



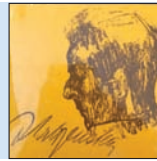
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# 'Marine Security Belt' drill

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## Over \$9.4b paid for development projects in 9 months

**TEHRAN** — Head of Iran's Budget and Planning Organization (BPO) said the government has paid 395 trillion rials (over \$9.4 billion) for financing development projects across the country in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 22).

Speaking in a ceremony for inauguration of a housing project in the

northeastern province of South Khorasan, Mohammad-Baqer Nobakht said: "Based on the statistics for the last nine months, we have paid 35 trillion tomans [350 trillion rials] for various development projects throughout the country and thousands of billions more will be paid in the coming months", ILNA reported. **→4**

## Ongoing Iran-China-Russia wargame not the last one: commander

**TEHRAN** — The deputy Army commander for coordination affairs announced on Saturday that it will not be the last time that Iran, China and Russia will hold a joint military exercise.

Iran, Russia and China started a naval wargame, codenamed "Marine Security Belt", in the Sea of Oman in the Sea of Oman and the north of the Indian Ocean on Friday morning that will last for four days. Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari's

remarks came in a news-analytic conference to explain the specifications of the large-scale drill.

The joint military exercise is viewed by some analysts as a show of power and solidarity between Iran and the great powers of China and Russia in the face of pressure by Washington.

Some media in Iran referred to the war game as a "show of power by the Easterners". **→2**

## Japanese protest plan to send Maritime Force to Middle East

By staff & agencies

Japanese protest in front of the prime minister's office in Tokyo on Dec. 27, against the government's plan to send Maritime Self-Defense Force personnel to the Middle East, Kyodo News reported on Saturday.

Japan's decision to send its navy to the Middle East for information-gathering activities, instead of

participating in a U.S.-led coalition, is seen as a "product of compromise" by experts.

In the weeks leading up to the government's formal approval for the dispatch on Friday, Tokyo had to play a delicate balancing act between avoiding tensions with its longtime ally Washington and maintaining its traditionally friendly ties with Tehran. **→13**

## New Iraqi election law: Mechanisms that have changed

By Ramin Hossein abadian

After lots of arguments, the Iraqi parliament finally approved the new electoral law. Iraqi parliamentarians approved all the articles of the new election law on Tuesday by holding a meeting.

The law consists of 50 articles that were passed and agreed upon by all the members of the parliament.

This is while that, previously, Iraqi parliamentarians had passed just some parts and articles of the law. Now, by passage of the new election law, some previous mechanisms in the election have been removed and replaced with new ones.

The law consists of nine chapters, as follows:

(I) Definitions and purposes; (II) The right to elect; (III) The right to nominate; (IV) Electoral districts; (V) Electoral system; (VI) Voter resignation; (VII) Electoral campaign; (VIII) Judicial rules (IX) General rules.

The fact is that the most important and prominent features of the new electoral law lie in Articles 15 and 16. What these articles refer to is in fact a development in electoral mechanisms, which did not exist before, but now, with the passage of the new law, will be applied to all future elections. Experts and observers in the Iraqi political scene refer to Articles 15 and 16 as the "spirit of the new law".

According to the articles, the new election law allows voters to vote for specific candidates instead of party lists, with each candidate representing an electoral district than a province. Therefore, experts believe that the approval of the articles will increase the chances of individuals to run for parliament.

Under the law, the country will be divided into various electoral districts based on the data provided by the Ministry of Planning, and Iraqi voters elect individual lawmakers instead of choosing from party lists, and have each member of parliament represent a certain electoral district instead of groups of legislators representing entire provinces. **→13**

## Libyan official: Turkish troops unwanted, destabilizing

Turkey's willingness to dispatch troops to Libya is "unacceptable" and such a move would constitute unwanted meddling in the affairs of a friendly country, the speaker of the north African country's parliament said Saturday.

According to the state-run Cyprus News Agency, Aguila Saleh said in a joint statement with his Cypriot counterpart that Turkey's actions are ratcheting up tensions and destabilizing the wider region.

Saleh and Cypriot parliamentary speaker Demetris Syllouris also reiterated their condemnation of a maritime border agreement that Turkey signed with Libya's Tripoli-based government - but which hasn't been ratified, as necessary, by the Libyan parliament - as a "flagrant violation of international law that's devoid of any legal basis."

On a surprise visit to Tunisia, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan reiterated that his country would evaluate sending soldiers to Libya if there is an invitation from Tripoli, where the

United Nations-supported but weak administration of Prime Minister Fayed Sarraj is based.

Turkey has signed maritime and agreements with the Libyan government that controls the capital, Tripoli, and some of the country's west.

The military deal allows Ankara to dispatch military experts and personnel, along with weapons, despite a UN arms embargo that has been violated by other international actors.

Turkey contends the maritime agreement gives it economic rights to a large swath of the eastern Mediterranean sea. Greece, Cyprus and Egypt have denounced the deal as legally invalid as it encroaches on their maritime borders.

In Rome, asked about a possible Turkish military action in Libya in support of Sarraj's forces, Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte said he had tried to discourage any attempt at a military solution for Libya.

Conte, who discussed Libya with Erdogan in a

phone call last week, told reporters on Saturday that a "proxy war in Libya" would, "instead of stabilizing" the North African country across the Mediterranean from Italy, only aggravate the "incredible fragmentation" there.

Conte called for stepped-up diplomatic pressure to push for a political solution, and said Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio might soon return to Libya to push Italy's determination to work for a "cessation of hostilities."

"We can't accept any military escalation," the Italian premier said at a year-end news conference.

Sarraj is battling an offensive launched in April by the rival government based in eastern Libya and forces loyal to commander Gen. Khalifa Hifter, who is trying to take Tripoli.

The fighting has threatened to plunge Libya into violence rivaling the 2011 conflict that ousted and killed longtime dictator Moammar Gaddafi. (Source: AP)



## ARTICLE

**Ebrahim Fallahi**  
Tehran Times journalist

## Promoting CNG as the national fuel, challenges and merits

**F**ollowing the implementation of the gasoline rationing scheme, the government has been promoting the use of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) as a replacement for gasoline, and has declared the mentioned fuel as the country's national fuel.

It has been said that people have also been welcoming CNG after the rationing because of the rise in gasoline prices and since, being a cheaper fuel, CNG seems a more affordable fuel for most of the people with lower income ranges.

In theory, replacing gasoline with natural gas, which is a cleaner and more accessible fuel in Iran, seems a very practical and beneficial plan, however, just like any other large-scale program implementing such a scheme on a national level requires great preparation in terms of infrastructure and education.

\*\*\*The rationing scheme

As one of the world's energy-rich countries, Iran also holds the title for the top country in terms of fuel subsidies. For many years, the government was planning to follow the footsteps of more advanced counties and to reduce such subsidies. However, due to economic and political conditions, the realization of such a scheme was postponed numerous times.

Finally, in mid-November the government started rationing of subsidized gasoline and increased fuel prices, announcing that it plans to use all the proceeds of the scheme for directly supporting underprivileged families.

■ **Leaning toward CNG**

Immediately after starting the program, the government also began a plan for promoting alternative fuels in order to mitigate the impact of price hikes on the low-income population.

A few weeks after the implementation of the rationing scheme, head of the CNG promotion program at the National Iranian Oil Product Distribution Company (NIOPDC) said: "CNG consumption in the country has increased by 10 percent since the implementation of the rationing plan." **→5**



## ARTICLE

**Martin Love**  
Political analyst from  
North Carolina

## Let the ICC do what it alleges it will

**T**he sole country that truly is a threat to peace in the Middle East, as the world ought to realize by now, is Israel. The only country in the Middle East that might benefit in ANY way from another war is Israel, in part because it seems to thrive on warfare. War or the threat of it, in the Zionist mentality, permits maintenance of its territorial expansions and human rights crimes against the Palestinians and war crimes against others (given the de facto backing by Israel's benefactor, the U.S., and the Trump Administration).

It certainly seems, at least, that as much as the Zionists would like to start another war, especially on Iran and its allies, that there is no other polity in the Middle East that stands to benefit in any way from further war in the region, and of course it is marginally questionable whether Israel itself would benefit, especially if it did not have American participation, and there is at least a small chance that it might not for a variety of both domestic and foreign policy reasons in the U.S. Trump and minions, despite the bluster, may well realize they don't have the assent of the American people.

Take American "allies" in the region: there is only one other U.S. ally with any serious clout, and that is Saudi Arabia. The Saudis well know, given the still somewhat mysterious attack on oil facilities in the Eastern Province this past autumn, that their entire oil infrastructure could be wiped out by a cluster of missiles and drones. The reduction of that oil infrastructure could well foment revolution against the Saudis inside Arabia. Are they willing to risk any approval of the Zionists, and especially their own participation, in a big regional war led by Israel? When push comes to shove, this is unlikely. And the same goes for the U.A.E. They are all too vulnerable.

The Israelis, on Christmas Day no less, heard Israeli chief of staff Aviv Kochavi claim that Israel cannot permit Iran to have a military presence in Iraq, and that Iran has been transferring "advanced weapons" there monthly. (Whether this latter charge is true a layman cannot know.) **→6**



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## Funeral procession for pilot of crashed fighter jet

A funeral procession was held for Colonel Mohammad Reza Rahmani, the pilot of a crashed fighter jet, in Tabriz on Saturday.

Rahmani was killed as his fighter jet, MiG 29, crashed over the Sabalan mountainous region in the northwestern province of Ardabil on Wednesday.

Rahmani was one of "the most experienced pilots" of the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF) who had a brilliant career record by operating hundreds of flight missions, the Army said in a statement on Friday.

The fighter aircraft had taken off from an airbase in the city of Tabriz.



## Tehran to host forum on Hormuz peace initiative in early January

**POLITICAL** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Ministry is scheduled to hold a forum on the Hormuz peace initiative on January 6-7.

The latest developments in the Persian Gulf region will also be discussed in the forum.

At the United Nations summit in New York in late September, Iran officially unveiled the proposal for regional security.

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

Foreign Minister Zarif has invited all regional states to join the peace plan for securing the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

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

In a post on his Twitter account on October 15, Zarif renewed Iran's call to all countries bordering the Persian Gulf to join Tehran to "forge a blueprint for peace, security, stability, and prosperity" in the region.

In a press briefing on November 25, the Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi announced that three countries have accepted to join Iran's Hormuz peace plan.

"Three countries have given written response to Iran's invitation and other countries are studying it," he said.

He also called on certain Persian Gulf Arab states to abandon reliance on foreign forces for their security, saying dependence on foreigners is just an "illusion".

"We called on the countries to respond to Iran's peace-seeking call and abandon illusions. We have stressed that the presence of foreign countries undermines security and stability. We hope this initiative of Iran would face with a positive response," Mousavi stated.

During a meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo on December 20, Rouhani said that Iran welcomes help to maintain stability and peace in the Persian Gulf and the wider Middle East.

"Iran welcomes help of all countries, especially Japan, in this respect," Rouhani said.

He added that Iran has fulfilled its duty to provide security in the region and believes that security in the Persian Gulf region has been weakened by foreign countries.

## Joining FATF will prevent economic isolation of Iran: MP

**POLITICAL** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Abolfazl Soroush, a member of the Hope parliamentary faction, has said that joining the Financial Action Task Force will prevent economic isolation of Iran.

"The truth is that Iran's joining to the FATF will not result in a miracle, however, it will prevent worsening of the country's economic situation," he told ISNA in an interview published on Saturday.

He noted that joining the FATF does not mean an end to the United States' sanctions, however, it will prevent doubling economic pressure on the country.

Mehdi Zakerian, an expert on international relations, also told IRNA in an interview published on Saturday that "standards of the FATF have turned into an international convention in countering corruption and money laundering, and Iran is required to join it in order to be present at the international arena."

Hossein Abbasinejad, the dean of Tehran University's faculty of economy, also told IRNA in an interview published on Saturday that it is wise to take decision in line with the country's interests.

He said that failure to join the FATF will cause more economic problems for the country.

The FATF must be studied regardless of factional disputes, Abbasinejad noted.

In a letter to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a number of MPs have pushed for the approval of the FATF by the Expediency Council.

MP Shahabaddin Bimeghdar told IRNA on Wednesday that the MPs are gathering more signatures about the need to join the FATF. It is said in the letter that being blacklisted by the FATF will isolate the economy which is already restricted by the United States "cruel sanctions".

The MPs said failure to join the FATF will cause "closure of the bank accounts in foreign countries", "accusations of money laundering against the country", "international distrust", "financial and banking crisis", "inefficiency of Iranian bank branches in foreign countries" and also "destabilization in stock exchange market".

Mahmoud Vaezi, President Rouhani's chief of staff, said on Tuesday that being blacklisted by the FATF will definitely harm the economy.

Fatemeh Saeidi, a member of the Hope parliamentary faction, also told ISNA on Wednesday that those who opposes joining the FATF should accept responsibility for the consequences.

Mohsen Rezaee, secretary of the Guardian Council, said on Tuesday that Palermo and CFT bills are still under assessment in the council.

"The FATF-related bills (Palermo and CFT) are still under evaluation in the Expediency Council, so, I can't say anything now (about the outcome of assessment)," Rezaee said, Fars reported.

In October 2018, the parliament voted to join the FATF. However, the Guardian Council rejected it. Now the ball is in the Expediency Council's court.

When there is a dispute between parliament and the Guardian Council the issue 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.

The government is pushing for the approval of the FATF.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on December 16 that the Expediency Council takes the final decision on the FATF, expressing hope its decision would be in line with the country's "expediency".

Majid Ansari, a member of the Expediency Council, told IRNA on December 16 that the council is still studying the CFT and the Palermo bill.

He declined to comment whether the two bills would be finally rejected or approved by the council.

The Expediency Council issued a statement on Saturday announcing that the two FATF-related bills of Palermo and CFT have not yet received green light but they are under accurate assessment.

# Iran against creating buffer zone in Syria: Velayati

**POLITICAL** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Ali Akbar Velayati, a top advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, said on Saturday that Iran is against creating a buffer zone in Syria or any other country in the region by foreigners.

"We oppose creation of buffer zone by foreigners and also foreign interference in Syria or any other place in the region, because it means making changes to a part of the region and disintegration of the countries," he said during a meeting with a group of heads of the Syrian tribes.

Velayati added, "The Islamic Republic of Iran opposes any kind of foreign interference in the regional countries and will resist any cruelty, aggression and plots to weaken and disintegrate the regional countries."

The former foreign minister noted that creating a buffer zone in Syria will never serve the country's interests.

Elsewhere, Velayati said that if it is necessary to make changes to the Syrian constitution, it must be done by the Syrian people without foreign interference.

The United Nations announced in September that a Syrian constitutional



committee made up of opposition, civil society and government members has been finalized after almost two years of negotiations. The 150-member committee, proposed during a

peace conference hosted by Russia in January 2018, will rewrite the Syrian constitution.

The long-awaited announcement of the committee's formation came during a visit

## Hormuz peace plan still on table: Zarif

**POLITICAL** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, in a post on his Twitter account on Friday, highlighted the importance of a trilateral naval drill involving Iran, Russia and China in the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean, saying Tehran's Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE) is still on the table.

Naval forces of Iran, Russia and China kicked off a large-scale maritime exercise in the northern part of the Indian Ocean and the Sea of Oman on Friday morning. The joint military exercise is viewed by some analysts as

a show of power and solidarity between Iran and the great powers of China and Russia in the face of pressure by Washington.

"Iran has long stated its readiness to work w/our neighbors to secure the Persian Gulf. #HOPE-Hormuz Peace Endeavour-is on table right now," the top diplomat wrote.

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

"The goal of the Coalition for Hope is to

promote peace, stability, progress and welfare for all the residents of the Strait of Hormuz region, and to enhance mutual understanding and peaceful and friendly relations amongst them," Rouhani told the delegates at the UN.

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

"The Coalition for Hope is based on important principles such as compliance

to Damascus by the UN envoy to Syria, Geir Pedersen, who held talks with Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualeem.

In a statement, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said the "Syrian-owned and Syrian-led" constitutional committee will be facilitated by the United Nations in Geneva, and he thanked Russia, Turkey and Iran for their diplomatic efforts.

**■ Syrian forces will surely liberate Idlib**

Velayati also predicted that the Syrian government and people will definitely liberate the Idlib region.

"This region belongs to the Syrian people and it has been for over nine years that any kind of cruelty and crime are being imposed on the people of this country. If the regional people keep silence over this cruelty, they will suffer the same crimes, because such devil plots are considered for all of the Islamic countries," the veteran politician said.

According to the Guardian, much of the area in Idlib is dominated by the al-Qaeda affiliate, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, whose leader this week urged jihadists and allied militants to head to the frontlines and fight the government.

## Ongoing Iran-China-Russia wargame not the last one: commander

**1 →** "We can restore security to the region, so, there is no need to alien forces' presence in our region," underscored Sayyari who was Navy chief until November 2017.

"In the current drill we will definitely realize a method on which we will count in our next trilateral wargames," the commander pointed out.

"The ongoing drills have been staged to show the might of the Army's naval force in the region as well as the world," Sayyari said.

He further highlighted importance of the northern part of the Indian Ocean which is located between the three straits of Hormuz, Bab al Mandab and Malaga, saying, "Iran enjoys 1,000 kilometers of maritime border overlooking the northern Indian Ocean, therefore deployment of the Iranian forces to the Macran coasts is completely justifiable."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the commander said, "Before the Islamic revolution in 1979, our navy was a force inside the territorial waters, but now we are hosting two world powers' naval forces."

**■ Iranian navy has escorted almost 5,000 trade vessels**

Sayyari went on to say that the Iranian navy has thus far managed to escort approximately 5,000 trade vessels and tankers, adding, "The navy, meantime, has staged 30



rescue operations to save in-danger international vessels."

"We have proved our naval might to the world, that is why the naval forces of the two world powers of Russia and China have come to our region to take part in a large-scale drill under Iran's command," Sayyari stated.

The commander said, "As we proved in the previous drills, we won't allow anybody to approach to the wargame's operational region for spying."

Sayyari said that the current drill is only a joint operation and the navies participating in the drill do not intend to form a coalition. "However," he said, "the U.S. has always been

trying to pretend the region as unsafe to pave the ground for forming a coalition."

On Friday, Rear Admiral Gholamreza Tahani, the deputy commander of the Iranian Navy, said the exercise will cover 17,000 square kilometers and consist of "various tactical exercises," which include target practice and rescuing ships from assaults and fires.

"Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, it is the first time that the country has staged such a large-scale drill participated with two huge naval powers in the world," Tahani stated.

Tahani said certainly those countries that share security, economic, political, and defense interests try to restore collective security in the region together.

"Reinvigoration of international maritime trade, countering piracy, exchange of information and experiences in various fields including maritime rescue and relief are among the main objectives of the drill," Tahani added.

Rear Admiral Tahani said peace, friendship and sustainable security under collective unity and cooperation are the main messages of the current naval drill.

"The message of this exercise is peace, friendship and lasting security through cooperation and unity ... and its effect will be to show that Iran cannot be isolated."

## Iranian FM to attend UN Security Council meeting in New York

**POLITICAL** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif is scheduled to leave Tehran for New York on January 9 to attend a meeting of the United Nations Security Council.

In his trip to New York, Zarif will attend a council meeting over multilateralism initiated by Vietnam which is the

current chairman of the council.

For the second time in history, Vietnam became a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council on June 7, 2019 for a year.

Last month, Iran's Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Es'haq Al-e Habib said that U.S. unilat-

eralism is the "greatest threat and challenge to international peace and security".

Al-e Habib made the remarks as he was addressing a UN General Assembly conference with a focus on the need to end "economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

## ‘Marine Security Belt’ drill in the eyes of world media

**TEHRAN** — The trilateral joint naval exercise of Iran with two major world powers have received mixed reactions from international media in recent days.

The geographical and strategic location of Iran has made it the focus of international attention. The waters around Iran, especially the Sea of Oman and the Persian Gulf, have become the hotspot for saber-rattling for many countries, including the U.S. and some of its allies to form a maritime coalition for patrols in the Persian Gulf these days.

The Sea of Oman is a particularly sensitive waterway as it connects to the Strait of Hormuz, through which about 30% of the world's crude oil passes and which in turn connects to the Persian Gulf.

Iran, Russia, and China on Friday started a four-day joint maritime drill, codenamed "Marine Security Belt", which includes tactical exercises such as rescuing frigates under attack. It began in the port city of Chabahar in southeastern Iran and is due to continue in northern parts of the Indian Ocean.

The joint drill, which is the first of such cooperation with Iran since the 1979 victory of Iran's Islamic Revolution with two major world naval powers at this scale, is aimed at promoting the security of international trade in the strategic regions amid heightened tensions between Iran and the U.S.

Holding trilateral exercise between the three countries have received mixed reactions from international media in recent days which shows the significance of the drill both in the region and world, as Jonathan Eyal, associate director at the Royal United Services Institute, said the joint naval drills had been choreographed by the three countries to send a message that U.S. influence in the region was waning.

"This is a carefully calculated exercise in which all three participants are winners: Iran gets to claim it is a regional power, Russia demonstrates its role as the key actor in the Middle East, and China can show it is a global naval power," Eyal said. "The strategic message is that these are the countries shaping events in the Middle East."

"Iran has long stated its readiness to work with our neighbors to secure the Persian Gulf," wrote Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a tweet on Friday, adding, "HOPE - Hormuz Peace Endeavour - is on the table right now."

Zarif then noted, "Our joint military drills in Oman Sea/Indian Ocean with our Russian and Chinese partners make clear our broader commitment to secure vital waterways."

Alongside the start of the joint naval exercise, Rear Admiral Gholamreza Tahani said on state television, "The message of this exercise is peace, friendship and lasting security through

cooperation and unity ... and its effect will be to show that Iran cannot be isolated."

The exercises brought the reaction of the U.S., with the State Department telling the Financial Times that Iran should "think twice" about conducting joint naval exercises, warning that such actions "should concern all nations with an interest in safeguarding freedom of navigation in the region".

The Pentagon spokesman Commander Sean Robertson said the U.S. was monitoring the joint exercise and would "continue to work with our partners and allies to ensure freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce in international waterways".

About the regional importance of the exercise, Reuters said, "Waters around Iran have become a focus for international tensions, with the United States exerting pressure for Iranian crude oil sales and other trade ties to be cut off."

It also noted to the sending a guided-missile destroyer to the four-day drills by China, adding that both Russia and China also have good relations with Saudi Arabia.

"Iran, Russia, and China began an unprecedented joint naval exercise in the Middle East amid fears they will take on the U.S. and Western powers," wrote Daily Mail.

Referring to the beginning of the naval exercise, Associated Press wrote that some

analysts believe that the drill is a response to recent U.S. maneuvers with its regional ally Saudi Arabia.

"Tehran has been seeking to step up military cooperation with Beijing and Moscow amid unprecedented economic sanctions from Washington," AP wrote, adding, "Visits to Iran by Russian and Chinese naval representatives have also increased in recent years."

It also quoted the message of Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Wu Qian as saying, "The drill will deepen exchange and cooperation between the navies of the three countries."

Times of Israel wrote in a report titled, "New triangle of sea power: Iran, China, Russia start unprecedented naval drill".

Israeli regime's Army Chief of Staff Aviv Kohavi on Wednesday lamented that Israel is alone in the fight against Iran and its proxies in the Middle East. "It would be better if we weren't the only ones responding to them [militarily]," Kohavi said, in an apparent criticism of the United States and Persian Gulf countries, which also see Iran as a major foe, the report added.

Relating the joint drill to boosting of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia, CBS News also wrote, "Iran, Russia and China team up for military drills as America boosts troops in Saudi Arabia."

(Source: Mehr)



# World lives in post-West era, Iran says

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The entire world lives in the post-West era, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman wrote on his official Twitter account on Friday, noting that the Western powers' domination and supremacy have come to an end.

"The fact is that in the current transitional era, not everything happens in, nor by the West. We are truly living in a #Post\_Western\_world in which all global players have their share in its reality," Abbas Mousavi said in regard to a trilateral drill in the Sea on Oman and the north of the Indian Ocean involving Iran, China and Russia.

The large-scale maritime exercise, code-named "Marine Security Belt", started on Friday morning. It was launched from the southeastern port city of Chahbahar in the Sea of Oman.

The joint military exercise is viewed by some analysts as a show of power and solidarity between Iran and the great powers of China and Russia in the face of pressure by Washington.

Visits to Iran by Russian and Chinese naval representatives have also increased in recent years.

China has sent a guided-missile destroyer to the four-day drills, which, according to the New York Times, Beijing has called a "normal military exchange" between the three armed forces.

"It is not necessarily connected with the regional situation," a Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman said.

China has close diplomatic, trade and energy ties with Iran, which has friendly ties with Russia.

The military exercise comes at a time that the United States is resorting to every ploy to isolate Iran in the world.



