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TSE index hits a 50-year record high of 102,000 points

Players in Iran's capital market witnessed a historical record in growth of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE)'s main index (TED-PIX) which gained 3,306 points to hit 102,452 points on Sunday, something unprecedented in the 50-year history of the country's stock market.

As reported, 1.821 billion securities worth 5.49 trillion rials (about \$130 million) were traded through 100,000

Also, IFX, the main index of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), rose 37.6 points to stand at 1,191 points on Sunday.

As reported, 613 million securities worth 1.26 trillion rials (about \$29.8 million) were traded through 58,000 deals in a day. \rightarrow 4

All Turkish political parties seek close ties with Iran: diplomat

POLITICS TEHRAN — Turkish ambassador to Tehran Riza Hakan Tekin has said that all the political parties in Turkey are aware of the importance of relationship with Iran and seek to expand it. The comments by the ambassador comes as Turkish presidential and parliamentary elections are scheduled

to be held on June 24. Turkish citizens who

reside in Iran casted their votes on Sunday.

Six candidates are running in Turkey's presidential race, while eight political parties are vying for 600 seats in parliament.

Ambassador Tekin said that the process of voting by Turkish citizens in foreign countries will end by June 19.

Reportedly, more than three million Turkish expatriates worldwide are expected to take part in the overseas vote at more than 100 polling stations. \rightarrow 2

Bahrain upholds death, life sentences against Shia clerics

NTERNATIONAL A Bahraini court has upd e s k held the death and life sentences against 11 Shia clerics, Bahrain's main Shia opposition group, the al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, has said in a statement. Three of these clerics sentenced to

death, according to al-Wefag statement. The regime in Bahrain has jailed thousands of anti-government protesters since the start of the popular uprising against the Al Khalifah rule in 2011. Dozens have also been stripped of their nationality.

Bahraini protesters are demanding that the Al Khalifah dynasty relinquish power and let a just system representing all Bahrainis be established.

Meanwhile, the European Parliament has called on Bahrain to immediately put an end to persecution of human rights activists in the country. \rightarrow 13



Fairytales of global economic growth

ARACHINAR - The world is moving at a rapid pace, technological advancements have transformed lives, and economic growth has been spurred by innovative policies and practices. The economic success story, some argue, is directly linked to the fluctuations in gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate. But some argue against it. So, is GDP the most precise and credible means of measuring growth and advancement of nations and peoples? Or, does it only show the yawning gap between haves and have-nots by contributing to economic inequality?

There is a general perception that GDP rate is the true barometer of the economic prosperity and welfare of society. But, in reality, they are two entirely different things. Even some famed economists claim that GDP can be misleading as it fails to show the bigger picture of the economic state of a country and fails to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' growth - whether everyone has contributed to the economy or only a handful of rich people. Economic inequality generally is driven by unequal ownership of capital that can be either privately or publically owned.

The consistent and alarming rise in income inequality - whether in the United States, India, Russia, China or other developed/developing countries - threatens to make economic growth less robust and durable. Although the economic growth is necessary for economic development, it does not necessarily address all the issues. The GDP metric could be a good indicator of an economy where everyone shares equal benefits and opportunities for economic progress.

Oxfam survey last year revealed that at least one billionaire was born every two days worldwide. Now, there are 2,043 billionaires (dollars) in total. The wealth of this elite group jumped by \$762 billion in just over 12 months and Oxfam estimated that almost two-third of that wealth is the product of inheritance, monopoly and cronyism. On the other side, the poor keep getting poorer. The bottom half of the global population made less than one percent of total wealth in 2016-2017, and has seen no substantial increase in their wealth, which exposes faultiness in the global economic order. Also, 82 percent of the global wealth generated in 2017 went to the pockets of just 1 percent of the world population. →7

Brazilian govt. to help businesses continue trade with Iran: ambassaddor

By Kamal Iranidoost & Payman Yazdani TEHRAN (MNA) – The Brazilian government will spare no efforts to help Brazilian and Iranian firms develop relations after the U.S. withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal, according to the Brazilian ambassador to Iran in an exclusive interview with the MNA.

Brazil's Ambassador to Tehran Rodrigo de Azeredo Santos visited Mehr News Agency headquarter in the center of Tehran on June 11 and sat down for an interview with journalists from the English desk.

The following are the most important ques-

tions and his answers: We would like to start by asking a question about your country's foreign policy. To me, Brazil acts like an economic entity. Its foreign policy looks very much like that of China? It has never sought to engage in any political rift with other countries. It only pursues its economic interests. Does Brazil as a leading country among developing countries and a member of BRICS



want to protect third world countries against U.S. unilateralism? Does it seek to do business in local currencies rather than the U.S. dollar to put an end to dollar supremacy?

A: Well, Brazil as you said is a developing country. It plays a major role in the world economy also in the political sector as well because of the strength of its economy. But of course, we have many challenges, social challenges. There is a lot to invest in social development and this reflects in our foreign policy and the kind of relations With regard to nature of our country, as you

mentioned, Brazil is not looking for any political supremacy or war or, let's say, a more aggressive policy. So, you are right. In Brazilian history, in Brazilian diplomacy history, let's say, all our problems were resolved by peaceful were resolved by peaceful negotiations. Brazil has not been engaged in war maybe since 1860 when we had a war in the continent. And all our borders were defined through negotiations. We have never had war to conquer territories or to define our borders. Those were negotiated at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century through diplomacy. So, we have this tradition of working with diplomacy, with multilateralism. Brazil is very much in favor of multilateralism. So, when you talk about unilateralism of some countries, I agree. But Brazil pursues the right way. It pursues cooperation, seeks to solve the world problems through negotiations. We really believe in multilateralism. →7

Saudis' lies over domination of al-Hudaydah

TEHRAN - On Saturday, some media outlets in the Saudi alliance, such as al Arabiya and Al-Hadath, in an organized and pre-planned attempt, reported that Saudi-led coalition had taken control of Yemeni port of al-Hudaydah.

However, it did not take long for the Yemeni political and revolutionary authorities to deny the Saudis and their allies claiming to dominate Riyadh and Abu Dhabi over al-Hudaydah and its port. In an interview with Al-Alam News Network on Saturday, Ibrahim al-Obeidi dismissed reports by the Saudi and Emirati media that the invaders have taken control of al-Hudaydah's airport. The battle for al-Hudaydah is a war of attrition that would drag on for a long time, the Houthi commander added.

It would have been impossible for the members of the Saudi-led military coalition to handle such a long war against Yemen single-handedly, Obeidi noted, adding that the invasion is being supported by the U.S. and the UK. Denouncing the U.S. government for giving the green light for Saudi Arabia to launch a war against Yemen, the Houthi leader said the fighting has flared up in Yemen's western coastal areas upon a decision by Washington. While the aggressors are looking for excuses to justify the invasion of Yemen, the Yemeni forces have no choice but to fight off the invaders and occupiers with any available equipment, Obeidi underlined, explaining that Yemen's Navy uses its missiles for defense and for preventing heliborne operations of the for-

According to the Yemeni army propaganda campaign, the aggressive forces penetrated from the West Shore were surrounded by three sides and could not receive support except by sea. \rightarrow 13



Iranian orchestra performs in Russia

Vocalist Salar Aqili (L) performs with a selection of musicians from the Tehran Symphony Orchestra and National Orchestra at the Bolshoi Zal (Grand Hall) of the Saint Petersburg Philharmonia on June 14, 2018.

Fereidun Shahbazian (R) and Shahrdad Rohani conducted the performance, which was also repeated at the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory

They are also scheduled to give a performance in Kazan This week



Iran at SCO: Role, achievements, and goals

rearly a month after the U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), leaders from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) met in Qingdao, China, to set the roadmap for the future.

In his speech, Chinese President Xi Jinping, the summit host, announced that the SCO members will uphold the authority and efficacy of WTO rules, strengthen an open, inclusive, transparent, non-discriminatory and rules-based multilateral trading regime, and oppose trade protectionism of any form. "We point out that economic globalization and regional integration are the compelling trend of our times," Xi said.

"All parties will continue to work in line with the principle of mutual benefit to improve regional economic cooperation arrangements, enhance the Belt and Road cooperation and complementarity of our respective development strategies, deepen cooperation in business, investment, finance, connectivity and agriculture, advance trade and investment facilitation, and foster new prospects for integrated development of the region to deliver benefits to our people and add fresh impetus to global growth," the Global Times quoted the Chinese president as saving.

■ Iran, JCPOA and SCO summit One of the major issues on the summit's agenda was the consensus that Russia, China, and India (which comprise three of the five BRICS countries) do not back sanctions against Iran announced by Trump and his secretary of state. The summitters also rejected U.S. unilateralism in global affairs in favor of a multilateral world order.

Iran, a current observer member of the SCO which has officially applied full membership, participated at the event on June 8-9 at the presidential level. Iran sought to achieve several goals in the summit. The country initially seeks saving the 2015 international nuclear deal by getting assurances from the remaining parties to the nuclear agreement. It wants its interests, which is removal of economic and financial sanctions under the agreement, are guaranteed otherwise it would resume nuclear activities at a higher speed. \rightarrow 4

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Ex-minister predicts bleak future for U.S.-**North Korea ties**

POLITICS TEHRAN — Former Defense Minister e s k Ahmad Vahidi has highlighted the U.S. government's lack of commitment to its international obligations and expressed pessimism about the future of a recent rapprochement between Washington and

"The United States is the embodiment of noncommitment to all ethical and international principles," Tasnim quoted Vahidi as saying on Sunday.

The U.S. does not even act properly (in dealing with) its European friends," he said, adding, "How the U.S. interacts with Britain, Germany and France proves that Washington values nothing other than its interests.'



Iran, Turkey seek continued war on terrorism

ITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Deputy Interior Minister Hossein Zolfaghari held a telephone conversation on Sunday with Undersecretary of Turkish Ministry of Interior Muhterem Ince to urge continued fight against terrorism and organized crime in the region.

They also highlighted the need for a closer monitoring of common borders, especially during critical times in an effort to prevent any terrorist act from taking place, Mehr reported.



Iran slams Daesh terrorist attack in Afghanistan

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has strongly condemned Saturday's suicide attack claimed by the Daesh (ISIL) terrorist group that killed and injured dozens of people in eastern Afghanistan.

In a statement released late on Saturday, Qassemi sympathized with the Afghan people and government over the deadly attack targeting Afghan and Taliban forces in the eastern city of Nangarhar, Tasnim reported.

The ill-wishers of the Afghan nation "did not tolerate the efforts to achieve a ceasefire and unity in the country and, by committing another crime, demonstrated that their existence hinges on crimes and divisions," he said in the statement.



Iranian consulate in Erbil launches electronic visa system

OLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian consulate in Erbil, the capital of the Iraqi Kurdistan, has announced that it has started issuing electronic visas in order to facilitate visa issuance.

In a statement on Sunday, the consulate announced that electronic visas would facilitate providing services to visa applicants and would reduce costs, Mehr reported.

It added, "Internet companies can charge visa applicants at most 3,000 Iraqi dinars for registering their visa applications.'



No Iranian fighter in Yemen, Ansarullah spokesman says

ITICS TEHRAN — There is not even a single Iranian individual fighting in Yemen, spokesman for the Yemeni Houthi Ansarullah movement said on Saturday.

This is while the military forces of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Sudan have boots on the ground in Yemen and are involved in a Saudi-led military campaign against the Yemeni people, Mohammad Abdulsalam told Al Mayadeen news, Tasnim reported.

The main objective of invaders in launching war on Yemen is to occupy the country, the Abdulsalam warned, adding that continuation of the aggression against Yemen's western port city of Hudaydah would ruin any chance for political resolution of the crisis.



China: Dialogue, cooperation key to save JCPOA

OLITICS TEHRAN — Dialogue and cooperation are the key for preserving Iran's nuclear deal, Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi said in a joint press conference with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu on Friday.

"Iran's nuclear deal is an achievement that has been gained with difficulty and as a result of multilateral approach, so it must be preserved through remaining committed to dialogue and cooperation principles," said Wang Yi, ISNA reported.

The nuclear deal "has played an influential role in expanding peace and stability in the Middle East and there is no reason for destroying the rightfulness of this international deal," he added.

China preserving relations with Iran despite U.S. pressure, analyst says

e s k ed States cannot affect China-Iran relations through pressure, an analyst at Institute of World Economics and Politics (IWEP) of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) said on Saturday.

Chinese companies preserve their ties with Iran and keep working with their Iranian counterparts, Wang Yongzhong told IRNA.

Wang Yongzhong said the sanctions imposed on Iran before the 2015 nuclear deal were supported globally but presently it is only the U.S. which has unilaterally withdrawn from the 2015 nuclear deal, while other five world powers are committed to keep the deal.

Iran and six world powers including the U.S., UK, France, Russia, China and Germany reached a landmark nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), on July 14, 2015. The agreement went into force on January 16, 2016.



Despite worldwide support for the JCPOA U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew his country from the deal back in May. Trump also said he will reinstate economic sanctions on Iran, sparking a storm of protest from the other signatories of the deal.

On Beijing's stance on the future of the JCPOA after the U.S. exit, the Chinese analyst said the U.S. cannot put pressure on development of ties between China and Iran as long as the European countries and Russia support the pact.

In its relations with Iran, Beijing has followed international regulations, he said, adding that China, as an independent country, does not accept U.S. unilateral laws.

He went on to say that the Chinese state enterprises have not left Tehran after U.S. withdrawal and still cooperate with Iran.

On trade exchange between China and Iran, the analyst proposed that the two countries do oil deals and make investments using yuan

KRG says to counter hostile moves against Iran

The Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government's spokesperson has expressed Erbil's opposition to the armed groups that threaten the neighboring states, stressing that the KRG government does not allow such groups to use its territory for moves against Iran and Turkey.

In an interview with Tasnim, Safeen Dizayee expressed Erbil's views on the recent political developments in Iraq and on relations with the neighboring countries.

Asked about repeated cases of hostile assaults against Iranian forces by anti-Revolution militant groups launched from inside the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, Dizayee said such groups are not a result of formation of the KRG and had already been present in Iraq under Saddam's rule.

The existence of the anti-Iranian groups does not mean Erbil's support for them, he explained, underlining that a joint commission between Iran and the KRG has made effective measures for coordination

'We have urged those (armed) groups and have warned them that they have no right to use the Iraqi Kurdistan Region's soil (for moves) against our neighbors, namely Iran and Turkey," said Dizayee,



also chief of staff of the KRG prime minister's office. Pointing to the cultural commonalities between Iran and the KRG and their common border, Dizayee said that occasional divisions or conflicting views are

a normal issue that would not affect the strong and

"Erbil attaches special value to its relations with

the Islamic Republic of Iran's nation and government in all fields," he underscored.

Calling for efforts to enhance economic interaction between Tehran and Erbil, the spokesman said a rise in trade exchange with Iran, both in terms of imports and exports, is high on the agenda of the KRG government.

As regards the internal developments in Iraq, Dizayee hailed a recent political alliance between the blocs of Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and Hadi al-Ameri for the formation of the next Iraqi government, adding, however, that such a positive move is not sufficient and that Iraq requires dialogue and partnership among all parties to resolve the current problems.

În the Iraqi parliamentary election on May 12, Sadr's

Sairoon coalition took 54 out of 328 seats.
With no bloc winning the 165 seats required for an outright majority, negotiations to form a coalition government in Iraq began after the polls.

On June 12, Sadr and head of the Iraq's Badr Organization Hadi al-Amiri announced an alliance between their political blocs, paving the way for the formation of the next government.

(Source: Tasnim)

MP pessimist about success of talks with E3



POLITICS TEHRAN — The and Germany) promise to keep the nuclear k spokesman of the Ira- deal in place. nian Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has said that the European companies' withdrawal from Iran shows a huge gap between Europeans' words and actions regarding the fate of the 2015 nuclear deal, aka the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The Europeans have shown that they are following the path of America. That's why their major companies are abandoning Iran under the pretext of American sanctions," Hossein Naqavi Hosseini told Mehr News Agency.

Naqavi Hosseini added that the European companies' abandonment of their projects in Iran points in favor of a pessimistic view of the E3's (the UK, France,

On the suspension of discussing Iran's membership to the International Convention for the Suppression of Financing of Terrorism (also referred to as CFT) at the Majlis for two months, saying that the negotiators must use passing the piece of legislation as a political leverage to put pressures on the E3 to provide guarantees to secure Iran's interest in the nuclear deal.

He added that the Europeans' way of dealing with Iran's demands has proven that all those inside the country who still are optimist about the success of the nuclear deal are wrong, calling the other side an enemy who should be treated the

Iran, Canada started no talks on resuming ties: Vaezi



POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's "sponsorship of terrorism around the presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi has said that Iran and Canada had started no talks on resuming relations that the Canadian parliament decided to stop it.

'No talk was even started to be stopped," Young Journalists Club quoted him as saying on Sunday.

He noted, "A number of signals for holding talks have been exchanged which do not mean resuming talks and relations.

The Canadian House of Commons voted on Tuesday in favor of a motion, calling on the government to "abandon its current plan and immediately cease any and all negotiations or discussions" to restore diplomatic relations with Iran.

The measure also accused Tehran of

world" and enlisted Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps as a "listed terrorist entity" under the Canadian Criminal Code. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad

Javad Zarif said on Wednesday that Canada has "misconceptions and illusions" "These polices will be to Canada's det-

riment and will not serve international peace and security," Press TV quoted Zarif

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi also said that Canada's motion and its "final approval will undoubtedly be a strategic and major mistake entailing destructive consequences."

Canada cut diplomatic relations with

All Turkish political parties seek close ties with Iran: diplomat

1 → Meanwhile, Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim has said that no country is allowed to use Incirlik air base in Turkey to carry out attacks

"Turkey permits use of Incirlik air base for fight against terrorism and the U.S. will never be able to use it in order to attack a country," IRNA quoted him as saying on BaBaLa TV when he asked about possible request by the U.S. to use the air base to

attack Iran.

The Incirlik air base is located in the Incirlik quarter of the city of Adana. The U.S. Air Force and the Turkish Air Force are the primary users of the air base. He noted that it is impossible that Turkey stands

against its neighbors. He added that there have been no war between Iran

and Turkey since the signing of the Treaty of Qasr-e Shirin between Iran and the Ottoman Empire in 1639.



Iran welcomes extension of ceasefire in Afghanistan

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman on Sunday called for extension of truce between the Afghan government and Taliban in Afghanistan.

Bahram Qassemi welcomed extension of the truce observed by the both sides over the Eid al-Fitr festivities period and

He expressed the hope that extension of ceasefire prepares the ground for start of a new and constructive process in the Afghan People's Dialogue on Peace.

The spokesman also hoped that the ceasefire between Taliban and the Afghan

government leads to sustainable peace urged both sides to respect the agreement. and stability in the country.

Afghanistan's government has extended ceasefire with the Taliban following an initial truce observed by both sides over the Eid period.

However, 25 people died on Satur-

day in a suicide attack on one gathering of Taliban and government officials in Nangarhar.

The Daesh (ISIS) terrorist group, which is active in the area, claimed responsibility for the attack.

(Source: mfa.ir)

Taliban, roaming Afghan cities amid Eid euphoria, rule out ceasefire extension

Taliban militants headed into cities across Afghanistan on Sunday as they celebrated their Eid ceasefire with feasts and selfies, raising questions about what happens when the ceasefire ends at midnight.

President Ashraf Ghani said he would extend a government ceasefire on Saturday and urged the Taliban to do the same, garnering praise at home and international backing, but critics said such overtures have allowed the Taliban to pour into cities unchecked and win the upper hand.

But the Taliban said there would be no extension, adding that their members were expected to leave government-controlled areas before sunset.

Ghani had committed "a grave mistake" by allowing Taliban fighters to enter government-controlled areas, said Amarullah Saleh, a politician and former head of the National Directorate of Security.

"We don't have mechanisms in place to mitigate the breach of ceasefire by the Taliban," Saleh told Reuters.

Members of parliament opposing Ghani's move said he had not consulted politicians and would be left with no recourse if the Taliban rejected his impromptu request.

A senior Western diplomat in Kabul said Ghani's decision was "a bold move" but questioned what happens if the Taliban do not extend their unprecedented halt in hostilities against government forces.

"The consequences could be disastrous," he said.

An explosion in Jalalabad, outside the governor's office in Nangarhar province, killed at least 15 people on Sunday, an official said. No group immediately claimed responsibility.

A car bomb killed 36 people at a gathering of Taliban and Afghan armed forces in the same province on Saturday. ISIL, not covered by the government ceasefire, claimed responsibility. Over the weekend, ecstatic men and children crowded around the soldiers and Taliban fighters, some of whom had checked in their weapons at the entrances to cities, and urged them to turn their ceasefire into a permanent peace.

