created many scoring chances," said Lucescu. "We managed to take advantage of the spaces to score the winning goal."

"It feels good that we are now among the best four teams in the world and we feel proud," he added. "We had great success because of our continuous work and great enthusiasm."



"Despite the absence of Gomis and (Sebastian) Giovinco, we managed to put a good performance," said Lucescu. "Gomis is one of the best players that we have and he has

great experience and enthusiasm.

"I'm happy that he managed to score directly after recovering from his injury."

"We expect a tough match against Flamen-

go but all the matches in this competition are hard. Flamengo might be tough but we are capable (of matching them)."

Esperance head coach Moine Chaabani said his team faced opponents who knew how to win the match.

"We had a good match and we knew that Al Hilal have an excellent team and players who are capable of creating danger, especially in the last meters of the pitch," said Chaabani.

"The match was tactical as there was only one goal and there were not many scoring chances," he added. "We had some chances but we failed to take advantage of them."

The 38-year-old coach said Asian teams have the upper hand against African sides and that was clear in the FIFA Club World Cup.

"Asian teams have better capabilities and they have a chance to sign special players, especially forwards. Asian teams have won nine out of 11 matches against African teams (in the FIFA Club World Cup) and this shows the big difference."

(Source: the-afc)

## Paralympic Marathon to remain in Tokyo

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) confirmed on Thursday (12 December) that the marathon events at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games will remain in the city.

The decision, announced at the end of the eighth IPC Tokyo 2020 Project Review, was taken following a thorough analysis of 2019 heat and humidity data and after consultation with athletes during November's World Para Athletics Championships.

Five marathon medal events are set to take place on 6 September 2020, the final day of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games with events scheduled to start at 06:30.

Andrew Parsons, IPC President, said: "The health and well-being of our athletes is a top priority for us at all times and before taking a final decision to keep the Paralympic marathon events in Tokyo it was vital for us to analyse all the relevant data and speak to the athletes themselves."

"The weather data, which was reviewed by the IPC Medical Committee, revealed that although the Games period in 2019 was slightly hotter than in 2018, the temperatures around the time the marathon events will take place were within all our thresholds for safe and optimal competition."

"When we spoke to athletes the overwhelming response was that they want to remain in Tokyo. With many marathon athletes also competing in track events during the Games, a move would be logistically difficult for them to accommodate."

The marathon is also the last event of the whole of Tokyo 2020 and athletes believe competing on the streets of the city in a free event that anyone can attend is a way of saying thank you for the tremendous support Tokyo residents have shown the Paralympic Movement over the last seven years."

The IPC and Tokyo 2020 also confirmed that after consultation with the International Triathlon Union, the start time of Para triathlon events on 29 and 30 August have been

brought forward from 07:30 to 06:30. The first races will involve the classes of athletes who, due to their impairment, are most impacted by heat.

Marisol Casado, ITU President, said: "For ITU, as well as for the IPC, the health and safety of our athletes is paramount. After the test event that we held this past summer, and considering all the weather reports, it is safer to start Para triathlon races one hour earlier, so that Para triathletes can finish all the races before the expected heat strikes in Tokyo."

"The new start times, along with all the counter heat measures will allow all the athletes to compete at their best in Tokyo. We are completely sure that even with these early start times, the streets of Tokyo will be packed with spectators cheering for the Para triathlon super stars and that we will have all the conditions for delivering safely the best Para triathlon spectacle in the world."

### ■ First sell-out Games

Following two days of updates on preparations for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics, President Parsons said he was greatly impressed and that excitement for the Games was growing by the day.

Parsons said: "We are on course for a remarkable Paralympic Games in Tokyo. There is a record demand for tickets, record demand from media to attend the Games, venues are ready or almost ready and the performances of athletes this year has completely blown me away. The work done so far by Tokyo 2020, national Government, TMG, media and partners has been exceptional."

"I cannot begin to tell you how excited our athletes and National Paralympic Committees were to learn that a record 3.1 million tickets were requested in the first Paralympic ticket window."

"There is real opportunity here for Tokyo 2020 to make history and become the first Paralympic Games to sell-out ahead of the Opening Ceremony. With all stakeholders work-



ing together I am extremely confident this landmark can be achieved, and Tokyo 2020 will set a benchmark for all future Organising Committees."

"All the ingredients are here in Tokyo for the best Paralympics to date, a Games that will transform Tokyo and Japan forever, driving social inclusion around the world."