Russia's Defense Ministry said on Friday it had sent three ships from its Baltic Fleet - a frigate, a tanker, and a rescue tug boat - to take part in the drills, Red Star, the official newspaper of Russia's armed forces, reported.

The ministry was cited as saying that it was the first time that such drills were being held in such a format.

The Times of Israel also reported that the drill is the first such trilateral exercise as Tehran seeks to boost military cooperation with Beijing and Moscow amid unprecedented economic sanctions from Washington.

The Navy Times website also reacted to the drill, reporting that the drill is seen as a response to recent U.S. maneuvers with its regional ally Saudi Arabia.

Global Time quoted Wu Qian, spokesperson of the Chinese Defense Ministry, as

saying that the exercise aims to deepen the cooperation between the navies of the three countries, and conveys a goodwill gesture.

He further said that the joint exercise will also exhibit China's ability to maintain world peace and maritime security.

In the meantime, Global Times cited Song Zhongping, a Chinese military expert and commentator, as saying that the Sea of Oman is a sensitive place and also vital to global energy transport, and its situation "could largely affect China's economy and security".

Song believes the joint drill will de-escalate the regional tension as two influential countries are standing together to safeguard peace and stability of the Persian Gulf. "Such a gesture urges the U.S. not to launch military actions unilaterally or put more pressure on Iran," he said.

"The move sent a clear signal to the U.S.: the Iran issue should be addressed through negotiations based on the previous deal rather than military actions. The U.S. should stop fanning the flames," Song said.

Strengthening military cooperation through such exercises will also help bolster China's own economy, energy, and national security, besides safeguarding the regional transportation and energy channels, Song told the Global Times on Thursday, noting it is important for China to boost its overseas escort strategy.

Such a drill also improves the capabilities of the Chinese Liberation Army (PLA) in counter-terrorism, anti-pirate and humanitarian missions, Song said.

Also, the Associated Press reported that the trilateral drill is the first of its kind at a time when Iran is facing unprecedented sanctions from the U.S.

The joint drills are likely to be perceived as provocative by Washington.

Tensions have been running high between Tehran and Washington since last year, when President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 multilateral nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and unleashed the "toughest ever" sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

According to the Sputnik, the United States is monitoring the joint naval drills, Pentagon spokesperson Sean Robertson said on Thursday.

"We are aware of the multilateral exercise being conducted between Iran, China, and Russia in the Arabian Sea", Robertson said. "We are monitoring it and will continue to work with our partners and allies to ensure freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce in international waterways".

## Scientists are source of Iran's deterrence power: defense chief



**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Saturday that Iran's technological achievements in the defense sector is owed to local scientists, researchers and experts whose work is a source of deterrence power and security for the country.

"The defense industry's experts are able to make use of science, knowledge and four decades of scientific experience of the Islamic Revolution to turn the armed forces' plans and ideas into defense products and achievement in a short period of time," Hatami said on Saturday, ISNA reported.

"And for that, they've become a thorn in the enemies' eye," the brigadier general added.

Hatami made the remarks while speaking at an event in Varamin, a city in the southern outskirts of Tehran.

He also referred to the United States' economic war and maximum pressure against the Islamic Republic as the last attempts by the global arrogance against Iran.

The defense chief described self-sufficiency in military industry as a model for

progress in other areas including economy.

Iranian military experts and technicians have in recent years made great headways in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment.

Iran maintains that its military capabilities pose no threat to regional countries, stressing that the Islamic Republic's defense doctrine is entirely based on deterrence.

In remarks on December 17, Hatami said Iran's geopolitical position necessitates gaining power for survival.

"We must increase our power in all fields, particularly in defense," Hatami said at a meeting of defense industry researchers in Tehran.

He said Iran has gained such a high level of defense power that it "surprises the enemies" in their decision-making.

On December 10, the defense minister pointed out that Iran has been able to withstand the bullies and tyrants for 40 years.

"By employing new models in science and technology, we have detected the shortcomings in the defense sphere," he said, adding that Iran has reached a point that will not be overwhelmed by the enemies.

## Putin, Netanyahu discuss Iran over phone



**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The office of the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Thursday that the situation in Syria and the Iranian nuclear dossier was focus of a telephone conversation between Netanyahu and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Putin and Netanyahu "discussed current topics of the international agenda and some issues of the bilateral relations in the context of the Russian president's visit to the occupied territories scheduled for January 2020," it said, according to TASS.

According to the Kremlin press service, the conversation was initiated by the Israeli side.

Earlier this month, Israeli Foreign Minister Yisrael Katz was quoted as saying Israel was considering military action against Iran for its nuclear program, which is under the strict monitoring of the UN's nuclear watchdog.

"Is bombing Iran an option that Israel is considering?" Katz was

asked by Italy's Corriere della Sera newspaper.

"Yes, it is an option. We will not allow Iran to produce or obtain nuclear weapons. If it were the last possible way to stop this, we would act militarily," Katz replied.

Meanwhile, Iran has on numerous occasions declared that its nuclear program is for civilian purposes and that it does not plan to obtain nuclear weapons.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei has also issued a fatwa saying production, stockpiling and use of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, is haram (religiously forbidden).

Also, in 2015, Iran signed a nuclear agreement with six world powers that limited its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. Despite the fact that Tehran fulfilled its obligations under the deal, officially known as the JCPOA, the United States withdrew from the JCPOA and put maximum pressure on the Islamic Republic.

## Experts shed light on role of ongoing trilateral naval drills on security in vital waterways

**TEHRAN (MNA)** — As the joint maritime maneuvers, involving the Russian, Chinese and Iranian Navies, enter their second day in the Indian Ocean and the Sea of Oman, experts underline the significance of such drills in securing international trade routes in strategic waterways.

The naval drills, the first of their kind, were launched on Friday with the aim of promoting the security of international trade in the strategic regions, as well as sharing experience among participants against piracy and marine terrorism.

The joint maneuvers with China and Russia can be considered as one of the greatest achievements of Iran's defense diplomacy, sending messages to the West amid US efforts to woo countries into a maritime coalition for patrols in the Persian Gulf.

Dr. Bilgehan Alagoz, an international relations professor at Istanbul Marmara University says, "I think the main goal of the US maximum pressure policy on Iran is to contain China's emerging power in World politics and to limit Russia's influence in the Middle East. Because China relies on Iran to diversify its energy supply and Russia is dependent on Iran to penetrate in the Middle East. In this context, the four-day exercise in the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Oman aims to cope with the US policy of containment."

Dr. Luciano Zaccara, Research Assistant Professor at Qatar University, believes the joint military drill is a clear message to the US and the PGCC states about the strong ties between Iran, Russia and China in terms of security, in case



a military option is still considered by the White House to deal with the Iranian file.

He also said, "It also shows the Russian will to play a significant role in the Indian Ocean security, far beyond their main area of interest in the Levant."

Javad Heirannia, an Iranian political analyst, also says the unprecedented drill shows Iran's different options to tackle the anti-Iran threats from US-led coalition in the Persian Gulf. He also says holding the second session of Regional Security Dialogue in Tehran participated by Russia, China and India recently and also the formation of a bloc by Iran, Turkey, Qatar and Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur all

indicate that Iran has many options to confront the US efforts to corner Tehran.

Payman Yazdani, another Iranian political analyst, believes the joint naval military drill of Iran, Russia and China in the northern part of the Indian Ocean shows the importance of establishing the security of the shipping lines for these three countries due to the significant role of the regional developments on the world economy. Yazdani also says the drill is supporting the regional balance of power.

The three countries have sent some of their most advanced vessels to take part in the four-day exercises.

Rear Admiral Gholamreza Tahani, Iranian flotilla chief, said the maneuvers cover 17,000 square kilometers and consist of "various tactical exercises," including target practice and rescuing ships from assaults and fires.

The United States has been trying to persuade its allies into an international coalition with the declared aim of providing "security" for merchant shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and other strategic Middle Eastern shipping lanes.

Washington claims Tehran played a role in two separate attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman in May and June, without providing any credible evidence to support the accusations, which Iran has categorically dismissed.

The US has sent troops and missile systems to Saudi Arabia following escalating tensions in the Persian Gulf.

Iran has always reiterated that foreign military presence brings insecurity to the region.

## FATF not pushed off Expediency Council's agenda: top MP

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Mojtaba Zonnour has said the Expediency Council is still examining Iran's accession to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

"The Palermo and CFT bills that are parts of the FATF are still being investigated and have not been pushed off the council's agenda," Tasnim on Saturday quoted Zonnour as saying.



"A joint committee to examine the FATF bills has been formed," he said.

Zonnour said he attends the council's sessions on FATF bills on behalf of the parliament.

Asked about the possibility of the approval of the bills by the Expediency Council, he said, "I cannot say whether the bills would be rejected or approved. A task force comprising experts from the Expediency Council, the Majlis, and the government are still mulling the bills."

"The task force, after reaching a conclusion on Palermo and CFT, will present its expert opinion at the council and the members will then decide about it," he added.

Ratifying the FATF-related bills has become a contentious issue in Iran.

The parliament passed 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 will be referred to the Expediency Council for final decision. Now it is up to the Expediency Council to reject or ratify the FATF.

The Paris-based task force 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.

The government is pushing for the approval of the FATF, but some figures of the principlist camp argue that such act could not resolve any problems, including the sanctions that the United States imposed on Iran after it withdrew from the 2015 nuclear agreement.

Hojjatolislam Kazem Seddighi, an interim Friday prayer leader of Tehran, has said the FATF is one of the enemy's tools aimed to hamper Iran's progress.

"The FATF is one of the enemy's rings of sedition which it insists upon," Seddighi told worshippers in Tehran on Friday.

The enemies are looking for opportunities to undermine Iran's independence and progress, he said.

## Security in Indian Ocean safeguards global economic interests: admiral

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Rear Admiral Gholamreza Tahani, the deputy commander of the Iranian Navy, has highlighted the importance of establishing security in the Indian Ocean, saying it would guarantee economic interests of countries.

Tahani said on Saturday that north of the Indian Ocean is one of the most important waterways in the world and plays an important role in international trade, Tasnim reported.

Iran, Russia and China started a joint naval drill on Friday. It will last for four days.

The naval exercise, codenamed "Marine Security Belt" is held in the north of the Indian Ocean and the Sea of Oman.

"Ensuring full security of shipping lines in the region, especially in the area between the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca and the Bab al-Mandab Strait..., safeguards economic interests on the global stage on the one hand and necessitates cooperation and convergence among different navies on the other hand," Tahani remarked.

He also said common maritime threats and political developments between the three countries have helped their navies boost trilateral cooperation.

On Friday, Tahani said the exercise will cover 17,000 square kilometers and consist of "various tactical exercises," which include target practice and rescuing ships from assaults and fires.

"Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, it is the first time that the country has staged such a large-scale drill participated with two huge naval powers in the world," he stated.

He said certainly those countries that share security, economic, political, and defense interests try to restore collective security in the region together.

"Reinvigoration of international maritime trade, countering piracy, exchange of information and experiences in various fields including maritime rescue and relief are among the main objectives of the drill," the admiral explained.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also said on Friday that the joint military exercises show that Iran and its partners are committed to secure vital waterways.

"Our joint military drills in Oman Sea/Indian Ocean w/ our Russian & Chinese partners make clear our broader commitment to secure vital waterways," Zarif tweeted.

Zarif added that Iran has been insisting that it is ready to work with its neighbors on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf to secure maritime trade in the region based on the Hormuz peace initiative.

"Iran has long stated its readiness to work w/our neighbors to secure the Persian Gulf. #HOPE-Hormuz Peace Endeavour-is on the table right now."



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	367632.1
IFX	4774.23

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,934 rials
GBP	54,911 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$66.87/b
WTI	\$61.72/b
OPEC Basket	\$67.93/b
Gold	\$1,513.00/oz
Silver	\$817.84/oz
Platinum	\$949.90/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

‘Govt. could offset budget deficit by selling assets, stocks’

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Deputy head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) says the government can compensate the probable deficits in the next year’s development budget by selling its stocks and assets.



According to Mohammad Amirzadeh, although the next year’s budget bill has been set based on the prediction of selling one million barrels of oil, but this doesn’t appear to be the case, so the budget for development project could witness a deficit, the ICCIMA portal reported on Saturday.

In the next year’s budget bill, the allocations for development is projected to grow by about 12 percent, which, if calculated against this year’s figure, would boost the development budget from the current 620 trillion

rials (about \$14.7 billion) up to 700 trillion rials (about \$16.7 billion), Amirzadeh said.

“The issue is that the development budget depends on oil revenues, and in the upcoming year, the realization of oil revenues is also subject to uncertainty,” he added.

The government owns the stocks of major companies in various sectors such as steel and petrochemicals, and can spend part of the proceeds from the sale of such stocks on development projects, according to Amirzadeh.

Earlier this month, President Hassan Rouhani submitted the administration’s draft of the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1399, which starts on March 20, 2020, 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.

The bill has estimated the government’s budget at 5.63 quadrillion rials (about \$134.04 billion), 8.2 percent higher than the figure in the present year’s budget.

According to the submitted bill, revenues from exporting oil, gas and gas condensate are estimated at 454.9 trillion rials (about \$10.83 billion), down 66 percent from 1.37 quadrillion rials (about \$32.61 billion) approved in the current year’s budget.

The government has envisioned various strategies for compensating the next year’s budget deficit due to the fall in oil revenues.

Transferring government’s assets, using forex reserves, selling Islamic bonds, and withdrawing 450 trillion rials (about \$10.714 billion) from National Development Fund (NDF) were among the strategies approved by the country’s Supreme Council of Economic Coordination.

UK economy on track for weakest year since 2008 financial crisis

The British economy is on track for its weakest year since the 2008 financial crisis, as Brexit turmoil weighs in on growth, economists said on Friday.

Following a year rocked by a parliamentary wrangling over Britain’s departure from the European Union, surveys suggest economic growth in the final quarter of the year has stalled.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has vowed to take Britain out of the bloc by January 31 and that too has had an impact on the economic growth in the final quarter. The Bank of England said earlier this month that it expected the gross domestic product to grow by only 0.1 percent in the final quarter as spending slowed before the Brexit deadline.

The Conservatives have promised to increase business investment if they secured a parliamentary majority.

But Mr. Johnson’s refusal to rule out a no-deal Brexit has held back business investment, two former Bank of England monetary committee members told The Guardian on Friday.

Economists also fear that Britain is set to face a difficult 2020 negotiating a new trade deal with the EU. Mr. Johnson has said that he is optimistic that Britain can achieve this in the 11-month window between Britain’s departure from the bloc and the end of the transition period.

Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, however, has been more skeptical. On Friday, she expressed “serious concern” about whether an agreement would be reached by the end of 2020 deadline.

(Source: thenational.ae)

Over \$9.4b paid for development projects in 9 months

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — “In spite of all the difficulties, we are still paying all our dues including government employees’ wages, retirees’ pensions, and the payments to all the groups covered by support agencies, just like before,” he said.

Back in October, Nobakht announced that the government is going to allocate all revenues from oil sales to the development projects following structural reforms in the next Iranian calendar year’s (March 2020-March 2021) budget bill.

According to the official, 430 trillion rials (about \$10.2 billion) is allocated for development projects in the next year’s budget plan, up 53 percent from the figure for the current year.

“We intend to invest as much as we can in development sector in the next [Iranian calendar] year (starts on March 19, 2020), so we have increased the budget for this sector by 53 percent to achieve significant growth,” Nobakht said.

President Hassan Rouhani submitted the administration’s draft of the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1399, which starts on March 20, 2020, to the Majlis in early December.

Stock market closes with TEDPIX, IFX growth

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 6,543 points to 367,632 on Saturday, the first day of the Iranian calendar week, IRNA reported.

Some 5.761 billion securities worth 30.719 trillion rials (about \$731.4 million) were reportedly traded at TSE.

TSE’s index had risen 10,766 points, or three percent, to stand at 361,088 points in the past Iranian calendar week.

The worth of trades at this market stood at 13.38 trillion rials (about \$318.5 million) in the past week, with a two-percent rise from its previous week.

As previously announced, TEDPIX rose 49,000 points, or 16.7 percent, to stand at 353,997 points at the end of the past Iranian calendar month of Azar (ends on December 21).

Reportedly, some 82.215 billion securities worth 432.151 trillion rials (about \$10.29 billion) were traded through 10.153 million deals at TSE during the previous month, with growth of 61 percent and 76 percent in the number and value of traded securities, respectively, while 71 percent rise in the number of deals.



Iran’s over-the-counter (OTC) market known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), also witnessed growth of its index on Saturday.

IFX, the main index of IFB, jumped 111 point to 4,774.

Some 1.62 billion securities worth 14.113 trillion rias (about \$336 million) were traded at IFB on Saturday.

IFX rose 15 percent in the past Iranian calendar month of Azar, while experiencing a 102-percent rise since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 21).

The index stood at 4,559 points at the end of the past month.

The value of trades at IFB rose 16 percent in the previous month and 85 percent since the year start.

Clearance of cargoes from customs through ‘green path’ rises 31%

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Clearance of goods from Iran’s customs through “green path” has risen 31 percent, IRIB quoted Mehrdad Jamal Orounaqi, the deputy head of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), as saying.

Clearance of cargoes through green path has been noticeably increasing and stands at 50 percent at the moment, the official underlined.

Putting the declarations of basic and necessary goods in “green path” for rapid clearance was one of the items mentioned in a directive announced in October by Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjpasand addressing the head of IRICA. It obliged the customs administration to take measures for facilitating customs processes. The directive set a deadline for IRICA to take the necessary actions.

The directive was in line with improving business condition for the enterprises and promoting foreign trade.

Setting up a strategic committee within two months to



take necessary measures for stable promotion of electronic systems and expediting the process of data registration and permit control, improving the system of commodity code,

Promotion of domestic production discussed at TCCIMA

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA)’s mining and industry committee as well as the committee for improving the business environment and removing barriers to domestic production held a joint meeting on Saturday to discuss issues regarding the promotion of domestic production and removing barriers in the way of foreign trade.

At the meeting, representatives of the country’s private sector and senior government officials discussed the consequences of the government’s restrictions on imports of raw materials and machinery in the current economic condition, and explored the possible effects of such restrictions on domestic production, TCCIMA portal reported.

Speaking in the meeting, Mohammad-Reza Zohrehvandi, head of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce’s Industry and Mining Committee, mentioned the “domestic production promotion” policy which the Industry Ministry has been following this year, and said: this policy has been adopted in a time when the government has also banned the imports of about 1,600 commodity items. Now the question is



upon what justifications these bans have been made and whether it would have been better if the imports had been controlled through tariff instruments.”

Iranian Industry Ministry is implementing numerous executive programs for promoting domestic production across the country in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21). In this regard the ministry is determined to follow the government policies for reducing imports of domestically-made products in order to support the country’s producers.

However, many of the private sector producers believe that the mentioned re-



The main characteristic of the next year’s budget bill which makes it different from previous years’ budget bills, is the impact of the U.S. sanctions on the country’s economy and the consequent considerations which

have been taken into account in preparing it.

The next year’s budget bill has been modified in terms of resources, expenditures, policies, and objectives, considering the resistance against the U.S. sanctions.

Commodities worth \$523m traded at IME in a week

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — During the weekdays ended on December 26, approximately 530,190 tons of commodities worth over \$523 million were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME).

According to the report from IME International Affairs and Public Relations Department, last week, on the domestic and export metal and mineral trading floor of IME, 167,603 tons of various products worth close to \$178 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 109,691 tons of steel, 3,480 tons of copper, 3,880 tons of aluminum, 160 tons of molybdenum concentrates, 12 tons of precious metal concentrates, 580 tons of zinc ingot and 5,000 tons of iron ore as well as 2 kg of gold bullion were traded by customers.

The report declares that on domestic and export oil and petrochemical trading floors of IME, 359,697 tons of different commodities with the total value of \$354 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 92,429 tons of bitumen, 133,300 tons of VB feed stock, 79,998 tons of polymer products, 100 tons of lube cut oil, 35,194 tons of chemical products, 310 tons of slaps axes, 310 tons of insulation, 3,006 tons of base oil, as well as 13,000 tons of sulfur



were traded.

Furthermore, 2,890 tons of commodities were traded on the side market of IME.

As previously reported, the value of trades at IME rose 26 percent to reach 135 trillion rials (about \$3.2 billion) during the ninth Iranian calendar month of Azar (ends on December 21).

Some 2.851 million tons of commodities were reportedly traded at this market in the mentioned month to experience a growth of 16 percent.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran’s over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

revising management indices especially for production units and basic and necessary goods, and developing the single-window system (a trade facilitation idea enabling cross-border traders to submit regulatory documents at a single location and/or single entity) were also mentioned in the directive.

Also, following a previous directive by President Hassan Rouhani, IRICA has been providing new facilities for importers of basic goods which makes them able to clear their commodities in less than an hour, as announced by Orounaqi.

Also, a new bylaw announced by Orounaqi on December 16 is to facilitate imports more in line with combatting the sanctions.

The new instructions declared to the country’s customs departments require the representatives of the related organizations to act under the supervision of IRICA for conducting necessary controls and inspections.

domestic production and non-oil exports based on the country’s Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (ends in March 2021).

According to Rahmani, the ministry’s programs mainly focus on developing and supporting domestic production, development of industry, technology, while improving the business environment, as well as expanding exports to the neighboring countries.

Since the U.S. re-imposed sanctions on Iran to pressure the country’s economy, Iran has been taking all necessary measures to mitigate the impact of the sanctions and counter the U.S. actions.

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.

Banning the imports of some domestic-made products and providing the required working capital for the production units and offering them facilities are some of the major measures being pursued by the government to support production units.

Singapore’s industrial land supply reduced again for first half of 2020

The government has once again trimmed industrial land supply for the first half of next year under its Industrial Government Land Sales program.

Industrial land supply will fall to 7.11ha in total site area. The number of sites in the confirmed and reserve lists are also lower than in the second half of this year.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry said that there are three sites on the confirmed list and five on the reserve list.

This is down from the four confirmed list sites and six plots on the reserve list for the second half of this year that amounted to a total supply of 9.98ha.

The first half of this year had five confirmed list sites and seven on the reserve list, amounting to 11.86ha.

In the latest launch, the three confirmed list sites are zoned B2 for heavier industrial use with a tenure of 20 years. They are in Jalan Papan, Tampines North Drive 3 and Gambas Avenue/Sembawang Avenue.

The site at Tampines North Drive 3 was also on the confirmed list for the first half of this year.

The five reserve list sites are also zoned B2.

One at Kaki Bukit Road 5 has a tenure of 30 years and was previously in the reserve list for the second half of this year.

The remaining four sites each have a tenure of 20 years. They are at Tuas South Link 3, 160 Gul Circle, Gul Avenue and Jalan Papan.

The Jalan Papan site was on the confirmed list for the first half of this year.

Confirmed list sites are launched according to schedule regardless of demand, while reserve list land is put up for tender when a developer makes an offer acceptable to the government.

JTC Corporation will be the sales agent for all the sites.

(Source: straitstimes.com)



# Promoting CNG as the national fuel, challenges and merits

➔ Speaking in a press conference, Hassan Gholipour put the average consumption of CNG in the month before the gasoline rationing, at 19.3 million cubic meters per day (mcm/d), and said the figure had risen to about 22 mcm/d, indicating a two-mcm/d growth.

In late December, the Managing director of National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPDC) announced that upgrading the country's automotive industry would reduce gasoline consumption by 17 million liters per day.

Speaking in a seminar on fuel consumption management in Tehran on Sunday, Amir Vakilzadeh said: "Compared to international standards, every car in Iran consumes one liter more gasoline every day. So with an estimation of 17 million cars being used in the country, 17 million liters of gasoline will be saved per day only by upgrading the automotive industry."

## National fuel and its challenges

As I mentioned before, the government is following a new strategy dubbed "CNG, the national fuel" for promoting the consumption of natural gas instead of gasoline in order to reduce the pressure on people with lower incomes and also to reduce the consumption of gasoline which would consequently result in more exports and more revenues.

However, in order for this program to succeed, the government needs to prepare the necessary infrastructure across the country.

According to Amir Vakilzadeh, CNG constitutes nearly 24 percent of the country's fuel consumption basket while LPG accounts



for 1.5 percent.

Currently over 2500 CNG stations are operational across the country in which 20 million cubic meters of CNG is distributed on a daily basis.

Although many government officials praise the oil ministry's efforts in providing the infrastructure for promoting CNG consumption, but many energy experts and analysts do not share their views.

In an interview with EghtesadOnline, Hamid Salehi, the head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture

(ICCIMA)'s Energy Committee, said: "One of the most important infrastructures needed for promoting CNG consumption is setting up enough CNG stations across the country, which unfortunately is not well provided even in metropolises such as Tehran."

"Many provinces lack enough gas stations, Sistan-Baluchestan is one of the most prominent examples in this regard," he added.