Governors and senior government officials hosted small feasts, played music to welcome the militants, coinciding with the close of the month-long Ramadan fasting season.

"There is no intention to extend the ceasefire," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told Reuters. "...Our normal operations will start tomorrow (Monday).'

Ghani's office has yet to declare a new timeframe for the extended government ceasefire.

Western diplomats based in Kabul said they were issuing fresh travel warnings for the whole country.



to attack foreigners," one Western diplomat said. "Nobody has any clue how many Taliban militants are now hiding in civilian areas.'

Pakistan role

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, echoing Ghani's announcement on Saturday, said peace talks would have to include a discussion on the role of "international actors

"Ghani has full blessings of the U.S. administration and it is crucial for the U.S. officials to prove that (U.S. President Donald) Trump's policies are working and talks with the Afghan Taliban are imminent," said a senior diplomat who met Afghan officials on Sunday to monitor the chance of back-channel talks with Taliban leaders.

The United States wants Pakistan, which it accuses of harboring Afghan Taliban commanders, to exert more influence on the group to bring it to the negotiating table.

The only time direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban have been held, in 2015, they broke down almost immediately. The Taliban are fighting U.S.-led NATO forces, combined under the Resolute Support mission, and Ghani's U.S.-backed government to restore sharia, or Islamic law, after their ouster by U.S.-led forces in 2001. But Afghanistan has been at war for four decades, ever since the Soviet invasion in 1979.

What we witnessed over the last two days was an overwhelmingly positive response by all Afghans to peace," Lt-Colonel Martin O'Donnell, a spokesman for Resolute Support and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, told Reuters.

Not even the attack on peace yesterday in Nangarhar by the enemies of Afghanistan will slow the nationwide momentum or quiet the celebration of a long-overdue cessation of hostilities and a chance for lasting peace.

On Sunday, Taliban insurgents were traveling freely with their flags and meeting civilians despite curbs imposed after the first Nangarhar attack. "In order to prevent our countrymen from being harmed and ... we become a reason for that, all officials should ban all mujahideen (Taliban fighters) under their command from participating in such crowds and gatherings," Taliban spokesman Mujahid said.

The Taliban roam huge swaths of the country and, with foreign troop levels of about 15,600, down from 140,000 in 2014, there appears little hope of outright government victory.

South Korea, U.S. to announce suspension of major military drills this week

South Korea and the United States are expected to announce the suspension of "large-scale" military drills this week, with the provision that they would restart if North Korea failed to keep its promise to denuclearize, news agency Yonhap said.

Citing an unnamed government source, the South Korean news agency said the suspension was likely to affect only major joint exercises, not more routine military training.

U.S. President Donald Trump surprised officials in Seoul and Washington when he pledged to end "war games" after his summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore last week. Immediately after the announcement, U.S. forces in Korea said they had received no guidance on stopping any drills, and South Korean officials said they were trying to figure out which exercises Trump was referring to. However, in a sign Seoul may be open to suspending drills, South Korean President Moon Jae-in said on Thursday his government would need to be flexible when it came to applying military pressure on North Korea if it was sincere about denuclearization.

Moon said South Korea would carefully consider joint military drills with the United States and he asked his officials to cooperate with the United States on the issue, his office said in a statement at the time.



Thursday, South Korean officials asked their inter-Korean summit in April at which leaders northern counterparts to relocate artillery of the two Koreas agreed to defuse tensions 30 to 40 kilometers away from the heavily fortified military demarcation line that divides the two countries. The South's defense ministry denied it made such a request. Yonhap said.

The talks, the first in more than a decade,

Yonhap also reported on Sunday that dur- held in the border village of Panmunjom in ing military talks between the two Koreas on the demilitarized zone (DMZ), followed an and cease "all hostile acts".

North and South Korea failed to reach any concrete agreement during those talks, officials said. North Korea proposed to Seoul to disarm, on a trial basis, the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom, the only site in the DMZ where both countries' soldiers stand almost face to face, the South's presidential spokesman said on Friday.

About 28,500 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea, a legacy of the Korean War, which ended in 1953 in an armistice that left the two Koreas technically still at war.

At a Senate hearing on Thursday, Trump's nominee to be ambassador to South Korea, retired Admiral Harry Harris, backed the idea of a 'pause" in major military exercises. He said his understanding was that any suspension would involve only major military exercises and that regular training of U.S. forces in South Korea would continue, although final decisions were up to the Department of Defense.

The U.S.-South Korean exercise calendar hits a high point every year with the Foal Eagle and Max Thunder drills, which both wrapped up last month.

The next major drill, Ulchi Freedom Guardian, is planned for the end of the summer.

Last year, 17,500 American and more than 50,000 South Korean troops participated in the Ulchi Freedom Guardian drills, although the exercise is mostly focused on computerized simulations rather than live field exercises that use weapons, tanks or aircraft.

Israeli airstrike targets 'leading figure' behind Gaza kites

The Israeli military says its aircraft targeted a leading figure behind the launching of balloons and kites into Israel from the besieged Gaza Strip.

The Times of Israel daily said the strike was an attempt to warn off Gazans launching balloons and kites into Israel, which has raised fears of attacks by balloon-borne explosives in the occupied territories. In a statement, the Israeli military said the airstrike targeted the vehicle of the leader of a cell making explosive kites and balloons. It did not name the person targeted or say if anyone had been hit in the airstrike.

The Palestinian Shehab news agency, however, reported that the airstrike had hit an empty vehicle outside a mosque in the Gaza suburb of Shujai'yya early on Sunday morning.

The Israeli daily said the strike was likely meant as a warning that Tel Aviv may begin carrying out assassinations from the air, including against figures not actively preparing balloons or kites for launching.

In recent days, Israeli aircraft have fired at protesters near a fence separating the besieged Gaza from the occupied territories in an apparent change of tactic.

So far, Israeli snipers and special troops have shot down nearly 130 peaceful Palestinian protesters, sparking international outcry over the disproportionate use of force.

Israeli officials have tried to put a criminal spin on the protests, claiming that kites and balloons launched by Palestinians had burned thousands of acres of farmland, forests and nature reserves in the regions around the Gaza Strip.

On Saturday, the Israeli military carried out a drone strike near residents of the Gaza Strip who were allegedly launching incendiary balloons into Israel. Two people were wounded in the strike, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza.

Hundreds of Palestinian demonstrators congregated at the fence on Friday in what has become a weekly event since the start of the protests on March 30.



A day earlier, the Gaza Health Ministry said a 21-yearold Palestinian who had been shot by Israeli troops near the Gaza fence the week before had died, bringing to 128 the number of those killed in the protests.

U.S. efforts to resolve Israeli-Palestinian conflict destined to fail

Meantime, the Palestinian Authority (PA) says the socalled peace plan, which has been promoted by the United States to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, is "meaningless" as it lacks the support of Palestinians.

Palestinian Authority spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh said on Saturday that purported U.S. efforts to resolve the decades-long dispute in the region are doomed to failure.

He also referred to a Friday meeting between United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, the U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley, White House special adviser Jared Kushner and the U.S. Middle East envoy Jason Greenblatt in New York, where they discussed Washington's so-called peace efforts and the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

"The round of meetings that began in New York, whose

purpose is to bring a meaningless plan, won't achieve anything," Abu Rudeineh said.

Kushner and Greenblatt are set to visit Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Qatar next week to hold talks with regional leaders on U.S. President Donald Trump's initiative for the Middle East and the Gaza situation.

"Without the agreement of the Palestinian people, the fate of the series of meetings will be a total failure," the Palestinian official said. "It is a waste of time and destined to fail, as long as the attempt to circumvent the legitimate Palestinian institutions continues," he added. Earlier this week. Abu Rudeineh told Palestine's official WAFA news agency that any plan that does not recognize East al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the Palestinian capital or address the problem of refugees will be unsuccessful.

The U.S.-Palestine ties deteriorated last December, when Washington recognized al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the "capital" of Israel and announced plans to transfer the embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds (Jerusalem).

The contentious move led President Mahmoud Abbas to formally declare that Palestinians would no longer accept the U.S. as a mediator to resolve the conflict because Washington was "completely biased" towards Tel Aviv.

The U.S. embassy relocation took place on May 14, the eve of the 70th anniversary of the Nakba Day (the Day of Catastrophe), sparking deadly clashes in Gaza.

Israel lays claim to the whole al-Quds (Jerusalem), but the international community views the city's eastern sector as an occupied territory and Palestinians consider it as the capital of their future state. The last round of Israeli-Palestinian talks collapsed in 2014. Among the major sticking points in those negotiations was Israel's continued settlement expansion on Palestinian territories.

(Source: Press TV)

Suicide blasts in NE Nigeria kill at least 31

Blasts killed at least 31 people in the northeast Nigerian state of Borno, two residents said Sunday, marking the largest attack in several weeks in a part of the country blighted by Boko Haram.

The residents, who were among those who counted the dead, said the blasts occurred in the Damboa local government area in the south of the state, on Saturday around 8:30 p.m. Witnesses spoke of at least one rocket attack.

Borno is the state worst hit by the insurgency, aimed at creating a caliphate in northeast Nigeria, which has killed more than 30,000 people and forced over 2 million to flee their homes since 2009. The blasts occurred in the Shuwari and Abachari districts of the local government area, which is about 90 km from state capital Maiduguri.

'It has destroyed our houses. We have also counted 31 innocent people including children and elderly killed in the attack,' said local resident Modu Usman, son of a community leader. Nobody had claimed responsibility for the blasts.

The military and police did not immediately respond to telephone calls seeking details of the blasts. The last large attack in the northeast occurred in early May when at least 20 people were killed in Adamawa state, which borders Borno

(Source: AFP)

Greece and Macedonia sign agreement on name change



Greece and Macedonia have taken a major step towards resolving a 27-year-old dispute over the latter's name by signing an agreement that would see Macedonia change its name to the Republic of Northern Macedonia.

The signing of the deal in the small fishing village of Psarades on Sunday comes a day after Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras survived a no-confidence vote over his handling of the dispute.

Opposition MPs (Member of Parliament), who accuse Tsipras of excessive compromise on the issue, failed to pass the no-confidence motion by 153 votes to 127 on Saturday.

That attempt came a day after an MP from the far-right Golden Dawn party delivered a fierce rant urging the army to overthrow Tsipras. Outside of parliament, police fired tear gas to disperse protesters marching against the agreement.

Security is intense at Sunday's venue, with police cordons in place many miles from the village. Anybody seeking to approach has to pass through successive identity checks.

Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias and Nikola Dimitrov of Macedonia signed the historic accord, with Prime Ministers Alexis Tsipras and Zoran Zaev in attendance, joined by officials from the United Nations and the European Union (EU), who have welcomed the move.

Once ratified by the respective parliaments in each country and $% \left(x\right) =\left(x\right)$ confirmed by a referendum in Macedonia by the end of the year, the agreement will also enable the landlocked state to eventually join the EU and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization).

Many Greeks are opposed to Skopje's use of the name Macedonia, as they say, it appropriates Greek history and fails to distinguish itself from the Greek region with the same name.

Tsipras has defended the new name because it includes the geographic qualifier 'northern'.

The historic region of Macedonia, includes the modern Greek region and some territory within what is now the sovereign state of Macedonia. The region was the birthplace of Alexander the Great, the ancient King of Macedon, whose empire stretched from Greece to India.

(Source: agencies)

Cambodian prince injured in road crash, wife killed

Cambodia's Prince Norodom Ranariddh was seriously injured, and his wife killed, in a car crash on Sunday in the southwestern coastal city of Sihanoukville, police said.

Ranariddh's sports utility vehicle (SUV) was hit head on by a taxi driving in the opposite direction, said Chuon Narin, police chief of the province of Preah Sihanouk.

"The prince was taken in a helicopter for an emergency rescue in Phnom Penh," Chuon Narin told Reuters. "He is seriously injured but he will be fine.'

Ranariddh's wife, Ouk Phalla, 39, an exponent of traditional dance, died in a hospital in Preah Sihanouk, Chuon Narin said, adding that both SUVs involved in the crash had been speeding.

The son of the influential late monarch Norodom Sihanouk and half-brother of the current King Norodom Sihamoni, Ranariddh, 73, has had a turbulent political career.

He returned to politics in 2015 to lead the royalist Funcinpec party that ditched him years ago.

In 1997, he was overthrown as co-prime minister in a bloody coup, and since his return to politics, had vowed to work with former rival and long-serving prime minister Hun Sen.

Cambodia's Supreme Court dissolved the main opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) last year, leaving the way clear for Hun Sen to extend more than three decades of rule in an election on July 29.

Ranariddh's Funcinpec was allocated most of the CNRP's parliamentary seats after its dissolution, and its leader, Kem Sokha, was arrested over accusations of plotting to take power with the help of the United States.

The CNRP and Washington have both denied the charges.

(Source: Reuters)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	102452.4
IFX	1191.36

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,3900 rials
EUR	49,179rials
GBP	56,264 rials
AED	11,543 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

WTI	\$65.06/b		
Brent	\$73.44/b		
OPEC Basket	\$73.35/b		
Gold	\$1,280.15/oz		
Silver	\$16.61/oz		
Platinium	\$893.05/oz		

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

BRIEF



IRENEX to attract over \$7b for oil projects

TEHRAN – Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) is going to attract 300 trillion rials (about \$7.1 billion) of funding for the country's oil projects, IRNA reported on Sunday.

According to Ali Hosseini, the managing director of IRENEX, "Prior to the recent shocks in the foreign currency market, initial talks were under way to raise \$10 billion through the stock market for the oil industry,"



IRIR receives its first domestically made rail cargo

CONOMY TEHRAN – Iranian Esfahan Steel Company S K (ESCO) has prepared and delivered the first cargo of Islamic Republic of Iran Railway (IRIR)'s rail orders (known as national rail) to IRIR on the occasion of Eid-al-Fitr.

According to ESCO, the mentioned cargo included 500 tons of U33 steel rails produced according to EU's EN13674 standards, IRNA reported on Sunday.

As the project's supervisor, the French-based international $% \left(1\right) =\left(1\right) \left(1\right)$ certification agency Bureau Veritas has verified and validated the rails according to their latest tests and assessments.

According to Mansour Yazdizadeh, ESCO's managing director, with a production capacity of 400,000 tons per year, ESCO is completely capable of providing the country's

Earlier in May, Maziyar Yazdani, the deputy head of IRIR for infrastructure and technical affairs, said that India has agreed to supply ingots for the national railway and the sample rail will be approved by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019).

Govt. should revise imports policies: expert

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Iranian Economist and Scholar e s k Farshad Momeni believes that Iran's imports policies should be revised in a way that the country's foreign revenues won't be spent on unnecessary and luxury goods.



As reported by Resalat newspaper, Momeni who also teaches at Allameh Tabataba>i University in Tehran, noted that in a time that the country's productive body is facing severe restrictions, imports of luxury goods are being facilitated and even supported by the government.

"Why even in the most extreme situations, imports of luxury goods and cars are not only not being limited, but also facilitated by the government?" he said.

Mentioning the country's current economic situation, Momeni further noted that all the revenues that come into the country, especially in the form of foreign currencies, are national strategic assets and therefore their allocation should be strictly monitored.

"Similarly, the government should also reconsider its rial allocations," he added.

Arguing that today the country is not in a position to be able to execute any new program, the economist called for attention to be given to the allocation of foreign currencies to essential commodities or commodities that can be useful for

domestic production. Iranian government provides traders with low-exchange-rate foreign currencies in order to support foreign trade.

TSE index hits a 50-year record high of 102,000 points

1 → Shares in different groups of commodities including base metals, chemical products, and minerals witnessed stable status of purchases on Sunday.

As reported, indexes of Mobarakeh Steel Company, Golgohar Mining and Industrial Company, and Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company were among those indices accounting for the highest amount of rise in the TEDPIX.

The historical increase in the stock exchange index had begun on June 13 (the last working day of the previous Iranian calendar year), which was named 'Golden Wednesday of Stock Market', when TEDPIX gained 2,767 points to stand at 99.146 points.

As reported, 1.66 billion securities worth 4.355 trillion rials (about \$103.19 million) were traded through 121,965 deals in a day.

Also, IFX rose 37 points to stand at 1,153 points on Wednesday. Some 412 million securities worth 1.856 trillion rials (about \$43.98 million) were

traded in IFB in a day. Index growth beyond anticipation Rise in stock exchange indexes was anticipated given the recent issues related to the political and economic status of the country, but a 2,767-point growth in a single day was

beyond the expectations. The experts of capital market say some factors such as turbulences in the markets of foreign currency, gold coin, and housing and also entrance of new liquidity is the main reason for such unprecedented rise.



In an interview with IRNA on Saturday, Ehsan Rezapour, an expert in economic and capital market issues, said: "Due to the high amount of liquidity in the country and existence of many risks for business during the recent months, many turbulences have been witnessed in different markets, as it happened in terms of foreign currency, gold coin, and housing."

For the index growth on the 'Golden

Wednesday', the expert said: "In the past week, the officials announced their determination for controlling different markets, which brought the attention to the stock market. Also, on Wednesday morning, it was reported that the companies have been allowed to sell the dollar receive from exports at the price of over 60,000 rials, which could bring more profit for the bourse companies." Also, Ebrahim Khalili, another capital

market expert, told Tasnim news agency: "After turbulences in different markets such as housing, car, foreign currency, and gold markets, and increasing trend of prices in these markets over the past months, we are gradually seeing some balance returning to these markets, therefore; some part of liquidity will come to the stock exchange market."

Delayed effect of inflation on capital market

"Moreover, after each period of inflation in the country, the effect of raised prices will be received by the capital market with some delay, and we are witnessing the effect of inflation imposed on the country's economy over the past months on the capital market now", Khalili further explained.

He also mentioned the decrease in the value of bourse companies' shares in the past months as one of the other reasons that the capital market welcomes entrance of liquidity at the moment and said: "Liquidity has enough excuses to enter the capital market now.

Now, while the stock exchange indexes are experiencing unprecedented growth, the experts say that as the capital market is one of the specialized markets that presence in it requires knowledge, experience, and consultancy, the investors should not make investment just based on the growth occurred in the indexes and they should also prevent from excitement in the capital market through proper information dissemination.

State-run companies to be privatized in order

ECONOMY TEHRAN— Not being capable of offering all the available state-run companies to private sector by the end of the present Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019), Iran will do the job and pricing procedures incrementally and regarding the market's priorities, an official from Iran's Privatization Organization (IPO) told IRNA on Sunday.

According to Zohreh Alipour, there are 630 governmental organizations ready to be offered to the private sector but the job will not be fully implemented by March 2019.

Earlier in late May, IPO published the list of the enterprises that their shares are planned to be transferred to the private sector by the end of current Iranian calendar year.

Implementation of privatization plan aimed at more productivity, investment making, job creation, promotion of trade balance, more competition in domestic economy, and reducing financial and management burden on the government has been under the spotlight in Iran over the past decade.

The law on implementation of the general policies of the Article 44 of Iran's Constitution on privatizing state-owned companies was declared in 2006 in a bid to downsize the government and promote the private sector's role in the national economy.

The government envisioned a large privatization program in the Fifth Five-Year National Development Plan (2010-2015), aiming to privatize about 20 percent of the state-owned firms each year. Under the present interpretation of the Article 44, some state-owned companies have been privatized to reduce their financial



burden on the country's budget and also increase their

Iran at SCO: Role, achievements, and goals

Developing regional and international economic cooperation as an independent and reliable partner and also expanding a comprehensive strategic partnership with China in the fields of energy and infrastructure, stand among the other major priorities of Iran for attending the summit.

President Hassan Rouhani, addressing the summit, stressed the significance of a non-political approach to energy security and legitimate international trade in both regional and global development, calling on the international community to stand up to

"Without a doubt, economic, political and legal unilateralism undermine regional convergence. In this regard, the United on others is a growing danger. A recent example of the United States' unilateralism and indifference towards the opinions of the international community is its decisions to withdraw from the JCPOA. The Islamic Republic of Iran has so far lived up to all his commitments under the JCPOA and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has so far confirmed my country's commitment to its obligations for 11 times," he said. He added, "All signatories to the JCPOA have a responsibility regarding the commitments of removing sanctions under the JCPOA, and also based on Resolution 2231 of the UN Security Council and Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations are responsible to help full implementation of the JCOPA and prevent any move that poses an obstacle on implementation of the JCPOA."

Welcoming efforts by Russia and China in maintaining the JCPOA, Rouhani announced that "Iran has given a limited opportunity to remaining signatories to the JCPOA so that they can give the necessary guarantee in action to help implement all the agreed conditions in the JCPOA and continue being a party to this agreement.'

"Definitely, the U.S. has monitored the reactions to its withdrawal from the JCPOA and considers the lack of response to its unilateral withdrawal as not being costly, which will have very bad consequences for the international community," he underlined.