### ■ Key priorities

During the Project Review, the IPC identified several issues which its aims to resolve with the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee in the coming months.

Currently there a lack of accessible public transport options linking Tokyo with the cycling venues in Fuji and Izu which could limit opportunities for persons with disabilities to attend and enjoy the action. Another key priority is accessible transport planning, in particular for athletes and the media.

The IPC continues to work with Tokyo 2020 on heat countermeasures and contingency planning for adverse weather conditions, including typhoon.

The Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games will take place between 25 August and 6 September 2020.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

## Andrea Stramaccioni tired of Esteghlal's behavior

**PLDC** — Italian coach Andrea Stramaccioni says that he is tired of behavior of Esteghlal officials.

He left Tehran last week after the Iranian club failed to pay his salary.

"In response to so many fake news which have been published by the Iranian local media in the recent days, I have to say I have been searching for a solution since I've returned to Italy after five months. I want to start my work with Esteghlal and I want to be happy with Esteghlal's fans," Stramaccioni said.

"I am so sorry because I think Esteghlal has done nothing to solve the problem. Nothing has changed since I left the club. I am no longer Esteghlal coach. They have published a picture which shows I have received my salary but it's not true," he added.

"I really don't know if they want to keep me in Esteghlal but I want to say I am really tired. I am tired of the management's behavior. I want to thank Esteghlal players because they kept in touch," Stramaccioni concluded.

## Faraz Kamalvand resigns as head coach of Pars Jonoubi

**TASNIM** — Faraz kamalvand announced that he is no longer Pars Jonoubi's head coach.

He stepped down from his role on Saturday at the end of the match against Naft Masjed Soleyman, where the two teams shared the spoils.



Kamalvand has resigned because of the financial problems of the Iranian club.

He was appointed as Pars Jonoubi coach in June as a replacement for Mehdi Tartar.

Under stewardship of Kamalvand, Pars sit 13th in the Iran Professional League table, five points above relegation zone.

## Iran U23 football team to play Qatar

**IRNA** — Iran U23 football team will play Qatar in a friendly match as part of preparation for the 2020 AFC U23 Championship.

Hamid Estili's boys will meet Qatar on December 28 in Doha.

Iran will hold a nine-day camp in Qatar from December 20 to 28.

Iran have been drawn in Group C of the AFC U-23 Championship along with Uzbekistan, China and South Korea.

The competition will be held in Thailand from January 8 to 26 and the top three teams of the tournament will qualify for the 2020 Summer Olympics men's football tournament in Japan as the AFC representatives.

## Sweden see off Thailand to book final berth

Sweden moved into the final of the U17 Women's Football Tournament 2019 with a 3-1 victory against Thailand at the Mumbai Football Arena on Sunday.

The Europeans were quick to seize the initiative after the first blow of the referee's whistle, creating more chances than the Thai side.

Swedish forward Ellika Holmberg was put through on goal in the 25th minute but her shot from a tight angle was put out for a corner by Thailand custodian Pawarisa Homyamyen. However, she could do nothing as Sweden took the lead a minute later from the resulting set-piece.

Marwa Said was the quickest to react to a loose ball inside the penalty area after the corner was played in and she slammed home a powerful volley to give her side the lead.

She could have added a second five minutes before the breather after Holmberg's square pass inside the 18-yard box. With the keeper beaten and an open goal gaping, Said's shot went wide.

Thailand's best chance of the first half came in the 29th minute through Suchavadee Chompaeng. The striker raced towards goal after being played through but was denied by Sweden shot-stopper Elin Svahn in a one-on-one situation.

In the 55th minute, Thailand were inches away from equalizing as Pluenjai Sontisawat's shot from distance rebounded off the crossbar and Janista Jinantuya headed an effort on target, only to be denied by a brilliant save by Svahn.

Sweden hit the woodwork through substitute Sara Eriksson four minutes later.

In the 64th minute though, Thailand got the equalizer as Khwanjira Wong slammed home a penalty kick.

However, the Swedes regained the lead in the 70th minute as Monica Bah, on as a substitute, put her name on the scoresheet after darting down the right flank and beating the opposing keeper from close range.

The match ended 3-1 eventually as Sweden added another in injury time through Said and made it six points from two games.

The next match will see India and Thailand square off on Tuesday, where the second finalist alongside Sweden will be decided.

The tournament is part of India's preparation for the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup 2020 on home soil.

(Source: All India Football Federation)



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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

If someone has a good opinion of you, believe it.