"Government is inviting people to change their cars into dual-fuel ones, however we see little changes in infrastructure and in the number of CNG stations, this could result in

long lines at CNG stations and could add to the problem," he said.

In addition to the mentioned infrastructure, Salehi believes another important aspect of the issue is the lack of education and cultivation about proper and optimized fuel consumption.

There is also the issue of safety and producing high-quality dual-fuel vehicles in accordance with international standards.

Unfortunately, due to the poor quality of such equipment in the country, every year numerous CNG or LPG-related explosions are recorded across the nation, which consequently makes people reluctant to lean toward using gas-fuel or dual-fuel cars.

## The solutions

Encouraging people to use natural gas instead of gasoline is a good thing in itself, however, as we mentioned earlier, a variety of issues must be taken into consideration in moving along such a path.

Constructing new CNG stations in the country in order for people to have easy access to the fuel; monitoring the country's auto industry in order to produce high-quality dual-fuel vehicles and also supervising the process of changing gasoline-fuel cars into dual-fuel ones in order to prevent equipment-related safety hazards, and finally teaching people about the merits of using clean fuels and the impact which they would have on the environment, can be mentioned as some of the ways through which the government would be able to successfully implement its plans for establishing CNG as the national fuel.

## Key developments for Tesla solar this year

By Vineet Kulkarni

Elon Musk dubbed this year as the "year of the solar roof." Although the year was not quite as he expected, there were some notable developments for Tesla (TSLA) Solar this year. With solar roof fires at Walmart and the following settlement, and the launch of Solarglass Roof version three, the company had an eventful year.

After previous versions failed to gain ground, Tesla launched the third iteration of its solar roof tile in October. This version is more efficient than previous variants and easier to install. Although Musk again set ambitious targets for the Solarglass Roof, we have yet to see those numbers realized.

In this year's third quarter, TSLA's solar energy generation and storage segment accounted for a mere 6% of the company's total revenue. Solar deployments increased 48% sequentially to 43 megawatts but declined year-over-year from 93 megawatts.

This month, Musk conveyed his year-end priorities to Tesla employees. Deliveries of all cars to customers was the first priority, and the second was to increase Tesla solar deployments.

Tesla's electric car gross profit margin has been around 20% in 2019, whereas its solar gross margin has been around 13%. Therefore, although the company's solar segment doesn't look appealing at this point, the picture might change over time with higher demand and production ramp-ups. Musk has admitted that the company was directing its resources toward Tesla's Model 3 production ramp-ups and had sidelined the solar segment.

Solar roof fires garnered negative publicity for Tesla this year. Retail giant Walmart (WMT) sued Tesla for fires at several stores in August. However, in November, Walmart dropped the lawsuit, keeping the terms of the settlement confidential.

## Solar-friendly policies

Tesla launched a wholly-owned subsidiary in Israel late last month, which could be important for its solar segment. Israel's abundant sunlight and solar-friendly



policies could expand Tesla's solar roof footprint. To learn more, read Will Tesla Solar's Israel Expansion Bring Success?

Tesla doesn't use conventional advertising. Instead, Musk reaches out to his more than 30 million Twitter followers and promotes Tesla products. However, this strategy has backfired at times. A Twitter scuffle between Musk and David Einhorn intensified in November when Einhorn expressed interest in visiting Tesla's Buffalo factory.

In my view, 2019 has set a strong foundation for Tesla Solar with the Solarglass launch, and 2020 could be more interesting for it. How customers respond to the innovative and efficient solar roof tiles amid controversy remains to be seen. The mandate to have a solar roof on every new home in California could also help Tesla Solar next year. Its solar deployments surged in Q3 and could do so again in Q4.

TSLA stock has had a solid run this year. It has surged around 76% in the fourth quarter, and 30% year-to-date. The stock is trading at record highs and gained momentum after the company's better-than-expected third-quarter earnings release. It has outperformed legacy automaker stocks Ford (F) and General Motors (GM) this year. However, after such a steep rally, could valuation be a concern? To learn more, read Morgan Stanley Weighs in on Tesla's Valuation after Spike.

(Source: marketrealist.com)

## Crude imports from top 5 suppliers hit record highs

China's top five suppliers — Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, Brazil and Oman — each delivered record high volumes of crude to China in November, propelling the crude import volume of the world's biggest Asian oil consumer to a brand new historical high of 11.18 million b/d, according to the latest data from the General Administration of Customs, which was made available on Friday.

Shipment from top crude supplier Saudi Arabia surged 25.1% year on year, crossing the 2 million b/d (8.21 million mt) mark for the first time ever in November.

On a barrels-per-day basis, the volume edged 0.8% higher from 1.99 million b/d in October, which was the previous record high. Imports from Russia, who supplied the second highest volume of crude in November, reached 1.87 million b/d (7.64 million mt), 4% higher than the last record high of 1.8 million b/d in October 2018.

Iraqi deliveries extended its upward trend, which started from 866,171 b/d in June, to rise to 1.42 million b/d (5.8 million mt) in November, exceeding the previous record high of 1.16 million b/d in October.

On a metric ton basis, Brazilian inflows had also reached a historical high of 4.12 million mt (1.01 million b/d) in November, which reflected a 4% decline from its previous barrels-per-day historical high of 1.05 million b/d recorded in February.

## A brand-new high

Omani supplies in November had also touched a brand-new high of 935,018 b/d (3.83 million mt), 5.7% higher than the previous record high of 884,802 b/d in December 2016.

Meanwhile, the number of crude suppliers to China in November was the lowest in recent years at 31, a contrast when compared with 41 suppliers in April, the most diversified month in 2019.

This suggests that China was the battleground for the top crude suppliers to increase marginal sales in November.

As a result, the top five suppliers took an overall 64.7% market share in China in November, climbing from 54.5% a year ago and 59.6% in October.

China is currently the world's biggest

crude oil importer with January-November reaching 10.1 million b/d, reflecting a year-on-year increase of 10.1%, GAC data showed.

China will likely demand for more crude oil to burn the country's refining capacity, which is expected to increase by about 24.5 million mt/year (492,000 b/d) in 2020, when the 800,000 b/d greenfield private complex ramp up their operating rates, analysts said.

## OPEC and allies cut production

OPEC and its allies earlier this month agreed to deepen their production cuts to 1.7 million b/d in first-quarter 2020, but Saudi Arabia and Russia said they would ensure sufficient or even lift their supplies to China.

Meanwhile, Brazil has been boosting its crude production and is further tightening its relationship with its Chinese customers, not only with the traditional, smaller-scale independent refining sector, but also with the state-owned giants.

In addition, Iraqi Basrah Heavy and Basrah Light crudes have become more popular among Chinese end-users that often blend heavy sour grades with lighter crudes.

The heavy inflow of Omani crude, on the other hand, came largely on the back of competitive prices.

The average of the Dubai Mercantile Exchange's Oman futures daily settlement for October contract in August was \$59.68/b, equivalent to a premium of 31 cents/b to the monthly average of Platts Dubai first-line crude oil assessments in the loading month.

The October settlement price differential for Oman crude was sharply lower than September's premium of \$2.76/b and it marked the fifth consecutive month of decline, making a case for Chinese refineries to request incremental term cargoes to take full advantage of attractive October prices.

Oman's Oil Ministry uses the average of the DME's Oman settlement price to set the value of its term export cargoes.

GAC releases its data in metric ton, which S&P Global Platts converts to barrels using a 7.33 conversion factor.

(Source: hellenicshippingnews.com)

## Renewables face 2020 challenges that could end Eastern capacity markets

By Jasmin Melvin

Renewable energy developers on the East Coast face an uphill battle in 2020 to secure capacity payments as new wholesale power market rules have the potential to force them out of the market.

Possibly more daunting than the hurdle this presents for the transition to a clean energy economy is the potential for market rule changes approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to be the beginning of the end for mandatory capacity markets in the Eastern regional transmission organizations.

"It may well be that a mandatory capacity market is no longer a sensible approach to resource adequacy at a time when states are increasingly exercising their authority under the (Federal Power Act) to shape the generation mix," Commissioner Richard Glick said in his stinging dissent to FERC's December 19 order (EL18-178) expanding application of the minimum offer price rule (MOPR) in PJM Interconnection to all new resources receiving state subsidies.

"Indeed, the conclusion that I draw from the record in front of us is not that there is an urgent need to mitigate the effects of state public policies, but rather that we should be taking a hard look at whether a mandatory capacity market remains a just and reasonable resource adequacy construct in today's rapidly evolving electricity sector," Glick said. "It is a shame that we have not spent the last two years addressing that question instead of how best to stymie state public policies."

Ryan Katofsky, a managing director with the trade group Advanced Energy Economy, said a theme that will dominate utility regulators' workload in 2020 centers around "finding ways to harmonize state utility regulation and wholesale electricity markets with increasingly ambitious state climate and clean energy goals."



Growing interest in 100% clean energy goals will "ultimately require a comprehensive review of how business is done today and whether that is compatible with achieving the target," Katofsky said during an AEE year-in-review webinar.

He noted the New York Public Service Commission's investigatory proceeding into resource adequacy, citing potential challenges with the compatibility of the current wholesale capacity market with the state's renewable energy and greenhouse gas reduction targets. Reply comments in that proceeding are due January 31.

Glick asserted during the commission's December 19 meeting that the NYPSC was mulling taking back resource adequacy responsibility from New York Independent System Operator over "concerns about FERC." Utility regulators in two states have also "suggested that, given where FERC's gone, maybe they should require their utilities to get out from under PJM," he said.

## Competitive wholesale markets

He told reporters after the meeting that FERC "absolutely" should be concerned that states may flee the organized markets as state policymakers "think this is commission run amok."

FERC's response to the increasing volume of generation backed by out-of-market state revenues seeking to participate in the competitive wholesale markets has riled certain states, the renewables industry and environmental groups.

In both ISO New England and PJM, FERC has given the nod to capacity market redesigns premised on a MOPR. That market mechanism relies on administratively set -- and artificially high, according to critics -- price floors. Traditional resources, such as coal and gas-fired generators, are generally not subject to the MOPR and able to bid lower, effectively forcing state-supported renewables out of the market.

"Despite having very different ways of accommodating subsidized resources, the capacity markets in ISO-NE and PJM face a similar problem in that subsidized resources are developed independent of market signals," Kieran Kemmerer, a power market analyst with S&P Global Platts Analytics, said in an email.

ISO-NE's first auction run under competitive auctions with sponsored policy resources (CASPR) rules, held in February for the 2022-23 delivery year, produced the lowest clearing price in six years at \$3.80/kW-month, an 18% decline from the prior-year's auction. Notably, Vineyard Wind's 800-MW offshore wind project being developed to help meet Massachusetts' clean energy goals was only able to secure an obligation for 54 MW in the substitution auction.

"In order for more subsidized resources to enter ISO-NE's capacity market, resources with the intention of retiring must first clear the auction," Kemmerer said. "In a capacity market with low clearing prices and significant reserve margins, it will take a significant amount of existing capacity retirement for this solution to ever be effective."

In PJM, a revised and expanded MOPR, while providing a limited set of exemptions for certain existing resources, is expected to force many renewables out of future capacity auctions while making the region's power system more expensive for consumers.

## Potential to slide

It remains unclear when PJM's auctions will restart, but the earliest date appears to be during the third quarter of 2020 with the potential to slide into 2021.

Both PJM and ISO-NE "exhibit oversupply, and states with aggressive renewable policy are not willing to wait for resource retirements, in a sense making capacity markets seemingly impertinent to renewables," Kemmerer said.

"In the event that states were willing to wait for resources to retire and market forces to take effect, then this decision would certainly have more bearing as it would be more difficult to transition from a fully-subsidized to economic model," Kemmerer said. "That being said, under existing market rules (non-associated with subsidies), the capacity payments for partially-subsidized resources like onshore wind and solar are low to begin with."

In 2020, the focus must be "toward charting a new path forward to solve the problem that market advocates have identified, but in a way that supports and enables clean resources rather than trying to exclude them," Kathleen Spees, a principal with the economic and regulatory consultancy The Brattle Group, said at an industry forum.

Charting this new course, however, is complicated by the difficulty inherent in getting states to align on policy. "For example, trying to use market-based mechanisms such as carbon pricing in New England did become very, very much an exercise in futility because the states have very different policy objectives," Spees said.

(Source: spglobal.com)

## Nigeria inks major LNG expansion with oil majors

Nigeria signed a major gas expansion deal on Friday, a much-needed collaboration with oil majors that Nigeria LNG said would boost its liquefied natural gas output by more than 30%.

The agreement marks a moment of amity with international oil majors, even as a tax dispute and a new law increasing the government's take on deepwater oil production have irked some companies.

The final investment decision on the Train 7 processing unit at the Bonny Island plant was signed by Nigeria LNG partners state-run Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Eni, Total and Royal Dutch Shell in Abuja.

The new train is expected to boost output by 35% to 30 million tons per year, NLNG said in a statement, and will arrest a decline in Nigeria's LNG output. NLNG operates six LNG processing units, known as trains, on Bonny Island.

The train 7 project has been delayed for several years. A previous deadline for a final investment decision in



the fourth quarter of 2018 was not met.

The West African country is rich in oil and gas but has been struggling to boost its output of both resources.

Its declining LNG production last year pushed it down to the world's fifth largest producer, with the United States taking its place at number four.

Total, Chevron and ExxonMobil are trying to pare back

some Nigerian assets as they focus on projects elsewhere, including U.S. shale. Shell has also sold onshore assets in the country and has discussed further divestment.

NNPC Group Managing Director Mele Kyari said Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari has directed NLNG to push forward to Train 12, and that they were on course to do so.

"It also signifies that there is renewed confidence over international investors, particularly our partners which we have known for a long time, to still agree to put money back into this country," Kyari said.

He added the project was expected to generate \$20 billion in net revenue for the government and create some 10,000 direct jobs.

Earlier this month, NLNG signed 20-year supply agreements with Shell, Eni and Nigerian oil company Oando to feed the Train 7 project. Commodities trader Vitol also signed a 10-year deal with NLNG earlier this month to buy 500,000 tons of LNG per year from other trains.

(Source: reuters.com)



## Trump is isolating the U.S. and here is how

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — The United States’ annual defense budget, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) came in at \$738 billion for 2020, up from last year a sweet \$22 billion.

This year the NDAA came with a few extra stocking-stuffers for the warmongers and profiteers. It bequeathed the world an upgraded possibility of nuclear war and guaranteed the universe a future of bellicosity beyond the confines of the planet.

It also accelerates the growing nuclear arms race with Russia. It fully funds almost every element of the Trump administration’s trillion-dollar plan to replace the entire US nuclear arsenal with new, more deadly weapons. Most immediately, it will allow the Trump administration to quickly deploy the new W76-2 nuclear warhead – a lower yield weapon specifically intended to be more useable in a nuclear conflict. Weapons such as this one make nuclear war more likely and do nothing to enhance our security.



Nor is that all. Trump’s NDAA also fired bullets at a slew of countries including not only Iran, Russia and China but also traditional allies such as Germany and Turkey. Apart from negative rhetoric on issues related to China’s Taiwan, Hong Kong and Xinjiang, the act lists Syria, Turkey, and most controversially, the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, as targets of sanctions.

Originally designed to transport natural gas directly from Russia to Germany, the pipeline is seen by Berlin as essential for its energy security. US punitive measures on companies involved in the project will undeniably exert tremendously negative effects on ties between the two allies. Immediately after the NDAA’s passage, German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz lashed out at it as “serious interference in Germany and Europe’s internal affairs and our own sovereignty.”

Washington justified sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline as protection of Ukraine’s interests and prevention of Russia’s “undue leverage over Europe.” Admittedly, the pipeline, if bypassing Ukraine, would mean huge financial losses for the country. But the Moscow-Kiev agreement clinched this month has ensured Ukraine’s transit status in the project. “Hard to understand” is how Ulrike Demmer, a spokesperson for German Chancellor Angela Merkel, responded to Washington’s Ukraine concerns.

Given this, the bogus fear of Germany becoming a “captive” of Russia sounds more like the real motive for the sanctions. In the era of global integration, systematic differences should be no longer a determinant in a country’s foreign policy. However, American politicians are still obstinate in Cold War zealotry and its hostility against the socialist camp. From their perspective, a Western country’s friendly ties with Iran, China or Russia are a result of its succumbing to economic interests.

Such a mentality is absurd. For any sovereign state in the 21st century, national interest is a top priority in their handling of foreign relations. In the Nord Stream 2 case, Germany has its own commercial and security considerations that should be independent of US interference. In Iran’s case, the EU countries want to save the nuclear deal and resume normal trade ties but to no avail, because of Washington’s strong opposition. Also in China’s and Russia’s cases the same argument could be made which so far have gone nowhere.

Since Trump took office under his America First doctrine, the White House has been acting in self-contradictory fashion in foreign policy. On the one hand, it is pursuing to Make America Great Again at the cost of the interests of its allies. But on the other, it cannot accept its allies walking closer to the opposite side and is adept at using the “alliance” to pressure them into a unified stance with the United States.

Take Germany as an example. Several times Trump has launched verbal attacks on Berlin for its trade surplus and failure to shoulder more defense spending. In blaming Germany, the US is prioritizing its national interests over those of its allies. But in the meantime, the US cannot accept Merkel’s pursuit to Make Germany Great Again, which the US believes is a betrayal of the alliance.

As is, Washington sacrifices allies’ interests for self-gain, but has been playing the alliance card to interfere in allies’ domestic affairs as well. It has relentlessly pressured Berlin to ban China’s telecommunications giant Huawei from the country’s networks and to give up energy cooperation with Russia by imposing sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. Washington is blatantly bullying its allies to walk away from Iran trade as well by failing to meet their end of the bargain under the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Whatever this is, such unilateral and selfish moves must be harshly denounced and resisted by the international civil society. Having habituated to its hegemonic status in the world, the US has been acting capriciously toward friends and foes alike under a capricious president. Trump’s will to Make America Great Again is to make the world miserable again just like after the Second World War. If the US insists on taking advantage of its alliance to thwart Western countries’ will to grow, it will only isolate the US internationally in the era of multilateralism.

# Laurence Twaddle in an Interview with Association for Defending Victims of Terrorism

All of us want to make the world a better place for everyone

**GENEVA** — Mr. Laurence Twaddle chose to do his BD Hons at the University of Edinburgh because at the time, it was considered to offer the most cutting edge theological training in Scotland. After four years in St Andrews it might have seem attractive to stay on there to study theology - but the reputation of New College was such that there seemed no better place to explore theology than there. After graduation, he had an almost two year spell as Assistant Minister at St Cuthbert’s Edinburgh, then 38 years at Belhaven Parish Church. He is minister of Church of Scotland in Geneva since 2017. The Church of Scotland has a glorious history. At the time of the Reformation, John Calvin gave his famous lectures here, and at his suggestion the building was made available for worship by the English and Italian speaking refugees. John Knox ministered to the English speaking congregation between 1556 and 1558. The form of worship and church government that was developed here at that time became a model for Presbyterian Churches throughout the world. The building was renovated in the 1950’s with funding raised by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Today, the Auditoire is the home of the Church of Scotland congregation in Geneva. Mr. Laurence Twaddle has written “Making Sense of English in Religion” book.

Association for Defending Victims of Terrorism Public Relations – Laurence Twaddle, minister of Church of Scotland in Geneva, emphasized contradiction between the aims of religions and terrorism.

■ What do you think about the misuse of religion by terrorist groups?

A: So this a terrible misuse of religion to take those scriptures and some other to test them around to seek your own ends and to give some spurious Religious justification to do what are doing.

Yes, it is strange how different groups all across the history of, taking a label



Christianity Judaism Islam, and have used it to justify the things that they do. Christians who hear about how these religions is about knows that they were not about terror, they were about peace, about brotherhood about sisterhood, were about building bridges not building walls were about caring for one another about loving one another bless the peacemakers. So this a terrible misuse of religion to take those scriptures and some other to test them around to seek your own ends and to give some spurious Religious justification to do what are doing. And many moments of good hearts who love those faiths know that to tarnish them by associating it with terrorism is just ugly and wrong.

■ What measure we can take to prevent terrorists from the abusing the religions? A: You would like some kind of dialogue with people who espouse these ugly doctrines.

That is hard one because the people we know ever we do in terms of educate folk around in the world so they don’t immediately associate any particular world faith with active violence so he can tell her children nothing to do that faith about not about that teach in school high ideals

Terrible things to destroy so we can do that you would like some kind of dialogue with people who espouse these ugly doctrines.

I am sure that we can talk and love to sit down with somebody who tries to justify blowing up of Pixar restaurant an all kinds of folks Muslims, Christians, Jewish, unbelievers. They don’t ask their identity card before deciding who they want to kill. They just do it indiscriminately.

■ What do you think about the perspective of Christianity about killing of innocent people?

A: Well, as we say in the UK it does

## Let the ICC do what it alleges it will



date), it must merely constitute only a threat of retaliation that might convince the Israelis NOT to initiate a regional war. Put another way, Israel is NOT threatened in fact UNLESS it initiates or starts a war. Why is it, it must be asked, don’t the Zionists realize this and simply relax? They could. They could simply stop the threats and aggressions and enjoy what prosperity they have long enjoyed under the umbrella of American support, which is NOT likely to go away significantly unless people wiser than most in the U.S. government now somehow manage to win in upcoming elections. People like, say, Bernie Sand-

ers, a Jew no less.

It may be the case, as already said, that the Zionists are just flat insane with a lust for war, which has marked Israel’s entire history. That they think the country literally thrives on war. In some respects it has thrived, but only to the extent that it has not suffered from it substantially economically or materially given the American backstops – except in the court of world opinion. But if they are insane, and there is good reason to suspect they may be, is this not alone a reason, in time, to imagine a future where Israel will increasingly be shunned and reviled and maybe even

no back in history, no relation to things we have understood as the essence of trust and meaning of Christianity is about fellowship and loving a neighbor not killing a neighbor.

Being peace maker not being warmongers so how do you heal and amend and make better for people make the world better and fill it with .

Love and joy that is Christian perspective so there is disconnect between anyone saying in the name of Jesus Christ and blowing up the shoot up innocents it is utterly illing should person kill person whole Christian ethos and all rouge minded lover of the faith with ever sanctions use of violence or of terrorism.

Being peace maker not being war makers do heal and amend and make better for people and make the world better.

■ What do you think about the cooperation between religions in countering terrorism?

A: [The idea that there] is some connection between religion and terrorism entirely oppose the end of spectrum

I think this is the interest of all of us to make a clear to folk don’t really carefully think about things that we are in the same business we all love God, we want to serve him and we want to make the world became better to be. So all of us to distance ourselves from anything undermines that more creation of people there is some connection between religion and terrorism entirely oppose the end of spectrum and it is a good thing and important exercise to gather the voice people and we like people to know whatever they are choose to on this label the terrible deeds and to use any religion for that is twisted corruption of the two thing so yes I love what you said cooperation and speaking one voice on that subject so there is no doubt that to be religious on to be true believer when you will off course no one wants to bloody hands terrible deeds.

1 → Kochavi threatens to “target everything that helps in combat operations” against Israel anywhere in the Middle East, and particularly in Syria and Lebanon and Iraq, presuming there is a response anywhere against the Israelis. But of course this makes no sense because it is and long has been entirely UNLIKELY that any country in the Middle East is going to start a war, beginning with offensive operations, against Israel. This latter assumption is just common sense: Israel is a nuclear power and also has by far the strongest conventional military assets in the Mideast. Even if most of the Arab countries in the Middle East could welcome the eradication of Israel, if not as a sovereign state, at least as a state AS IT HAS BEEN for decades, most would consider an offensive attack on Israel AS IT IS more or less suicidal. IF a regional war develops, it won’t have been initiated anywhere but Israel. Again, this looks like common sense.

The danger, obviously, is a “mistake” of some sort by Iran or by Iran’s allies or proxies that literally gives the Zionists (what they consider) a casus bello to initiate a war. So far, it seems, this has not occurred. Does Iran stationing forces or other military assets in Iraq or Syria constitute such a “mistake”, or something that the Zionists can further seize upon to justify offensive operations? It’s hard to say at this point.

Any sensible mind has to imagine that whatever Iran does (or has done to

## The concept of women development is limited to economics

**TEHRAN** — The author of “The Developed Woman” book emphasized on studying the concept of women development independently while she criticized the monopoly of economics in development studies.

The concept of development has been one of the most significant and of course, complicated issues in phenomenon circle of humanities, at least during past decade. Emerge of more postmodern approaches for considering humanities and its philosophy also has important role in extension of this concept and its various branches.

The unveiling ceremony for introducing “The Developed Woman” held by presence of Atena Naseri, psychologist and author of this book and some active thinkers in Islamic feminism society of Iran in Tehran this week.