Rouhani's participation at the event bore some economic fruit, ended with the signing of a cooperation document within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative with China. Included in the document was the agreement to use national currencies in bilateral investments and trade exchanges as well as developing technical and scientific cooperation between the two countries and cooperation between stock exchanges of the



two countries.

In addition, concluding the summit, the SCO unanimously issued a statement urging a "full and efficient" implementation of the nuclear deal.

"The member SCO states deem it important to consistently implement the JCPOA on the Iranian nuclear program, and call for participants to strictly observe their obligations with a view to ensuring its full and efficient implementation and promoting peace and stability in the region and globally," read a paragraph of the statement issued at the end of the summit.

It is worth noting that almost concurrent with the SCO summit in Qingdao, the leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) met in Quebec, Canada. The G7 meeting ended in failure as leaders of Canada, France, Germany, and Britain clashed with President Trump over imposition of tariffs on import of steel and aluminum from Europe and Canada. Also one of the main contentions of the other six nations in the G7 group with Trump was their support for the JCPOA.

Cooperation with SCO members is Iran's lever of power

To have a better view about the achievements of the SCO summit, the Tehran Times conducted a phone interview with Davood Abbasi, an economic expert.

Abbasi said, "Besides China and Russia who are the major powers at United Nations Security Council, the SCO members include Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and India and Pakistan, among which India can be considered as a rising economic power in the world. Iran, Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia are the observer states. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and

Turkey are the dialogue partners."

"One of the main goals of SCO 2018 was supporting China's One Belt, One Road (OBOR) project, as a giant economic proect which can engage all the named SCO members," he said.

He added, "The interesting point about this project is that China discusses a type of trade cooperation pattern totally different from the one used by the capitalist Westerners."

In fact, the SCO seeks creation of a free $trade\ zone, transition\ to\ a\ preferential\ trade$ regime, and facilitating trade between countries along the OBOR route in Central Asia and the Persian Gulf region.

Abbasi said, "All the countries in the region can benefit from the establish the OBOR project, accordingly." In better words, he said, the project can spur all the member states to take part for joint economic benefits.

Answering a question on Iran's participation and role in development of OBOR and the advantages of cooperating with SCO to persevere its national interests, Abbasi said, "I believe some factors, such as the simultaneity of the SCO 2018 with G7 summit and Russia's tendency in trying other formats than G8, can highlight the positive and pivotal role of Iran in OBOR project for China, while such factors could increase Iran's bargaining power in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as well as the country's capability in convincing EU members to preserve their economic relations with the country after withdrawal of U.S. from the JCPOA."

"Iran can benefit from its participation in the regional agreement of the SCO as an alternative for replacing European countries in its economic relations with those from the region," the economic expert highlighted.

"Under the present conditions, I guess that

senior European officials are focusing more than before on continuing their oil purchases from Iran, of course, without encountering any difficulties in their relation with the U.S., specifically Trump. While, China preserved its purchase of 630,000 bpd of Iranian oil in 2017 and has announced its readiness to boost oil purchases from Iran. Besides, the value of Iran-China trade surpassed \$37 billion in 2017, showing a 20-percent increase from the preceding year. Therefore, in case Europeans decide to decrease the purchasing volume, Iran has an alternative to replace them with eastern customers," he said, "This improves Iran's bargaining power."

"More effectively than any political measure, Iran's reinforcement of economic ties with regional countries and China can persuade Europeans to tighten their economic ties with Iran, while Europeans cannot ignore the economic benefits they can gain from developing ties with Iran," he concluded.

Considering Iran's relations with Russia and China, Abbasi said the three countries' cooperation on reconstruction of the warhit Syria and Iraq can additionally improve their trilateral cooperation.

"In better words, the three countries' political cooperation is incrementally being converted into economic collaboration in the region to guarantee their economic

However, the road to reach such warm ties through OBOR is not smooth. India disagrees with the OBOR project, which cuts through the Pakistan-controlled Kashmir since it lays claim to that area.

"Here, China has the possibility to resolve the old row between India and China by defining economic benefits for both sides via implementation of the OBOR project. Regarding its firm economic ties with India and Pakistan, Iran can also have a positive impact on India-Pakistan relations as well as that between Armenia and Azerbaijan,' Abbasi remarked.

"In fact, when some countries in the region such as Saudi Arabia sow unrest via spreading ideological and political disputes..., Iran is transmitting a direct message to regional countries, inviting them to peace and boosting economic cooperation to guarantee multi-

lateral benefits of all parties," Abbasi stated. Asked about Iran's membership in the SCO, he expressed content that "some negotiations have been held at the SCO summit to improve Iran's situation in the SCO via accepting it as a permanent member," predicting that Iran's full membership in the regional bloc would be facilitated regarding the current circumstances.

Russia, Saudi Arabia are getting increasingly chummy

Saudi Arabia may have gotten blown out by Russia during its first match at the World Cup, but there seems to be no hard feelings between Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Vladimir Putin.

The two leaders met this past week as the Russian national soccer team clobbered Saudi Arabia 5-o in Moscow. It appears both have agreed to cement the cornerstone of an already deepening energy and economic relationship, even as they look to alter a successful oil production deal that brought

On Friday, Russia's energy ministry said it has reached a general consensus with Saudi Arabia that its newfound relationship with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) should be "institutionalized," and be extended to monitor the market and take action if needed. OPEC will meet this upcoming Friday, and then with Russia and other non-OPEC members after that.

The chumminess of Russia and Saudi Arabia, however, is not unexpected. The relationship between two of world's largest oil producers is being reinforced as OPEC is poised to grapple with several thorny issues. Chief among them is how to deal with the declines of supply from OPEC member Venezuela, and the effect of renewed sanctions on Iran by the United

Iran is being sanctioned by the U.S. after President Donald Trump withdrew from a deal between Iran and six other countries designed to end its nuclear program. Trump said the deal was not tough enough, and under the renewed sanctions, companies around the world in essence will have to stop dealing with Tehran if they want to deal with the world's largest economy.

"This time more than most, [OPEC's meeting] is almost more about geopolitics than it is about the market," said Daniel Yergin, vice chairman of IHS Markit.

The U.S. is definitely the elephant in the room, with pressure also coming from Trump, who has tweeted twice, including this past week, about high oil prices.

"Of course, Trump has brought a new



form of jawboning into play, but they're hearing the same thing form the Indians who are very concerned about what high oil prices mean about growth and the economy, and next year's election in India," Yergin

Also playing out in the background are domestic political considerations, amid November's hotly contested Congressional elections. Economic growth is a centerpiece of Republicans' efforts to maintain an increasingly tenuous grasp of control on the House and Senate.

"This is one time when U.S. mid-term elections are going to figure into what OPEC does," said Yergin.

"The message from Trump is he is not wanting high oil prices, either as a result of sanctions on Iran or heading into the November congressional election. These elections could be of such decisive importance," he added.

'Obfuscate and obscure'

When OPEC ministers meet, they are expected to consider altering a production deal that has held back 1.8 million barrels a day from the market for the past 18 months.

Russia has pushed for returning a million barrels per day back into the market relatively quickly. However, Saudi Arabia would like to try a lower amount to prevent the price from dropping too much, analysts said.

"I think they do something like return 500,000 barrels a day, but the actual increase will be a lot more. I think they'll try to obfuscate and obscure as much as they can, to try to prop up the price," said John Kilduff of Again Capital.

Oil prices took a beating Friday amid concerns about U.S. trade actions, and are off by more than 10 percent from last month's high. The production cuts have been successful, shrinking world supplies and sending prices high enough to the point where Brent crude popped above \$80 in May.

Now that both Russia and Saudi Arabia are looking to return some barrels to the market, not all OPEC members agree. Iran, Venezuela and Iraq have all said the current production agreement should stay in place.

"You now have in OPEC two countries that have been the subject of international sanctions and for one country, Iran, those sanctions have been supported by two members of OPEC, the [United Arab Emirates] and Saudi," said Helima Croft, global head of commodities strategy at RBC. "There are a whole host of divisions going into this meeting.'

There are also a complicated series of factors impacting the decision, and it's not just about stabilizing the market. Already, Venezuela has lost about 700,000 barrels a day this year, and analysts expect U.S.

sanctions could remove 500,000 Iranian barrels a day from the market by the end of the year, she said.

Croft said Iran could be a bigger factor in the market later in the year, after the sanctions snap back.

"I think Iran becomes a story postmeeting," Croft said, suggesting that Iran, Venezuela and Iraq may withhold support for a production boost. "Then you have the Saudis acting independently," she said.

The OPEC ministers meeting Friday will be followed by a meeting with Russia and other non OPEC producers. Ahead of that, they will be attending an OPEC summit Wednesday and Thursday, which includes global energy ministers as well as the CEOs of international companies like Total and BP, and U.S. producers Pioneer and Hess.

"It's a weird dynamic. The Russians aren't liking the U.S. getting up to 11 million barrels a day. They've foregone a lot of market share,"

OPEC announced in March that it would invite U.S. producers to the seminar to discuss shale production and technology, as the world's largest economy continues to churn out massive amounts of crude. The U.S. has been pumping record amounts of oil week after week, with the latest weekly figures showing production of just under 11 million barrels a day.

U.S. output has surpassed Saudi Arabia, and its growing market share is another factor that makes production cuts difficult for OPEC and Russia.

"The Saudis really have a sense of obligation with Trump, after he ditched the Iran nuclear deal," said Again's Kilduff.

After talks with Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih in Moscow on Thursday, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said that both nations "in principle" supported a gradual increase in production.

"We in general support this ... but specifics we will discuss with the ministers in a week," Novak said. He noted one possibility would be to gradually raise output by 1.5 million barrels per day, starting July 1.

(Source: CNBC)

EU raises renewable energy targets to 32% by 2030

The EU is raising its target for the amount of energy it consumes from renewable sources, in a deal lauded by the bloc's climate chief as a hard-won victory for the switch to clean energy.

Energy ministers agreed a binding renewable energy target of 32 percent by 2030, up from the previous goal of 27 percent, but fell short of the hopes of some countries and green groups for a more ambitious share.

The EU council deal caps 18 months of negotiations. It was welcomed by the renewables industry and the trade body for European energy utilities called it: "a well-balanced com-

The talks saw the UK call for a target of 30 percent below the 32 percent a newly pro-renewables France wanted and the 35 percent that new governments in Spain and Italy argued for.

Miguel Arias Cañete, EU climate commissioner, said: "This new ambition will help us meet our Paris agreement goals and will translate into more jobs, lower energy bills for consumers and less energy imports.'

He added that the binding nature of the goal would provide certainty to investors.

Whether the target will apply to the UK after it leaves the EU will depend on the exit deal reached by London and Brussels. The agreement also includes plans for a 2023 review on

whether the target should be bumped even higher. Around 17 percent of EU energy consumption in 2016 was

from renewables, with the UK on about 9 percent. Green energy advocates argued the existing 2030 target was unambitious because member states were already on

Environmental groups said the increase did not go far enough and were critical of a decision to keep counting biomass as renewable energy.

Molly Walsh, renewable energy campaigner for Friends of the Earth Europe, said: "EU decision-makers have agreed a paltry 32 percent target for renewable energy that is inadequate for a climate-safe fossil-free future, and shows a failure to grasp a shifting energy landscape, including rapidly falling renewables costs.

However, the group welcomed the deal's recognition of rights for consumers to produce and sell their own renewable energy, such as from solar panels on rooftops.

The agreement now needs to be formally approved by the EU parliament and council in coming months.

(Source: The Guardian)

Egypt hikes fuel prices in IMF-backed austerity drive

Egypt has raised gasoline prices by up to 50 percent, the oil ministry said on Saturday, under an IMF reform plan calling for austerity measures that have made life tougher for ordinary Egyptians.

Oil Minister Tarek El Molla said the price rises would help Egypt save up to 50 billion Egyptian pounds (\$2.8 billion) in allocations for state subsidies in the 2018-19 state budget.



The price hike, the third since Egypt floated the pound currency in November 2016, is expected to pile more pressure on Egyptian consumers struggling to make ends meet amid high unemployment and rising prices.

The oil ministry said the price for 95 octane gasoline had been increased to 7.75 Egyptian pounds a liter from 6.60 pounds; 92 octane had been raised to 6.75 pounds a liter from 5 pounds and 80 octane had gone up to 5.50 pounds a

The ministry also raised the price for a canister of gas for Egyptian households to 50 pounds from 30, while a bottle of gas for commercial purposes was raised to 100 pounds from 60.

The government, under new Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouly, also announced on Saturday a hike in taxi fares by 10 to 20 percent, according to a cabinet statement.

Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouly said that bread prices would not be affected by a 50.7 percent rise in diesel prices. He said the Ministry of Supply would bear the extra cost for bakeries to ensure that the price of Egypt's main staple remains unchanged.

Subsidized bread is a staple for millions of poor Egyptians and the country's leaders are always keen to keep supplies flowing for fear of unrest.

But the price rises left many Egyptians angry.

"I pay 40 percent of my income on transportation," said Mohamed Abed Rabbo, an employee in his 40s employed in a local company in al-Qalyubia, north of Cairo. "Since the last price rise, I have been unable to support my wife and daughter without help from my family," he added, his voice

In Minya province, south of Cairo, Iman Salah said that only in Egypt did employees spend half of their salary on transportation and the other half on electricity, water and internet. "What do we need to do?" she wondered. "May God have mercy upon us.

Halfway into a three-year, \$12 billion IMF loan program signed in 2016 which is tied to the austerity measures, Egypt hopes painful reforms will lure back investors and kick-start

an economy that crashed after its 2011 Arab Spring uprising. IMF First Deputy Managing Director David Lipton told government officials in May that Egypt would have to deepen reforms and better encourage private sector growth if it wants to cash in on a wave of global expansion.

The IMF-backed austerity program carries risks for President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, a former army general who was elected for a second term in March.

Sisi, who came to power after the army ousted Islamist President Mohamed Mursi following mass protests against his rule, has overseen a crackdown on vocal critics he sees as trying to derail his reforms. (Source: Reuters)

Libya's NOC calls on armed faction leader to withdraw from oil crescent



Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC) called on Saturday for the "unconditional and immediate" withdrawal of militia loval to Ibrahim Jathran from Ras Lanuf and Es Sider terminals, warning of further damage to key infrastructure.

Jathran headed an armed group that blockaded the terminals in Libya's oil crescent for three years before being forced out by the rival Libyan National Army (LNA) led by Khalifa Haftar, the dominant figure in eastern Libya.

The NOC said storage tank 12 in Ras Lanuf had been "significantly damaged" in fighting on Thursday, when armed forces linked to Jathran stormed the two ports in an attack against the LNA, causing the ports to close.

The LNA took control of Es Sider, Ras Lanuf and other ports in the oil crescent in September 2016, reopening them and lifting oil production after the blockade that cost Libya tens of billions of dollars in lost oil exports.

The NOC declared force majeure in both ports announcing an initial production loss of 240,000 barrels per day (bpd), which it said was expected to rise to 400,000 bpd if the ports stayed

"NOC calls for the unconditional and

immediate withdrawal of the militia operating under Ibrahim Jathran to prevent an environmental disaster and further destruction of key infrastructure," it said in a statement.

"Further damage to these sites could have a huge impact on the Libyan oil sector and the national economy.

Since Thursday's attack, the LNA has been sending reinforcements to the oil crescent ahead of a push to recapture the ports, and has launched air strikes against its rivals, military sources and residents said.

"For the past two days the sound of air strikes starts in the night and carries on until the early morning," said one resident of Ras Lanuf.

The LNA's rivals had not entered residential areas of Ras Lanuf but were stationed nearby, he said. Both sides have suffered casualties

since Thursday. The Red Crescent humanitarian group in the nearby city of Ajdabiya said 28 bodies from Ras Lanuf and Es Sider had been delivered to the hospital there, without giving details.

The Ras Lanuf resident said three anti-LNA fighters wounded by air strikes had been brought to a hospital in the town.

(Source: Reuters)







www.exportcenter.ru

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Trump tries to destroy the West

The alliance between the United States and Western Europe has accomplished great things. It won two world wars in the first half of the 20th century. Then it expanded to include its former enemies and went on to win the Cold War, help spread democracy and build the highest living standards the world has ever known.

President Trump is trying to destroy that alliance. Is that how he thinks about it? Who knows. It's impossible to get inside his head and divine his strategic goals, if he even has long-term goals. But put it this way: If a president of the United States were to sketch out a secret, detailed plan to break up the Atlantic alliance, that plan would bear a striking resemblance to Trump's behavior.



It would involve outward hostility to the leaders of Canada, Britain, France, Germany and Japan. Specifically, it would involve picking fights over artificial issues — not to win big concessions for the United States, but to create conflict for the sake of it.

A secret plan to break up the West would also have the United States looking for new allies to replace the discarded ones. The most obvious would be Russia, the biggest rival within Europe to Germany, France and Britain. United States intent on wrecking the Atlantic alliance would meddle in the domestic politics of other countries to install new governments that also rejected the old alliance.

Check, Check, Check, Trump is doing every one of these things.

He chose not to attend the full G-7 meeting, in Quebec, this past weekend. While he was there, he picked fights. By now, you've probably seen the photograph released by the German government — of Trump sitting down, with eyebrows raised and crossed arms, while Germany's Angela Merkel and other leaders stand around him, imploring. Shinzo Abe, Japan's prime minister, wears a look of defeat

No wonder. The meeting's central disagreements were over tariffs that Trump has imposed for false reasons. He claims that he's merely responding to other countries. But the average current tariff of the United States, Britain, Germany and France is identical, according to the World Bank: 1.6 percent. Japan's is 1.4 percent, and Canada's is 0.8 percent. Yes, every country has a few objectionable tariffs, but they're small — and the United States is not

So Trump isn't telling the truth about trade, much as he has lied about Barack Obama's birthplace, his own position on the Iraq War, his inauguration crowd, voter fraud, the murder rate, Mexican immigrants, the Stormy Daniels hush money and several hundred other subjects. The tariffs aren't a case of his identifying a real problem but describing it poorly. He is threatening the Atlantic alliance over a lie.

If you need more evidence, look at his tweets after leaving the summit. Close readers of Trump's Twitter feed (and I don't envy that title) have learned that he often accuses others of committing his own sins. On Saturday, he called Justin Trudeau, Canada's prime minister, "very dishonest."

Trump and his aides have promoted far-right politicians in Germany and elsewhere. Jay Nordlinger, the conservative writer, asked, "Why is he talking like an RT host?" — RT being Russia Today, a government-funded television network.

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I don't know the answer. But it's past time to take seriously the only explanation for all of Trump's behavior: He wants to destroy the Western alliance. Maybe Trump just likes being against what every other modern American president was for.

Whatever the reason, his behavior requires a response that's as serious as the threat. As the political scientist Brendan Nyhan

pointed out, this past weekend felt like a turning point: "The Western alliance and the global trading system are coming under the same intense strain that Trump has created for our domestic institutions."

For America's longtime allies, the response means shedding the hopeful optimism that characterized the early approach taken by Trudeau and Emmanuel Macron, France's president. Merkel is the right role model. She has been tougher, without needlessly escalating matters, because she has understood the threat all along.

For Trump's fellow Republicans, it means putting country over party. A few Republicans, like John McCain, offered appropriately alarmed words in the last two days. Now members of Congress need to do more than send anguished tweets. They should offer legislation that would restrain Trump and hold hearings meant to uncover his motives.

For American voters, it means understanding the real stakes of this year's midterm elections. They are not merely a referendum on a tax cut, a health care plan or a president's unorthodox style. They are a referendum on American ideals that are older than any of us.

ian any of us. (Source: The NYT)

'We failed miserably': Karzai

Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai discusses the failure of the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan, the future of the war and why he would be willing to work with the Trump administration.

Hamid Karzai was the first democratically elected president of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. A member of the Pashtun ethnic group, Karzai governed the war-torn country after the U.S.-led invasion of December 2001 for 13 years. Today, the 60-year-old still has considerable influence, especially among the clans in southern Afghanistan.

In an interview with Spiegel online, Karzai paints a grim picture of the situation in his homeland. The number of extremists continues to grow, neighboring states are using the country as a venue for their geopolitical power struggles. Karzai, however, praises Germany's role.

The former head of state is keeping his political future open. He isn't completely excluding the possibility of running in next year's presidential election.

From the perspective of the West, the war in Afghanistan cannot be won. Yet it hasn't come to an end. Why not?

A: Initially, after the tragedy of September 11, we succeeded very, very well. Afghanistan was liberated from the Taliban, women won back their rights, and institutions were built. But when it comes to the fundamental reason for the intervention in Afghanistan -- the defeat of terrorism and extremism -- we failed together and we failed miserably. The loss of Afghan and international lives, and of property and much more, has been massive. On top of that, the extremists have grown by the thousands and we now have the Islamic State [ISIS] operating in Afghanistan. How do you explain this to the Afghan people? How do you explain this to the American people? How do you explain this to the German people? Or to our neighbors? How come, after all that sacrifice, after all that money spent, we don't have anything to show for it?