Imam Ali (AS)

## “I Am a Sheikh”: Documentary on Islamic scholars in Qom

➔ Namazi was born in Isfahan in 1987. At the age of six, his family moved to Montreal, Canada where he spent his early years in elementary schools. When the family returned to Iran in 2000, he continued his education in Qom. He graduated with a BA in English translation from the University of Qom in 2012. Later on, he continued education with MA in cultural studies at Kashan University where he graduated in 2018.



Morteza Namazi (L) holds his award along with IRIB Vice President Hamid Shahabadi (C) and Radio Maaref director Mohammed Kaviani during a ceremony held in autumn 2018 to celebrate Iranian artists' wins at domestic and international events.

In 2008, Namazi started working at Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting's "The Call of Islam" radio broadcast in English. He continued his work at Radio Maaref as a producer.

In 2015, he produced "The Forgotten Ayatollah", a nine-minute documentary about the life and works of Ayatollah Seyyed Abolqasem Khansari Riazi, a famous scholar from the city of Khansar. The documentary premiered in 2015 at the Prix Marulic Radio Festival, where he was selected as a member of the jury as well.

About his future plans, Namazi wants to engage in Ars Acustica, a form of radio program made only from sound effects without any conversation. Using this genre, his documentary will be about the martyrdom of Ali Asghar (AS), son of Imam Hussein (AS), in Karbala.

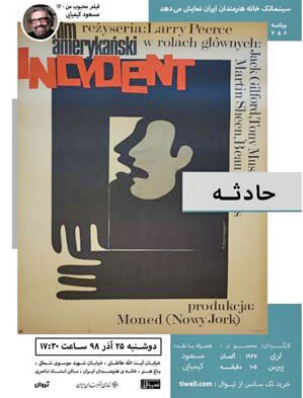
About 10 minutes of sound effects, Namazi explained that this is "one of the miracles of radio, in which you produce a program without anyone saying a word." His inspiration came from "Happy Birthday Darling", a nine-minute Ars Acustica by the renowned Russian producer Dimitry Nikolaev, about World War I.

"Things I've been working on since 2015, I consider these works as a new method of 'tabligh' or 'Islamic propagation'. Old methods we refer to as 'minbar' or lectures. We should use the new methods and mediums instead of old ones for propagating the word of Islam."

Concluding his interview, Namazi stressed that "artists in Iran are in need of more government support and encouragement in order to continue working for the sake of Iran."

## IAF cinematheque to review Larry Peerce's "The Incident"

ART TEHRAN — The cinematheque of the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) in Tehran will review American filmmaker Larry Peerce's 1967 movie "The Incident" today.



A poster for a screening of Larry Peerce's "The Incident" at the Iranian Artists Forum.

As the hostage situation stretches out, things become increasingly tense for everyone confined to the subway car.

Veteran Iranian filmmaker Masud Kimiai and critic Keivan Kasirian will attend the review session, which will be organized after a screening at 5:30 pm.

Starring Martin Sheen and Tony Musante, "The Incident" is about Artie and Joe Ferrone, two young punks who take control of a car on a New York City subway train filled with passengers. Among other people, the train includes military officer Felix Teflinger and tough-talking Bill Wilks, as well as quiet Jewish man Sam Beckerman and his wife Bertha.

# Memoirs of suspect in Mykonos murders case wins Iran's most lucrative literary prize

➔ "Teahouse Painting" published in early 2019 received the honor in the documentation category.

"Trainspotter", Ehsan Noruzi's studies on the history of railroads in Iran, won an honorable mention in this section.

Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi also attended the awards ceremony held at the National Library and Archives of Iran on Saturday evening.

"Iranian culture and civilization both historically and geographically have many subjects to study, however, there is a wide gap between what has been carried out and what must be done," Salehi said in his short speech.

"The subjects are waiting for you to be changed into books," he said, addressing the scholars attending the gala.

No winner was announced by the jury in the novel section. However, "The Shamelessness Situation" by Hamed Jalali, about a young man during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, and Mohammadreza Marzuqi's "Turning on the One-Way Street", about a hero who intends to solve a puzzle that even its designers cannot decipher, won honorable mentions in this category.

The short story section also had no winner. "We Were Traveling Through the Heyran Pass" by Hossein Lalbazri received an honorable mention.

"Domestication of Magic Realism in Iran" by Mohammad and Mohsen Hanif and "Theory and Literary Criticism" by Hossein Payandeh shared the award in the literary criticism section.