During holding of the ceremony, Nasiri emphasized

on general features of developed women and said: “in this book, I’ve shown how braveness of women could cut dogmatism and escaping us from deprivation”.

The author of the Developed Woman criticized the monopoly of development concept in economics emphasizing on this essential question that “how can we bring this concept from economics into other aspects of development?”

“If we don’t face reality, we will be stabbed in our back from it. That’s why it’s necessary to say that even we are not developing in many areas of study. We have to ask this question that is economic crisis our only problem in developing countries while all the creating elements of economy are composed of our human resources?”, Nasiri said.

Referring her book, this psychologist emphasized that she has tried to show the concept of inner development of women and said: “The indications of development of this book are outlined in relation to a woman’s behavior with her body and psyche. In health psychology, we focus on interaction between body and psyche. So the content of book is based on an interdisciplinary studies framework.

Pointing to the issue of studying psychological characteristics of women regarding health approach, Nasiri said: I’ve decided to do my women studies in an abstract style to recognize existing individual obstacles on the path of their development. I strongly believe that we have to start our studies on single persons in order to save our society from crisis.



# How Trump can reach a new Iran deal

By Paul R. Pillar

**IN ABANDONING** — the nuclear deal with Iran, the Trump administration disrupted an international consensus on how to deal with Tehran. U.S. policy toward Iran will now be a story of attempted recovery from the failures of that disruption. Domestic politics drove the original decision to confront Iran, and domestic politics, in an election year, will shape Donald Trump's attempts at avoiding war. Any hope of salvaging success will require significant change in Trump's policy, some hints of which have already appeared. Iran, too, has changed, but in unhelpful ways that will make the recovery process all the more difficult.

THE TOO-EASILY-FORGOTTEN background to the current mess was broad agreement—expressed most strongly by proponents of a hard line toward Iran—that the sine qua non of Iran policy was to prevent an Iranian nuclear weapon. The response to that broadly-held concern was the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a multilateral agreement that—by disposing of stockpiles of enriched uranium, filling nuclear reactors with cement and a host of other measures—closed all possible paths to such a weapon and imposed an intrusive system of international monitoring to assure the world that they stayed closed. The international consensus on the subject took the form of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, which passed unanimously in 2015 and was the Council's formal blessing of the JCPOA.

The Trump administration's reneging, beginning in 2018, on U.S. obligations under the JCPOA was foreshadowed by earlier Republican attempts during the Obama administration to sabotage the negotiation of the agreement. Both the earlier sabotage and the later reneging were motivated by the identification of Barack Obama with the JCPOA. That the agreement was a signal foreign policy accomplishment of this Democratic president was reason enough to try to destroy it. A complementary motivation was opposition to the agreement by the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu, whose unrelenting push to keep Iran ostracized served several political purposes, including promoting Israel's relations with the Gulf Arab monarchies and diverting international attention from Israel's own policies. The position of that government had, as always, profound political implications in the United States, even though in this case the JCPOA's closing of all paths to an Iranian nuclear weapon was clearly in Israel's interests, as many former senior Israeli security officials stated.

Vague references to a "better deal" did not clarify the Trump administration's desired end game. Different players in the administration had differing desires. Especially evident was a division between Trump, who wants deals, and his former National Security Advisor John Bolton, who always wanted a war. For a while after the initial reneging in mid-2018, the differences did not seem to matter. As U.S. violations of the JCPOA escalated into unrestricted economic warfare against Iran, the administration pointed to the significant damage inflicted on the Iranian economy as if that were ipso facto a positive achievement. The administration took satisfaction in how the private sector's fear of losing access to U.S. markets undermined European governments' efforts to circumvent secondary U.S. sanctions. The administration's policies did not even seem to dent the existing nuclear restrictions on Iran. For a year after the United States reneged on the JCPOA, Iran—reaffirming its commitment to the agreement and expressing its desire for full compliance with it—continued to observe its own obligations under the accord.

By mid-2019, however, it was impossible to ignore how the "maximum pressure" campaign was failing on every front. Iran's patience ran out when the Trump administration ended the last of the waivers of sanctions it had placed on purchasers of Iranian oil. Tehran then began a series of small, incremental moves beyond the JCPOA's limits on the amount of enriched uranium that Iran could stockpile and the level of enrichment. Using the same strategy it employed before the JCPOA was negotiated, Tehran gradually ramped up its nuclear activity to pressure the United States and other



foreign states to negotiate seriously about sanctions relief. Iran, in other words, has been responding to maximum pressure with pressure of its own.

The nuclear program is still below the levels it reached before the JCPOA deconstructed most of that program, and nowhere near the ability to construct a nuclear weapon. With each of its incremental steps, Iran has emphasized that what it has done is easily reversible and that its objective is a return of everyone to full compliance with the JCPOA. But for the time being, the result has not been a move toward a "better deal" but instead a series of moves in the opposite direction. Iran will continue the gradual expansion of its nuclear program as long as the maximum pressure campaign continues.

A SIMILAR story is unfolding regarding what gets vaguely but routinely labeled as "malign" or "nefarious" Iranian activity in the Middle East. The Trump administration has contended that this is the front where its economic warfare is most effective, because crimping Iran's economic resources, the argument goes, forces Iran to curtail its regional activity whether or not Tehran signs any new agreements. But there was no discernible curtailment of Iran's regional activity when the pressure campaign started in 2018, any more than there was any discernible expansion of that activity when the JCPOA went into effect in 2015 and Iran gained some sanctions relief. Iran does what it does in the region not according to the level of its financial resources but instead for what it regards as security reasons. Any changes in that activity have almost always been in response to someone else's activity in the region, whether it was what Saudi Arabia was doing in Yemen, what insurgents were doing in Syria or what the Islamic State was doing in Iraq. Press reports about increased financial strains in Iran's ally Hezbollah, for example, have not been accompanied by a corresponding reduction of Hezbollah activities on the ground.

This picture worsened in the spring of 2019 as the Trump administration escalated its economic warfare with an attempt to reduce Iranian oil exports to zero. The Iranian regime, in continuing its strategy of meeting pressure with pressure, escalated in response. Despite Iranian denials, it is widely believed to have been behind the May 2019 sabotage of two Saudi oil tankers and two other vessels off the coast of the United Arab Emirates. More dramatic, and with greater immediate impact on the oil trade, was an unmanned aerial attack on Saudi Arabia's Khurais oil field and the critical Abqaiq oil processing facility in September of the same year.

Iran was doing nothing of the sort prior to the U.S. maximum pressure campaign, and had no reason to do so. Iranian leaders have been acutely aware of how attacks on anyone

else's oil exports would invite reprisals that would damage Iran's own oil trade. Iran's incentives in this regard changed markedly when the Trump administration endeavored to destroy Iran's oil trade anyway. Tehran no longer had anything to lose. Iranian leaders have explicitly stated that if Iran cannot export its oil, then other Persian Gulf producers will not be able to either. Attacks such as the one against Abqaiq were a step toward making good on this threat.

The attacks also served what in Western strategic jargon is called "establishing deterrence." They demonstrated, to the Saudis as well as others, Iranian willingness and ability to inflict major damage across the Gulf in the event of a military attack against Iran. The message-sending nature of the operations was underscored by how they were aimed at economically vital targets but inflicted few to no human casualties.

In short, if damaging Iranian regional activity is a worry, that activity has gotten much worse since the Trump administration's pressure campaign kicked into high gear. Iran's actions in this regard are clearly a direct response to the administration's policies.

A FINAL front on which to measure the results of the maximum pressure campaign—one that should be of special interest to those longing for regime change in Iran—is the effect on politics inside Iran. Two patterns stand out. One is that Iranian hardliners have risen in influence since the United States reneged on the JCPOA. Leaders who were involved in negotiating the JCPOA—notably President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Javad Zarif—have been on the defensive. The hardliners' "we told you so" line about the hazards of negotiating with the perfidious Americans has been difficult to rebut. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who gave Rouhani and Zarif room to negotiate the agreement but was careful to leave himself room to dissociate himself from the result if it went sour, has taken the same line. The increased clout of the hardliners, reflected in their capturing some important senior government positions in the last several months, represents another front in which the effects of the Trump administration's nothing-but-pressure policy have been in the opposite direction from what was advertised.

The other pattern inside Iran is that the economic hardship from sanctions is not translating into revolutionary upheaval. This has been true even of the most serious economically-driven protests in Iran since the start of maximum pressure, after the regime increased in November 2019 the price of still heavily subsidized fuel. There is no evidence that the Islamic Republic is anywhere close to collapse.

(Source: *National Interest*)

## On the road to Gaza: The freedom flotilla will sail again

by Ramzy Baroud

**ANTIWAR** — What is Gaza to us but an Israeli missile, a rudimentary rocket, a demolished home, an injured child being whisked away by his peers under a hail of bullets? On a daily basis, Gaza is conveyed to us as a bloody image or a dramatic video, none of which can truly capture the everyday reality of the Strip — its formidable steadfastness, the everyday acts of resistance, and the type of suffering that can never be really understood through a customary glance at a social media post.

At long last, the chief prosecutor of the International Court of Justice (ICC), Fatou Bensouda, has declared her 'satisfaction' that 'war crimes have been — or are being — committed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip'. As soon as the ICC statement was made on December 20, pro-Palestinian groups felt a rare moment of relief. Finally, Israel will stand accused, potentially paying for its recurring bloodbath in the isolated and besieged Gaza Strip, its military occupation and apartheid in the West Bank, and much more.

However, it could take years for the ICC to initiate its legal proceedings and render its verdict. Moreover, there are no political guarantees that an ICC decision indicting Israel would ever be respected, let alone implemented.

Meanwhile, the siege on Gaza persists, only to be interrupted by a massive war, like the one of 2014, or a less destructive one, similar to the latest Israeli onslaught in November. And with every war, more dismal statistics are produced, more lives shattered, and more painful stories are told and retold.

For years, civil society groups across the world labored to destabilize this horrific status quo. They organized, held vigils, wrote letters to their political representatives and so on. To no avail. Frustrated by government inaction, a small group of activists sailed to Gaza in a small boat in August 2008, succeeding in doing what the United Nations has failed to do: they broke, however fleetingly, the Israeli siege on the impoverished Strip.

This symbolic action of the Free Gaza movement had a tremendous impact. It sent a clear message to Palestinians in occupied Palestine, that their fate is not only determined by the Israeli government and military machine; that there are other actors who are capable of challenging the dreadful silence of the international community; that not all Westerners are as complicit as their governments in the prolonged suffering of the Palestinian people.

Since then, many more solidarity missions have attempted to follow suit, coming across the sea atop flotillas or in large caravans through the Sinai desert. Some have successfully reached Gaza, delivering medical aid and other supplies. The majority, however, were sent back or had their boats hijacked in international waters by the Israeli navy.

The outcome of all of this has been the writing of a new chapter of solidarity with the Palestinian people that went beyond the occasional demonstration and the typical signing of a petition.

The second Palestinian Intifada, the uprising of 2002, had already redefined the role of the "activist" in Palestine. The formation of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) allowed thousands of international activists from around the world to participate in "direct action" in Palestine — thus fulfilling, however symbolically, a role that is typically played by a United Nations protective force.

ISM activists, however, employed nonviolent means of registering civil society's rejection of the Israeli occupation. Expectedly, Israel did not honor the fact that many of these activists came from countries deemed "friendly" by Tel Aviv's standards. The killing of US and British nationals Rachel Corrie and Tom Hurndall in Gaza in 2003 and 2004 respectively, was just the precursor of Israeli violence that was to follow.

In May 2010, the Israeli navy attacked the Freedom Flotilla consisting of the Turkish-owned ship 'MV Mavi Marmara' and others, killing ten unarmed humanitarian workers and wounding at least 50 more. As was the case with the murder of Rachel and Tom, there was no real accountability for the Israeli attack on the solidarity boats.

It must be understood that Israeli violence is not random nor is just a reflection of Israel's notoriety and disregard of international and humanitarian law. With every violent episode, Israel hopes to dissuade outside actors from getting involved in "Israeli affairs". Yet, time and again, the solidarity movement returns with a defiant message, insisting that no country, not even Israel, has the right to commit war crimes with impunity.

Following a recent meeting in the Dutch city of Rotterdam, the International Coalition of the Freedom Flotilla, which consists of many international groups, has decided to, once more, sail to Gaza. The solidarity mission is scheduled for the summer of 2020, and, like most of the 35 previous attempts, the Flotilla is likely to be intercepted by the Israeli navy. Yet, another attempt will likely follow, and many more, until the Gaza siege is completely lifted. It has become clear that the purpose of these humanitarian missions is not to deliver a few medical supplies to the nearly two million besieged Gazans, but to challenge the Israeli narrative that has turned the occupation and isolation of Palestinians to a status quo ante, to an "Israeli affair".

According to the United Nations Office in Occupied Palestine, the poverty rate in Gaza seems to be increasing at an alarming speed of 2% per year. By the end of 2017, 53% of Gaza's population lived in poverty, two-thirds of them living in "deep poverty". This terrible number includes over 400,000 children.

An image, a video, a chart or a social media post can never convey the pain of 400,000 children, who experience real hunger every single day of their lives so that the Israeli government may achieve its military and political designs in Gaza. Indeed, Gaza is not just an Israeli missile, a demolished home, and an injured child. It is an entire nation that is suffering and resisting, in near-complete isolation from the rest of the world.

True solidarity should aim at forcing Israel to end the protracted occupation and siege on the Palestinian people, sailing the high seas, if necessary. Thankfully, the good activists of the Freedom Flotilla are doing just that.

## Caleb Maupin: Capitalism wars to destroy independent countries

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Caleb Maupin, American activist and political analyst, says people around the world are caught in an ivory trap caused by capitalism which is even impoverishing the middle class people.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with FNA, Maupin said, "Capitalism means millions of people fearing unemployment, as they can only be hired if their labor power is deemed profitable by a capitalist [...] Capitalism is military industrial complex, where war and death means profits."

Caleb Maupin is an American writer, journalist, and political analyst. He has traveled extensively in the Middle East and in Latin America. He was involved with the Occupy Wall Street movement from its early planning stages in August 2011.

Below is the full text of the interview:  
■ How do you view capitalism as a social, political, and economic system?

A: Capitalism, the system in which the major centers of economic power function in order to make profits for owners, is very well alive. Capitalism today is expressed in huge international monopolies that dominate global trade, reaping super profits from across the planet. Capitalism means millions of people fearing unemployment, as they can only be hired if their labor power is deemed profitable by a capitalist. Capitalism means a dropping living standard across the planet,

as workers everywhere compete with each other in accepting the lowest wages and worst conditions of the huge multinationals.

Capitalism is the sweatshops of Bangladesh. Capitalism is the guest workers of Saudi Arabia who exist as modern day slaves. Capitalism is millions of people in Latin America, who have seen their homelands ground into deep poverty, fleeing to the United States with dead bodies found along the US-Mexico border every single day.

Capitalism is wars to destroy independent countries that dare compete with the billionaire class of international bankers. Capitalism is military industrial complex, where war and death means profits. Capitalism very well alive.

■ How does capitalism impact Americans?

A: Since the mid-1970s, a particular model of capitalist economics called "Neoliberalism" has been implemented in the United States. This has meant cutting back the public sector, and allowing the market to take dominance in every field. In the USA, we have prisons for profit. Private companies are contracted by the government, and get paid for each person who is locked in prison. As a result, we have a massive prison population, the largest in the entire world, not just in numbers but also per capita and percentage.

Capitalism in the United States has meant the manufacturers of painkilling opioid medi-

cines going out and promoting disinformation, saying that their drugs are not addictive. As a result of a huge campaign of deception, in which doctors were given inaccurate info and pushed to overprescribe painkilling medicines, we now have a massive episode of drug addiction in the USA, with deaths from Opioids far higher than ever before in US history.

Capitalism in the United States has resulted in municipalities across the country no longer have the funds to maintain paved roads. In many different US states, cities are actively unpaving the roads, replacing asphalt roads with dirt and gravel roads. Cities do not have the money to maintain paved roads any longer. Capitalism has meant power plants and water treatment facilities crumbling. Capitalism has meant the elimination of good paying industrial jobs.

The USA is one of the wealthiest countries on earth, but in many parts of the country, the living conditions and the life expectancy is dropping to third world conditions. Low wage jobs are replacing the industrial middle class that once prospered during the Cold War. Young people are committing suicide at the highest rate in generations. The American Dream has been stolen by Wall Street bankers and their drive to establish a global, international financial system, at the expense of the domestic US economy.

■ Why are people in the capitalist United States increasingly turning to socialism that is the exact opposite?

A: For years, Americans have been told that if the government provides healthcare, this is bad because "that is socialism". We have been told that the government providing free education cannot be tolerated, because "That is socialism". We have been told that the richest people should not be forced to pay their fair share in taxes, because "That is socialism".

The result of decades of economic mismanagement, done in the name of opposing socialism, has been making socialism popular. Millions of young Americans now say "Fine! We don't care if it is socialism! We want healthcare, education, and jobs. We want to tax the rich".

The Cold War stigma associated with Socialism and Communism has worn off. Many young Americans do not feel that the identity of Americans is intrinsically tied up with the unregulated market and the pioneer mentality of "every man for himself".

Many Americans who voted for Donald Trump, were Democrats who had preferred Sanders and were disgusted by Hillary Clinton. Americans are upset about the future of the country, and want things to change. "Socialism" has become a popular word among those who want economic reforms.



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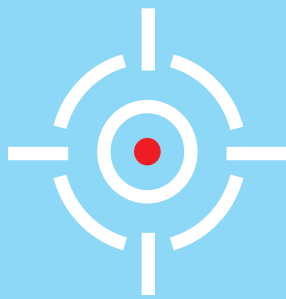
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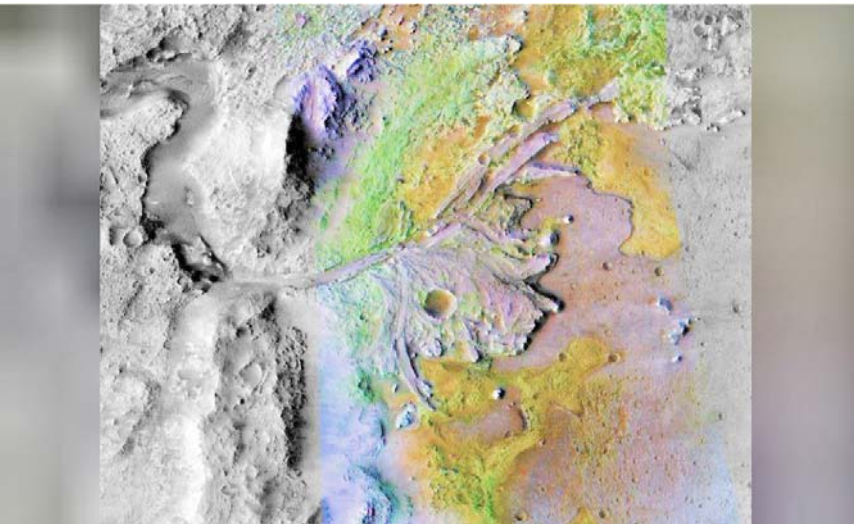
# NASA’s Mars 2020 rover set to hunt Martian fossils, scout for manned missions

A NASA robotic rover is nearing completion ahead of a journey next year to search for evidence of past life on Mars and lay the groundwork for the space agency’s mission to send humans into deep space.

The U.S. space agency on Friday showed off its Mars 2020 rover, whose official name will be chosen early next year. NASA will in February ship the rover to Florida’s Kennedy Space Center where its three sections will be fully assembled. A July launch will send the rover to a dry lake bed on Mars that is bigger than the island of Manhattan.

The four-wheeled, car-sized rover will scour the base of Mars’ Jezero Crater, an 820-foot-deep (250-meter-deep) crater thought to have been a lake the size of Lake Tahoe, once the craft lands in February 2021. The crater is believed to have an abundance of pristine sediments some 3.5 billion years old that scientists hope will hold fossils of Martian life.

“The trick, though, is that we’re looking for trace levels of chemicals from billions of years ago on Mars,” Mars 2020 deputy



project manager Matt Wallace told Reuters. The rover will collect up to 30 soil samples to be picked up and returned to Earth by a future spacecraft planned by NASA.

“Once we have a sufficient set, we’ll put them down on the ground, and another mission, which we hope to launch in 2026, will come, land on the surface, collect those

samples and put them into a rocket, basically,” Wallace said. Humans have never before returned sediment samples from Mars.

The findings of the Mars 2020 research will be crucial to future human missions to the red planet, including the ability to make oxygen on the surface of Mars, Wallace said. The Mars 2020 Rover is carrying equipment that can turn carbon dioxide, which is pervasive on Mars, into oxygen for breathing and as a propellant.

If successful, Mars 2020 will mark NASA’s fifth Martian rover to carry out a soft landing, having learned crucial lessons from the most recent Curiosity rover that landed on the planet’s surface in 2012 and continues to traverse a Martian plain southeast of the Jezero Crater.

The Soviet Union is the only other country to successfully land a rover on Mars. China and Japan have attempted unsuccessfully to send orbiters around Mars, while India and Europe’s space agency have successfully lofted an orbiter to the planet.

(Source: Reuters)

## Scientists find iron ‘snow’ in Earth’s core



The Earth’s inner core is hot, under immense pressure and snow-capped, according to new research that could help scientists better understand forces that affect the entire planet.

The snow is made of tiny particles of iron -- much heavier than any snowflake on Earth’s surface -- that fall from the molten outer core and pile on top of the inner core, creating piles up to 200 miles thick that cover the inner core.

The image may sound like an alien winter wonderland. But the scientists who led the research said it is akin to how rocks form inside volcanoes.

“The Earth’s metallic core works like a magma chamber that we know better of in the crust,” said Jung-Fu Lin, a professor in the Jackson School of Geosciences at The University of Texas at Austin and a co-author of the study.

Youjun Zhang, an associate professor at Sichuan University in China, led the study. The other co-authors include Jackson School graduate student Peter Nelson; and Nick Dygert, an assistant professor at the University of Tennessee who conducted the research during a postdoctoral fellowship at the Jackson School.

The Earth’s core can’t be sampled, so scientists study it by recording and analyzing signals from seismic waves (a type of energy wave) as they pass through the Earth.

However, aberrations between recent seismic wave data and the values that would be expected based on the current model of the Earth’s core have raised questions. The waves move more slowly than expected as they passed through the base of the outer core, and they move faster than expected when moving through the eastern hemisphere of the top inner core.

The study proposes the iron snow-capped core as an explanation for these aberrations. The scientist S.I. Braginskii proposed in the early 1960s that a slurry layer exists between the inner and outer core, but prevailing knowledge about heat and pressure conditions in the core environment quashed that theory. However, new data from experiments on core-like materials conducted by Zhang and pulled from more recent scientific literature found that crystallization was possible and that about 15% of the lowermost outer core could be made of iron-based crystals that eventually fall down the liquid outer core and settle on top of the solid inner core.

“It’s sort of a bizarre thing to think about,” Dygert said. “You have crystals within the outer core snowing down onto the inner core over a distance of several hundred kilometers.”

The researchers point to the accumulated snow pack as the cause of the seismic aberrations. The slurry-like composition slows the seismic waves. The variation in snow pile size -- thinner in the eastern hemisphere and thicker in the western -- explains the change in speed.

“The inner-core boundary is not a simple and smooth surface, which may affect the thermal conduction and the convections of the core,” Zhang said.

The paper compares the snowing of iron particles with a process that happens inside magma chambers closer to the Earth’s surface, which involves minerals crystallizing out of the melt and glomming together. In magma chambers, the compaction of the minerals creates what’s known as “cumulate rock.” In the Earth’s core, the compaction of the iron contributes to the growth of the inner core and shrinking of the outer core.

And given the core’s influence over phenomena that affects the entire planet, from generating its magnetic field to radiating the heat that drives the movement of tectonic plates, understanding more about its composition and behavior could help in understanding how these larger processes work.

Bruce Buffet, a geosciences professor at the University of California, Berkley who studies planet interiors and who was not involved in the study, said that the research confronts longstanding questions about the Earth’s interior and could even help reveal more about how the Earth’s core came to be.

“Relating the model predictions to the anomalous observations allows us to draw inferences about the possible compositions of the liquid core and maybe connect this information to the conditions that prevailed at the time the planet was formed,” he said. “The starting condition is an important factor in Earth becoming the planet we know.”

The research was funded by the National Natural Science Foundation of China, Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities, the Jackson School of Geosciences, the National Science Foundation and the Sloan Foundation

(Source: Science Daily)

## True meanings of words of emotion get lost in translation, study finds



The true meaning of words may be lost in translation, according to research suggesting the way people understand terms such as “anger” or “love” differs between languages.

For example, while the concept of “love” is closely linked to “like” and “want” in Indo-European languages, it is strongly linked to “pity” in Austronesian languages -- a family that includes Vietnamese and the Mon language spoken in parts of Myanmar.