What consequences do you draw from this bitter insight?

A: The only solution to the conflict in Afghanistan is through peaceful means --political solutions which have to include everybody, even the Taliban. We are willing, as a nation, to forgive all that has happened. Everyone involved needs to come together.



We need a new beginning and a new contract. When the U.S. came to Afghanistan with its allies, we had the perfect cooperation of major powers: Russia, China, Saudi-Arabia, Iran. One reason for the initial success in Afghanistan was that cooperation. Today, unfortunately, that cooperation has given way to suspicion and rivalry. Now they try to weaken each other in Afghanistan. And the price is always paid by the Afghans.

Pakistan and Afghanistan share a 2,430-kilometer (1,500-mile) border. Can your country make peace with Pakistan and, conversely, can Pakistan make peace with Afghanistan?

A: Pakistan needs to be assured that Afghanistan will not be used against them. We fully agree with that. But Pakistan also must recognize that Pakistan should not be used as strategic hinterland against Afghanistan or any other neighbor. Perhaps

Afghanistan should aim to become strictly neutral politically, like Switzerland or Turkmenistan, a possibility very well received by many Afghans.

Ever since the Taliban raided and plundered Kunduz in 2015, destroying 10 years of reconstruction in just a few days, many Germans have completely given up hope for Afghanistan.

A: That was not your fault. And there is a bigger picture: German contributions have been very important economically, in the training of the security forces, the political impact. I want you to tell the German people that Germany has done a lot that has left a lasting impact in Afghanistan.

Your differences with the Americans were viewed as irreconcilable, but only a couple of days ago, U.S. Ambassador John Bass reached out to you. Could you imagine working with President Donald Trump?

A: Absolutely, I can imagine working with any U.S. government. My disagreement with the United States is not based on ideology or a dislike of one another. My difference with the United States is about the way they conducted the war in Afghanistan, which I believe led to failure.

Afghanistan is holding elections in May 2019. Are you going to run against President Ashraf Ghani?

A: I was a democratically elected president. I left a legacy and I don't want that legacy to become tainted. The Afghan constitution only allows two terms.

Some legal scholars interpret the constitution differently, arguing that a president has to take a break after two terms, but can run again afterwards.

A: If there is an absolute need for it, and if all political groups agreed, why not?

(Source: Spiegel)

Colombia's presidential election is turning the page on the FARC peace deal

By Luke Taylor

In the first round of Colombia's presidential election on May 27, Gustavo Petro, the ex-mayor of Bogota, won 25 percent of the votes cast, setting the stage for him to face off against Ivan Duque, a senator and former official of the Inter-American Development Bank who secured 39 percent.

Their respective results make Duque — who is running as the candidate of the Democratic Center, the right-wing party that is most critical of the 2016 peace agreement with FARC guerrillas — the clear favorite to win in the June 17 runoff.

But despite the fact that Petro can all but rule out taking office in August, the mood in his camp was celebratory: Petro barely beat center-left candidate Sergio Fajardo for the runoff ballot by a narrow margin of 1.35 percent, making him the first-ever left-wing candidate to reach the second round.

How did Petro, who in the 1980s was a member of the leftist M-19 guerrilla group, manage to succeed where others before him failed? And what does this say about politics in Colombia in the aftermath of the historic peace accord with the FARC?

Although global media remains fixated on the peace process, for Colombians the topic sits low on their list of political priorities.

In a May presidential poll by Invamer, voters were asked, What is the main problem that must be solved by the next president of Colombia? Only 2.5 percent of respondents chose the peace process with the FARC. Even fewer identified the on-again, off-again peace talks with Colombia's second-largest guerrilla group, the ELN. Seven other issues were deemed more important, among them unemployment, health care, corruption, education and poverty.

Growing concern over these issues stems in part from a pessimistic outlook on politics and the challenges currently buffeting the country: seemingly endless corruption scandals, poor economic growth, a decline in urban security and the arrival of 1 million migrants from neighboring Venezuela.

But more central to this change in priorities is a more fundamental and enduring shift for Colombian politics following the FARC's demobilization.

"Ending the conflict has changed the political landscape in Colombia from now on," said Jorge Restrepo, director of the Conflict Analysis Institute, or CERAC. "In terms of voters' preferences and how politicians presented themselves to the electorate, this was an election based on ideology rather than fear over the conflict."

In essence, Colombia's domestic politics have begun to normalize with commonplace topics like education, employment and the economy taking precedence as the focus of debates.

This does not mean that the electorate has lost all interest in the peace deal with the FARC. In fact, it will likely regain some importance now that two candidates with such a wide divergence of positions on the accord will be facing off.

On the eve of the results, Petro announced that the next round of voting would decide "if Colombia returns to violence or if it will build a new era of peace." Duque attempted to ease the concerns of the political center he must now woo by announcing he would only revise the peace accord and does not wish "to tear the agreement to shreds."

There remains a strong correlation between voting in the 2016 referendum over the peace accord and the first-round presidential voting, with those who supported



As Colombia's conflict loses its prominence, other longneglected issues have begun to fill the political vacuum.

the FARC deal preferring Petro, and those who rejected it rallying behind Duque.

Implementation of the peace plan will therefore likely be a topic of debate in the second round, but it is undoubtedly waning in importance for the electorate.

Instead, as the conflict and the reintegration of the FARC guerrillas have lost their prominence, other long-neglected issues have begun to fill the vacuum.

"The risk panorama for the future in Colombia no longer has to do with security risks, but with political risks ... public policy, fiscal policy, how the government earns revenue and spends it," says Restrepo.

Here too, the two candidates have widely divergent views about what to do. When it comes to Colombia's export model, for instance, Petro proposes a shift away from oil, gas and mining, which currently represent over half of Colombia's exports, and a move toward agricultural goods and services. Duque largely argues for continuity, supplemented by a reduction in corporate taxes and other efforts to boost foreign investment, which crashed along with oil prices in 2014.

Their differences over economic policy have gained prominence as the crisis in neighboring Venezuela continues to rage on. Petro's opponents use Venezuela's meltdown to highlight his alleged affinity for "Castro-Chavismo."

If voters are concerned over how the government generates its revenue, they are even more worried about where it ends up. As WPR reported in January, corruption has been a consistent concern following high-profile scandals, such as the Brazilian contracting giant Odebrecht's kickback schemes, which implicated high-profile political figures and widely discredited the political establishment in Colombia and across the region. This trend has since continued, refueled by new developments such as the firing of the Colombian head of a \$500 million international fund to finance post-conflict programs due to suspected corruption.

New political players such as Fajardo's center-left Colombia Coalition have benefited enormously from the current wave of anti-establishment sentiment sweeping across Latin America. But with Fajardo now eliminated, "the subject clearly favors Petro," says Yann Basset, a political analyst at La Universidad del Rosario in Bogota. "Even more so now, the entire political class is behind Duque," making him the insider to Petro's outsider.

Previously neglected discussions about big topics such as corruption, the economy and the environment will likely continue to shape Colombian politics and benefit anti-establishment figures going forward.

But while the left appears stronger than it ever has been, Uribismo—the conservative orientation centered on hostility to the peace deal led by Duque's mentor and supporter, former President Alvaro Uribe—continues to triumph.

To beat Duque in the final round, Petro will need to somehow capture the majority of the 5 million voters who opted for Fajardo or Humberto De la Calle, who served as the government's chief negotiator during peace talks with

the FARC, in the first round.

In an effort to make up ground in the political center, Petro has begun courting moderate voters by abandoning his proposal to seat a constitutional assembly that could modify the constitution. But it is hard to tell how successful these attempts will be, says Basset. "Fajardo voters are educated,

urban-class people who are not moved by slogans."
Petro's task became even more difficult this week when
Fajardo, Claudia Lopez and Jorge Robledo — all top leaders
of the Colombia Coalition — refused to back him.

The underdog's best chance of winning the presidency is now probably to prepare the ground for a repeat run in 2022 by building on his role as an anti-establishment figure and key opposition to Uribismo. He can use the congressional seat guaranteed to him for having reached the second round of the presidential election to this end.

"Many people are saying that Petro is actually campaigning for 2022 now, rather than for this election," Basset adds. "It will be difficult to organize political parties into an opposition, but obviously he would have a privileged place in the Congress, with a platform at his disposal to try to do so."

(Source: WPR)

Brazilian govt. to help businesses continue trade with Iran: Ambassaddor

■ Brazil was one of the founding nations of the United Nations and even before, the League of Nations. Therefore, we are very active in multilateral organizations and institutions. In many areas, in environment for example, Brazil has been always very active in supporting environmental policies.

In economic area, Brazil is part of the G 20 that comprises G7 plus some developing countries. As a member of the BRICS, as you mentioned, Brazil has good cooperation with the nations such as China, Russia, India, and South Africa. So, Brazil's foreign policy has been very active in cooperation and coordination with other developing countries. Brazil has good cooperation to defend the interests of the developing countries in the WTO for example...So, Brazil has always been a good coordinator of the interests of the developing countries.

With regard to U.S. dollar supremacy, well, this is a fact...that the most of the world trade is financed through U.S. dollars. Brazil is not different. Most of our exports and imports are traded based on the U.S. dollar. But, there are other currencies that are becoming more important on our international trade. In euros, in Japanese yen, in Chinese yuan... but this takes time. I believe for many reasons, for financial reasons, you have to diversify your foreign currencies. So, you do not have to take so many risks. When there is a problem in one country, you can have part of your transactions in another currency, so it is good to diversify not only for political reason, but also for financial and economic trade reasons. You know, Brazil is considered a global trader. It has a very well-distributed trade. We have not concentrated on one market. Some countries depend a lot on the market of the United States, for example or depend a lot on the on the market of China or the European Union. Brazil has good distribution. You know, our main partner is China, with 23 or 24 percent of our bilateral trade. Then comes the EU with 21 or 22 percent and the United States with 20 percent, then Latin America with another 20 percent. So, our bilateral trade is very well distributed.

Therefore, we believe we would benefit if we have diverse currencies in our bilateral trade. With Argentina, we are dealing with our local currencies. We are also negotiating with China as well on using our currencies in our trade. So, step by step, we are finding other ways for our transactions, because of not only political reasons but also because of safer financial transactions it is important to diversify your currencies and your trade partners.

Would you please tell us about the bilateral economic relations between Iran and Brazil. In what fields, are the Brazilian companies active in Iran's economy? What are the prospects for bilateral trade relations?

A: Well, our bilateral trade with Iran is almost \$ 3 billion dollars. To be more precise, it has reached \$ 2.7 billion dollars. Most of this amount are Brazil's exports to Iran. And the main commodities are agricultural products like beef, soya, corn, sugar. But there are also other things for example medical equipment, buses, and tracks. ... So, there are other products, industrial goods, and we would like to see more industrial services.

Since I moved to Tehran, we have been working with different manufacturer associations and industries in Brazil...Brazil has very good and competitive technologies for medical equipment at reasonable prices.
We are working with a lot of companies and hospitals here in Iran to be part of the investment project in th investment projects in Iran... to modernize or build new hospitals, for example, with Brazilian equipment...

Also, in oil and gas sector, Brazil has a well-developed industry in manufacturing equipment and engineering services in oil and gas sector. In Brazil, we have developed the oil production very fast. We have a good group of industries that can cooperate with Iran. Iran as well has made progress in oil and gas sector and it can cooperate with Brazil. So, it is on the two ways... In terms of agricultural machines sector, Brazil is very good at agriculture. We have very good machines and equipment for agriculture... in the field of urban transportation like buses and trucks, we believe that we can cooperate more with Iran. Now, there are lots of contacts between Brazilian companies and their Iranian counterparts.... In agriculture area, there will be more bilateral cooperation... Iran used to import a lot of chicken and poultry from Brazil but it stopped 5 or 6 years ago, because it started to produce its own products. But it still needs corn to feed its poultry....so, they are buying more corn from Brazil and soya as well for different industrial use. Therefore, the agricultural cooperation will continue and you would like to bring more industrial products and services to Iran. Also, on the other way around, in Brazil we can see a lot of interests in Iranian products such as chemicals, fertilizers. You know, there is a good room for Iranian petrochemical and fertilizers ... but, the Iran's exports to Brazil is very low. So, Iranian businessmen need to go to Brazil more, to have more contacts with Brazil... We



have also Brazilian companies who want

to import from Iran. In terms of investment, maybe some of those projects result in investment in the long run. But for the time being, we are talking about trade. But in the medium and the long run, we talk about investment. Some of those projects are very big, urban transportation for example, or medical equipment, so if the deals are done in a good way and they see the good high potential as I see, they would be ready to invest...to establish long term partnerships...Therefore, we believe that some of those projects will result in good investment.

Given the fact that the U.S. withdrew from the JCPOA, how do you see the prospects of business and cooperation with Iran? Will Brazil take some measures to confront the U.S.?

A: Well, I would not say to confront with the U.S. Brazil is taking the measures to follow the JCPOA agreement. The JCPOA, for us is still valid. We follow the United Nations' resolutions. We do not follow other countries' unilateral decisions. I think it is very important to highlight that even before the JCPOA, Brazil was supporting Iran. You remember the Tehran Declaration when Brazil alongside Turkey and Iran were trying to find a good diplomatic solution for the nuclear dossier. At that time, few countries were on the side of Iran, but Brazil was here. You know, that is very important to highlight. After the JCPOA, everybody wanted to do business with Iran...So, it is not like that the U.S. alone takes a decision and we are not going to support Iran. We have more reasons to support Iran because Iran has been fulfilling its commitments to the JCPOA...the IAEA has verified Iran's abidance by its commitments, other parties of the agreement are saying this. So, we believe the JCPOA is a very important agreement that has to be in place not only to the benefit of peace in the world but also it helps the non-proliferation regime. So, Brazil has always been in favor of nuclear

We have very good relations with Iran. Meanwhile we also have very good relations with the U.S., but we think they are not right on this issue. We would like to follow the JCPOA.

In terms of measures, for us, the business is as usual. It did not affect us in terms of the government...For us in the government, we are still looking for developing economic cooperation with Iran in both ways... we are doing our best efforts in the banking relations, in financing, in bringing in new businesses in looking for cooperation, in science and technology, in every field. So, for us it is the same as usual and nothing will change for the Brazilian government.

On the other hand, for Brazilian companies it is the same as well. Meanwhile, they have some exposure to the U.S. They are thinking twice, because they have to check whether this makes a problem for them or not. In this case, we cannon intervene, because it is their decision... It is not the government that is doing business, it is the private sector to decide. Of course, we have to provide them with facilities and try to facilitate to promote, to have agreements, and we are doing these....

For us as the government, we are still looking for building bridges between Brazil and Iran not only politically, but also cooperation on trade, on economic and science and technology, on everything. So, people who want to cross these bridges will be welcome. Maybe, there are some people who hesitate to cross the bridge, we will help them to show them the way. But that is their own decision. You know, that's what I am saying... There are lots of Brazilian companies who engage in business with the U.S., so maybe they will have problems if they come to Iran, but there are many other companies that do not have any exposure to the U.S., and you can do a lot of business with them. So, I believe we have a good room to go ahead in all fields that I told you earlier, like oil and gas, engineering services, medical equipment, food and agriculture industries. Well, food and agriculture products were never under sanctions because of humanitarian concerns. So, I believe our cooperation in agriculture field will continue. We will follow up...We are also working on some financial mechanisms to facilitate our transactions. So, that is the job that we want to do...I am still optimistic about the level of economic cooperation that we can have with Iran.

We would like to ask about Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his large politico-economic delegation's visit to your country earlier this year? Was it a fruitful visit? What were the achievements?

A: His visit was very fruitful. It was very important to have Dr. Zarif in Brazil. We had been trying for some years [to have him there], but because of busy schedules here and there, we did not manage to have him there. But finally we could have him there. It was an honor and pleasure to have Dr. Zarif there. We had very good talks between the two sides. He was accompanied by a large economic delegation. Some of those sectors that I mentioned above were represented. We had talks about our financial cooperation and mechanisms... our bilateral relations progressed even more during Dr. Zarif's visit to Brazil. We hope, we can establish a bilateral mechanism that can facilitate our business. We are working very hard on this and Dr. Zarif's visit really helped it. And also we held talks on other kinds of cooperation. There was also a group that got together on science and technology. It was our first meeting of our working group in the field of science and technological cooperation. They met during Dr. Zarif's visit as well... There was a positive attitude shared by both countries' ministers of agriculture.

We also exchanged views on the political issues in our regions. What is going on in South America and the Middle East? We shared common views with Iran about the world politics, about what's going on in our regions. So, it was a very successful [visit]. Some agreements were signed in judicial cooperation, for example, and also on the cooperation between our academic centers for exchange of students, on the events that we can organize together. So, it was a very positive and very fruitful visit.

In response to a question about the Brazil's chance for wining this year's World Cup, the ambassador said that he was not so sure that Brazil could win the World Cup, adding that there were very good teams in the tournament that play very high level football.

He then wished success for national Iranian team, saying it can qualify for the next stage by securing a draw with Portugal and winning Morocco.

At the end of the interview and in response to a question as to what happened following the impeachment of former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff and sentencing another socialist president Lula da Silva, the ambassador said that their cases were a good test for the democratic iudicial institutions in Brazil, stressing that they could put the country back on the right track and helped the economy recover from the political turmoil.

Fairytales of global economic growth

Oxfam recommend serious action to tackle growing income inequality between rich and poor as 42 people hold as much wealth as 3.7 billion people who make the poorest half of the world. In this modern, free-market era, especially in the United States, majority of wealth is earned through speculation, rise and fall of stocks – which help in making people rich – where it does widen the gap of inequality though. However, this accumulated money doesn't help in the real economic expansion.

Inequality varies greatly worldwide. In 2016, the share of total income accounted for world's top 10% earners (top 10% income share) was 37% in Europe, 41% in China, 46% in Russia, 47% in U.S.-Canada, and around 55% in sub-Saharan Africa, Brazil, and India. In the Middle East, where inequality in deep-rooted, according to rough estimates, the top 10% people held 61% of income, as stated in the World Inequality report.

The world has been changing dramatically, in terms of technological progress and economic growth, but the life of underprivileged, low-income people has become a disaster across the world. Inequality has increased rapidly in the United State, China, Russia and India.

That Americans have political anxiety and are worried about the future of their nation and current social divisiveness prevailing in the country was confirmed to us in December last year by American Psychological Association's 11th Stress in America Survey.

Unsurprisingly, the income inequality in the United States of America is highest in the Western countries; inequality operating throughout the country. "About 40 million live in poverty, 18.5 million in extreme poverty, and 5.3 million live in Third World conditions of absolute poverty," United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, in his recently-released report. "Around 40 million continue to live in poverty. 40 million people! That's almost like the population of France. That's a lot. Or it's like 7 Irelands!" according

Furthermore, the share of top 1 percent population of the United States holds almost 39 percent of the total wealth and has increased over the time. But, the share of bottom 90 percent has fallen. The youth poverty rate has also skyrocketed. In addition, a high infant mortality rate shows the real picture of the worst health care of the people.

Likewise, the success story of China's economic growth has been celebrated for decades but the level of inequality there is also growing, according to some economists, is



approaching the U.S. level of inequality. Also, the Indian economy expanded 7.7 percent year-on-year in the first three months of 2018-strongest growth rate, leaving China behind, where manufacturing and investments increased at a faster pace. However, the widening inequality is catastrophic. India's top 1% of the population now hold 73% of wealth while 67 crore citizens, comprising the country's poorest half, saw their wealth rise by just 1%, according to the Oxfam report.

India has been ranked 100 out of 119 developing countries by the International Food Policy Research Institute's Global Hunger Index 2017 (GHI), underlining the seriousness of the prevailing hunger situation in India, followed by Pakistan ranked 106. Even countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh have been ranked higher than India.

It is pertinent to note here that the billionaire boom is not necessarily a sign of blooming economy but can also be a symptom of the crippled, dysfunctional economic system. Those who work hard can barely finance their children's education, cannot afford health care and hardly manage two times meal.

So, if the growing inequality is not properly checked and addressed, it may lead to numerous political, economic and social catastrophes. Ultimately, to measure true progress, other human development indexes like education, healthcare or socio-economic progress should be used to measure the well-being of the people, rather than just focusing on one metric like GDP growth.

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	Public Call Of Tender							
	One-Stage							
TENDE	R GUARANTEE	ESTIMATED	ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial) Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No		
Euro	Rial	VALUE (Rial)		Reg. No.				
3,770	186,000,000	3,708,414,726	ELECTRIC DC MOTOR MODEL YZ08	3,164,690	Tender No.: FP/17-97/011 Indent No.: 48-22-9622009	1		

Brief discription of subject:

National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Sagare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through one-stage public tender upon following terms and conditions:

The tenderers should not have legal restrictive to participation governmental to tenders, also they should provide statute or business license related to subject of the tender.