"About Eternality and Mortality" by Ahmad Shakeri won an honorable mention in this category.



TEHRAN TIMES / Shahab Ghayoumi

## Tehran theatergoers to witness "Crimes of the Heart"



Iranian stage director Delara Nushin in an undated photo.

ART TEHRAN — Iranian director Delara Nushin plans to stage American writer Beth Henley's play "Crimes of the Heart" at the Sayeh Hall of the City Theater Complex in Tehran on December 29.

Translated into Persian by Nushin, the play will be performed by a cast composed of Azadeh Esmailkhani, Tina Bakhshii, Alireza Moayyedi, Sara Tavakkoli, Pegah Arzi and Turaj Saminipur. Actor Afsar Asadi will also

work with the troupe as a narrator.

This drama composed in three acts won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1981. Set in a small Mississippi town, it examines the lives of three quirky sisters who have gathered back home. During the course of a week the sisters unearth grudges, criticize each other, reminisce about their family life, and attempt to understand their mother's suicide years earlier.

The play will be on stage for about two months.

## “When the Moon Was Full” tops at Carcassonne festival

ART TEHRAN — Iranian director Narges Abyar's acclaimed movie "When the Moon Was Full" won the grand prize at the 2nd edition of the Carcassonne International Political Film Festival in France, a public relations team for the movie announced on Sunday.

The film also received the student jury award for the best film, while the best performance award was awarded to the star of the film, Elnaz Shakerdoost.

"When the Moon Was Full" tells the story of a woman from Tehran who marries a man from an Iranian province near the border of Pakistan. Soon after, she discovers that her new brother-in-law is a religious extremist trying to recruit her husband for his bloody cause.



Elnaz Shakerdoost acts in a scene from "When the Moon Was Full" by Narges Abyar.

## Families of martyred artists honored in Tehran

ART TEHRAN — A number of families of the artists martyred during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war were honored during a meeting named "Witnesses to Love" at the Art Bureau in Tehran on Saturday.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi and the Art Bureau director Mohsen Momeni-Sharif.

Speaking at the ceremony, Salehi said,

"People of different religions and people from all walks of life joined together during the Sacred Defense, part of whom were those artists who were martyred."

"We have over 2000 martyred artists, 500 in visual arts, 500 in dramatic art, over 300 in calligraphy, over 100 in cinema and over 80 in music. These figures show that the artists were among the others during the days of hardship and war," he added.

The family of Jamal Shurjeh, the director of "33 Days", a film on the Israeli 33-Day War of 2006 against Lebanon, were honored onstage.

Other honorees were writer Morteza Sarhangi and vocalist Mohammad Golriz. Families of the martyrs Ali-Asghar Fallah, Javad Asadi, Ebrahim Asgharzadeh, Ali-Hossein Ebrahimi and Saeid Noruzi were among the other honorees.



Mehdi Chamran, brother of martyr Mostafa Chamran, is honored during a meeting at the Art Bureau in Tehran on December 1, 2019. (Mehr/Mohammad Mohsenifar)

## All art is political: Switzerland's Blocher puts masterpieces on display

MARTIGNY, Switzerland (Reuters) — Christoph Blocher's vast collection of works by Switzerland's master painters is a fitting accompaniment to the 79-year-old billionaire's decades at the vanguard of right-wing Swiss politics.

A 127-piece sample from his private trove, on display at the Fondation Pierre Gianadda in Martigny from December until June, celebrates Switzerland's rural roots and iconic geography, with a dash of the heroic folk identity Blocher has long championed.

A former government minister for the anti-immigrant

Swiss People's Party, Blocher is his country's best-known and most polarizing politician. Since the 1980s he has championed an independent, sovereign Switzerland firmly outside the European Union that surrounds it.

The majority owner of polymers and chemicals maker EMS Chemie has drawn on his fortune of 11 billion Swiss francs (\$11.03 billion) to build one of the world's most comprehensive collections of Swiss masterpieces.

His populist vision of a nation under siege from the outside world clearly informs his taste in fine art. The

collection includes Ferdinand Hodler's monumental "Retreat from Marignano," depicting the 1515 battlefield defeat that in Swiss mythology marks the nation's inward turn toward neutrality.

Also well-represented are Hodler's expressionist, blue-hued mountainscapes, including the fog-shrouded Eiger and the 2,190 meter (7,185 ft) Stockhorn above Lake Thun, as are Albert Anker's bucolic 19th-century scenes of peasants celebrating village life for which Blocher's deep affection shines through.