“Even though we might say there is a word for anger in hundreds of languages, these words actually might not mean the same thing,” said Joshua Conrad Jackson, co-author of the research from University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.

Writing in the journal Science, Jackson and colleagues report how they carried out an analysis of 24 emotional concepts, such as anger, love and pride, across 2,474 languages. The study also included more than 2,400 non-emotional concepts -- such as “quarrel” -- that were used to further explore meanings and context of emotion words.

The team then carried out an analysis based on multiple meanings of words.

The Hawaiian word “pu’iwa” refers to both “fear” and “surprise”, suggesting a strong link between the two concepts. Other languages in the same family may have the same word for either “fear” or “surprise” and a third word, such as “unknown”, furthering the likelihood of a link between these two emotion concepts within that language family. In other languages, however, there might be no such overlaps, suggesting that fear and surprise are unrelated concepts for those speakers.

The team found emotion concepts across all language families tend to be grouped together based on whether they were positive or negative and passive or energetic. Moreover, certain emotions such as grief and regret were commonly found to be linked in several different language families, with language families geographically closer showing greater similarities in meanings.

Nonetheless, there were variations. For example, the link between “fear” and “surprise” in Austronesian languages like Hawaiian is not evident in Tai-Kadai languages, spoken in south-east Asia and beyond, where “surprise” sits more closely with “want” and “hope”.

Jackson said the research suggested there may be no universal concepts of

emotions. “People may universally have the experience of having their heart beat faster when threatened. However, there is variability in the way that we make meaning of that experience, the behaviors that we associate with the experience, and the way that we verbally communicate the experience to other people as an emotion,” he said, adding that such responses appear to be shaped by culture.

However the study is based on something of a paradox. “Our results suggest that there is no single concept of ‘fear’, but we couldn’t have done the analysis without starting with the concept of ‘fear’ and comparing the way that it is expressed and co-lexified in different languages,” said Jackson.

But the team say dictionaries are still better than nothing. “What we are saying in this paper is not to throw out translation dictionaries; instead, we are saying we can’t take them too seriously,” said Jackson.

Dr. Angeles Carreres, an expert in translation from Cambridge University, said dictionaries often give a false notion of equivalence, noting that even physical entities like the moon can be referred to differently -- for example as masculine or feminine -- reflecting a different view of the same object. History, she adds, can also shape the meaning of terms. “The word ‘nation’ is notorious for the range of different, often conflicting associations it can bring with it, dependent on a country’s, or a community’s, history.”

Maja Konkolewska, a freelance Polish/English translator and interpreter and an associate of the Stephen Spender Trust, said she believes the emotions we feel are connected to the experiences of our ancestors.

“I always struggle to translate the word ‘vulnerable’ to Polish because there is no direct equivalent,” she said. “When I listen to my grandmother’s stories about her childhood during the Second World War, I wonder whether there was no space for vulnerability in Polish history.”

As part of a multilingual family, Konkolewska said she finds that subtle differences in meaning for the same word in different languages are important -- and useful. “My favorite English word is ‘flabbergasted’ -- I love this feeling, but I can only feel it in English because it doesn’t exist in Polish,” she said.

(Source: The Guardian)

## Scientists attempt to recreate ‘Overview effect’ from Earth

The spectacle of Earth suspended in space was so overwhelming for Edgar Mitchell that the Apollo 14 astronaut and sixth man on the moon wanted to grab politicians by the scruff of the neck and drag them into space to witness the view.

Such drastic measures may not be necessary, however. Scientists are about to welcome the first participants on an unprecedented clinical trial that aims to reproduce the intense emotional experience, known as the “Overview effect”, from the comfort of a health spa.

If the trial goes well, what led Mitchell to develop “an instant global consciousness” and a profound connection to Earth and its people could be recreated with nothing more than a flotation tank, a half tons of Epsom salts, and a waterproof virtual reality (VR) headset.

“There’s a lot of division and polarization and disconnection between people,” said Steven Pratscher, a psychologist and principal investigator on the trial at the University of Missouri. “We’d like to see if we can recreate the Overview effect on Earth to have an impact on those issues.”

Pratscher will recruit about 100 volunteers who are willing to don the VR headset and clamber into a dark, salt-laden flotation tank at the city’s Clarity Float spa. The silence and buoyancy will mimic the sensation of floating in space, while the VR headset plays high-definition, 360 degree immersive video recorded by the Silicon Valley startup, SpaceVR.

The volunteers will be randomly assigned to have either the full flotation tank VR experience, to float without VR, or have VR while lying on a bed. Before and after their one-hour session, the participants will complete a series of questionnaires to assess whether they had any mystical experiences, felt more connected to others, or had what psychologists call an “emotional breakthrough” moment. The persistence of any effects will be assessed after one week and again a month later.

Pratscher does not expect everyone who steps into the tank wearing a VR headset to emerge having experienced the Overview effect. But the experiment will reveal what, if anything, people do experience when their senses are fooled into believing they are looking down on Earth from space.

“It may be able to elicit, to some degree, these mystical experiences, and I’m curious to see if they have persisting effects, for example on people’s values and behaviors, especially with respect to how people view the Earth and the environment, and the things they do that may impact the environment,” Pratscher said.

“We’re causing potentially irreversible impact on the Earth, so hopefully it will wake people up to see that there are more things we can do to help save the planet, protect the environment, and live in more harmony,” he added.

Not all astronauts experience the Overview effect, but those who do describe a number of factors that appear to fuel the phenomenon. On seeing the whole planet in the blackness of space, national borders melt away, and we all become, primarily, citizens of Earth. Many astronauts are struck by the thinness of the atmosphere, and the stunning beauty of the planet, and feel compelled to protect it when they return.

“For me it was an epiphany in slow motion,” said Ron Garan, a former NASA astronaut who is not involved in the trial. “It’s a profound sense of empathy, a profound sense of community, and a willingness to forgo immediate gratification and take a more multi-generational outlook on progress.”

Garan, a former fighter pilot, flew on space shuttle Discovery in 2008 and spent two weeks working on the construction of the International Space Station. The trip created a longing to go back and in 2011 he launched onboard a Soyuz rocket on a six-month mission to the space station.

“From space, the planet is a constantly changing masterpiece and the sheer beauty is absolutely breathtaking. It looks like a shining jewel and you realize that it’s home to everyone who ever lived and everyone who ever will be,” he said. “But another thing that hit me was a sobering contradiction between the beauty of our planet and the unfortunate realities of life on our planet. It filled me with a sense of injustice. It infuriated me.”

On his return, Garan wrote The Orbital Perspective, a book about the call to action he felt after experiencing the Overview effect. It is about seeing the big picture, appreciating what needs to be done, and cracking on with solutions. He believes it might be possible to at least produce what he calls an “aha” moment with VR on Earth.

(Source: The Guardian)

## Europe’s Mars lander passes parachute test

Ground tests designed to validate the deployment of the parachutes that will be used on the European Space Agency’s (ESA) Mars lander next year have started well at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, California. ESA’s ExoMars 2020 mission consists of the UK-built Rosalind Franklin rover, which will look for signs of past or present life, and the Russian Kazachok surface platform, which will monitor the local environment at the landing site.



The parachutes are essential in helping slow down the spacecraft from 21,000km/h at the top of the planet’s thin atmosphere, to virtually nothing six minutes later, when it touches down on the Martian soil. In tests earlier this year, the parachutes sustained damage during deployment. This was traced to the parachute bag in which they were held before being deployed.

Working with NASA, ESA made modifications to the way the parachutes are released from the bag, which avoids creating so much friction. Using a special rig at JPL, the parachutes have now been tested up to their expected extraction speed of just over 200km/h with no sign of damage. Further confirmatory tests will now take place.

If all goes well, ExoMars 2020 will launch to the red planet sometime between 26 July and 11 August 2020.

(Source: The Guardian)

## Animated, interactive digital books may help kids learn better

Digital books may have a few advantages over ordinary ones when it comes to kids remembering their contents, according to a new study. Animations, especially ones keyed to verbal interactions, can significantly improve recall of story details -- but they have to be done right.

The research, from psychologist Erik Thiesen at Carnegie Mellon University, evaluated the recall of 30 kids aged 3-5 after being read either an ordinary story book or one with animations for each page.

When asked afterwards about what they remembered, the

kids who had seen the animated book tended to remember 15-20% more. The best results were seen when the book was animated in response to the child saying or asking something about it (though this had to be done manually by the reading adult) rather than just automatically.

“Children learn best when they are more involved in the learning process,” explained Thiesen in a CMU news post. “Many digital interfaces are poorly suited to children’s learning capacities, but if we can make them better, children can learn better.”

This is not to say that all books for kids should be

animated. Traditional books are always going to have their own advantages, and once you get past the picture-book stage these digital innovations don’t help much.

The point, rather, is to show that digital books can be useful and aren’t a pointless addition to a kid’s library. But it’s important that the digital features are created and tuned with an eye to improving learning, and research must be done to determine exactly how that is best accomplished.

Thiesen’s study was published in the Journal Developmental Psychology.

(Source: Techcrunch)



## Foreign arrivals in Semnan province up 22% since March

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — International tourist arrivals in Iran’s north-central Semnan province rose 22 percent since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21), provincial tourism chief has said.

Talking to ISNA, Mehdi Jamal on Thursday said that the number of foreign arrivals in the province has surged over 22 percent since the start of the year. The official, however, didn’t mention the number of travelers.

Regarding tourist accommodations, the official noted, “Bed occupancy rate in hotels and guest houses was more than 85 percent, which is a very high figure.”



The main population centers of Semnan province lie along the ancient Silk Road (and modern-day Imam Reza Expressway), linking Rey (Tehran) with Khorasan (Mashhad). While few visitors spend much time in the area, driving through you can easily seek out several well-preserved caravanserais (notably Dehnamak and Ahowan), cisterns (the Cafe Abenbar in Garmsar is a special treat) and ruined mud citadels (Padeh is lumpy but fascinating). The large, bustling cities of Semnan, Damghan and Shahrud (Bastam) all have a small selection of historic buildings and Semnan has a fine old covered bazaar.

Mojtaba Karimi, who presides over Foreign Ministry’s visa and passport department, said on December 4 that some 6.7 million foreign nationals have visited Iran since the beginning of the current Iranian year.

## Singapore Airlines first Boeing 737 Max spotted flying in Seattle

Another Boeing 737 MAX has been spotted in its new livery. This time, the grounded MAX aircraft was decked in the livery of Singapore Airlines. The plane, registration 9V-MBN, was seen in Seattle as it was moved to a storage facility to wait for the all-clear to fly commercial flights.

Singapore Airlines regional affiliate airline SilkAir grounded its six operational 737 MAX aircraft in March of this year after the two fatal crashes involving the aircraft. This caused complications for Singapore Airlines they were forced to changes to flight scheduling and, more frustratingly, they were forced to delay a merger which would see SilkAir fully merged with Singapore Airlines in 2020.

The airline has 31 Boeing 737 MAX on order and was planning to move its older 737 NGs to Singapore Airlines low-cost carrier Scoot. The new 737 MAXs would facilitate the growth of SilkAir as it joined Singapore Airlines and would enable a restructuring of the airlines.

(Source: Simple Flying)



### ROUND THE GLOBE

## Durham Castle and Cathedral

Durham Cathedral was built between the late 11th and early 12th century to house the bodies of St. Cuthbert (634-687 CE) (the evangelizer of Northumbria) and the Venerable Bede (672/3-735 CE). It attests to the importance of the early Benedictine monastic community and is the largest and finest example of Norman architecture in England.



The innovative audacity of its vaulting foreshadowed Gothic architecture. The Cathedral lies within the precinct of Durham Castle, first constructed in the late eleventh century under the orders of William the Conqueror.

The Castle was the stronghold and residence of the Prince-Bishops of Durham, who were given virtual autonomy in return for protecting the northern boundaries of England, and thus held both religious and secular power.

Within the Castle precinct are later buildings of the Durham Palatinate, reflecting the Prince-Bishops’ civic responsibilities and privileges.

The site is significant because of the exceptional architecture demonstrating architectural innovation and the visual drama of the Cathedral and Castle on the peninsula, and for the associations with notions of romantic beauty in tangible form. The physical expression of the spiritual and secular powers of the medieval Bishops’ Palatinate is shown by the defended complex and by the importance of its archaeological remains, which are directly related to its history and continuity of use over the past 1000 years.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Step into the ‘House of Hercules’ in western Iran!

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s western Kordestan province is teemed with hundreds of historical sites, many of which well worth a visit. One of the most famous is the Caves of Karaftu, a series of chambers carved into a cliff facing a mountain. The caves are formed naturally but have been modified by inhabitants over the past centuries.

Today, those elevated lodgings are magnificent because one of which bears a Greek inscription that reads: “This is the House of Hercules. Whoever enters is safe.” It is, however, one of the few examples of such an inscription preserved in-situ in Iran.

Karaftu has been a haven for local people at the time of trouble. Evidence shows that it has been a residence for various peoples before the advent of Islam. The property is also known as Karaftu Castle by the local people.

At present time, the Caves of Karaftu are a source of tourist attraction. In January 2015, it was reported that the caves were to be inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List. It was also asserted that with this prestigious status, more tourists, especially foreign ones, would visit the site.



**The Caves of Karaftu are only accessible via a common entrance found on the southern side of the mountain. In times past, the caves could only be reached by using ladders of ropes. Today, there is a long staircase leading up to the entrance.**

The Caves of Karaftu are limestone caves, and believed to have been naturally formed several millions of years ago. Studies have shown that the region had been underwater during the Cretaceous period, and that the mountains emerged out of the waters during the late part of this geologic period. There is still water in certain parts of the cave, and these areas may be explored using small boats, according to an article revealed by the Ancient Origins in July 2016.

Based on the article, it is not known for certain when the modification of the caves began, but it has been initially suggested that this commenced during the Parthian period, i.e. between the 3rd century BC and the 3rd century CE. This is supported by the discovery of pottery from this period.

Pottery from the subsequent Sassanian and Islamic periods indicate that usage of this cave continued during these periods. The Greek inscription from the caves may show that such modifications may have taken place in an earlier period of time.

Apart from the pottery from various points of the caves’ history, the Caves of Karaftu are also known for a Greek inscription that reads “Herakles resides here / Nothing evil may enter”. This inscription is said to have been first discovered in modern times by Sir Robert Ker Porter, who recorded the site and its inscription in 1819. An improved reading of the inscription was obtained by Sir Henry Rawlinson when he visited the caves in 1838. A copy of this reading was given

to William Martin Leake, a well-known British topographer and antiquarian, who made several observations.

Firstly, Leake identified Herakles as the protector of the area. Secondly, the two lines may have been verses. Thirdly, the form of characters belonged to the 4th or 3rd century BC. The last of these was clarified about a century later. In the summer of 1936, Sir Aurel Stein, under the advice of W. W. Tarn, explored the Cave of Karaftu for three days. Apart from producing a plan of the chambers, Stein also made a copy of the inscription. This allowed Marcus N. Tod, a lecturer of Greek at Oriol College, Oxford at that time, to confirm that the inscription was from the early Hellenistic period, between the end of the 4th century BC and the beginning of the 3rd century BC.

The Caves of Karaftu are only accessible via a common entrance found on the southern side of the mountain. On this side, the cliff is said to rise almost vertically, and the entrance to the caves is said to be around 9 m (29 ft.) above the ground. In times past, the caves could only be reached by using ladders of ropes. Today, there is a long staircase leading up to the entrance.



## Bones show hundreds flocked to ancient Ireland capital for Iron Age feasts

Navan Fort, an important archeological site and the historic capital of Ulster, named for the Irish kingdom of Ulaid, regularly hosted feasts featuring roasted pork and drawing people from across Ireland, according to a new study of ancient pig carcasses.

Previous excavations have turned up evidence -- including a barbary ape cranium from Iberia -- that Navan Fort was a site of ritual importance to the people of Iron Age Ireland. Now, researchers have discovered evidence that the ritual site drew visitors and livestock for feasting from across northern Great Britain.

Archaeologists excavated and studied 36 pig remains, using sophisticated isotopic analysis to pinpoint the origins of each animal.

“Our results provide clear evidence that communities in

Iron Age Ireland were very mobile and that livestock were also moved over greater distances than was previously thought,” lead researcher Richard Madgwick, an osteoarchaeologist at Cardiff University in Wales, said in a news release.

Just as with humans, when animals eat, their diet leaves behind chemical signatures that get preserved in the layers of enamel that form their teeth. Scientists use these chemical signatures to link animals with their geographic origins.

Pigs raised in Scotland feature different isotopic signatures than those raised in Ireland. The new study, published this week in the journal Scientific Reports, revealed evidence that visitors to Navan Fort brought pigs from more than 100 miles away.

“The high proportion of pig remains found there is very

rare for this period,” Madgwick said. “This suggests that Navan Fort was a feasting center, as pigs are well-suited as feasting animals and in early Irish literature pork is the preferred food of the feast. It is clear that Navan Fort had a vast catchment and that the influence of the site was far-reaching.”

An earlier archeological survey led by Madgwick revealed the presence of pigs of distant origins at archeological sites near Stonehenge.

“Transporting animals across the country would have involved a great deal of time and effort so our findings demonstrate the important role they played in society,” Madgwick said. “Food was clearly a central part of people’s exchanges and traditions.”

(Source: UPI)

## Archaeologists find ancient Mayan palace at least 1,000 years old

Archaeologists with Mexico’s National Institute of Anthropology and History have found what they believe is an ancient, jungle Mayan city at least 1,000 years old near Cancun, officials said.

The discovery was made in Tizimin in Yucatan state, about 80 miles due west of Cancun, the institute said.

Researchers found the ruins while doing conservation work in the area, and said the Mayan palace is believed to date as far back as 1050 BC, toward the end of the terminal classic period. The structure was discovered in the ruins of the ancient city of Kuluba.

Scientists said the palace is 180 feet long, 50 feet wide and 20 feet high.

Kuluba shares ties with other important



The palace, found 80 miles west of Cancun, measures 180 feet long, 50 feet wide and 20 feet high. Photo courtesy National Institute of Anthropology and History

Mayan cities like Ek’ Balam and Chichen Itza as the civilization controlled large regions that are now southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and Honduras.

“From data and the Chichen-like ceramic materials and obsidian [found at Kuluba] we can infer that it became an enclave [under the control] of Chichen Itza,” archaeologist Alfredo Barrera Rubio said.

The institute said archaeologists want to research additional areas around Kuluba’s central square, where ruins of residential buildings, an altar and an oven have already been found but not yet investigated.

Restoration work in Kuluba began last year and the site is scheduled to open to the public in the near future.

(Source: UPI)

## How to avoid getting sick during holiday travel, according to a doctor

Traveling during the holidays is the perfect time to catch up with old friends, connect with family and explore new places. Unfortunately, it’s also a time that’s ripe for getting sick.

Between flying on planes with recirculated air, packing a ton of activities into a short time and risking becoming run down, and the dreaded jet lag, there are a lot of pitfalls that could leave you not feeling well and longing for your own bed — and not the one from high school.

Luckily, there are several small steps travelers can take to help prevent getting sick and make it easier to deal with if you do. Travel + Leisure talked to Dr. Rand McClain, the medical director for LCR Health, specializing in regenerative and sports medicine, to get his best tips for staying healthy while traveling during the holiday season so you can think less about illness and more about the amazing beach you’re planning on going to escape the winter cold.

“Try enjoying all the stuff you enjoy doing when you’re not feeling well — it’s no fun,” McClain said. “When you’re sick, you are not only drawing energy away from things

you enjoy... you don’t want to dig into your reserves for down the road.”

The simplest trick of all is just washing your hands.

“One simple hand washing if you’ve been exposed can be enough to save you from getting sick,” he said.

From choosing the best seat on a plane to getting enough sleep and eating the right things, these are McClain’s tips to not only get through holiday travel, but actually love every minute of it.

### ■ Sleep is key

McClain’s No. 1 tip is to get enough sleep. While it seems obvious, it’s a simple fix that will make your brain work better. When you travel, however, that becomes harder and harder.

“Travel gives you double whammy potential — not only do you lose sleep oftentimes, but you throw off your rhythm. Changing time zones will affect your circadian rhythm,” he said. “Roughly for each time zone hour you change, it takes you at least a day to adjust to that time zone.”

McClain said you can compensate for

lost sleep and jet lag with getting plenty of sunshine and exercise.

“One of the tricks to help your body at least learn to go to sleep at the right time is as soon as you land, get some sun exposure... and help reset that clock,” he said. “And exercise also helps. It can even just be a walk, [and] if you can get to a HIIT or a spin class, even better.”

### ■ Choose the best seat on the plane

Not all plane seats are created equal — and we’re not just talking about business vs. economy. McClain explained that choosing the window seat can actually help you avoid as many germs as possible, walling you off from more passengers than if you were in the middle or aisle.

“If you’re on the aisle, you’re more likely to get affected by germs floating around,” he said.

### ■ Start wiping

The first thing you should do when you get on a plane or into a hotel room, is to wipe down the surfaces. McClain recommends using alcohol wipes or bringing a container of antibacterial gel — 3 oz or less, of course.

“They can kill germs on contact,” he said,

but warned: “they’re all not created the same. The higher the [alcohol] concentration, the better, the more likely you are to kill a virus or a bacteria.”

In a hotel room, McClain suggests wiping down things like the phone and remotes.

“All the things where you’re going to get contact from the hands, where people cough... that’s a Petri dish of germs,” he said.

### ■ Get a move on

McClain said it’s important to get up and move while on a plane to prevent potentially dangerous blood clots and swelling.

“Sitting too long can create enough stasis where you can form a clot,” he said. “Getting up and moving ideally once an hour would be great.”

Eating a higher protein meal before you get on the plane can also help to reduce swelling while up in the air.

### ■ Be prepared

McClain recommends traveling with an emergency kit so you’re never stuck without the proper medication or first aid. He would stock it with a broad-spectrum antibiotic and an antiviral like Tamiflu.

(Source: MSN)



# Media elites to Assange: Fight for your own hide

By Ted Galen Carpenter

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange languishes in a British prison awaiting probable extradition to the United States to stand trial for violating the Espionage Act of 1917. Ironically, he is serving jail time for jumping bail on trumped-up sex crime charges in Sweden that even the Swedish government has now abandoned. Most Western, especially American, mainstream journalists, though, have expressed at most tepid opposition to the persecution of Assange, even as reports mount that his health has deteriorated to an alarming extent.

This is shameful and jeopardizes the news media's own long-term interests.

The worst thing about such conduct is that so many reporters have bought into the Justice Department's insistence that Assange is not a "legitimate" journalist. John Demers, the DOJ's assistant attorney general for national security, bluntly stated the government's thesis earlier this year. "Julian Assange," Demers said, "is no journalist," since he engaged in "explicit solicitation of classified information."

Other Trump administration officials have conducted a similar campaign to delegitimize Assange's status as a journalist, thereby justifying his prosecution for espionage. "WikiLeaks walks like a hostile intelligence service and talks like a hostile intelligence service," CIA Director Mike Pompeo said in April 2017 during his first public speech as head of the agency. "Assange and his ilk," Pompeo charged, seek "personal self-aggrandizement through the destruction of Western values."

Unfortunately, much of the U.S. press seems eager to exclude Assange from its ranks. A decision by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) in early December underscored the mainstream media's willingness to disown Assange. The CPJ refused to include him on its annual list of journalists jailed throughout the world. CPJ Deputy Executive Director Robert Mahoney's attempt to explain the decision was an exercise in painful linguistic contortions. His December 11 blog post on the CPJ website used the unequivocal title, "For the sake of press freedom, Julian Assange must be defended."

Much of the substance of the post,



though, pointed to the opposite conclusion. "WikiLeaks's practice of dumping huge loads of data on the public without examining the motivations of the leakers can leave it open to manipulation," Mahoney sniffed. He continued:

To some, Julian Assange is a warrior for truth and transparency. To others, he is an information bomb-thrower. The question with which CPJ has had to grapple is whether his actions make him a journalist. Each year, we compile a list of journalists imprisoned around the world, based on a set of criteria that have evolved as technology has upended publishing and the news business. After extensive research and consideration, CPJ chose not to list Assange as a journalist, in part because his role has just as often been as a source and because WikiLeaks does not generally perform as a news outlet with an editorial process.

By using an array of rhetorical gymnastics, Mahoney and the CPJ tacitly accepted the Justice Department "logic" for prosecuting Assange, even as the CPJ officially condemned the prosecution itself. The bottom line is that the CPJ legitimized the government's campaign

to put Assange outside the boundaries of legitimate journalism.

Kevin Gosztola, managing editor of Shadowproof.com, aptly pointed out the underlying problem with the CPJ's tightrope act: "Can a laudable press freedom organization claim Assange is not a journalist without aiding the political case brought by prosecutors in President Donald Trump's Justice Department?" Gosztola also highlighted a likely reason for the CPJ's ambivalent (at best) stance: "CPJ's Board of Directors is composed of many journalists in the U.S. media establishment, an establishment which clings to the notion that Assange is not a journalist in order to maintain a supposed distinction between his work and their work."