B) Preparation of tender documents:

Purchasing of documents:

Tenderers must be obtain the tender documents maximum ten days after the date of second publication till June 30,2017 (1397/04/09) in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender ducments from foreign procurment department in due date and participates in tenderwill be known as tenderer from tender committee.

C) Delivery of bids envelopes:

Tenderers shall submit simultaneuosly envelopes of bids including (A) Tender bank guarantee, (B) stamped and signed of tender ducuments, (C) The priced signed and stamped of the same Technical-Commercial sheets muximum till Aug 04,2017 (1397/05/13) to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor, Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN.

Notice: The deadline for the refusal of bidders participation in the the tender is the last day of determined for submission of bids.

D) The envelopes will be opened At 9:15 a.m On Aug 05,2017 (1397/05/14).

Type of guarantee: A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activites licensed by the Central

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You can't be pro-life and against immigrant children

What does "pro-life, pro-family" really mean? The idea behind that phrase has long been an important organizing principle for prolife groups like Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council.

For many who work for these organizations — or who vote for candidates endorsed by them — being "pro-life, pro-family" is not a euphemism for opposing abortion and same-sex marriage. It acknowledges that protecting children, including ones not yet born, often requires protecting and supporting their mothers and families too.

We are in the midst of a serious crisis for vulnerable children and families, though, and these "pro-life, pro-family" organizations have been largely silent.

The crisis is the Trump administration's practice of separating children from undocuare asking for asylum. In one particularly horrific case, a mother said that her baby was taken from her while she was breastfeeding.

The number of children being taken is so large that the administration, using the fear these children must feel as a means of deterring undocumented immigration, is apparently building "tent cities" around military bases to house them.

Given their support of the administration. and an unwillingness to speak critically about immigration policy, "pro-life, pro-family" organizations now risk being tied to these and other horrific practices.

Some church groups and leaders have followed their broad pro-life commitments in condemning these practices. Evangelical leaders like Russell Moore and Samuel Rodriguez have signed a public letter of protest to the administration. The "traumatic effects of this separation on these young children, which could be devastating and long-lasting, are of utmost concern,"

On Wednesday, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, denounced the Trump administration's immigration policy. "We urge courts and policymakers to respect and enhance, not erode, the potential of our asylum system to preserve and protect the right to life," he said.

A cruel policy

Catholic bishops in border states and cities have been particularly scathing. "Separating immigrant parents and children as a supposed deterrent to immigration is a cruel and reprehensible policy," Bishop Daniel Flores of

During the 2016 presidential campaign, I spoke with Bishop Flores about mass deportation. He called the policies intrinsically evil. Because it regularly forces children into places where their lives are under threat, Bishop Flores argued, it is "not unlike driving someone to an abortion clinic.

So why can't the biggest pro-life organizations join these religious leaders in condemning the administration's treatment of children?

Where is National Right to Life? Where is the Susan B. Anthony List?

The leadership of the Susan B. Anthony List, one of the most powerful pro-life groups in the country, originally had harsh things to say about Donald Trump as a candidate. They were "disgusted" by the way he treated people, and "women, in particular." It was "anyone but Donald Trump."

But after his nomination, the group promoted him as someone its supporters should vote for. Going well beyond the "lesser of two evils" language, it even made Mr. Trump the keynote speaker at its annual gala last month.

It is true that the president's nominee for the Supreme Court, Neil Gorsuch, seems likely to be anti-abortion, as do several federal judges who have been confirmed under Mr. Trump. His appointments and policies with respect to the Department of Health and Human Services have been similarly anti-abortion.

A turning point

But this is nothing like a turning point for the movement. People opposed to abortion got some short-term gains, all of which could be easily reversed by the next administration, and some judges about whom they must wait

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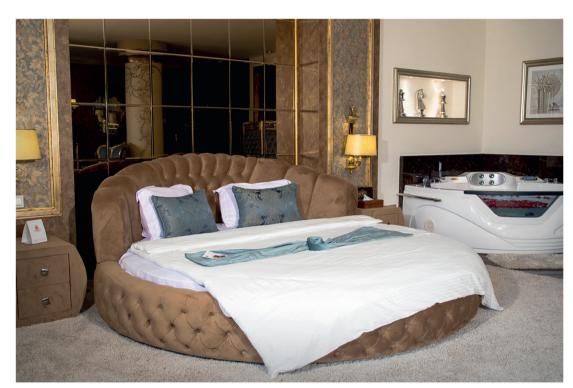
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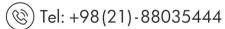


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ICT ministry plans to promote high quality products

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN - Iran's Ministry of Information e s k and Communications Technology plans to introduce and promote domestically-made high quality

 $\bar{\mbox{The}}$ plan is in line with naming of the current [Iranian calendar] year, began on March 21, by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei as the year of "Support for Iranian Products".

To this end, the ministry has called all domestic companies who supply ICT products to submit their applications until July 6.



ICT-based services in different fields include education, healthcare, and marketing, crowd-sourced funding, cloud service, CDN, media, social networks, fintech, clothing, music, messaging allocation, tourism, environment, internet of things (IOT), lifestyle, food services and augmented reality.

According to a report entitled "Overview of ICT Industry of Iran" published by the ICT ministry in April 2015, the value added to the Iranian economy comes from 15 different sectors, with retail and industrial sectors accounting for more than

30% of the added value to the Iranian economy.

There are more than 30,700 private entities and 1,000 public entities under the supervision of the ICT ministry.

The private entities account for more than 96% of the total ICT supporting establishments. The supporting entities provide the necessary assistance to the ministry throughout the country with 14,203 offices and branches in Iran.

Portugal app empowers disabled to win better access to buildings

Fed up with the obstacle course of Lisbon's narrow footways and stairs in doorways, wheelchair user Ricardo Teixeira has taken matters into his own hands, giving disabled people the chance to fight back and instantly report violations via

Developed together with Portugal's disability charity Salvador Association, +Acesso is believed to be the world's first application allowing users to file official complaints against public buildings and businesses that do not meet



The digital entrepreneur, a tetraplegic since the age of 18, came up with the idea a year ago after a disappointing experience during his wedding anniversary party at a restaurant, which advertised itself as being accessible.

"But we were surprised to find a big step at the entrance," the 41-year-old told Reuters. "I didn't want to ruin the evening but it made me think about how great it would be to have something in my pocket to make a complaint with.

Launched in May, the free app, which covers all Portugal, identifies the user's location on an interactive map that shows all nearby buildings. In a single click the user can select a shop or restaurant and rate it based on its accessibility, including if it has an adapted toilet, parking or a ramp, and fill in a complaint form.

"There are apps out there people can use to rate buildings based on accessibility but there is nothing like this," said Vera Bonvalot, board member of the Brussels-based European Disability Forum.

Complaints sent through the app instantly reach the respective city councils and the National Institute for Rehabilitation, responsible for upholding accessibility laws. The process takes less than five minutes.

Since the app was introduced 95 complaints have landed in authorities' mailboxes, compared with 70 filed in Portugal in all of 2016, a report by the Disability and Human Rights Observatory revealed.

Around 18 percent of Portuguese live with a disability. "By using this app we can all work towards a more acces-

sible Portugal," Teixeira said.

A government decree in force since 2007 gave all public and private entities until February 2017 to "ensure accessibility in public spaces." However, the legislation is yet to be fully implemented, said Ana Antunes, secretary of state

"In this area [accessibility] Portugal has a long way to go and many things to improve," Antunes added.

Joana Bernardo, a 28-year-old with cerebral palsy who uses a walking aid to get around, said there was a time when lack of accessibility affected her motivation to go out but she

hopes the app will help. 'Some people get discouraged from complaining because they think nothing will ever change," she said. "The app is a very smart way of making us exercise our rights.'

(Source: Reuters)

Iran promotes nanotechnology market

TECHNOLOGY d e s k industrialization of Iranian nanotechnology products, production cost is decreased and value added is created, secretary general of Iran's Nanotechnology Initiative Council (INIC) told IRNA on Saturday.

Saeed Sarkar said that Iran has exported nanotechnology products to about 50 countries in recent years.

"Iran has also exported its technical knowledge in the field of nanotechnology to countries like South Korea and

Iran has already exported \$35 million worth of nanotechnology products, he said. Regarding the prominence of Iran in

nanotechnology articles and research during recent years, the export should be increased, he said.

According to the StatNano report published in January 2018, more than 154,000 nanotechnology related articles were indexed in Web of Science (WoS) in 2017 while more than 50% of them were published by China, the United States, and India. Iran and Korea are on the next ranks.

He said that INIC plans to multiple exports of nanotechnology products until the end of the Iranian calendar year 1398, which falls on March 19, 2020.



About 170 nanotechnology companies produce over 420 nano products in the different fields including healthcare, textile, home appliances, energy and laboratory equipment.

Iranian nanotechnology and international sanctions

'Actually most machineries for nanotechnology products and over 80 percent of equipment used in research are homegrown hence there is no apprehension over sanctions," INIC official Reza Assadifard told IRNA

He said that about 170 nanotechnology companies produce over 420 nano products in the different fields including healthcare, textile, home appliances, energy and laboratory equipment.

"Nanotechnology products has had a 100 percent growth during the Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017-2018) in comparison with its preceding year," he announced.

The INIC plans to find its way to foreign market in near future, he said.

"We help nano companies to manufacture a high quality product and reduce their expenditure with financial support," he explained.

to increase the nano products market share with different promotions and supports.

He said that the council also tries its best

"For instance, we do our best to convince different insurance companies to cover nanomedicine," he said.

In this case, the price is very economical for the patient in comparison with similar

'Innovation ecosystem has a great impact on job creation'

TECHNOLOGY d e s k has a great impact on job creation for educated people, deputy science minister Masoud Boroumand told ISNA on Saturday.

The knowledge-based product trade and job creation for educated people are important factors, which can be considered for evaluation of innovation ecosystem.

About 5,000 knowledge-based companies have been established in science parks and incubators affiliated to Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology until the end of the Iranian calendar year 1395 (March 2006-March 2007), he said.

They create job opportunities for over 30,000 people and had over 30 trillion rials (about \$700 million)



income during the period, he said.

The innovation ecosystem is very complicated system, which needs time to develop, however, we have a great improvement in this field, since its emergence in Iranian universities in 2001, he said.

Innovation ecosystem is the term used to describe the large number and diverse nature of participants and resources that are necessary for innovation. These include entrepreneurs, investors, researchers, university faculty, venture capitalists as well as business development and other technical service providers such as accountants, designers, contract manufacturers and providers of skills training and professional

Tech upgrades you can get for free

You've spent so much money already - on a laptop, tablet, computer, router, network extender, printer, and smartphone. You've signed up for the internet, and you're paying monthly fees. You'll be relieved to know that a lot of tech is free.

Open-source software is like the "generic' brands you find in a supermarket; they cost nothing, and they often work just as well as their big-brand counterparts. Then, some websites give you something for free hoping you'll upgrade to a paid plan someday.

Speaking of sites, if you want to know about some great ones, I recently put together a list of 10 you'll use time and time again. Click here if you want to check it out now.

Here are 15 of my favorite tech freebies,

available whenever you want them. Free online storage in the cloud Cloud storage is a great way to access and share your computer's media library remotely. If you save documents, photos, and videos in the cloud, you'll be able to reach them at work, on your laptop while traveling, or on your phone or tablet wherever you are located.

If you're already a Google user, Google Drive is a versatile option. This free cloud storage system gives you five gigabytes of free online storage, and you can buy more storage as needed.

iCloud is the online storage program available to Apple users. This service makes it easy to transfer and view files across your iPhones, iPads, and iMacs. You get an initial 5 GB free and can purchase more space if and when you need it.

Dropbox is another reliable cloud storage site. It gives you 2 GB of space for free when you sign up, and you can earn more storage when you recommend others to sign up for a Dropbox account.

Free office software

Microsoft Office remains the most popular productivity software around. It's not free, of course, and many people waffle on whether to buy it. Fortunately, you can get pretty much the same power and performance without the hefty price tag.

First, there's the free and open-source office suite LibreOffice. This suite offers six programs that will feel instantly familiar if you've ever used Office. Writer, Calc, and Impress are equivalent to Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Even better, it can open and edit the documents you made in Office and can save new files in Office formats.

Another great free online option is Google Docs. Google Docs is more than just a word processor; it's an entire suite of productivity programs that have become steadily more powerful over years of development. Next time you need to start a spreadsheet, build a presentation, create a form, or make a digital drawing, try Google Docs, Sheets,



Slides or others and see if it's something you can use.

Free photo editing software

If you know a professional photographer or a serious hobbyist, they're using Photoshop. For everyone else, GIMP is a compelling, top-quality, free alternative to Photoshop.

GIMP stands for GNU Image Manipulation Program. It has a lot of the same capabilities as Photoshop. There are filters, brush tools, gradients, smudging, cropping and erasing tools. You can add colors with a pencil, a paintbrush, or fill in whole areas of your image.

If you're comfortable exploring new software programs, plunge into GIMP. Open a photograph or image that you want to manipulate.

GIMP is useful in that it puts almost all its tools into pop-up boxes surrounding the image. If you want to touch up an image's shape, or angle, add text, erase parts of the image, or add on layers of texture, you'll find all the tools right in front of you.

Free Audiobooks

For audiobook fans, Audible and iTunes have become vast treasure troves. Whether you listen to audiobooks at work, at the gym or on long drives, these narrated volumes provide hours of enlightenment and entertainment – for a price.

Audiobooks can cost far more than a paperback, and if you're not hungering for this week's best-seller, you might consider Overdrive, which connects you to your local library or academic institution. Just use the free app and your library card, and you're entitled to any number of audiobooks (and Kindle ebooks as well).

If you're interested in classic literature. LibriVox specializes in public domain works, read and recorded by an army of volunteer narrators.

Free product samples

In a similar vein to Sample Box, The-FreeSite will send you free samples of consumer products. If you like them, you can purchase more substantial portions, but otherwise, there are no strings attached. TheFreeSite offers everything from doughnuts to pain relief cream. You don't even require an individual membership or a login.

Note of caution: In order to receive free samples, you'll be asked to fill out numerous surveys and give up some personal information such as your name, both email and mailing addresses, gender and birthday. In some cases, you may be asked to share your phone number. If you're going to sign up to get freebies, it might be a good idea to set up a temporary email address. Read more on three websites that give away freebies.

Free internet speed test For low and hiccupy Wi-Fi connections, these free internet speed tests can help you

figure out if you're genuinely getting your advertised rates. One of the most reliable free speed tests

around is Speedtest.net. This site will measure various statistics like the ping time, download speed and upload speed of your internet connection. If you're a streaming video buff, try Netf-

lix's own free internet speed test, Fast.com. This site only measures download speeds, but it will give you a pretty accurate measurement of your internet speed at any given time. If your internet speed turns out to be lower

than expected, there are ways to improve it. Click here to learn how to double your internet speed.

Free incredible software and images courtesy of NASA

Yes, that NASA – the same people who put human beings on the moon are giving away computer programs for free.

NASA's software catalog includes software products for a wide range of technical applications. NASA scientists say that software has been critical to each of its mission successes and discoveries and over 30 percent of all NASA's reported innovations are software, and anyone is welcome to tinker

with its programs at home.

Meanwhile, NASA also opened its massive library of high-quality images. Browse and view historical archived photos from years past, including the Mars Missions, New Horizons, and shots from the International Space Station.

Free sound editor

If you are looking for a free audio editing program, your search should probably start and end with Audacity. Audacity is a free and easy-to-use open source audio editor. It can record live audio and computer playback, and even convert tapes and records into digital recordings or CDs.

Part of what makes Audacity great is that it will allow you to do pretty much anything you could ever want or need with audio. Just recording something? It can do that. Need to edit, combine or enhance some sound? No problem.

In some ways, such as ease of use, Audacity rivals or outperforms professional software like Audition. For recording demos or simple podcasts, Audacity has almost all the capabilities you need, including background noise removal.

Free firewalls

Aside from your antivirus or malware protection software, another essential tool that will protect your computer system from hackers and cyber attacks is a firewall.

Although newer Windows systems all have built-in software firewalls, there are plenty of free and more powerful third-party firewall options out there.

TinyWall, as its name proudly suggests, is a small, non-intrusive, almost invisible, free firewall program. Unlike other free firewalls that seem to announce everything they do, TinyWall does not use annoying pop-up messages and warnings to alert you that it's doing its job.

Another option is ZoneAlarm. ZoneAlarm is a free, downloadable firewall and antivirus system that is highly configurable and effective against many kinds of cyber attacks. It's popular for a reason - it's powerful and feature-packed for something that's free.

Free disposable emails There are millions of spam emails that get sent every day. Similar to robocalls, it's a tech problem that won't go away

anytime soon. One way to fend off these unsolicited messages is to use a disposable email address. You can use a free disposable email service like Mailinator or Maildrop. These services let you create a fake, temporary and disposable email address to ensure your security, so you don't have to give away your personal and work email addresses

all the time. Need more email privacy? Click here for more ways to cut down on spam email.

(Source: msn.com)

We can now harvest radioactive uranium from the world's oceans

Scientists have made a breakthrough that could open the doors to a whole new way of producing nuclear fuel, and they did it using nothing but the power of the ocean - or at least the chemicals floating inside it.

Researchers in the U.S. used a specially designed yarn to extract natural trace amounts of uranium found in seawater, and their proof of concept snared enough of the element to make five grams of yellowcake - a powdered uranium concentrate used as fuel in nuclear power production.

"This is a significant milestone," says biogeochemist Gary Gill from Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL).

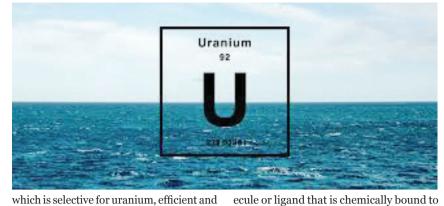
"It indicates that this approach can eventually provide commercially attractive nuclear fuel derived from the oceans – the largest source of uranium on Earth.

In order to pull this off, the PNNL team - which is part of the U.S. Department of Energy – teamed up with scientists from a company called LCW Supercritical Tech-

Researchers at LCW had developed a special acrylic fiber designed to extract uranium from seawater, by attracting and holding onto dissolved uranium naturally present in the ocean

Modified regular yarn

"We have chemically modified regular, inexpensive yarn, to convert it into an adsorbent



which is selective for uranium, efficient and reusable," explains LCW president Chien Wai.

"PNNL's capabilities in evaluating and testing the material, have been invaluable in moving this technology forward."

In previous research, Wai helped pioneer the foundations of this kind of extraction process, which adsorbs uranium onto a mol-

extracts uranium floating by. Scientists have been working to optimize this kind of technique for years, and the pay-

The yarn is then placed directly in ocean

water - or in seawater pumped into the lab

-- where, given enough time, it naturally

the acrylic fiber of the yarn.

Researchers at LCW had developed a special acrylic fiber designed to extract uranium from seawater, by attracting and holding onto dissolved uranium naturally present in the ocean.

off could one day be huge.

Not only because it's a lot easier to extract uranium if you don't have to dig it up, but because of the virtually infinite supply we could be looking at.

Single grain of salt

"Concentrations are tiny, on the order of a single grain of salt dissolved in a liter of water," researcher Yi Cui from Stanford University, who wasn't involved in the current work, explained when describing similar research last year.

"But the oceans are so vast that if we can extract these trace amounts cost effectively, the supply would be endless.

According to Wai, the adsorbent material is inexpensive to manufacture, and the researchers estimate a scaled-up process would be competitive with the costs of land-based mining of uranium.

Perhaps more significantly, the team estimates there is at least 4 billion tons of uranium in lying in wait in the ocean, which is around 500 times the amount known to exist in land-based ore.

There's more work to be done here - including investigating what other kinds of chemicals this fiber can extract - but we could be on the verge of something huge in energy production.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

New method makes weather forecasts right as rain, researchers find



Meteorologists have known for some time that rainfall forecasts have flaws, as failure to take into account factors such as evaporation can affect their accuracy. Now, researchers from the University of Missouri have developed a system that improves the precision of forecasts by accounting for evaporation in rainfall estimates, particularly for locations 30 miles or more from the nearest National Weather Service radar.

"Right now, forecasts are generally not accounting for what happens to a raindrop after it is picked up by radar," said Neil Fox, associate professor of atmospheric science in the School of Natural Resources at MU. "Evaporation has a substantial impact on the amount of rainfall that actually reaches the ground. By measuring that impact, we can produce more accurate forecasts that give farmers, agriculture specialists and the public the information they need."

Fox and doctoral student Quinn Pallardy used dual-polarization radar, which sends out two radar beams polarized horizontally and vertically, to differentiate between the sizes of raindrops. The size of a raindrop affects both its evaporation rate and its motion, with smaller raindrops evaporating more quickly but encountering less

Humidity of the atmosphere

By combining this information with a model that assessed the humidity of the atmosphere, the researchers were able to develop a tracing method that followed raindrops from the point when they were observed by the radar to when they hit the ground, precisely determining how much evaporation would occur for any given raindrop.

Researchers found that this method significantly improved the accuracy of rainfall estimates, especially in locations at least 30 miles from the nearest National Weather Service radar. Radar beams rise higher into the atmosphere as they travel, and as a result, radar that does not account for evaporation becomes less accurate at greater distances because it observes raindrops that have not yet evaporated.

"Many of the areas that are further from the radar have a lot of agriculture," Fox said. "Farmers depend on rainfall estimates to help them manage their crops, so the more accurate we can make forecasts, the more those forecasts can benefit the people who rely on them."

Fox said more accurate rainfall estimates also contribute to better weather forecasts in general, as rainfall can affect storm behavior, air quality and a variety of other weather factors.

The study, "Accounting for rainfall evaporation using dual-polarization radar and mesoscale model data," was published in the Journal of Hydrology. Funding was provide by the National Science Foundation (Award Numbers IIA-1355406 and AGS-1258358). The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the funding agency. The School of Natural Resources is located in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. (Source: eurekalert.org)

Massive storm on Mars downs Opportunity rover after 14 years on the Red Planet: NASA



The massive storm currently affecting Mars covers 15.8 million square miles (41 square kilometers), which is roughly the size of North America and Russia combined. The intensity of the storm has effectively blocked the sunlight on Mars' surface, preventing Opportunity to charge its batteries. The rover is currently near the center of the storm, inside the Red Planet's Perseverance Valley.

NASA is under the assumption that Opportunity's batteries have dipped below 24 volts, causing the machine to enter low power fault mode. In this state, all of Opportunity's subsystems except its mission clock are turned off. During NASA's press conference, John Callas, Opportunity's project manager, stated that the rover's present state invokes

The "analogy I would use right now is it's like you have a loved one in a coma in the hospital. The doctors are telling you that you've just got to give it time and she'll wake up, all the vital signs are good, so it's just waiting it out — but you know, if it's your 97-year-old grandmother you're going to be very concerned. And we are. By no means are we out of the woods here," he said.

Opportunity has been on the Red Planet for close to 15 years, far more than the duration of its original 90-day mission. As of January 2018, the rover has managed to cover an area of 45.09 kilometers (28.02 miles), studying Mars' terrain and laying the foundations for missions to come. Opportunity was sent to the Red Planet with its sister rover, Spirit. While both machines were able to last far beyond their initial 90-day mission, Spirit ultimately fell silent in 2010, six years into its exploration of the Martian landscape.

■ The Red Planet's mysteries

Overall, it would be truly sad to lose Opportunity after such a long and storied life, but the near future will be filled with many new robotic Martians striving to uncover the Red Planet's mysteries. After all, Opportunity, as well as Spirit and the larger, nuclear-powered Curiosity rover, have all but laid the foundations for further and more ambitious missions on the Red Planet. Plans are already underway to develop and launch Mars 2020, a rover based on Curiosity, and ExoMars, a rover ${\bf from} \ {\bf Europe-both} \ {\bf of} \ {\bf which} \ {\bf would} \ {\bf be}$ tasked to find signs of life.

Despite the challenge facing Opportunity right now, however, Jim Watzin, the director of NASA's Mars Exploration Program, stated that NASA is still hoping the nearly 15-year-old rover will somehow survive.

"We're all pulling for Opportunity. As you know, it's been a remarkably resilient rover, lasting 15 years — well beyond its original design life of just 90 days. Its longevity has taught us much about operating on the surface of Mars. But regardless of how this turns out, this little rover has proven to be an invaluable investment that has greatly increased our ability to explore the Red Planet," he said.

(Source: teslarati.com)

Researchers complete milestone in international physics experiment in Switzerland

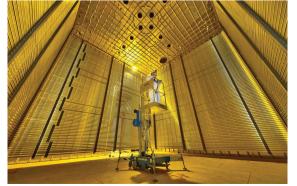
Researchers at The University of Texas at Arlington have built prototypes for an aluminum electric field cage inside a particle detector for an international physics experiment conducted at the European Organization for Nuclear Research in Geneva, Switzerland.

"UTA's key role in the Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment prototype developments in Switzerland demonstrates the high regard in which we are held by the international physics community," said Duane Dimos, UTA vice president

"High-energy physics is a research key area for UTA where we have invested in having one of the largest and best-regarded experimental physics groups in the country," he added.

UTA already played an important role in finding the Higgs boson or "God particle" in 2012 as part of an earlier international experiment carried out at the Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland. The Higgs boson is an invisible force-field that permeates space and endows particles with mass. The discovery led to a Nobel Prize for Peter Higgs and Francis Englert, who led the research.

Last year, UTA had research expenditures of \$3.5 million carrying out leading roles in the world's most prestigious new particle physics experiments in the United States and around the world. Total grants over the next decade are expected to surpass \$35 million.



"UTA is participating in all the important projects — upgrades to the Large Hadron Collider's ATLAS experiment, the International Linear Collider in Japan, DUNE with the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory in Illinois and the IceCube experiment in the South Pole," said Kaushik De, UTA physics professor and director of the Center for Excellence in High Energy Physics.

"As a result, we are able to offer our students first-hand experience on international projects at the highest level,"

The subatomic particles

The Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment or DUNE is a U.S.-led international experiment that focuses on neutrinos, subatomic particles that may offer an answer to the lingering mystery of the universe's matter-antimatter imbalance.

Physics tells us that matter is created side by side with antimatter. But if matter and antimatter are produced equally. then all of the matter created in the early universe should have been cancelled out by equal amounts of antimatter, eliminating existence itself instantly. And we wouldn't be here.

Neutrinos and their antimatter antineutrinos oscillate as they move through space, changing "flavor," form and mass. Scientists hope that by observing and comparing the oscillations of neutrinos and antineutrinos some difference will become apparent that could explain the matter-antimatter imbalance and hence how our universe came to exist.

DUNE will consist of two neutrino detectors placed in the world's most intense neutrino beam. One detector will record particle interactions near the source of the beam, at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory in Batavia, Illinois. A second, much larger, detector will be installed more than a kilometer underground at the Sanford Underground Research Laboratory in Lead, S.D.—1,300 kilometers away from the source, according to the project's website.

(Source: phys.org)

New type of photosynthesis discovered

The discovery changes our understanding of the basic mechanism of photosynthesis and should rewrite the textbooks. It will also tailor the way we hunt for alien life and provide insights into how we could engineer more efficient crops that take advantage of longer wavelengths of light.

It will also tailor the way we hunt for alien life and provide insights into how we could engineer more efficient crops that take advantage of longer wavelengths of light.



The discovery was led by Imperial College London, supported by the BBSRC, and involved groups from the ANU in Canberra, the CNRS in Paris and Saclay and the CNR in Milan

The vast majority of life on Earth uses visible red light in the process of photosynthesis, but the new type uses near-infrared light instead. It was detected in a wide range of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) when they grow in near-infrared light, found in shaded conditions like bacterial mats in Yellowstone and in beach rock in Australia.

As scientists have now discovered, it also occurs in a cupboard fitted with infrared LEDs in Imperial College London.

The standard, near-universal type of photosynthesis uses the green pigment, chlorophyll-a, both to collect light and use its energy to make useful biochemicals and oxygen. The way chlorophyll- absorbs light means only the energy from red light can be used for photosynthesis.

Since chlorophyll-a is present in all plants, algae and cyanobacteria that we know of, it was considered that the energy of red light set the 'red limit' for photosynthesis; that is, the minimum amount of energy needed to do the demanding chemistry that produces oxygen.

(Source: Science Daily)

LHC upgrade to allow exploration beyond standard model of particle physics

The world's largest and most powerful particle accelerator, CERN's Large Hadron Collider, is getting a major upgrade. The work, which started on Friday, involves heavy civil engineering works at the two main sites of LHC in Switzerland and France.

The Large Hadron Collider (LHC) smashes particles together at high speed to see how particles react and understand the fundamental laws of nature. The LHC upgrade called the High-Luminosity LHC (HL-LHC) will increase the number of particle collision inside the LHC by five-fold.

The project will add and replace hardware to make collisions more likely and these would include installing new types of powerful magnets that can focus particle beams into a smaller area within four detection points.

The power lines and machine protection that shields the instruments against potential damage from stray particles will also be upgraded. New buildings, caverns, shaft, and underground facilities will also get an upgrade.

The aim of the upgrade is to boost the amount of data that can be picked up by the LHC. The particle smasher is capable of producing up to 1 billion proton-proton collisions per second, but the upgrade will increase this number, which physicists call "luminosity," by a factor of between five and seven.

The improvement would allow accumulation of about 10 times more data, which would help scientists observe rarer physical phenomena and make more accurate measurements.

"It's tremendously exciting to see the HL-LHC project gathering pace," said Gavin Davies, principal investigator for CMS experiment at the LHC. The "much larger data sets that it will make available will allow us to take our understanding of the subatomic world to the next level - helping elucidate some of the deepest mysteries of the universe.'

(Source: Tech Times)

This supercomputer can calculate in 1 second what would take 6 billion years

It's shiny, fast and ultrapowerful. But it's not the latest Alpha Romeo. A physics laboratory in Tennessee just unveiled Summit, likely to be named the world's speediest and smartest supercomputer.

The supercomputer — which fills a server room the size of two tennis courts - can spit out answers to 200 quadrillion (or 200 with 15 zeros) calculations per second, or 200 petaflops, according to Oak Ridge National Laboratory, where the supercomputer resides.

'If every person on Earth completed one calculation per second, it would take the world population 305 days to do what Summit can do in 1 second," according to an ORNL statement.

Put another way, if one person were to run the calculations, hypothetically, it would take 2.3 trillion days, or 6.35 billion years. The former "world's fastest supercomputer," called Sunway TaihuLight, can perform 93,000 calculations a second (93 petaflops), while humming away inside China's National Supercomputing Center in Wuxi.

The supercomputer is an IBM AC922 system that's made up of 4,608 computer servers — each comprising processors (the brains of the computer). But what's actually going on inside these processors is what makes the difference.

"Summit's computer architecture is quite different from what we have had before," Daniel Jacobson, a computational biologist at ORNL, who is working on Summit, told Live Science. For one thing, the computer uses the new Tensor Core feature in its graphics cards (made by Nvidia), which is designed specifically for applications focusing on machine learning and artificial intelligence

Basically, unlike older computer chips, these chips are optimized for a special type of mathematical operation on matrices — or rectangles filled with numbers with rules for adding, subtracting and multiplying the different rows and columns.

(Source: Live Science)

Health official warns about increasing antibiotic-resistance in Iran

SOCIETY
Description

TEHRAN—The rate of antibiotic resistance has increased in Iran, a Health Ministry official warned on Sunday, saying it takes only 1 to 2 years for an antibiotic to become resistant to microbial infections in the country.

"Antibiotics misuse and overuse have led to microbial resistance to antibiotics; while an antibiotic takes 10 to 15 years to become resistant to microbial infections in other countries it only takes 1 to 2 years in Iran", Fars news agency quoted Mohammad Mahdi Aslani as saying.

Today, a total 90% of the bacteria, which had been sensitive, are now resistant to penicillin, Aslani regretted.

For example infections caused by staphylococcus [a genus of Gram-positive bacteria that causes disease such as boils, impetigo, food poisoning, cellulitis, and toxic shock syndrome] and pneumococcus [a genus of Gram-positive bacteria which causes diseases with symptoms such as fever and chills, cough, difficulty breathing, and chest pain] are now resistant to penicillin, he explained.

He further mentioned that the other infection caused by bacteria resistance is urinary tract infections [an infection in any part of urinary system such as kidneys, ureters, bladder and urethra] which is one of the most common infections.

Iran plans to host the 19th International and Iranian Congress of Microbiology on September 4-6.

Aslani, the scientific secretary of the congress, said topics that will be discussed at the event include clinical infection and vaccine, antimicrobial agents and resistance, microbial infection and cancer, pharmaceutical microbiology, emerging and reemerging infectious diseases, etc.

Aslani said that the latest scientific achievements in various fields of microbiology, as well as antibiotic resistance of bacteria will be discussed at the congress.

Specialists from the UK, Japan, Germany, France, Finland, and other countries will participate at the forum.

Antibiotic resistance

Antibiotic resistance happens when bacteria change in a way that reduces or eliminates the effectiveness of drugs, chemicals, or other agents designed to cure or prevent infections. The bacteria survive and continue to multiply bringing about additional harm.

According to World Health Organization (WHO), antibiotic resistance is rising to dangerously high levels in all parts of the world. New resistance mechanisms are emerging and spreading globally, threatening our ability to treat common infectious diseases. A growing list of infections – such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, blood poisoning, gonorrhea, and foodborne diseases – are becoming harder, and sometimes impossible, to treat as antibiotics become less effective.

Where antibiotics can be bought for human or animal use without a prescription, the emergence and spread of resistance is made worse. Similarly, in countries without standard treatment guidelines, antibiotics are often over-prescribed by health workers and veterinarians and over-used by the public.

Without urgent action, we are heading for a post-antibiotic era, in which common infections and minor injuries can once again kill.

'Implementing law on children's right entails proper budget allocation'

SOCIETY TEHRAN—Implementing the law destruction on the rights of the children requires proper budget allocation, a member of the legal committee of the Society for Protecting the Rights of the Child has said.

In case the bill on children's right is approved, there will be a great need to provide some mechanism for the law to go into effect properly which entails budget allocation, Monika Nadi said, Khabaronline reported on Saturday.

The Majlis [Iranian Parliament] passed a law on children's right in 2002, however, a lack of clarity in the law and ineffective legislative strategies prompted the parliamentarians to start to revise the law in 2006. Six years later in 2012 a new bill on children's right was brought before the parliament, but surprisingly the bill is yet to be approved to become a law.

The current law on children's right is ineffective in that in many cases of child abuse the punishment does not fit the crime. Releasing criminals on parole, giving remissions, and not granting responsible bodies the authority to fight violence against children are some of the shortcomings of the current law. Moreover, there is a need for establishment of special courts or child-friendly courts for cases of child abuse. There is no exact and unambiguous definition of "abuse" in



the law, which opens up possibility of interpreting the word in different ways, and hence it might benefit the criminals in many cases.

In May, MP Mohammad Reza Badamchi announced on his twitter account that after months of discussions the bill on rights of children will be brought before the Mailin

"Finally after days of putting in considerable effort in legislative group of Majlis we have managed to bring

the bill on children's right before the parliament," he wrote.

However, almost two weeks after the MP's announcement the bill is yet to be approved the Majlis.

Nadi has explained that if the issues regarding the children were actually a matter of concern for the parliamentarians the law would have been approved so far.

The great gap between the proposal of the bill and its approval is unjustifiable, she regretted adding that, "considering the latest news we hear about child abuse in the country approving the law on right of children is a must."

Approval of the bill can positively affect the rights of children in Iran, she stated, noting, the fact that there is a law governing the rights of children is very much important and effective in supporting the children. Nadi further explained that the new law might have

Nadi further explained that the new law might have some shortcomings, however, the fact that violators of the children's right will be legally accountable and any violation of the would-be-law is punishable are some of the advantages of the law.

The Society for Protecting the Rights of the Child started as an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO) in 1994. The main goal of the Society is to publicize and promote the principles of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Justice Ministry to increase citizenship right clinics

SOCIETY TEHRAN—The Ministry of justice will increase the number of citizenship right clinics in all provinces of the country, the ministry's deputy head for human rights and international affairs department has said.

The clinics will grow in number in cooperation with provincial municipalities and city councils, IRNA quoted Mahmoud Abbasi as saying Sunday.

Currently, the aforesaid clinics have achieved good results in 10 provinces of the country namely Qazvin, Yazd, Alborz, East Azarbaijan, West Azarbaijan, Isfahan, Gilan, Fars and Lorestan, Abbasi noted.

Citizenship right clinics are tasked with educating the public about citizenship rights and promoting citizenship rights and ethics, giving legal advices, psychological and social counseling, under supervision of a lawyer, a psychologist and a social worker, he explained.



The central citizenship right clinic in Yazd is known as the most successful center, which has taken great steps towards [promoting] citizenship rights in the province under management of Iran's Bar Association, he mentioned.

He also noted that these clinic's services are responsive to a large share of legal problems citizens are facing.

Citizenship right clinics can have a significant role in preventing social harm, he concluded.

Iranians make contribution of \$7m to free prisoners

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Donations raised over a TV show for releasing prisoners who committed unintentional crimes has reached up to 300 billion rials (nearly \$7 million) during the holy month of Ramadan, head of Iran's Prisons Organization has said.

Following a call made in a live TV show, dubbed Mah-e Asal, which is normally aired during the month of Ramadan in Iran, Iranians started making donations to help free prisoners who committed involuntary crimes.

"From the first day of the call to collect contributions all prison heads and judicial authorities throughout the country began to take action to free prisoners who were accused of unintentional crimes," IRIB quoted Asghar Jahangir as saying on Friday.

A full report on the number of released



prisoners will soon be released, he added.
If donations reach 370 billion rials (about \$9 million), two thousand prisoners of involuntary crimes can be released, he concluded.

Every year concurrent with the holy month of Ramadan, Iranians make generous donations to help free prisoners.

This year, the Leader has made a contribution of 4 billion rials (nearly \$950,000) to help release prisoners who had committed involuntary crimes.



Saudi-led forces bogged down outside Hudaydah

Yemen's Ansarullah (Houthi) movement fighters have dismissed reports that the Saudi regime-led forces have seized the airport in the port city of Hudaydah, saying the aggressors are on the retreat on all front lines.

Militants and foreign mercenaries armed by the House of Saud regime and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are attempting to capture the well-defended city and push the Ansarullah out of their sole Red Sea port in the biggest battle of the war.

"A battle of attrition awaits the Saudi alliance which it cannot withstand. The Saudi coalition will not win the battle in Hudaydah," Ansarullah spokesman Mohammed Abdulsalam told Lebanon-based al-Mayadeen TV.

The House of Saud regime on Sunday conducted airstrikes on the airport, to support forces attempting to seize it. The official SABA news agency said warplanes carried out five strikes on Hudaydah - a lifeline to millions of Yemenis.

Ground troops including Emiratis, Sudanese and Yemenis have surrounded the main airport compound.

Mohammed al-Sharif, deputy head of Yemen's civil aviation, said images circulated online about the airport had been taken in October 2016.

A fence shown as proof of the airport's capture is actually situated near the al-Durayhimi district, on a piece of land belonging to a Yemeni lawmaker, the official Saba news agency quoted him as saying

Ahmed Taresh, the head of Hudaydah airport, also denied news of the airport's capture, but said that it has been completely destroyed in airstrikes conducted by the Saudi-led coalition.

Abdulsalam warned that the Saudi regime-UAE offensive against the port city would undermine chances for a peaceful settlement of the Yemen crisis.

The rebuttals came after the media office of the Saudi regime-backed Yemeni forces loyal to ex-president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi said on Twitter that they had "freed Hudaydah international airport from the grip of" the Ansarullah.

Reports on Sunday said the Saudi regime-backed forces had been surrounded in the al-Durayhimi Bayt al-Faqih district and at least 40 Saudi regime mercenaries killed by Yemeni sniper fire over the past two days.



Al-Mayadeen, meanwhile, cited informed sources as saying that the invading forces had retreated from all fronts in Hudaydah's west.

A Yemeni military source said clashes had left 50 Saudi regime-backed forces dead and destroyed 13 of their armored vehicles in southern Hudaydah.

Yemeni forces have also managed to confiscate a French or American ship off Hudaydah's coast, president of the Ansarullah (Houthi) Revolutionary Committee Mohammed Ali al-Houthi tweeted.

The UAE, a key member of the Saudi regime-led coalition waging the war on Yemen, launched the Hudaydah assault on Wednesday despite warnings that it would compound the impoverished nation's humanitarian crisis.

Le Figaro newspaper on Saturday reported that French Special Forces were present on the ground in Yemen supporting the

France, along with the United States and Britain, backs the Saudi regime in the Yemen conflict and provides weapons to both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

According to the Ansarullah, British and French warships were also on standby on Yemen's western coast to launch missile and aerial attacks on Hudaydah.

Fighting on Saturday closed off the city's northern exit, blocking a key route east to Sana'a and making it harder to transport goods from Yemen's biggest port to moun-

tainous regions. World Food Program calls for maintained food flow for Yemen's Hudaydah

Elsewhere, the World Food Program (WFP) has called on all warring parties in Yemen's Hudaydah to maintain a free food flow through the port city.