Whatever their motives, journalists who excuse or justify efforts to prosecute Assange are acting as gullible tools in the government's ongoing campaign to plug leaks and stifle criticism, especially regarding defense and foreign policy issues. The intent is clearly to suppress embarrassing revelations by WikiLeaks and other players.

But the strategy the CPJ and its cohorts

have adopted is akin to appeasing a tiger in the hope that it will eat the appeaser last—or, ideally, become sated with its initial victims. This approach is both unprincipled and myopic. The government has already made worrisome forays against troublesome mainstream journalists who have published embarrassing disclosures. Barack Obama's administration conducted electronic surveillance of both New York Times reporter James Risen and Fox News reporter James Rosen in an effort to identify their sources. The government even named Rosen as an "unindicted co-conspirator" in an espionage case brought against his source. Similarly, the administration asserted that it had the right to prosecute Risen, even though it chose not to take that step. Those were ominous warning signals.

The New York Times reported that President Trump expressed even greater interest in prosecuting journalists who utilize leaked classified information. In his much-discussed February 2017 Oval Office session with FBI Director James Comey (during which Trump allegedly asked Comey to end the investigation into former national security advisor Michael Flynn), the president reportedly backed the Obama approach. "Alone in the Oval Office, Mr. Trump began the discussion by condemning leaks to the news media, saying that Mr. Comey should consider putting reporters in prison for publishing classified information."

Government prosecutors are going after Assange because he is an especially controversial figure and therefore a more vulnerable target. But prosecuting him and WikiLeaks for espionage poses a mortal threat to a free and independent press in the United States. It is extraordinarily dangerous to the health of the First Amendment to allow the government to decide who is or is not a "legitimate" journalist. Only legacy publications friendly to the national security bureaucracy could then count on restraint—and, as the Rosen and Risen cases indicate, even that expectation would be quite fragile. The CPJ and other media institutions that choose to abandon Assange are playing the role of the government's useful idiots and imperiling their own best interests.

(Source: *The American Conservative*)

## Gearóid Ó Colmáin: Macron tasked with dissolving French nation, empowering European block

TEHRAN (FNA) - Gearóid Ó Colmáin, journalist, says Macron is EU's lapdog which executes its austerity program and "implements EU's anti-social measures" to dissolve the French heritage.

In an exclusive interview with FNA, Colmáin warned social movements, including the Yellow Vests, of the elites' intention to mislead them, saying the "oligarchy" uses the media to brainwash people and direct them to "elite-approved causes".

Gearóid Ó Colmáin is a Paris-based Independent political analyst. He is also the correspondent for American Herald Tribune.

Below is the full text of the interview:  
■ Why does the French President who witnesses the demand of the French people protesting every Saturday continue the austerity program?

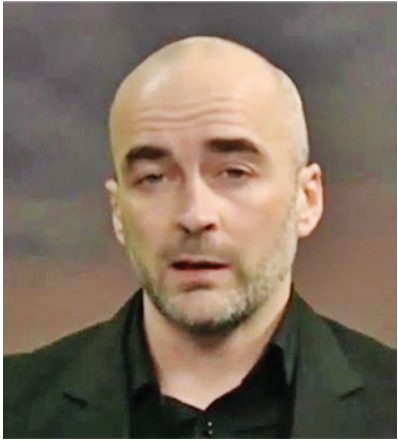
A: The austerity programmer is coming from Brussels which is in charge. Macron was appointed to implement EU anti-social measures. The EU is a banking cartel. It has no interest in improving people's lives. It has no vision for the future. It says it is European, yet wants to replace Europeans. It says it is democratic, yet the Commission is not voted. The EU is a financial dictatorship.

■ Why does the government continue to spend a fortune on equipping and deploying thousands of police forces across the country?

A: The police are there to protect the oligarchy from the people. The oligarchy has a public relations department called the mainstream media. Their job is to brainwash the masses and direct them away from popular causes towards elite-approved causes, such as climate change activism etc. Macron's job is to dissolve the French nation and empower European construction. But the EU super-state is based on a lie. There is nothing European about it. All the freedoms we have in Europe are from our Christian heritage; the Macronists want to destroy that.

■ How do you view unions and activists joining the protests?

A: The unions in France have been co-opted by the oligarchy. They are led by elite-funded associations and movements who promote anti-working



class ideology such as global warming. The global warming ideology was a redevelopment of Malthusianism by American elites in the late 1950s. Its purpose is to provide a moral basis for a world state where all the activities of the masses are scientifically monitored -- including eventually the amount of air one breathes. It is the most totalitarian and tyrannical ideology men have ever thought up, and it is complete nonsense! Climatism has completely taken over the labor movement. So now, workers are being encouraged to join the strikes, along with brainwashed school children, "marching for the planet". It is a pathetic spectacle and shows once more that the Left is now obsessed with manipulating children. If it is not forcing sexual perversion on them in schools, it is scaring them about climate change and the end of the world. Communists used to call this kind of thing bourgeois decadence.

The Yellow Vest movement should have been a revolt against what I call carbonophobia, that is to say the irrational belief that carbon is dangerous, when in fact it is the basis of life itself. But instead, they are now part of the problem. Remember the original Yellow Vest revolt was about rising fuel prices. If the green regime succeeds, working-class people will be enslaved in just about every imaginable way. But just about every so-called left-wing movement believes in climate change. It is an extremely dangerous cult.

## Long March-5 milestone signals new era for Chinese space exploration

GLOBALTIMES —China's Long March-5 carrier rocket was successfully launched at the Wenchang Space Launch Center in South China's Hainan Province on Friday. Standing at an impressive 57 meters tall and with a diameter of 5 meters, the rocket will send a test satellite into planned orbit. The endeavor marks a significant leap forward since the carrier rocket's maiden mission in 2016 and through a failed attempt in 2017.

Friday's flawless blast off was a confidence booster for the rocket's reliability and officially marked China's entrance into a new era of aviation technology.

Chinese astronauts have nicknamed the rocket "The Fat Five." The rocket can haul a 25-ton payload to low Earth orbit, 1.5 times more than the main Long March series. Space exploration hinges on rocket thrust capabilities. With the technological breakthroughs achieved in the Long March-5, China now occupies a more prominent position in space exploration and will experience changes in its strategic plans for space industry development. China now has the resources to send bigger and heavier materials into space that will allow for greater accomplishments than ever before.

The launch has enabled China to set new goals for Moon and Mars explorations and beyond. Chinese scientists will have the resources to achieve dreams that were once unimaginable as China emerges as the new pioneer and decisive force within the global aerospace industry.

It is worth noting the rocket's development encountered failure along its journey to where it stands today. The Long March-5 Y2 was unsuccessful. During the Cold War, space industry development was primarily a political issue as serious failures did not hinder investment. Today, space exploration ambition is different. No matter in which country, launch failures can spark negative public opinion. However, Chinese society has remained rational on the issue of scientific exploration. The positive mindset has made the success of the Long March-5 possible despite the setbacks. Chinese society's overall attitude led to the success of the Long March-5 Y3 soon after. Such distinction is the equivalent to the success of the Long March-5 Y3.

It would be unnecessary to compare the Long March-5 with the heavy US-made rockets. For example, the SpaceX Falcon is the

product of fresh technology, however, the Long March-5 marks a significant advance in the carrier rocket industry. It's a milestone achievement in high-tech research and proves China's determination to advance space exploration innovation.

Of course, it is necessary to see and acknowledge that in aerospace there is still a big gap between China and the United States currently. The US company SpaceX's active Falcon heavy rocket has a carrying capacity of 68 tons, which is much larger than that of the Long March-5. Besides, the US is also far ahead in the breadth and depth of aerospace research. For China, obviously, there's so much to do and so many gaps to fill in.

Although the launch was successful, the technology behind it will need further updates to reach a level of maturity. China's aerospace industry will demand larger carrier rockets to reach its goal of deeper space exploration. There is no doubt the industry will experience difficult challenges related to science and technology development.

The success of Friday's launch is a reflection of Chinese perseverance in the face of challenges. It is also the result of the rational support it has received from the Chinese community as investment continues to increase in the market economy. In other words, China has acquired such comprehensive capabilities to advance its space industry through modern mechanisms. With such capabilities, every goal in the future will represent a step forward for China.

The carrier rocket is symbolic of Chinese society. It is a demonstration of the country's strength and ability to coordinate resources necessary to achieve breakthroughs. With this advantage, China will overcome obstacles and difficulties as it continues to rise and rejuvenate. When China needs to remove the shackles of development, it will always rely on such advantages.

Last but not least, every major achievement relied on contributions from multiple talents. Assembling a team with members from every relevant field garners a level of respect within the space industry.

The Chinese are intelligent, hardworking and traditionally patriotic. As long as Chinese talents are respected and provided with a positive working environment, they can create more miracles and help the country secure its leading competitive edge throughout the 21st century.

## Hedging strategy best protects Russia's national interests

By Pavel Tarasenko

GLOBALTIMES — Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and his Venezuelan counterpart Vladimir Padrino Lopez shake hands in Moscow on August 15, 2019. (Russian Defense Ministry photo)

The passing year has been extremely difficult for Russian diplomats responsible for Latin American affairs. In a bunch of countries, including Russia's closest allies, we have seen political instability, protests and even incidents, which were unambiguously interpreted by Moscow as coups d'état and coup attempts.

The row started in January with the apogee of the Venezuelan conflict that had been growing through the last few years. The reason was the decision of the lawmaker Juan Guaido to declare President Nicolas Maduro a usurper and to assume a rival «interim presidency». This step has divided the world into two parts: more than 50 countries including the US supported Guaido, while others refused to recognize him as a legitimate state leader.

The position of Washington is clear: there is no room for Nicolas Maduro in the prosperous and democratic Venezuela of the future. The country is now suffering the worst economic and humanitarian crisis in its history. During the meeting between US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Washington, the American diplomat said: «We've asked the Russian government to support the aspiration for democracy and the legitimacy of interim pres-



ident Juan Guaido and the call that we have made for free and fair presidential elections». However, Moscow repeated that interim problems of any country (Venezuela, Ukraine, Syria and all others) must be solved by its own citizens. Therefore, all the calls for preterm elections are unacceptable. That is a cornerstone of modern Russian diplomacy. But Western politics perceives it as Moscow's craftiness, claiming that the only goal of Russia is to help the «bloody regime» of Maduro to survive.

China also didn't recognize Juan Guaido as Venezuela's legitimate head of state and has slammed US interference into the domestic affairs of the South American country. The similarity of the Russian and Chinese positions on Venezuela can be easily explained. First, the perception of such concepts as «international rule of law» and «global order» are the same - in contrast to the position of the US which promotes the vague concept of the «rules-based order». According to Lavrov, the aim of such concept is obvious - «to revise the norms of international law which no longer suits the West, to substitute it for the «rules» adjusted to its self-serving schemes which are elaborated depending on the political expediency, and to proclaim the West and only the West as an indisputable source of legitimacy.» So, for Russia, the Venezuelan issue has a clear geopolitical dimension: Moscow wants to challenge US' hemispheric power.

Second, both China and Russia are the most important economic partners of Venezuela and current instability jeopardizes the future of bilateral contracts and investments. Over the past 10 years, China has become the main source of external financing for Venezuela. Moscow is also Venezuela's lender of last resort, and its state-owned Oil Company Rosneft is a main geopolitical instrument to support Maduro and Venezuela, which is home to the world's largest oil reserves.

When in 2018 I met Juan Guaido - a young and very active opposition leader, who nevertheless could hardly imagine the course of events in the year 2019 - in Caracas, he assured me: the whole world (including Russia and China) would be better without Nicolas Maduro because he is responsible for the actual collapse of the economy. When Guaido became a self-proclaimed «interim president», his closest advisers tried to persuade me: after their victory all the contracts, signed «correctly and legally», will remain in force. They said that after their «complete and unconditional victory» they would like to maintain trade and economic relations with all countries of the world, but «only to the extent that these countries respect democracy and freedom in Venezuela and contribute to their development». This wording gives ample room for maneuver. The possibility of renegotiating contract terms with Russia and even just refusing to repay remaining debts under the pretext of «protecting national interests» can't be excluded.

Moscow should also think about the future - and it doesn't matter if the opposition gains in the upcoming years or the «Chavistas» stay in power. The lack of such strategic thinking is a chronic illness of Russian diplomacy - whether we talk about Latin America or our closest neighbors. American diplomats do not hesitate to make contacts with representatives of different political groups in countries that interest them most. But their Russian colleagues still do.

Toward the end of the year, the situation in Venezuela has calmed down slightly, but the problems are still there and the frozen conflict can any minute return to an acute stage. It looks like a volcano that has already showed its readiness to erupt. Awareness of the fact that the situation can reverse direction any minute is the main lesson Russia can learn from the turmoil in Venezuela and the crisis in Bolivia. Sometimes the principle «The enemy of my enemy is my friend» should give way to another one - «Pragmatism first». By hedging politically, Russia could foster its long-term commercial interests beyond the crisis.

And this statement seems to be relevant for every country. Earlier this year, the Chinese Foreign Ministry has dismissed as «fake news» a report by The Wall Street Journal saying that Chinese diplomats held talks with the political opposition in Venezuela to protect its investments in the Latin American country. One way or another, it's obvious that in a modern rapidly changing world, flexibility (without compromising core principles) is really important. Instead, keeping all eggs in one basket sooner or later can turn to be very costly.

The author is foreign desk deputy editor at Kommersant daily newspaper (Russia).



## Climate crisis linked to at least 15 \$1bn-plus disasters in 2019

Climate breakdown played a key role in at least 15 events in 2019 that cost more than \$1bn (£760m) in damage, with more than half of those costing more than \$10bn each.

Extreme weather including floods, storms, droughts and wild-fires struck every inhabited continent in the past year, causing devastation and loss of life. Christian Aid, which tracked climate-related destruction in 2019, said the costs in human terms and insured losses were likely to have been underestimated.



Floods in Argentina and Uruguay in January this year forced 11,000 people from their homes. Cyclone Idai killed 1,300 people in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi in March, and Cyclone Fani struck India and Bangladesh in May and June. A stronger than usual monsoon killed 1,900 people in India.

Richer countries were also badly affected, with Storm Eberhard hitting Europe in March and the typhoons Faxai and Hagibis battering Japan in September and October, disrupting the Rugby World Cup. Wildfires laid waste to farming areas in California and caused more than \$25bn in damage, and Hurricane Dorian swept along the US east coast, killing 673 people.

The study published on Friday was compiled before the full effects of the Australian wildfires could be assessed.

Kat Kramer, a co-author of the report and the global climate lead at Christian Aid, said time was running out to tackle the climate crisis.

“Last year, [greenhouse gas] emissions continued to rise, so it’s essential that nations prepare new and enhanced pledges for action to [fulfil] the Paris agreement as soon as possible,” she said. “That will ensure the world responds urgently to the warnings of scientists, as well as the demands from schoolchildren around the globe who are horrified at the kind of world they are being forced to inherit.”

Hurricane Dorian caused at least \$11bn in losses, and floods in the midwest and south of the US from March to June cost about \$12.5bn. India’s losses from floods and Cyclone Fani alone came to more than \$18bn, and these estimates covered only insured losses. Typhoon Lekima in China was estimated to have cost at least \$10bn, and floods in China from June to August cost a similar amount.

Experts said the extreme weather and record-breaking temperatures were clearly linked to human actions.

Michael Mann, the director of the Earth System Science Center at Pennsylvania State University, said: “If anything, 2019 saw even more profound extreme weather events around the world than last year, including wildfires from the Amazon to the Arctic, and devastating out-of-season simultaneous wildfires in California and Australia, winter heatwaves and devastating superstorms.

“With each day now, we are seemingly reminded of the cost of climate inaction in the form of ever-threatening climate change-spiked weather extremes.”

Governments failed to make much progress at the UN climate talks in Madrid earlier this month, but campaigners hope the public concern and activism around the world, as well as reminders of the vast and growing economic and social costs of inaction, will act as a spur.

(Source: The Guardian)

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### World Summit - the scientific agenda

(September 04, 2002)

At the end of the World Summit on Sustainable Development the science community has been given a clear agenda for the future. This report from Corinne Podger.

**Speaking to** researchers and experts on climate, health and energy here at the summit **one gets** the distinct impression that this is **a science conference disguised as a political meeting**. Every one of what the UN calls its **five ‘we have’ themes** - water, energy, health, agriculture, and biodiversity - requires the world’s scientific community to **come up with** the means to achieve sustainable development, and researchers meeting here in Johannesburg know it. Many **express dismay** that too much of the summit was **dominated by political speeches** and that not enough had been heard from the researchers whose discoveries and inventions will help **shape** sustainable development into the future. Geoff Sacks, the special advisor to the UN secretary general Kofi Annan, says major investment to develop new technologies is needed.

There’s also an urgent need for better **monitoring systems** to keep track of the earth’s dwindling biodiversity and water resources. And the chief scientific advisor to the World Bank, Bob Watson, told me the agreements to allow scientists to move forward on sustainable development are already there. The **conventions** on biological diversity, on desertification, agreements on forests, climate change and water, are all in place - some were agreed back in the 1980s. What’s needed now, he said, is the **financial commitment**, especially from rich states, to make those agreements work.

#### ■ Words

**Speaking to...one gets:** If you talk to.... you get **a science conference disguised as a political meeting**; it appears to be mainly about politics although it’s intended to be about science **five ‘we have’ themes:** these are the five things that the UN feels we should all have

**come up with:** think of and suggest

**express dismay:** say that they regret

**dominated by political speeches:** there seemed to be too many political speeches compared with scientific ones

**shape:** if you shape a topic you cause it to develop in a particular way

**monitoring systems:** systems which regularly check on the development and progress - here, of water and biodiversity

**conventions:** official agreements or codes of conduct between countries

**financial commitment:** agreement to pay money

(Source: BBC)

# 1,738 medicinal herbs endemic to Iran

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Some **d e s k** 2,300 species of medicinal plants bare cultivated across Iran, of which 1,738 species are endemic species, Tarahom Behzad, deputy director of the Forests, Ranges, and Watershed Management Organization, has said.

Of the 8,425 species of herbs identified in the country, 2,300 have medicinal, aromatic and cosmetic properties, IRNA quoted Behzad as saying on Friday.

The Food and Agriculture Organization estimated in 2002 that over 50,000 medicinal plants are used across the world.

#### ■ 9.6m ha of natural resources on the road to recovery

According to the Sixth Five-Year Development Plan (2016-2021), up to 9.6 million hectares of natural lands of the country should undergo restoration, development and improvement activities to increase the growth and utilization of medicinal plants, Behzad noted.

So far, 5 million hectares of these areas have undergone restoration measures, he said, adding, the budget bill for the next calendar year (to start



March 21, 2020) has proposed a budget of €150 million from the National Development Fund for the development of medicinal plants.

#### ■ 16 provinces export medicinal plants

This year, 16 provinces played an important role in exporting medicinal plants to the

## 6,000 ha of mangrove forests in southern Iran undergo restoration

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** — The **d e s k** mangrove forests cover an area of 27,310 hectares in Iran, over 6,000 hectares of which have underwent restoration and revival measures, chairman of the high council of the Forests, Ranges and Watershed Management Organization (FR-WMO), has stated.

The mangrove forests or Hara forests are located on the southern coast of Iran, particularly on and near the island of Qeshm in the Persian Gulf.

Dominated by the species *Avicennia marina*, known locally as the “hara” or “harra” tree, the forests represent an important ecological resource. The “Hara Protected Area” on Quesm and the nearby mainland is a biosphere reserve where commercial use is restricted to fishing (mainly shrimp), tourist boat trips, and limited mangrove cutting for animal feed.

The area is a major habitat for migratory birds in the cold season, and for reptiles, fish, and varieties of arthropoda and bivalves. Green (or hooked) turtles and venomous aquatic snakes are also indigenous to the forests. Bird life includes herons, flamingos, pelicans, and angler eagles. Another important feature of these forests is the appropriate and suitable seabed conditions for the ovulation of fish in the Persian Gulf.

Unique mangrove forests are under the special protection and conservation of Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, while being controlled by the FRWMO, IRNA quoted Kamran



Pour-Moghaddam as saying on Thursday.

Some development projects that took place upstream of these forests caused damages to hydrological systems and changed water flow patterns which had a negative impact on these habitats, he lamented.

On the other hand, construction of infrastructure for large boats on the fringes of the forests resulted in the erosion of the plants’ roots, which eventually led to the depletion of mangrove trees, he regretted.

Referring to the development measures and reforestation of mangrove forests, he noted that during the past 4 years, the FRWMO has prepared a document titled “sustainable management of mangrove forests” which emphasizes on the conservation and development methods.

Stating that these actions are being carried out in collaboration with local communities, he added that local communities plant seedlings and carry out restoration and conservation operations that have led to the development of a significant portion of these forests.



## Iran’s third astronomy center for children to be established

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The third science and **d e s k** astronomy center for children and teenagers will be constructed in northwestern province of West Azarbaijan, director of provincial Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, has said.

The center is a two-story building with an area of 300 square meters, which is located in Urmia National Park,

IRNA news agency quoted Javad Zahedi as saying on Friday.

Two astronomy centers have been previously established in Tehran and Zanjan provinces, he noted.

He pointed out that 15 billion rials (around \$360,000 at an official rate of 42,000 rials) has been allocated to the project, adding, the center will have various departments, including science, physics, life sciences, planetarium and observatories.



killed, and the fires were so large “we will probably never find the bodies”.

In the Adelaide Hills in SA, volunteer firefighters shared images of koalas rescued from the fires – including six in one house, and two koalas who came out of the bush looking for help.

Koala populations and other endangered species have been significantly affected by land clearing, habitat destruction and the effects of global heating.

Before this year’s bushfire crisis, koala populations in NSW and Queensland had already dropped by 42% between 1990 and 2010, according to the federal threatened species scientific committee.

“Koala numbers have plunged over the past 20 years,” he said. “We are directly destroying thousands of hectares of their forests through clearing for agriculture and logging for timber. But we are also shrinking available habitat indirectly as a result of climate change.”

(Source: The Guardian)

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

## Wildfire burns 400 ha of protected areas within 3 months

Some 400 hectares of the protected areas turned into ashes due to raging wildfire, since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21), head of the Department of Environment’s (DOE) protection unit has stated.

He went on to say that so far wildfires broke out in 14 provinces, mostly in areas located near the Zagros foothills, such as of Kohgiluyeh and Boyerahmad, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Lorestan, Fars, northern provinces and Tehran.

Provinces of Kalgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, Tehran set record highs for the wildfires, IRNA news agency quoted Jamshid Mohabbat Khani as saying on Sunday.

Mohabbat Khani also highlighted that 62 cases of wildfires caused 400 hectares of the protected areas to turn into ashes since past three months, out of which 8 cases sparked by lightning.

While most of the fires were human-caused or ignited due to litter and waste left in the nature by the humans, somehow direct or indirect role of human is the leading cause of such incidents, he added.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “-ic, -ics”

■ **Meaning:** of or pertaining to

■ **For example:** Some fruit juices taste a bit **acidic**.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Hive something off

■ **Meaning:** to sell one part of a business

■ **For example:** It is part of a growing trend for television contractors to hive off their advertising sales.

## IDIOM

### Bury your head in the sand

■ **Explanation:** to refuse to face the unpleasant reality by pretending that the situation doesn’t exist

■ **For example:** It’s no good burying your head in the sand. We’ve got a problem on our hands.

## وقوع آتش سوزی در ۴۰۰ هکتار مناطق محیط زیستی از ابتدای امسال

فرمانده یگان حفاظت محیط زیست خبر داد: از ابتدای امسال تاکنون حدود ۴۰۰ هکتار از مناطق تحت مدیریت سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست دچار آتش سوزی شده است.

جمشید محبت خانی روز یکشنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار علمی ایرنا افزود: در واقع از ابتدای امسال در ۱۴ استان آتش سوزی داشتیم که فراوانی مکانی آنها بیشتر در استان های زاگرسی مانند کهگیلویه و بویراحمد، چهارمحال و بختیاری، لرستان، فارس، استان های شمالی و تهران در مناطق خجیر بود که استان کهگیلویه و بویراحمد و تهران به ترتیب بیشترین آتش سوزی را داشتند.

محبت خانی گفت: بیشترین آتش سوزی را به ترتیب استان های کهگیلویه و بویراحمد و تهران داشتند.

وی اظهار داشت: از ابتدای امسال تاکنون ۶۲ مورد آتش سوزی داشتیم که بر اثر آن حدود ۴۰۰ هکتار از مناطق تحت پوشش سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست دچار آتش سوزی شده اند که علت بروز ۷ تا ۸ مورد از آنها طبیعی مثلاً به علت وقوع رعد و برق بوده است که مجموع به حدود ۲۰ درصد هم نمی رسد، بنابراین بالاترین علت درصد به بی احتیاطی مردم بر می گردد که آنها را نمی توان آتش سوزی عمدی دانست بلکه خطای انسانی است.



# OPCW official ordered removal of report disproving Syria chemical attack claims: Wikileaks

Wikileaks has leaked new documents regarding the probe by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) into an alleged chemical attack in Syria, showing that a senior OPCW official ordered the removal of a "dissenting" report.

One of the published documents shows Sebastien Braha, chief of cabinet at the OPCW, ordered in an email that "all traces" of a report from Ian Henderson, a then-OPCW inspector in Syria's Douma, be erased from the body's registries.

"Please get this document out of DRA [Documents Registry Archive]... And please remove all traces, if any, of its delivery/storage/whatever in DRA," the email read.

The findings of Henderson claimed that two cylinders, found in the alleged chemical attack site and thought to have probably contained chemicals, were likely manually placed in the area rather than dropped from a plane or helicopter.

Only terrorists controlling the area had land access to the area at the time.

Wikileaks claims the email was leaked from an exchange between senior OPCW officials and the body's fact finding mission deployed to the Syrian city to investigate claims of an alleged chemical attack in the area April last year.



Another OPCW email exchange released by the whistleblower website on Friday showed that the body had ordered its eight inspectors in Douma - except one, a paramedic - be excluded from discussions on the probe in July 2018.

A third leaked document detailed discussions between the OPCW and four

toxicologists with expertise in chemical weapons.

The experts claimed that "no correlation" had been found between symptoms observed among the alleged chemical attack victims and chemicals possibly used in such an attack, according to the leaked document.

"The symptoms observed were incon-

sistent with exposure to chlorine and no other obvious candidate chemical causing the symptoms could be identified," the document read.

The revelations are the latest batch of leaks undermining the official report of the OPCW regarding the incident in Douma, which was released March this year.

The OPCW report claimed that a "toxic chemical" had been used during the alleged chemical attack in Douma but stepped short of blaming any party for the incident.

The new documents along with previous leaks, however, show that the OPCW may have intentionally doctored its findings, notably avoiding revelations which may point to terrorist hands being behind the alleged chemical attack.

The leaks come as the Syrian government, which surrendered its entire chemical stockpile in 2013 to a mission led by the OPCW and the United Nations, has also strongly rejected the chemical attack allegations as a staged event to frame Damascus.

The U.S. and its allies, however, were at the time quick to blame the Syrian government, launching a coordinated missile strike on the country despite having no proof that Damascus used chemical weapons.

(Source: Press TV)

## Riyadh signs deal with Raytheon Saudi Arabia to localize Patriot maintenance

Saudi Arabia signed a deal with the local unit of U.S. weapons maker Raytheon on Saturday to localize maintenance of its Patriot missile defense system, as part of efforts to boost Saudi's defense industries and its broader economy.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman plans to diversify the kingdom away from its reliance on oil exports and wants Riyadh to produce or assemble half its defense equipment locally, aiming to create 40,000 jobs for Saudis by 2030.

Saudi Arabia is among the top five defense spenders in the world. It is one of several U.S. allies to use Patriot, a ground to air missile system giving defense against ballistic missiles and other threats.

Ahmed al-Ohali, governor of Saudi

Arabia's General Authority for Military Industries (GAMI), said the agreement with Raytheon reflected the authority's efforts to develop Saudi's military industries and its research and technology capabilities, state news agency SPA reported.

He did not say how many jobs would be involved, the value of the agreement, or the location of any work being moved or localized.

Riyadh-based Raytheon Saudi Arabia supports the Kingdom's Vision 2030 economic program by creating skilled jobs for Saudis in defense, aerospace and cybersecurity through partnerships with Saudi private sector companies and local universities, according to the company's website.

(Source: Reuters)

## At least 90 people killed in Mogadishu checkpoint blast

At least 90 people have been killed and many wounded in a car bomb attack in the Somali capital Mogadishu on Saturday, police and witnesses said.

Police officer Mohamed Hussein said the blast targeted a tax collection center during the morning rush hour.

Close to 100 wounded people, including children, were rushed to hospitals. Among them were several university students who had been travelling in a bus, Hussein said.

A large plume of black smoke rose above the capital, marking one of the deadliest attacks in Mogadishu in recent memory.

There were conflicting reports about the number of casualties. Speaking to Al Jazeera, the adviser to Mogadishu's mayor said the death toll "is above 90 at

the moment".

"There are many casualties as well so the death toll is expected to rise," Hodan Ali said, adding that the explosion took place at the Ex-Control junction.

Abdiquadir Abdirahman, director of the Aamin Ambulance service, said 61 people were killed in the attack.

Al Jazeera's Haru Mutasa said Somali police officers were among the casualties.

"We can expect more injuries and casualties once these numbers are officially tallied," she said, speaking from Nairobi. "A lot of officials are saying their priority is to try to help those who have been injured, trying to get them to hospitals as quickly as possible and then, of course, count the dead."

(Source: al Jazeera)

## Sudan, rebels, agree plan to end conflict in Darfur

The Sudanese government and nine rebel groups Saturday signed an agreement on a roadmap towards ending the bloody conflict in the Darfur region.

The deal outlines different issues the parties will need to negotiate during the latest round of talks in Juba.

"We believe this is an important step," said Ahmed Mohamed, the chief negotiator on Darfur matters from the Sudan Revolutionary Front or SRF, a coalition of nine rebel groups involved in talks with the Sudanese government.

"This step no doubt will help the process to achieve a lasting peace in Darfur and also it will enable the transitional process in Sudan to move smoothly without hindrances," Mohamed told AFP.

Among the issues they agreed need to be tackled are the root causes of the conflict, the return of refugees and internally displaced people, power sharing and the integration of rebel forces into the national army.

The deal also states that the Sudanese government will address land issues, such as the destruction of property during the conflict.

Khartoum has been negotiating with different rebel groups in the capital of South Sudan for two weeks, in the latest round of efforts to end conflicts in Darfur, Blue Nile

and South Kordofan.

Rebels in these areas fought bloody campaigns against marginalization by Khartoum under ousted president Omar al-Bashir.

The Darfur fighting broke out in 2003 when ethnic minority rebels took up arms against Bashir's Arab-dominated government.

Human rights groups say Khartoum targeted suspected pro-rebel ethnic groups with a scorched earth policy, raping, killing, looting and burning villages.

Bashir, who is behind bars for corruption and awaiting trial on other charges, is wanted by the International Criminal Court in The Hague for his role in the conflict that left around 300,000 people dead and 2.5 million displaced, according to the United Nations.

However, there is fresh hope for peace after Sudan's transitional government, led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, made peace in these areas a priority.

"We failed to achieve a lasting peace for Darfur simply because the previous government was not ready to take strategic decisions to resolve the conflict in Darfur," said Mohamed who has been involved in previous failed peace talks.



General Samsedine Kabashi, the top Sudanese government representative at the talks said: "We are committed to ending all the problems in Darfur and ensuring that we restore peace and stability not only in Darfur but across all parts of the country."

The peace process began in August and mediators aim to reach a final deal by February 2020.

(Source: AP)

## Algeria names new prime minister

Algeria's President Abdelmadjid Tebboune on Saturday named a university professor and former diplomat as prime minister as he builds a new government to handle political unrest and a looming economic challenge.

Abdelaziz Djerad, 65, served in the administration of a previous president in the 1990s, but was sidelined by president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who was ousted in April after two decades as head of state.

The massive street protest movement that prompted Bouteflika to step down regarded Tebboune's election this month as illegitimate and it seems unlikely to accept any government he appoints.

The protesters rejected any election

that took place while the military stayed involved in politics and Bouteflika-era figures retained powerful positions.

Algeria's authorities publicly welcomed the street protests, casting them as a patriotic movement aimed at refreshing Algerian politics and ending corruption.

Djerad spoke several times on radio after the protests began, backing them and demanding that Bouteflika and his allies quit power.

Tebboune, himself a former prime minister, was one of five former senior officials approved as candidates for the presidential race, and won 58% of votes on Dec. 12 amid protests and an electoral boycott that reduced turnout to 40%.



The opposition say that despite Tebboune's election, ultimate power remains with the army, whose own chief, Ahmed

Gaed Salah, died suddenly of a heart attack on Monday.

It leaves Algeria with a new president, prime minister and army chief during its most acute political crisis in decades. Meanwhile the country faces a longer-term slide in its trade and fiscal balances after years of lower energy prices.

With state coffers relying on energy exports for most annual revenue, the new government may be forced to make tough cuts in spending. The parliament and outgoing interim government have already agreed a 9% cut in public spending for 2020.

Other members of the new government are expected to be named in the coming days.

(Source: Reuters)

## Japanese protest against government's plan to send Maritime Force to the Middle East

Uemura said the LDP, which forms the ruling coalition with junior partner Komeito, hammered out the plan not because of the need to carry out "survey and research" activities or analyze the security situation in the region, but for "political-power balance" purposes.

Sending the Self-Defense Forces overseas is a politically sensitive issue for Japan as its operations are highly restricted under the country's war-renouncing Constitution.

The LDP has set the term of the MSDF mission at one year and conditioned that important future decisions regarding the dispatch, such as extending its period, require approval from the Cabinet.

The stipulations were made to help persuade Komeito, which has been reluctant to send the SDF overseas, to go along with the plan.

In an emergency, the MSDF could engage in maritime policing actions, with the SDF law allowing personnel to take necessary steps, including the use of weapons at sea, to safeguard Japanese lives and property.

But Uemura, who is well-versed in international politics, phrased the action as the "unusable last resort," saying that Tokyo "has never assumed that such emergency cases could actually occur."

## U.S. firm accuses China of stealing data of Israel's Iron Dome missile system

A U.S. company has accused China of stealing technical data for the so-called Iron Dome missile system from Israeli computers.

Maryland-based Cyber Engineering Services (CyberESI) has detected the cyber theft, according to cybersecurity writer Brian Krebs.

"Between Oct. 10, 2011 and Aug. 13, 2012, attackers thought to be operating out of China hacked into the corporate networks of three top Israeli defense technology companies, including Elisra Group, Israel Aerospace Industries, and Rafael Advanced Defense Systems," Krebs writes.

"By tapping into the secret communications infrastructure set up by the hackers, CyberESI determined that the attackers ex-filtrated large amounts of data from the three companies," he adds.

"Most of the information was intellectual property pertaining to Arrow III missiles, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, ballistic rockets and other technical documents in the same fields of study."

The Iron Dome has been co-developed by American company Raytheon and Israeli firm Rafael. It is partly manufactured in the United States. It is claimed to be capable of detecting, assessing and intercepting a variety of shorter-range targets such as rockets, artillery and mortars.

The system was originally developed to counter small rockets that Hamas and other Palestinian resistance groups fired into Israeli occupied territories in retaliation for the regime's crimes against Palestinians. However, it has proven largely ineffective in serving that purpose.

CyberESI believes the hackers were from a hacking group sponsored by the Chinese military. However, what Beijing will do with the Iron Dome information is an open question.

(Source: Press TV)

## UNGA resolution condemns abuses against Myanmar's Rohingya

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) approved a resolution on Friday strongly condemning human rights abuses against Myanmar's Rohingya and other minorities, including arbitrary arrests, torture, rape and deaths in detention.

The 193-member body voted 134-9 with 28 abstentions in favor of the resolution, which also calls on Myanmar's government to take urgent measures to combat incitement of hatred against the Rohingya and other minorities in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states.

UNGA resolutions are not legally binding but they reflect world opinion.

Buddhist-majority Myanmar has long considered the Rohingya to be "Bengalis" from Bangladesh, in spite of their families having lived in the country for generations.

Nearly all have been denied citizenship since 1982, effectively rendering them stateless; they are also denied freedom of movement and other basic rights.

The long-simmering Rohingya crisis exploded on August 25, 2017, when Myanmar's military launched what it called a clearance campaign in Rakhine in response to an attack by a Rohingya armed group.

The campaign led to a mass exodus of Rohingya to Bangladesh, and accusations that security forces committed mass rapes and killings and burned thousands of homes.

### 'Seeds of distrust'

Myanmar's ambassador to the UN, Hau Do Suan called the resolution "another classic example of double-standards (and) selective and discriminatory application of human rights norms" designed "to exert unwanted political pressure on Myanmar."

He said the resolution did not attempt to find a solution to the complex situation in Rakhine state and refused to recognise government efforts to address the challenges.

The resolution, the ambassador said, "will sow seeds of distrust and will create further polarisation of different communities in the region."

The resolution expresses alarm at the continuing influx of Rohingya to neighbouring Bangladesh over the last four decades, now numbering 1.1 million including 744,000 who arrived since August 2017, "in the aftermath of atrocities committed by the security and armed forces of Myanmar."

The UNGA also expressed alarm at an independent international fact-finding mission's findings "of gross human rights violations and abuses suffered by Rohingya Muslims and other minorities" by the security forces, which the mission said "undoubtedly amount to the gravest crimes under international law."

The resolution called for an immediate cessation of fighting and hostilities. Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu-kyi has defended the military action in Rakhine state during her appearance at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, while denying the "genocidal intent" of the state against the Rohingya.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## New Iraqi election law: Mechanisms that have changed

The new law states that each province with a population of more than 100,000 is considered as an electoral district, while provinces with a population of less than 100,000 constitute an electoral district along with neighboring provinces.

The new election law requires that running for parliament individually should be conducted in an electoral district not through electoral lists, and the candidate who wins the most votes will be declared

the winner of the election. Another point in the law is the allocation of at least 25% of the seats in the parliament to women.

It can be concluded that one of the obvious developments of the Iraqi election law is the change in the electoral mechanism from a list approach to individual one. This means that individuals will have more chance to enter the parliament compared to past elections rather than those who are affiliated with political parties and groups.

Some opposition media outlets have launched a warfare against the law, claiming it has disregarded the rights of Kurds.

Foreign media outlets, above all Saudi and American ones, are trying to obstruct the implementation of the new electoral law by making such allegations.

Meanwhile, Kurdish lawyer Latif Sheikh Mostafa responded to the questions raised by the matter, saying, "The multi-electoral district system is the best for the Iraqi election.

One should not be trapped by some people, as the electoral law is not against the Kurds".

The Kurdish lawyer also said, "The approval of an electoral law based on a multi-district system is in favor of democracy and people and against the current model of parties. I have emphasized earlier that all systems have their pros and cons, but the best electoral system for people and democracy is a system with multi-electoral district".



## Cyclist Dlamini suffers broken arm in Table Mountain ticket row

South African cyclist Nicholas Dlamini suffered a broken arm in a confrontation with park rangers on Table Mountain on Friday over whether he had dodged paying his entry fee.

His team, NTT, blamed South African National Park (SAN-Parks) staff.

“Nicolas Dlamini sustained a broken arm after being stopped by SANParks officials in the Silvermine section of Table Mountain National Park on Friday,” NTT said in a statement.

“There can be no justification for the level of violence meted out to him.”

The park authorities responded that a cyclist had suffered a broken arm but said that the rider had entered the park without paying.

When he was stopped by rangers and asked to show a ticket or permit “the situation spiralled causing the suspect to injure himself during the ordeal”.

Photos and videos posted on social media show a ranger pushing Dlamini against a SANParks vehicle while twisting the cyclist’s arm, behind his back.

In the evening, South Africa’s Environment Minister Barbara Creecy tweeted that she had visited the bedside of the hospitalised athlete “and heard first hand his horrible experience.”

“I have instructed to suspend all official involved and implement an independent investigation,” she wrote.

Dlamini, a 24 year-old, who is from Cape Town, rode for NTT in the Vuelta this year.

NTT called the injury “a major setback” for the South African who planned to ride in the Tokyo Olympics next year.

(Source: AFP)

## Klopp never lost faith in Firmino

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp insisted he had never lost faith in Roberto Firmino when the Brazilian was worried by a lack of goals before scoring four in three matches including the Club World Cup final.

Firmino, known affectionately to Klopp as Bobby, met with Klopp after a worrying run of one goal in 16 appearances.

But the German told Firmino he was in the side for more than just his goals, since when he’s been on a spree.

FHe followed up his goals in the semi-final and final of the Club World Cup with a Boxing Day double in the Premier League leaders’ 4-0 rout of nearest challengers Leicester City.

Firmino’s goals against the Foxes led to an embrace with Klopp on the touchline at Leicester’s King Power Stadium.

“Journalists told me he hadn’t scored for a while, but the thing about Bobby is that I don’t think about scoring,” Klopp explained.

“I think about how important he is, so we had a little talk and I told him. For the first time he was a little bit concerned about that fact (he had not scored in so many games), and I told him I was not interested in that number.

“He is the connector for our team, he is so important for us. He is the only one who can play the position, and he plays the position in a very special way.

“He doesn’t have to come (for a hug) with every goal, but this time we had a little thing where, after being calm enough to leave him on the pitch in games that I never thought about (his lack of goals), he thought he would say thank you.”

(Source: Mirror)

## Title race is over, says Man City boss Guardiola

Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola conceded the Premier League title race is over after the reigning champions lost 3-2 at Wolves on Friday.

City are third in the Premier League, 14 points behind leaders Liverpool and a point below Leicester City.

Asked if the title race is over, Guardiola told BBC Radio 5 Live: “The advantage is too big, yes.”

City have lost five Premier League games this season, one more than in the whole of the 2018-19 campaign.

They have also played a game more than Liverpool, who have dropped only two points this season, are on a run - stretching back to March - of 26 wins from 27 league games and are two matches away from going a full year unbeaten in the top flight.

“It’s unrealistic to think about Liverpool, we think about Leicester,” Guardiola added. “We have the chance to recover second place. I know the quality of my team but that’s the situation.”

Winger Bernardo Silva added: “It is a really bad situation for us. A frustrating first half of the season. Nobody expected us to be this far away from Liverpool at this halfway point.

“We have to continue now. We know that winning the title is very complicated. I wouldn’t say impossible but very difficult.”

(Source: BBC)

## Vidal: It seems unfair to me if money is missing

Arturo Vidal is frustrated with Barcelona after not receiving 2.4 million euros in bonus payments.



The Chilean midfielder was paid 1.7m euros in bonuses last year, but he believes that he is due around 4.1m euros.

“I’m not in charge of that - that’s why I have my agent, my lawyer, who takes care of the awards and stuff,” Vidal told ADN.

“It seems unfair to me if money is missing, but it is an issue that is alien to what we are experiencing today.”

There has been a lot of talk regarding Vidal’s future, but he does not want to delve into that whilst on his winter holidays.

“It’s a subject I said when I arrived [in Chile on holiday] that I’ll talk about it when I’m there [in Spain],” Vidal added.

“I’m on holiday and I just want to talk about what’s going on here.”

(Source: Marca)

# Cristiano to Hollywood? Juve star wants acting future

Dubai: Cristiano Ronaldo has revealed the secret of his success: “There is no secret - just love what you do.”

Speaking at the 14th Dubai International Sports Conference, the global football icon revealed that it’s his simple passion for the game that has allowed him to reach the top.

With multiple Champions League, Premier League and La Liga trophies with Manchester United and Real Madrid, a European Championship with Portugal, and most recently a Serie A winners’ medal with Juventus, there is very little that the five-time FIFA Footballer of the Year has left to win.

But rather than bask in his glory, he keeps his feet on the ground and continues to push himself further each day, and he has no plans to stop any time soon.

“There are no secrets to success,” he said. “I have been playing football for many years, but with each past year, my maturity is growing.

“It is important to get titles, obviously as this helps your success. But there is no secret. It is simply just love what you do.

“I have been doing this for 13-14 years at the top, but you have to love it or you will not succeed. It is about a team - to help each other to reach the top.

“The ambition is part of what you are. In



the last 15 years the most important word to me is passion. You must be motivated.”

Despite having been at the top of the game for a decade and a half, Ronaldo is still determined to keep pushing for more success - But he also knows his limits.

“I want to play on for a few more years,” said the 34-year-old. “It is not possible

to win all the titles, but you need to be humble. I know I have achieved so much but I know that others also achieve and there are many great players.”

The discipline involved to be the best goes much further than the football field, Ronaldo explained. “Everything is a process, only maybe 30 per cent is football. Everything

else is just as important. Diet, training, relaxation. I know my body 100 per cent. There are fellow athletes who do not know.

“If you want to keep the highest level, you need to do everything well. To stay excellent, you have to think about excellence. You have to do things 24 hours to help you give a better performance every time.

“Take care of yourself and learn from the best. It is very important to learn from those who can help you with areas you do not know. I am always looking to learn from those around me. Physical and mental training are equally important. Like a meal, you need all the ingredients. As an athlete you need to take care of yourself.

On a lighter note, Ronaldo - famous for his good looks - also hinted that he has an eye on dominating Hollywood once the time has come to hang up his playing boots, even if that means getting out of his ‘comfort zone’.

“I need to prepare for my next life after football,” he said. “Maybe I want to star in a movie, but I must learn how to act, speak perfect English and also not to be nervous.

“If I want to achieve this, I need to go out of my comfort zone. And I always want to learn something new. Life does not stop after football.”

(Source: The Nationals)

## Fury-Wilder rematch set for Las Vegas



The February 22 rematch between World Boxing Council heavyweight world title-holder Deontay Wilder and Tyson Fury will take place at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, promoters announced on Friday.

Top Rank and Premier Boxing Champions said tickets for the highly anticipated bout would go on sale on Saturday, now that the venue has been confirmed.

“I’m happy and I’m excited that the rematch is finally happening,” said Wilder, who will make his 11th title defense.

The American is coming off a seventh-round knockout of Luis Ortiz on November 23 in Las Vegas, a victory that saw him improve to 43-0.

“I want to give the fans what they want to see. I’ve been doing it with my last three outings -- Fury, (Dominic) Breazeale and Ortiz,” he said.

“They’ve been spectacular events -- from my ring walks, where I gather all the energy of the people, to my uniforms that I wear to help spread that energy. Then I give them what they all come for -- the knockouts, and my knockouts have been amazing.”

Wilder and Fury fought to a split decision draw last December in Los Angeles.

Former world champion Fury was leading on the scorecards before he was knocked down by the American in the 12th round.

The big Briton beat the count, but a second knockdown helped cost him a victory.

“I proved myself the first time and I’m ready to do it again,” Wilder said. “It was a very controversial fight. I promise my fans that there won’t be any controversy with this one. I’m going to finish it.”

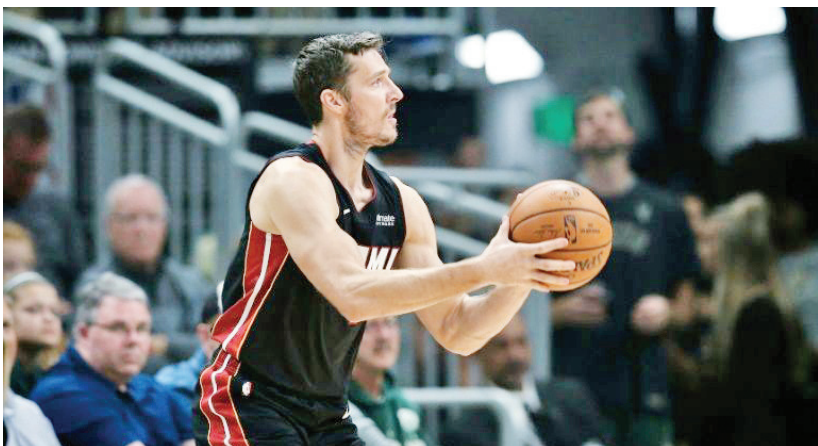
Fury, who survived two severe cuts to beat Otto Wallin by unanimous decision in September, said he was looking forward to taking care of “unfinished business” against Wilder.

“The date has been set, and the ‘Bomb Squad’ is about to be securely detonated and the real champion crowned as the world watches on for the most anticipated fight in years.

“This is unfinished business for me, but come February 22, this dossier will finally get what’s coming to him, and I can’t wait!”

(Source: Eurosport)

## Heat edge Pacers on Dragic’s late basket, Magic nip 76ers



Miami’s Goran Dragic drained the game-winning basket with 6.8 seconds remaining as the Heat edged the Indiana Pacers 113-112 in a wild NBA finish on Friday.

The Heat took their league-best home record to 14-1, but the injury-hit Pacers made them work every step of the way.

Dragic’s jump shot in the lane was Miami’s third attempt on a scrambling possession that had seen both Jimmy Butler and Kendrick Nunn miss and the Heat secure the rebounds.

“That’s who we are, man,” said Butler, who led the Heat with 20 points. “Never give up on any play.”

Indiana’s Aaron Holiday had a last chance for a game-winner but his effort failed to fall.