The WFP's director for Yemen Stephen Anderson made the call on Saturday, while voicing deep concerns over the humanitarian situation in Hudaydah.

The United Nations agency is appealing "to maintain the free flow of food and fuel and both commercial and humanitarian for the people who need it most," he said.

Anderson noted that basic needs of those Hudaydah's civilians are not being satisfied, while warning the worsening situation in the port will have a "major impact" on its

The World Health Organization (WHO) also expressed concern over the fighting in and around the, calling for unbroken aid access and protection of health workers

"We stand with our UN partners to call on all parties to the conflict to protect the port, and allow its uninterrupted functioning. We also call on all parties to protect health workers and their facilities from harm, as well as to ensure unimpeded access for medical teams seeking to treat the wounded," said

WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom

He added that Hudaydah "an essential lifeline" for Yemen, saying that "more than 70% of all food, essential medicines and healthcare supplies are brought in through

The Saudi regime-backed coalition is trying to capture the port city in its yet heaviest assault on the country in more than three years. The offensive threatens to cut the lifeline to millions of Yemeni people already struggling with an acute shortage of vital supplies.

The UN has warned that the battle in Hudaydah, which has a population of 600,000, could cost up to 250,000 lives, as well as cutting off aid and other supplies to millions of people.

■ UN envoy in Yemen for crisis talks over Hudaydah port

Meantime, the UN envoy for Yemen has arrived in Sanaa for crisis talks on the port city of Hudaydah amid growing fears that fighting between a Saudi regime and Emirati-led coalition and Ansarullah forces will exacerbate a humanitarian crisis.

Martin Griffiths did not make any statement as he landed in the Yemeni capital on Saturday.

He is expected to propose to Ansarullah leaders that they halt fighting and cede control of Hudaydah's vital port - responsible for more than 70 percent of Yemeni imports - to a UN-supervised committee.

Griffiths's arrival came as fighting intensified around Hudaydah's airport amid conflicting claims over its fate.

In a post on Twitter on Saturday, an account associated with the Saudi regime-aligned Yemeni army said the airport had been "freed from the grip of the Houthi militia" and that de-mining operations were

But later on Saturday, Ansarullah-linked civil aviation authorities denied the rebels had lost control over the airport.

The Hudaydah official news agency SABA quoted Mohammed al-Sharif, deputy head of civil aviation, as saying that images circulated online about the airport were taken in 2016 and that a fence shown as the airport fence was in fact situated on a piece of land belonging to a lawmaker.

(Source: agencies)

Hundreds of migrants turned away by Italy start arriving in Spain

After more than a week at sea, hundreds of migrants turned away by Italy danced and sang as their ships started arriving in the Spanish port of Valencia on Sunday.

The 630 migrants had been rescued by the Aquarius last weekend off the coast of Libya, but Italy and Malta refused to let their ship into port. The ship is operated by aid agencies Doctors Without Borders (MSN/Médecins Sans Frontières) and SOS Mediterranee, and had at least 100 minors and seven pregnant women aboard.

The ship was held for two days between Malta and the Italian island of Sicily after the latter nation's Interior Minister, Matteo Salvini, refused to allow it to dock.

After Spain offered to take them in, the ship started an 800-mile journey to Valencia along with two Italian ships sent to ease the overcrowding. The first group of 274 migrants arrived at the Spanish

port on Sunday morning aboard the Italian Coast Guard ship Dattilo. More than 2, 200 people are meeting the ships, includ-

ing 400 translators, 1,000 Red Cross volunteers and 600 police officers, local authorities said. SOS Mediterranee posted footage on Twitter of migrants

dancing and singing as they viewed the Spanish coast.

"Relief & happiness on board the #Aquarius as we see Spanish shores. ... The end of a long and exhausting odyssey



Doctors Without Borders tweeted that migrants on board the Aquarius had been "calm and pleased" to hear they would be arriving in Spain on Sunday morning.

to conduct search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean "for as long as European governments fail to fulfill their responsibilities."

Some of the rescued migrants from the Aquarius will be allowed to settle in France, Spain's deputy prime minister said on Saturday.

France made the offer via its ambassador to Spain, Deputy PM Carmen Calvo said in a statement. In a telegram, Spain's President, Pedro Sanchez, thanked French President Emmanuel Macron for his offer.

Macron had been critical of Italy's refusal to accept the Aquarius migrants but later worked to smooth things over with Italy's Prime Minister, Giuseppe Conte.

■ Italy's warning
Salvini, Italy's hard-line, anti-immigration interior minister and the leader of League party, was instrumental in blocking the Aquarius from docking this week in

On Saturday, he warned other ships carrying migrants as part of a humanitarian mission not to try to dock in Italy.

While the Aquarius ship goes toward Spain, 2 other NGO ships with Dutch flags have arrived near the Libyan coast," Salvini tweeted on Saturday. "We know that Italy does not want to be complicit in the

look for other ports to go to," he said, without providing details about the Dutch-flagged ships.

Salvini has previously promised to expel half a million illegal immigrants from Italy. He's also shared anti-immigrant memes on social media.

(Source: CNN)

France, Germany close to agreement on Eurozone reform

Paris and Berlin are very close to an agreement on eurozone reform after months of divisions, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire has said.

"An agreement is close at hand," Le Maire said on Twitter late Saturday after final negotiations on the subject with this German counterpart in the northern German city of Hamburg.

The minister added that he hoped an agreement could be finalized on Tuesday, when German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron are scheduled to meet near Berlin.

Paris and Berlin are racing to bridge the gap between Macron's vision of grand European Union reforms and Chancellor Angela Merkel's more prudent approach by a crunch eurozone summit on June 29.

"There are two or three remaining issues" to sort out, a European source close to the negotiations told AFP. "But these are clearly defined and limited.'

The source added that "real progress had been made on the sensitive issues that remained to be decided, especially regarding the eurozone budget."

Germany and other northern European states have baulked at Macron's calls to give the eurozone its own big budget, fearing the more fiscally prudent north will have to pick up the tab for overspending by the more profligate south.

Earlier this month, Merkel made some concessions, agreeing to support Macron's call for an investment fund to help poorer European countries catch up in the areas of science, technology and innovation.

But the size of the fund remains a major bone of contention, with Merkel saying it

should be "at the lower end of the double-digit billions of euros range", while Macron has called for a budget amounting to "the equivalent of several points of the GDP of the eurozone".

The French president is on a drive to reconcile Europeans with the EU after years of austerity and mass migrant flows have helped fuel the rise of anti-immigrant and nationalist parties.

He has championed EU reform proposals such as a common finance minister and

(Source: AFP)

Thai king signs royal family's \$30bn fortune over to himself

The vast wealth of Thailand's royal family has formally turned over its assets with more than \$30bn to King Maha Vajiralongkorn, who assumed the throne after the death of his father in 2016.

An undated announcement seen on the website of the Crown Property Bureau, which controls the royal wealth, says that assets it has been administering will be put in the same category as the monarch's personal assets and managed together at his discretion.

Forbes magazine's rankings of the world's richest people had estimated the fortune of the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej at more than \$30bn, including the holdings of the Crown Property Bureau. King Vajiralongkorn last year had already asserted personal total control over the bureau.

Some holdings in two major companies controlled by the bureau had already been transferred earlier to the new king's personal control.

The new announcement noted that while the Crown Property Bureau had been exempt from taxes and duties, the personal assets of the king and the holdings previously belonging to the Crown Property Bureau to be treated together as 'Crown Property Assets' would "be subject to the same duties and taxation as would assets belonging to any other citizen".

The announcement, which was titled Explanatory Notes, also said that the king could direct the existing Office of the Crown Property Bureau, or any other designated person or agency, to manage the assets now held in his name.

Vajiralongkorn's father, King Bhumibol, who reigned for seven decades, had professional managers who were also trusted insiders administer the palace's business interests. The new king has sought to put his stamp on the monarchy, replacing palace officials with his own

Chirayu Israngkun Na Ayuthaya, who had been director general of the Crown Property Bureau since 1987, was replaced in March by Air Chief Marshal Satitpong Sukvimol, a close aide to King Vajiralongkorn.

The Crown Property Bureau's most notable assets are real estate in Bangkok, Thailand's capital, the Siam Commercial Bank and the Siam Cement Group, a major building materials conglomerate.

(Source: The Guardian)

Bahrain upholds death, life sentences against Shia clerics

In a resolution adopted with 479 votes in favor, 97 against and 58 abstentions, the European lawmakers called on the Bahraini regime "to immediately release all human rights defenders imprisoned for their activities, and in particular Mr. Nabeel Rajab, who has been sentenced to five years in prison for denouncing on Twitter the alleged torture in Bahrain's Jaw prison and the Saudi Arabia-led coalition airstrikes in Yemen." The resolution urged Manama to observe international laws

and guarantee human rights for prisoners, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly in the lead-up to the country's upcoming elections, suspend military trials for civilians and officially revoke death sentences.

While human rights organizations and activists hailed the resolution, Bahrain's foreign ministry strongly regretted the decision by the European Parliament.

Manama claimed that the resolution was based on false information, noting that the decision was made in disregard of improving political, social and economic situation in the

On Monday, Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah signed off on an amended version of the kingdom's election law which bans figures of dissolved opposition parties and organizations from running in parliamentary elections.

According to Bahrain's main Shia opposition group, the al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, which was dissolved by Manama regime in 2016, the legislation deprives more than 50,000 Bahraini nationals from their civil and political right

Bahrain is expected to hold parliamentary elections in fall 2018. Opposition parties boycotted the 2014 polls.

Since February 2011, Bahraini people have been holding peaceful protest rallies on an almost daily basis, demanding that the Al Khalifah family relinquish power and let a just system representing all Bahrainis be established.

Bahrainis have also been complaining against widespread discrimination against the Shia majority in the

Manama has responded to the demonstrations with lethal force, drawing international criticism from rights

Bahraini authorities have further detained human rights campaigners, broken up major opposition political parties, revoked the nationality of several pro-democracy activists and deported

Scores have also been killed and hundreds arrested in Bahrain's crackdown on dissent.

Human Rights Watch said in a report in May, "Courts convict and imprison peaceful dissenters, including prominent human rights defenders and opposition leaders, and file trumped-up charges against their relatives. Security forces use excessive force to disperse peaceful assemblies."

Saudis' lies over domination of al-Hudaydah

Clearly, the fabricated lies of the Saudis and Emiratis and their affiliated media about their domination over al-Hudaydah are their wishful thinking. They are spreading such falsehood with the aim of creating a psychological warfare through the media-propaganda against the Yemeni forces

The main reason for such pretense is the failures of Riyadh and Abu Dhabi against the armed forces and popular committees in Yemen. They decided to target al-Hudaydah after their plans fell through in Aden and Sanaa, the capital of Yemen.

Had Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates been able to defeat Yemeni forces in al-Hudaydah, they would not have to bring in their Western allies, including the United States and France. Thus, the direct involvement of Americans and French with Saudi and Emirati in Yemen is a clear proof of the aggressive Saudi-led coalition's defeat in the Yemen War.

In another event, the French Newspaper, Le Figaro, quoted two well-informed military sources as saying that French Special Forces, are in Yemen along with forces from the United Arab

The newspaper does not mention the details of the activities of these foreign forces in Yemen.

Although the French Defense Ministry has not yet responded to this, a French parliamentary source recently told Reuters that his country's special forces are in Yemen. Zaifullah al-Shami, a member of the Ansarullah movement's

political bureau has confirmed the presence of mercenary fighters in the strategic port of al-Hudaydah. Israeli fighter jets have carried out airstrikes on the western coast of Yemen, he added. Currently, the development in al-Hudaydah, despite wide-

spread Saudi air strikes, is in the interest of the Yemeni army and popular committee's forces who have made invaders withdraw from the airport for kilometers. The images released by the Yemeni intelligence headquarters all indicate that al-Hudaydah airport and its port are still outside the control of the Saudi invading forces and their allies. This means that the reports published in recent days regarding the fall of al-Hudaydah has been nothing but a mass media hypes.

You can't be pro-life and against immigrant children

8 -> And these modest gains have cost the movement greatly. In standing by President Trump and his administration and, indeed, in now honoring him as their standard-bearer traditional pro-life leaders have put short-term and uncertain political gain ahead of consistent moral principle.

Because of their support of the president and general silence on his administration's actions, the major players in the pro-life movement are now tethered to his horrific border policies. This presents a real threat to the broader movement's capacity to be taken seriously by young people and people of color.

The silence on the border policies is not a simple question of groups keeping a focus solely on abortion. Many pro-life organizations also do extensive work opposing euthanasia. There is nothing in principle compelling such organizations to ignore anti-life and anti-family border policies.

If the traditional pro-life movement is to regain credibility as something other than a tool of the Trump administration, it must speak out clearly and forcefully against harming innocent

children as a means of deterring undocumented immigration. These groups have extraordinary access and influence in the White House. They have to use it.

(Source: The NYT)

Amrabat out of hospital but also out of next game

Morocco winger Nordin Amrabat has been discharged from hospital but he will not play in the side's next World Cup Group B clash against Portugal on Wednesday after suffering concussion in the 1-0 loss to Iran, officials said.

Amrabat was withdrawn after a 72nd-minute clash of heads with Iran's Vahid Amiri in St Petersburg on Friday as the north Africans were beaten in their opening game at the tournament.

The pair were chasing a loose ball down the touchline when Amrabat sprinted into the back of Amiri, hitting his head against that of his opponent.

Amrabat spent one night in hospital before being discharged and allowed to return to the team base in Voronezh, some 500

However, he would be unavailable for at least a week, a statement from the Royal Moroccan Football Federation said.

Morocco's medical team have since been criticised for slapping the player around the cheeks as they treated him when it seemed obvious he had suffered a serious blow to the head and his $legs\ were\ wobbly.\ Amrabat\ was\ replaced\ by\ his\ younger\ brother$ Sofyan for the final stages of the game.

Morocco meet Portugal at Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium in a match they must win if they hope to stand any chance of advancing in the tournament.

(Source: Reuters)

Taxi ploughs into pedestrians in Moscow injuring eight



At least eight pedestrians, including some Mexican World Cup fans, were injured after a taxi mounted a crowded pavement in

CCTV footage posted on social media showed the car veer out of a queue of stationary traffic and accelerate into pedestrians before coming to a halt. The driver then fled, pursued by several

Moscow police said the driver was a 28-year-old national of Kyrgyzstan who had been taken into custody.

They released a video of the man being questioned in which he says he had been at the wheel for more than 20 hours when the crash happened and had pressed the accelerator by mistake.

"I wanted to brake, I wanted to let someone through," he says, while visibly upset. "I switched off for a second and hit the accelerator.... then I saw the people.'

He said he fled because he thought the crowd of people "were going to kill" him. But one witness, who was across the road at the time of the crash, said it did not appear to be accidental.

"I have the feeling that he did it deliberately because he was in the traffic jam with the cars going really slowly," said Viktoria Geranovich, "How could he lose control of the wheel, push the gas and drive into the crowds?"

She said "mostly girls" were knocked down, but people rushed to help and the ambulance arrived quickly. "Thank god everything went well. It's scary that this happened in the very centre."

An unidentified official said of the injured: "Seven of them are in a satisfactory condition and one woman is in a moderate

The incident happened not far from the Kremlin and Red Square, an area packed with tourists.

Russia is currently hosting the World Cup, and promised "unprecedented" security measures in all cities hosting the games. (Source: BBC)

The problem at England's hotel disrupting their World **Cup preparations**

 $England\ begin\ their\ World\ Cup\ campaign\ on\ Monday\ night\ but$ one big issue has blighted their preparations in Russia.

Gareth Southgate's team are gearing up for a clash with Tunisia in Volgograd and are due to make the 1,000-mile journey for the fixture on Sunday.

The game kicks off at 9pm local time and don't be surprised if there are one or two bleary-eyed England players taking to the field. That's because the Three Lions' base in Repino has one major

drawback despite offering the team maximum privacy. Sam Cunningham, writing for i News, reports that almost constant daylight is disrupting the squad's sleep at the Forrest-

mix Club hotel. The sun does not set until 11.30pm at night and rises at 3am making it difficult for the team to get rest at their base outside

Saint Petersburg. Blackout blinds have been fitted to rooms but Cunningham claims the preventative measures have not fully solved the issue

and left England with a far from ideal build-up. Boss Southgate gave a detailed explanation of why Repino was chosen as a base for the Three Lions prior to the tournament.

He said: "We went through a long process in terms of looking at the venues available.

"We wanted to get the right balance around the location in terms of travel, in terms of climate, and the quality of the training ground that is paired with that. It was important for us that we had a hotel with exclusive use.

(Source: Yahoo)

Southgate draws on Premier League for new England approach



"Feel the power of dream at 2018 World Cup"

The Premier League has long been a scapegoat for England's below-par performances at major tournaments but manager Gareth Southgate says he has benefited from close study of the tactics used by its foreign coaches.

England start their World Cup campaign against Tunisia on Monday with a formation Southgate believes will play to their strengths of pace and attacking flair.

"We've got some of the best coaches in the world working in our league so there are some fascinating ideas," Southgate told the FA's website. "The more you watch a team, the more you start to see familiar patterns of play and how they build up. The season has been a great contrast of styles and philosophies," he added.

Much has been made of the impact of Manchester City's Spanish coach Pep Guardiola on players like Kyle Walker, John Stones and Raheem Sterling but Southgate's system owes more to the approach of Italian Antonio Conte at Chelsea.

The London club won the Premier League in 2017 playing with three central defenders and two advanced wing-backs - a central striker and a floating winger/support forward in Eden Hazard. That is essentially the formula Southgate is expected to use in the World Cup with Kieran Trippier

and Ashley Young likely to occupy the wing-back positions which Conte used to such good effect with Victor Moses and Marcos Alonso. While Guardiola and Liverpool's Juergen Klopp also make use of attacking full backs, they do so as part of more traditional back fours whereas Southgate is adopting Conte's preference for three central defenders.

That requires a different kind of centre-half, capable of covering the wider areas when a counter-attack – hence the use of Walker on the right and probably Harry Maguire

Carbon copy

It is no carbon copy of Conte's approach though – whereas the Italian often used two holding midfielders in N'Golo Kante and Nemanja Matic, Southgate is expected to go with one in the form of Jordan Henderson.

Sterling is likely to be given the "Hazard role" in support of striker Harry Kane with Jesse Lingard and Dele Alli pro-

viding attacking support from midfield.
Southgate, who coached England's Under-21 team, has tried different systems but says the common factor is a desire to get the most quality on the pitch.

"Predominantly, when I started with the U21s, it was

4-2-3-1 for a spell. Then in order to get our best players on the pitch, we played with a diamond for an 18-month period when we won the Toulon tournament. Now we've moved to three at the back with the seniors.

"Essentially, you're trying to get your best players on the field in a formation that allows them to play at their very best and allows you to win matches - because sooner or later you have to win games," he said.

It is a system that makes England well suited to counter-attacking and playing in high-tempo matches. But perhaps it makes Southgate's side better suited to facing stronger sides than less ambitious opponents who will look to defend in numbers and slow games down

Southgate has a young and dynamic group of players but English footballers have rarely looked comfortable in slow, possession based games. The first two opponents in Group G, Tunisia and Panama, will likely try to limit the opportunities for breaks, reduce space and slow the tempo.

The first major test for Southgate's philosophy will be whether his team can impose their desire for an open, attacking contest on their opponents.

(Source: Mirror)

Poland, Senegal return to World Cup with Lewandowski, Mane



For unfashionable teams, Poland and Senegal

feature quite glamorous stars. Poland captain Robert Lewandowski led European qualifying with 16 goals, one more than Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo, and scored five goals in a nine-minute span for Bayern

Munich against Wolfsburg in February. Senegal's Sadio Mane scored 20 goals this season for Liverpool, including 10 in the Champions League, and had the fastest hat trick in Premier League history when ne got three goais in a 176-second span for Southampton against Aston Villa in May 2015.

Led by dynamic attackers in their prime, both nations return to the World Cup on Tuesday night after lengthy absences. A winner would have a good chance to advance from a group that includes Colombia and Japan.

Under coach Adam Nawalka, who played for his nation at the 1982 World Cup, Poland has improved from 76th in the FIFA rankings in 2013 to eighth – one shy of the nation's high set last year.

Poland finished third in the 1974 World Cup with Grzegorz Lato and in 1982 with Zbigniew Boniek. It was knocked out in the round of 16 in 1986, then didn't qualify until 2002, when it lost its first two games and already was eliminated before beating the U.S. in its group stage finale. The Poles lost

their first two games again in 2006 before a meaningless match against Costa Rica and have not been back since.

Senegal, a former French colony that gained independence in 1960, made one previous World Cup appearance and debuted with a shocking victory: 1-0 over defending champion France 1-0 in the 2002 opener. The Lions of Teranga advanced to the quarterfinals before a 1-0 extra-time loss to Turkey.