Bam Adebayo had 18 points and 15 rebounds, including the offensive rebound of Nunn’s miss that made Dragic’s game-winner possible in a contest that saw 20 lead changes.

“The ball didn’t want to go in, but we came up with two huge offensive rebounds, first Jimmy, then Bam,” Dragic said. “The ball came to me. I was just open and I made the shot.”

The Heat maintained their third spot in the Eastern Conference led by the Milwau-

kee Bucks.

The absence of reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo proved no problem for the Bucks in a 112-86 win over the Atlanta Hawks.

Khris Middleton scored 23 points as the Bucks bounced back from their Christmas Day loss to the Philadelphia 76ers.

Antetokounmpo, nursing a sore back, looked on from the bench as the Bucks improved their league-best record.

The Hawks, meanwhile, lost their ninth straight and saw guard Trae Young hobble out with a sprained right ankle in the first half.

The 76ers were unable to build on their upset of the Bucks, falling 98-97 to the Magic in Orlando.

Sixers center Joel Embiid drained two three-pointers in the final 25 seconds, but his desperate long-range effort as time expired wouldn’t fall and the Magic escaped with the win.

Orlando had stymied Embiid for much of the night, holding the All-Star center to 24 points. He was scoreless in the second quarter and scored just six points in the fourth.

(Source: France 24)

## The Lion returns: Ibrahimovic ready for new chapter at AC Milan

Same look, same impressive build and same oversized ego: Zlatan Ibrahimovic returns to AC Milan for a final challenge seeking to prove that he remains the superstar he claims to be.

The 38-year-old Swedish striker signed a six-month contract with the struggling Italian giants on Friday vowing to help rescue their season.

“I’m coming back to a club I hugely respect and to the city of Milan I love,” he said.

“I’ll fight together with my teammates to change the course of this season. I will do everything to make it happen.”

Ibrahimovic knows the game in Italy, having played for three different Italian clubs.

He first joined Juventus in 2004, moving on to Inter Milan after the match-fixing scandal in 2006, then arriving at AC Milan in 2010 on loan before making the move permanent.

In 85 games for AC Milan over two seasons, Ibrahimovic scored 56 goals.

One of the most successful clubs in the world, AC Milan are 11th in the league just seven points above relegation.

The club have come up short in their attacking options with just 16 goals in 17 games.

Ibrahimovic left Los Angeles Galaxy last month after a two-year stay and 52 goals in 56 games, leaving him free to sign with another club.

Milan must hope that showy Swede, never far from the headlines, will bring some punch and a winning mentality to the locker room.

The son of a Bosnian and a Croatian, Ibrahimovic grew up in Rosengard, a tough working class neighborhood of Malmo, Sweden.



Among young people with immigrant backgrounds, Ibrahimovic has become even more of a symbol, as have his cocky attitude, individualism and zealous ambition.

But he has fallen out of favour in his hometown where a bronze statue unveiled in his honour in Malmo in October has been vandalized by fans angry that he has bought shares in a club in Stockholm.

■ ‘Fascinating character’

Ibrahimovic had turned out for many of Europe’s top teams, such as Amsterdam’s Ajax, AC Milan, Barcelona, Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester United, before he signed for US team LA Galaxy in 2018.

In his second autobiography entitled “Football is me,” published in 2018 he claims to have changed the history of his sport.

“Now go back to baseball,” he told his supporters at the Los Angeles Galaxy, where he was, between 2018 and

2019, the best player in the North American Championship.

“I came, I saw, I conquered. Thank you LA Galaxy for making me feel alive again.”

During his time at PSG he promised to stay “if they replace the Eiffel Tower with (his) statue”.

“I arrived like a king, I’m leaving like a legend,” he said after he left the French club.

He proved in California that he still had legs after injuries precipitated his departure from Manchester United in 2017. “Lions do not recover like humans,” he said.

But Ibrahimovic’s strength is that he has the talent to back up his verbal jibes.

He delighted fans with his “kung fu” goals, his outrageous overhead goal against England in 2012, or the slalom in 2004 with Ajax, dribbling past six players to beat the goalkeeper, which launched his career.

At PSG, he became the best scorer in the club’s history, with 156 goals in 180 games, before being overtaken by Edinson Cavani.

He was twice top Serie A scorer, in 2009 with Inter and in 2012 with AC Milan, he also has the record for the Swedish national team with 62 goals.

His first year with Manchester United was a success, with 28 goals in 46 games, before he was sidelined with a his knee ligament tear before leaving Europe in March 2018.

But he remains and exemplary professional, as Italian coach Carlo Ancelotti found.

In his book, “My Coaching Secrets”, Ancelotti said he had been told the Swede was “a difficult player to manage”.

But he discovered at PSG a player “very available and professional, always focused on his work.”

(Source: AFP)



# Jahanbakhsh scores first ever goal for Brighton

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Alireza Jahanbakhsh broke down in tears as he scored his first Premier League goal to help Brighton move five points clear of the drop zone with a crucial victory over fellow strugglers Bournemouth.

The Iranian winger found the back of the net just three minutes into the match, ending his 18-month goalscoring drought.

Jahanbakhsh, a club-record £17million signing last summer, couldn't control his emotions after scoring goal.

He almost looked in disbelief himself as he instantly covered his eyes with his hands.

It obviously meant the world to him as he was mobbed by his delighted teammates.

An excellent second by Aaron Mooy secured a vital 2-0 victory for the Seagulls.

Both teams headed into the fixture on 20 points, just two above Aston Villa occupying the final spot in the zone.

Jahanbakhsh had already said he's determined to keep putting in his best efforts for the side.

"I have been working really hard and trying to get used to the way that the head coach wants the team to play. It's obviously different to what we did last season, but it's been a good week for the side," Jahanbakhsh told [www.brightonandhovealbion.com](http://www.brightonandhovealbion.com).

"I try to work hard, as professional players you have to train well and be in a good shape for when the head coach gives you a chance," the Iranian international added.

Jahanbakhsh is the third Iranian player to score in Premier League history (also Ashkan Dejagah and Andranik Teymourian) and the first since Dejagah in April 2014.



## Wrestler Karimi suffers knee ligament



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iranian freestyle wrestler Alireza Karimi Machiani has suffered a knee ligament injury.

Karimi Machiani, who won a gold medal in the 2018 Asian Games and a silver at the 2019 World Wrestling Championships in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, suffered a knee injury in the 2019 World Wrestling Clubs Cup held in Bojnurd, Iran last week.

An MRI exam confirmed the injury, Dr. Sohrab Keyhan said.

Karimi, 97kg, will miss the 2020 Olympic Games if he undergoes surgery.

Last week, 2016 Olympics gold medal winner Hassan Yazdani underwent successful surgery on his torn meniscus.

Yazdani had also suffered the injury at the 2019 World Wrestling Clubs Cup.

## Iranian goalkeeper Amini passes away



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Ex-Sepahan goalkeeper Mohammadreza Amini passed away at the age of 35 on Saturday.

He played in Iranian football teams Sepahan, Nassaji and Shahin Bushehr. Amini lost his battle with leukemia.

Leukemia is cancer of the body's blood-forming tissues, including the

bone marrow and the lymphatic system. Many types of leukemia exist.

Some forms of leukemia are more common in children. Other forms of leukemia occur mostly in adults. Leukemia usually involves the white blood cells.

Tehran Times offers its heartfelt condolence to his bereaved family.

## Sepahan suffer bitter defeat to Sanat Naft

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Sepahan could come back to top of Iran Professional league (IPL) with a win over Sanat Naft but they suffered a 4-2 defeat against Sanat Naft in Abadan on Saturday.

Issa Alekassir gave Sanat Naft the lead just seven minutes into the match but Sajjad Shabbazzadeh canceled out his goal in the 28th minute.

With four minutes before the halftime, Mohammadreza Hosseini made it 2-1 for Sepahan.

Mohammad Ghoreishi equalized the match seven minutes after the interval.



Sanat Naft forward Mohammad Ahleshakheh got on the scoresheet in the 70th minute and the team's captain Taleb Reykani made it 4-2 in the 82nd minute.

Earlier on the day, Tractor defeated Paykan 3-2 in Tehran. Masoud Shojaei (two goals) and Sasan Ansari were on target for the visiting team and Jalaeddin Alimohammadi (52-penalty) and Shahriar Moghanloo (78th) scored for Paykan.

Persepolis sit top of the table with 34 points, followed by Sepahan (31 points), Tractor (30 points) and Sanat Naft (30 points).

## Weightlifting at Tokyo will suffer if top lifters do not qualify, says Rostami

Iran's Olympic champion weightlifter Ki-anoush Rostami made a career high total in one of the best head-to-head contests of 2019 at the Qatar Cup in Doha, the final Olympic qualifying competition of the year — but he still needs a miracle if he is to go for gold again at Tokyo 2020.

Rostami, who has won two world titles and Olympic gold and silver since 2011, made five of his six lifts to pass the 400 kilogram mark for the first time earlier this week.

Fares Elbakh, the 21-year-old Qatari, then made his final lift to post his own personal best of 404kg and win by 1kg.

The 96kg showdown was by far the best contest of the five-day Qatar Cup and also the biggest field with 19 men taking part, some of them beaten by well over 100kg.

In fifth place was Ilya Ilyin, the Kazakh who was twice stripped of Olympic gold for doping and who remains 40kg or more below his career highs.

«It was good,» said Rostami, who believes he can do better and «make a weight that nobody else can go near».

Even that, though, would probably not be enough to earn him a place in Tokyo.

The big problem for Rostami — a popular figure in the sport worldwide but a controversial one in Iran, where he trains alone at home — is his lack of points from the second phase of qualifying that ended on October 31.

Registering a total in all three of the six-month qualifying phases is essential for all lifters to have a realistic chance of qualifying.

Rostami had a controversial bomb-out in

the snatch at the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) World Championships in Pattaya, Thailand in September — where Elbakh was second — which led to him protesting on the stage.

There was a mix-up over which weight he should take, a problem with the scoreboard, and Rostami had to wait «four or five minutes» on the stage, during which time his body cooled down and his mind was «too busy».

«Everything was bad for me, and it was the World Championships' problem, not mine,» he said.

Rostami then travelled to Switzerland to compete in the final phase-two qualifier in Tramelan in the last week of October, only to discover that his entry had not

been received in time.

For that, he blamed the Iran Weightlifting Federation, who sent in his entry «two or three days late», he said.

Iran can send only one 96kg lifter to Tokyo and Rostami believes his federation favors Sohrab Moradi, the Olympic champion and world record holder in the old 94kg class.

This is despite the fact that Moradi has suffered serious spine and shoulder injuries, is way short of competition fitness, and is even lower down the rankings than Rostami.

Moradi was, however, entered in that Swiss competition and although he lifted less than the 55kg women because of his lack of fitness, he did register a total, and crucial qualifying points in phase two.

(Source: *Insidethegames*)

## Host cities for AFC Asian Cup China 2023 confirmed

The 10 host cities for the AFC Asian Cup China 2023 have been announced by the Chinese Football Association (CFA). The cities include the People's Republic of China capital, Beijing as well as Tianjin, Shanghai, Chongqing, Chengdu, Xi'an, Dalian, Qingdao, Xiamen and Suzhou.

The full details will be reported to the Organizing Committee of the Asian Cup (OCAC) — at its next meeting in 2020 which will also discuss the overarching vision, key milestones and timelines of Asian football's most prestigious tournament.

AFC President, HE Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, said: «The AFC Asian Cup is our flagship competition for national teams, and I am sure that the Chinese FA and

the selected host cities will deliver a tournament which is in keeping with the event's world-class status.

«The AFC thanks the commitment shown by the CFA and these 10 great cities to be a part of this celebration of Asian football. I wish them all the very best of success in their desire to show the world that China PR can stage huge international football events.»

If the candidate host cities showed great interest and commitment in bidding to host Asia's biggest football tournament which will be held in June and July 2023 — with 24 teams playing a total of 51 matches.

In hosting the 18th edition of the AFC Asian Cup, the CFA aims to promote the implementation of the China Football

Reform Plan with more infrastructure, better youth programmes and widespread promotion of the grassroots game.

Furthermore, the CFA also views Asia's crown jewel as an opportunity to showcase its progress and achievements to the world and in the years, leading to the tournament, the CFA also reinforced its commitment to work closely with the AFC and the host cities to stage a spectacular, far-reaching and successful festival of Asian football.

The AFC will further study and review the competition arrangements and organisational plans proposed by the host cities and the CFA in the early part of 2020. China PR last played host to the AFC Asian Cup in 2004.

(Source: *AFP*)

## Qatar hold Iran in friendly as Thailand 2020 looms

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Qatar U23 football team came from 2-0 down to draw 2-2 with Iran U23 on Saturday as part of preparation for the 2020 AFC U23 Championship.

In a friendly match held in Doha, Reza Shekari gave the Persians the lead in the 28th minute from the penalty spot and Mehdi Ghaedi extended Iran's lead six minutes later.

Abdulrasheed Umaru Ibrahim scored twice for Qatar in the 83rd and 90th minutes.

Iran have been 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.

The top three teams qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics in July, although should Japan emerge as one of them, the fourth-placed side will advance.

Iran have not been in the Olympics since the 1976 games in Munich.

Hamid Estili's team will start the campaign on Jan. 9 with a match against Uzbekistan.

## Gabriel Calderon hits out at Persepolis GM

**PLDC** — Gabriel Calderon has hit out at Persepolis general manager Mohammad Hassan Ansarifard, saying he has to stop lying.

Persepolis defeated Nassaji 1-0 on Friday to go top of the Iran Professional League (IPL) but the Argentine coach is not happy with the club's officials' behavior.

"First, I would like to thank my players and the fans for the win. I have to announce that we don't want a foreign forward and I have asked the club to pay salary arrears owed to players instead. We will sign two Iranian players in the January transfer window," Calderon said.



"I did my best over the past six months and I didn't complain, but I want the officials to stop lying from now on. We can be the best team in Asia but we need organization. Some people just think about their personal interests and don't think about the club's progress. I didn't say anything just for the fans and worked hard. You can see the result at the moment," he added.

"Persepolis has the best fans and they deserve a better behavior. I have played in the final of the FIFA World Cup twice and I am not a silly person. I fell in love with Persepolis and its fans. But I'm saying I need respect, respect and respect. Iran's football has a high quality and can have a bright future. But you need responsible persons who want to help football," Calderon concluded.

## Iran handball team beat Al Ahli in friendly

**TEHRAN** — Iran national handball team defeated Qatari club Al Ahli in a friendly match on Saturday.

Team Melli defeated Al Ahli 32-25.

Iran will also play Qatar national team as part of preparation for the 2020 Asian Men's Handball Championship.

The championship will be held in Kuwait City, Kuwait from January 16 to 27, 2020 and acts as the Asian qualifying tournament for the 2021 World Men's Handball Championship.

Iran have been drawn in Pool A along with Bahrain and New Zealand.

Pool B consists of Qatar, Japan and China. South Korea, Saudi Arabia and Australia are in Pool C.

Host Kuwait is drawn in Pool D along with the UAE, Iraq and Hong Kong.

## Iranian int'l referee to officiate at 2020 AFC Cup

**IRNA** — Iranian international referee Bijan Heidari has been invited to officiate at the 2020 AFC Cup.

The Iranian referee is to judge Defenders and Paro FC match in Sri Lanka on January 22, 2020.

Presently some 80 referees from Iranian Province of Hamedan are to whistle at national and international cups.

## Wrestlers win five medals at 3rd Moscow Christmas

**TASNIM** — The Iranian freestyle wrestlers claimed three gold medals, one silver and three bronzes at the 3rd Moscow Christmas.

The competition was held in Moscow, Russia from December 25 to 28.

Ebrahim Khari (45kg), Ali Arab Firouzjaji (48kg) and Hossein Azizi (110kg) claimed three gold medals.

Hossein Asghari won a silver medal at the 92kg.

Ali Gholizadegan (55kg), Hassan Esmailnejhad (65kg) and Amir Ali Sabouteh (80kg) seized three bronze medals.

Iran took part in the competition with 11 wrestlers.



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**GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING**

It is surprising that the envious are ignorant of the soundness of others and do not envy them in this particular case.

Imam Ali (AS)

Persian bookstores to receive “Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein”

**CULTURE** TEHRAN — Austrian architect Paul Engelmann's book “Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein with a Memoir” has recently been translated into Persian.

Front cover of the English version of Paul Engelmann's book “Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein with a Memoir”.

Wittgenstein was an Austrian philosopher who worked primarily in logic, the philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of language.

Engelmann was a Viennese architect who is now best known for his friendship with Wittgenstein between 1916 and 1928, and for being his a partner in the design and construction of the Stonborough House in Vienna.

“Wittgenstein is the most influential philosopher of the twentieth century,” translator Hamed Erfan told the Persian service of ISNA on Saturday.

“He was Adolf Hitler's classmate at school. He came from a wealthy family who was never seduced by money. He even anonymously donated a great deal of money to [the writers] Georg Trakl and Rainer Maria Rilke,” he added.

“Wittgenstein's letters to Engelmann were penned in the heat of World War I when he was working in the frontline on his philosophical notes, which were later published in a book with an introduction from [his teacher] Bertrand Russell,” Erfan explained.

He said, “In ‘Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein’, Wittgenstein shows a greater tendency to praise women's spirit. He recollects his sister, Mining, and the close friendship between Engelmann and his mother, to whom the book has been dedicated.

“In the letters, he also writes about his loneliness and his intentions of killing himself several times... by reading this book, we will find the thing that caused his masterpiece ‘The Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus [Logical Philosophical Treatise or Treatise on Logic and Philosophy]’ was created,” he added.

The Persian version of “Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein with a Memoir” will be published in Tehran in the near future.

With Uighur comic, Japanese manga artist aims to highlight everyday ‘suffering’

**TOKYO (Reuters)** — A Japanese artist whose manga comics about a Uighur woman went viral wants to use the simple power of her work to raise awareness of the “daily suffering” endured by the Chinese mostly Muslim minority, she told Reuters.

With “What Has Happened to Me”, a manga comic that has been translated into 10 languages - including Mandarin, Uighur and English - and viewed more than 330,000 times online, artist Tomomi Shimizu has seized on an issue that many Western countries see as evidence of Beijing's abuse of human rights.

In panels of spare, black-and-white drawings, Shimizu tells the story of Mihrigul Tursun, a real Uighur woman who now lives in the United States and says she was beaten and detained in China for being a Uighur.

“The Uighur issue has been well known among people who are into politics. But little is known among the general public. The gap is staggering,” Shimizu, 50, told Reuters in an interview.

“I decided to use manga for this purpose because I believe manga has power to convey things to people in an easy-to-understand way.”

Shimizu, who has penned another comic about Uighurs, appears to be no stranger to politics, having voiced support on her Twitter account for issues generally backed by Japan's right wing.

The United Nations and human rights groups estimate that between 1 million and 2 million people, most of them ethnic Uighur Muslims, have been detained in harsh conditions in the Xinjiang region of northwest China, as part of what Beijing calls an antiterrorism campaign.

China has said Xinjiang faces a threat from Islamist militants and separatists. Beijing rejects accusations of mistreatment and denies mass internment, saying it is simply seeking to end extremism and violence in Xinjiang through education, and that it is offering Uighurs better employment prospects with vocational training.

The Chinese foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The Chinese government has accused Tursun of spreading lies about her time in Xinjiang and strongly denied her accusations of mistreatment.

Tehran gallery holds retrospective of painter Parvaneh Etemadi

**A R T** TEHRAN — A retrospective of painter Parvaneh Etemadi, known for her relaxed style of work, opened at Tehran's Tarrahan Azad Gallery on Friday.

Etemadi in her new collection of silkscreens has revised the compositions and palette she has used in her earlier works. These artworks, which focus on her favorite topic of still life, have been accumulated by Ali Bakhtiari.

With a career spanning five decades, Etemadi, 71, is one of the most successful and popular Iranian artists.

Her still lifes, termeh (a type of sumptuous handwoven cloth) and pomegranate designs, her collages and installation art have put her among the prominent figures in Iranian art.

Etemadi studied art at the University of Tehran and attended many group exhibitions held at the Ghandriz Gallery in Tehran from 1967 to 1977.

Her first serious painting teacher Bahman Mohasses had a great influence on her in her early period of artistic activity.

Although Mohasses introduced her to ancient art, Etemadi was driven away from figurative art toward abstraction for a little while.

However, she finally chose a middle way and expanded the scope of her experience which marked the second period of her career.

The second period of her artistic life, which took shape in the seventies was a synthesis of constructivism of her first period with a return to figurative art.

The exhibition will run until January 7 at the gallery located at 5 Salmas Square, off Fatemi St.



“Vases” Iranian painter Parvaneh Etemadi.

Bookstore offering original English publications opens in Tehran

**CULTURE** TEHRAN — A bookstore offering over 2,000 original English books from Iranian and foreign publishers opened in northern Tehran during a special ceremony on Friday.

Book Hall manager Ahmad Rezai (L) and Tehran City Council member Ahmad Masjed-Jamei attend the opening ceremony of the bookstore on December 27, 2019.

The bookstore named “Book Hall” belongs to Vijeh Nashr, a major Iranian cultural organization that imports books from overseas English and Arabic publishers.

The ceremony was attended by Tehran City Council member Ahmad Masjed-Jamei, Book Hall manager Ahmad Rezai and a number of cultural officials.

Most of the English books, which were published in 2018 and 2019, are on various subjects. The bookstore also offers over 8,000 books from Iranian publishers.

Vijeh Nashr earlier had opened two other bookstores, which shut down due to some problems in the publishing industry, Rezaei said.

“Such bookstores need support from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance,” he noted and added, “We have used all our power to set up this bookstore and we need to be supported... We hope we can endure in this mission.”

“Accidental Further Adventures of Hundred-Year-Old Man” published in Persian

**CULTURE** TEHRAN — Swedish author Jonas Jonasson's book “The Accidental Further Adventures of the Hundred-Year-Old Man” has recently been published in Persian.

The book translated into Persian by Shadi Hamedei will be unveiled during a ceremony at the Roshanan Mansion in Tehran on Wednesday, publisher Behnegar announced on Saturday.

The sequel to Jonasson's international bestseller “The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared” begins with a hot air balloon trip.

Allan and Julius are ready for some spectacular views, but they're not expecting to land in the sea and be rescued by a North Korean ship. And they could never have imagined that the captain of the ship would be harboring a suitcase full of contraband uranium, on a nuclear weapons mission for Kim Jong-un.

A Persian copy of Swedish author Jonas Jonasson's book “The Accidental Further Adventures of the Hundred-Year-Old Man”.

Bruce Lee's daughter sues Chinese fast food chain for using late kungfu master's image

A woman walks out of a restaurant of Chinese fast food chain Real Kungfu at Beijing Railway Station in Beijing, China December 27, 2019. (Reuters/Jason Lee)

**SHANGHAI (Reuters)** — A firm run by the daughter of Bruce Lee has sued a Chinese fast food for using the late kungfu star's image in its logo without permission and is seeking over 210 million yuan (\$30 million) in compensation, Chinese media outlet The Paper reported.

California-based Bruce Lee Enterprises, whose head is Shannon Lee, filed the case against the Real Kungfu chain in a Shanghai court on Wednesday, requesting that the food firm stop using the image and pay an additional 88,000 yuan to cover legal expenses.

It also asked that the Guangzhou-based chain to issue clarifications for 90 days to say that it has nothing to do with Bruce Lee. Real Kungfu, which sells rice bowls with Chinese dishes, was founded in 1990 and has outlets in over 57 Chinese cities.

Its logo is of a man dressed in yellow long-sleeved top whose looks and stance are similar to Bruce Lee and his famed 'ready to strike' pose.

Real Kungfu on its Weibo account on Thursday said it was “puzzled” by the lawsuit as it had used that logo for the last 15 years. It said that while there had been some issues in the past, its use of the logo was approved by national authorities.

German opera singer, conductor Schreier dies at 84

In this June 21, 2013, file photo, conductor Peter Schreier smiles after receiving the Bach Medal in Leipzig, Germany. (Hendrik Schmidt/DPA via AP)

**FRANKFURT, Germany (AP)** — Opera singer and conductor Peter Schreier, who won fame at the Salzburg festival and Milan's La Scala, has died in Dresden, Germany. He was 84.

The DPA news agency reported Thursday that he died Wednesday, citing his longtime secretary. Schreier, a tenor, was in demand on opera stages all over the world.

He performed at the Berlin State Opera in his native East Germany and at Milan's La Scala, as well as a 25-year run at the famed Salzburg festival. One of his specialties was performing and recording the songs of composers Franz Schubert and Robert Schumann.

Schreier retired from the opera stage in 2000 after a final performance in Berlin as Tamino in Mozart's “The Magic Flute”, one of his most important roles.

He then continued with songs and oratorio performances until he was 70. DPA didn't report a cause of death, but said Schreier had suffered heart trouble including bypass surgery in past years.