After upsetting France in Seoul, South Korea, on a goal by Papa Bouba Diop, thou sands of people danced in the streets of Dakar after the final whistle at 1:30 a.m. local time and President Abdoulaye Wade declared a national holiday.

Diop ran to the corner flag after scoring, took off his jersey and put it on the field and formed a circle with teammates to dance around the garb.

Poland's goalkeepers include former Arsenal teammates Woiciech Szczesny and Lukasz Fabianski

Senegal, coached by 2002 captain Aliou Cisse, has a roster stocked with regulars based in England who include midfielders Idrissa Gueye, Cheikhou Kouyate, Cheikh N'Doye, Alfred N'Diaye and Badou Ndiaye. Forwards include Mame Biram Diouf.

(Source: AP)

Croatia need own goal and penalty to overcome Nigeria



Croatia beat Nigeria 2-0 on Saturday with an own goal from Oghenekaro Etebo and a penalty from Luka Modric to go top of World Cup Group D, one of the toughest and most unpredictable in the tournament.

Modric's coolly taken 71st minute spot kick gave the scoreline a clear-cut feel, but the fact that Croatia failed to score on their own from open play was testament to some wayward shooting.

While dominating for long periods, tney struggied to penetrate the Nigerian defence and failed repeatedly to find the target with speculative shots from well outside the penalty area.

The result puts Croatia in pole position for now after Argentina - their next opponents in the group - were unexpectedly held to a 1-1 draw by Iceland.

Looking ahead to that clash in Nizhny Novgorod next Thursday, Modric told reporters: "It is going to be a difficult match, maybe against the favourites in our group. They have quality but this win will boost our confidence.

It will be tough, granted, but they will have to play for a win because of the scoreline today that they never expected."

Nigeria coach Gernot Rohr highlighted his team's weakness in defending at set-pieces, and said victory against Iceland next Friday was now a necessity. "All is possible for the qualification...

We keep smiling, we are disappointed, and we will try to be better in the next game," he said. "Of course it is important now to make

at least four points if you want to qualify. We are one point behind now. It is all in our hands. We have the youngest team in the World Cup - let them learn from this, and we will do better.

The first goal came just after the halfhour mark when a Croatian corner from the right was headed across the box and on to striker Mario Mandzukic, whose diving header found its way into the net off Etebo's foot.

Just three days into the World Cup, the scrappy goal added to what is becoming a pattern, following a Moroccan own goal that handed victory to Iran on Friday. Until then, Croatia and Nigeria had

appeared evenly balanced, with the African side's goalkeeper Ikechukwu Ezenwa untroubled by powerful but long-range shots from Ivan Perisic and Andrej Kramaric - the first going over the bar and the second finishing wide.

(Source: Reuters)

Ever missed a penalty? Don't worry, Messi does too

For anyone who has ever missed a penalty at any level, there was some consolation on Saturday - Lionel Messi can miss

With the world watching him in a World Cup opener against Iceland, the normally brilliant Messi struck a weak spot kick that was saved, leaving Argentina with a disappointing 1-1 draw. Messi's failure was all the more bitter given his long-time rival for current world's best - Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo - easily converted a penalty the day before.

On a remarkable day of five penalties during Saturday's matches, Peru's Christian Cueva then repeated Messi's failure, arguably even upstaging it by skying his penalty high over the bar in a game Denmark went on to win 1-0.

Messi left the field looking daggers, Cueva in tears.

Before them, France and Australia showed in Saturday's early game how to do it, each comfortably converting a spot kick in a match the Europeans won 2-1. And Croatia completed an extraordinary day in the box when Luka Modric scored a penalty in his side's 2-0 defeat of Nigeria in the fourth and last game.

The five penalties on Saturday have only been surpassed on one World Cup day in more than four decades, when six were given in France on June 24th, 1998.

But it is not just the number and varying quality of penalties astonishing fans at this World Cup: the new Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system has ramped controversy up to a whole new level. When France striker Antoine Griezmann fell on Saturday during a sliding challenge from Australia defender Josh Risdon, Uruguayan referee Andres Cunha first thought it a fair tackle. But he was summoned to review the VAR footage and, after deliberation, awarded the spot kick - to the fury of the Socceroos.

Shades of Baggio 94

Australia coach Bert van Marwijk felt Cunha was still undecided even after seeing the replay but he acknowledged how tough it can be for the men in black with thousands of baying fans: "He's also a human being and everybody makes mistakes."

Griezmann's well-struck shot was the first VAR-awarded penalty at a World Cup. "I think it's a penalty because he trips my left foot and then when I get up, I feel some pain, there was no diving," said the Frenchman.

Peruvian fans were disconsolate after they outplayed Denmark for large periods, piled the pressure on, but missed a penalty and lost 1-0. Yet Peru's coach Ricardo Gareca had only words of encouragement after Cueva left the field hiding his face. "After the penalty, he staved in there, he was asking for the ball ... He is a strong personality," he said.

Iceland's man-of-the-match Hannes Halldorsson revealed he had not only been studying Messi's penalties - but also going back to his own movements so as to outwit the Argentines. "I also looked at how I had been behaving in previous penalties, so I tried to get into their mindset, how they would be thinking about me," said Halldorsson, who dived correctly to add to Messi's miserable run of four misses from seven penalties this past season.

Inevitably, after Messi and Cueva's spectacular misses, fans and commentators immediately went looking for memorable

English ex-forward and pundit Gary Lineker compared Cueva's miss to a similarly-ballooned penalty by Italy's Roberto Baggio that gave the 1994 World Cup to Brazil.

"Don't need VAR to see that go over the bar," Lineker commented wryly of Cueva's now infamous effort.

(Source: Guradian)

Iran not an easy opponent for Spain: Alireza Beiranvand



"80 Million People, One Nation, One Heartbeat"

S P O R T S MOSCOW — Iran national football team goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand said Spain will not have an easy match against Team Melli.

Spain will face Iran on June 20 in Kazan in Group B of the 2018 World Cup.

"Thank God we won our first game against Morocco. It was a very important match for us and we dedicate this victory to our fans. The victory was achieved with many sacrifices from players and coaching staff", Beiranvand told AS.

"But it's not time to celebrate. We will concentrate for the next match, everybody knows that Spain is one of the greatest teams in the history of football and what we can guarantee is that we're going to make it difficult for them, the Persepolis goalie said.

Beiranvand was one of the key men in the victory over Morocco on Friday in St. Petersburg with a decisive dive

"Everybody knows that we like to compete and we are

fighters. We will be very focused until the last second of the game," he said.

We have been drawn in the toughest group in the World Cup. We have a former world champion, the current European champion and the African best team in

"But we want to do something big, something huge, a surprise that is qualifying for the second round and we will give the best of ourselves," Beiranvand said.



Carlos Quieroz pays tribute to Sir Alex Ferguson after late Iran World Cup win

Carlos Quieroz paid tribute to his former boss Sir Alex Ferguson as his Iran team grabbed a dramatic late victory over Morocco in 'Fergie Time' on Friday night.

Iran, managed by Queiroz, scored through a Moroccan own goal in the 95th minute, the last minute of stoppage time, of their opening game in St Petersburg to secure only

the second World Cup victory in their history.

The former Manchester United assistant manager paid tribute to Sir Alex, who is recovering from surgery after a

brain haemorrhage in May.
'That was like Fergie Time and it was for Sir Alex,' he

said afterwards.

'I have not been able to see him since he was taken ill, but as soon as he is strong enough, and I get the chance, I will go to see him and give him a hug. He is a great man,

Queiroz was assistant to Ferguson twice, and has been manager of Iran since 2011.

Their victory on Friday, coupled with Portugal's dramatic draw with Spain, means Iran are top of Group B, and he said: 'I am proud of these players.'

(Source: Daily Mail)

Ansarifard urges Iran to ensure Queiroz stays after Russia

ST PETERSBURG — Iran forward Karim Ansarifard has called for the country's football authorities to convince coach Carlos Queiroz to extend his stay after the side's dramatic last-gasp 1-0 World Cup victory over Morocco on Friday.

Queiroz led Team Melli to their first World Cup win in 20 years — and only the second in the country's history — when Aziz Bouhaddouz's own goal deep into added time gave the Iranians all three points in their Group B opener

The win is the highlight of a seven-year stint in Iran for the Portuguese coach, who announced before the tournament that he would stand down from his role after only being offered a six-month extension

Football Federation to reconsider the situation and convince the 65-year-old to remain in the role long after the tournament in Russia concludes.

"We hope he will stay and we will pray that he will stay because now after seven years he's one of us and he has tried to give everything to our national team," the Olympiacos striker told reporters.

"He deserves to stay with us and make all of the Iranian people proud."

Former Real Madrid coach Queiroz was handed the Iran job in April 2011 and has qualified the country for the last two World Cup tournaments, the first time they have appeared at back-to-back finals.

But the former goalkeeper has had a fractious relationship with football authorities

number of occasions throughout his tenure. Just weeks before the start of the finals in Russia, Queiroz told Reuters he would stand down from his post after being offered a contract that would only take him through

to the Asian Cup finals in the United Arab Emirates next January. "We have one of the most fantastic coaches in the world," Ansarifard added. "He has

been in Iran for the last seven years and he

has supported us all of the time. "He fights for us and he teaches us and we learn something from him every day, and for sure it's a good opportunity if we can keep him in our team because still we

are learning from him. "He's fantastic for us and, as you saw

Iran continue their Group B campaign against Spain in Kazan on Wednesday before concluding the pool phase against Portugal

(Source: Reuters)

in the game, we had a great chance to win Ansarifard, however, wants the Iran in Iran and has threatened to resign on a the game, to make it possible to make our World Cup 2018: Carlos Queiroz the catalyst as Iran dream of more

Queiroz has shown the special value in having an elite coach, one who can turn his jumble of players into a serious unit like the one that outlasted Morocco on Friday.

"Superman is only in the cartoons," said Carlos Queiroz, one game into the World Cup and already having to deny that he has extra-human powers.

The World Cup is about players, not managers, but in St Petersburg on Friday evening Queiroz showed the special value in having an elite coach, one who can turn his jumble of players into a serious unit.

That is what Queiroz has done for Iran over the past seven years, taking them to the 2014 World Cup and now this one, making them the most canny, disciplined and hard to beat side in Asia, and by a distance.

All that work culminated in St Petersburg on Friday when Iran won their second World Cup match in their history, with a performance that only a well-coached side could produce. Like a clever boxer, they survived the ferocious combinations Morocco threw at them in the early rounds, let them tire themselves out and start doubting themselves. The atmosphere started to turn and then, in the final seconds of the final round, Iran landed the knock-out blow.

It was a vindication for Queiroz and his seven years of hard work in extremely difficult circumstances. He had studied Morocco, he knew that they would come flying out early on, and he knew how to turn that against them. "Our strategy from the first minute was to create a mental collapse in the Moroccan players," he said. "And we tried to



do that by creating frustration and blocking all the play-makers."

But should it have even been a surprise? Iran had not lost a competitive game since the last World Cup. In their 10 qualifiers for this one they only conceded twice. They are a testament, like Iceland, to the power of organisation and unity in international football. And that all comes from the coach. "It was not a miracle or magic" said Queiroz, again having to insist on the fact of his own humanity. "We won because the team concentrated for 90 minutes.

Of course Queiroz thanked his players for their "attitude, commitment, soul and heart" but these are players working to a plan, and you have to wonder whether they would work this hard, or this focused, for a lesser coach.

And when Karim Ansarifard stopped to speak after Friday's game, he was full of praise for the man who has shown them

"To be honest, we have one of the fantastic coaches in the world," Ansarifard beamed. "He supported us, from when he arrived in Iran, and over the last seven years he has supported us all the time, he fights for us, he teaches us the way. We learn something from him every day. We are proud he is one of us.

What matters most is that Queiroz has stuck by the team even when his job has been made almost impossible by circumstances outside his control. Facilities and resources in Iran are lacking, but even more damaging is their international isolation. Opponents have pulled out of warm-up friendlies, leaving the team undercooked. "No pitches, no camps, no friendly games, and sanctions," as Queiroz said after the game. Just this month Nike pulled out of their boot deal with Iran to comply with the Trump administration's new sanctions on Iran, to the dismay of the players.

Now they are naturally keen that Queiroz will stay beyond this year, for the next World Cup campaign, and Ansarifard almost begged his manager to stay around no matter what happens this month. "It is going to be a good opportunity if we can keep him with our team," he said. "We hope, we hope he will stay. We will pray for that he will stay. Really now, after seven years, he is one of us. He tries to give everything to our national team, all the time. He deserves to stay with us, to make all Iranian people happy and proud."

But before all of that there are two more games, Spain in Kazan, Portugal in Saransk. Until then at least, Queiroz's team are top of Group B. And they have shown that they are far better than many realised - especially Morocco - at keeping it tight and wearing you down. So why shouldn't they dream of making things difficult and sneaking something?

And this brilliant veteran former coach of Real Madrid and the Portugal national team, already having to make clear that he is despite everything still just a man, knows how much it all means. "If the game against Morocco was the World Cup final for us," he said, "the game against Spain will be the Universe Cup final.'

(Source: independent.co.uk)

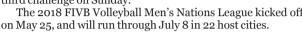
Iran sustains narrow defeat from Serbia at 2018 FIVB **Volleyball Nations League**

The Iran men's national volleyball team has slumped to its first defeat at the fourth week of the 2018 Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) Volleyball Men's Nations League, going down to the Serbian side.

On Saturday evening, suffered a narrow defeat and ceded its second Pool 15 fixture at the 11,000-seat Sears Centre in Hoffman Estates, Illinois, the United States, 2-3 (25-21, 22-25, 25-27, 25-20 and 11-15) to the Southeast Europeans.

The loss came a day after Iranian volleyball players had thumped world champion Poland 3-0 (26-24, 26-24 and 25-22) in their opening match.

The Iran men's national volleyball team is scheduled to play against the United States in its third challenge on Sunday.



A total of 16 teams compete in a round-robin format with every core team hosting a pool at least once. The teams are divided into four pools of four teams at each

week and compete five weeks long, with a total of 120 matches.
The top five teams after the preliminary round join the host

of the final round to compete in the last stage. The relegation takes in consideration only the 4 challenger

The last-ranked challenger team plays the promotion play-off against the Challenger Cup winners. The winners of the play-off will qualify for the next edition as a challenger team.

(Source: Press TV)

Difficult to come back against Iran: Nikola Grbic

 $\textbf{TASNIM} - \textbf{Serbia} \, \textbf{volleyball} \, \textbf{coach says} \, \textbf{it} \, \textbf{was} \, \textbf{not} \, \textbf{easy} \, \textbf{to} \, \textbf{come}$ back against Iran in Volleyball Nations League (VNL).

Serbia defeated Iran 3-2 (21-25 25-22 27-25 20-25 15-11)

"It wasn't easy to come back and play less than 24 hours after the loss we had. We managed to come back after losing the first set by changing a lot of players," Grbic said.

We managed to turn around the game and win. It would have been better if we had won in three. Then again, the victory is always good.'

'I am satisfied with the players who came in and changed the game and gave us positive energy. We will try to forget what happened now and focus on a game against Poland," he added.

Igor Kolakovic unhappy with defeat against Serbia

 $\textbf{TASNIM} - Iran \, national \, volleyball \, team \'s \, coach \, Igor \, Kolakovic$ said that to suffer a narrow defeat to Serbia in Volleyball Nations League (VNL) is very tough.

Iran was defeated against Serbia 3-2 (21-25 25-22 27-25 20-25 15-11) on Sunday.

The defeat means Iran is now just playing for pride in the VNL - but Serbia marches on and remains very much in the mix.

"It was a tough match. We olayed as hard as the match before but Serbia won," Kolakovic said.

"I'm happy because they really have an opportunity to play in the final, but also I'm sad because we had an opportunity to win in this condition," he added.



'We had a lot of problems with our players with injuries. During the game, one of our important young players - Morteza Sharifi – got injured. For that reason I am sadder with this defeat, but life goes on and we have a new game. We will try to keep this energy for the next game," he added.

Nike's move against Iran 'Disrespectful': Jahanbakhsh

TASNIM — Iran's Alireza Jahanbakhsh had strong words for Nike following their team's 1-0 win against Morocco to open the World Cup.

The team's star winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh said of the American brand's move, "To be honest, we didn't care actually. What they have done is a little bit disrespectful."

'In my opinion -- and we spoke with the other players in the team as we had a meeting about this -- politics has nothing to do with sport and with football, such a beautiful game. You don't have to involve this kind of thing with this game," he added, ESPN news reported.

That is something that unfortunately this brand did and, well, it's their responsibility to do such a thing but the image they have (projected) at least for 80 million people in Iran is not a really nice image."

The shoe company withdrew the squad's supply of boots earlier this week due to US-led sanctions against Iran ahead of the tournament in Russia.

Iran won their group opener after Morocco's Aziz Bouhaddouz scored an own goal in second-half stoppage time to give Carlos Queiroz's team the three points and top spot in Group B thanks to a draw later on Friday between Spain and Portugal.

On a historical night for the country, Iran recorded their second-ever win in a World Cup, 20 years after beating the US at the 1998 World Cup.

Iran will face Spain in their next Group B match on June 20, before playing Portugal five days later.

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"Foruzan" named best drama at Astoria NY Film Festival

TEHRAN – Iranian director Mir Abbas Khosd e s k ravinejad's short film "Foruzan" has been picked as best drama at the Astoria NY Film Festival, the organizers

"Foruzan" tells the story of a widow with two children living in a village in central Iran. She tries to protect her herd from robbery in the night.



A scene from "Foruzan" by Mir Abbas Khosravinejad

"I Was Meant to Be This Way" by Elizabeth Ebbert from the U.S. won the Zukor Award at the one-day festival, which was held in Astoria on June 9.

The Grand Jury Prize went to "The Perfect Fit" by American director Emory Parker.

"Foruzan" will also be competing in the Los Angeles Diversity Film Festival, which will be held from July 26 to 28.

Kazak publisher acquires rights to 11 books from Iran

CULTURE TEHRAN – Foliant, a major Kazakh publishing d e s k house, has purchased the rights to a collection of 11 books by Iranian authors.

The Pol Literary and Translation Agency, a Tehran-based institution that translates Iranian books and presents Persian language publications around the world, entered into negotiations with Foliant at the 3rd Eurasian Book Fair in Astana, Kazakhstan in April



Mehdi Azar Yazdi's series "Good Stories for Good Children"

The final negotiations are currently taking place between Iranian publishers and Foliant, Pol director Majid Jafari-Aqdam said in a press release on Sunday.

Mehdi Azar Yazdi's series "Good Stories for Good Children" which won a UNESCO prize in 1966 and was selected as Iran's

best book of the year in 1967, is among the books. The collection also includes "Canned Monster" by Mehdi Rajabi, "Little Stories for Little Children" by Shokuh Qasemnia, "Shahnameh Tales" by Atusa Salehi and "Parsua Plain" by Marvam Azizi

Also included are "Orange Book" by Fariba Kalhor, "A Banana that Smiled" by Hamidreza Shahabadi, "I was a Deer" by Ahmad Akbarpur, "Gili Gili" by Susan Taqdis, "Would You Like to Be..." and "Children's Books, Games, Lives" by Esmaeil Jamali.

Kurt Cobain's personal items to go on show in Ireland

LONDON (Reuters) — An exhibition dedicated to late Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain opens in Ireland next month, showcasing a selection of the grunge rock singer's belongings curated by his family.

From his sketches and drawings to clothing and a car, "Growing Up Kurt Cobain" will display dozens of Cobain's personal items, some of them never seen before by the public.

His daughter, Frances Bean Cobain, and mother, Wendy O'Connor, will be among the singer's relatives attending the opening at the Museum of Style Icons in Newbridge, 50 km (30 miles) southwest of Dublin. Cobain, who had Irish ancestry, died in 1994 at the age of 27

from a self-inflicted gunshot. "I have always been the most intimately informed of who my father was by my grandmother and aunts," Frances Bean Cobain

said in a statement sent to Reuters. "I am so ecstatic that their view of who Kurt was gets to be celebrated with Nirvana fans the world over."

Iranian director plans to stage "West-East Divan" in Weimar, Frankfurt

TEHRAN - Actor/did e s k rector Mohsen Hosseini has announced his plan to stage a play based on German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's "West-East Divan" in Weimar and Frankfurt following an invitation from the Goethe-Institut.

Speaking to the Persian service of FNA on Sunday, Hosseini said that his troupe will give two performances in Weimar and four others in Frankfurt.

He is scheduled to meet a number of Goethe-Institut officials in three weeks to

set the date for the performances. "In the current situation, it is appropriate

to pursue cultural diplomacy," he noted. "West-East Divan" premiered during the 34th Fajr International Theater Festival at Tehran's City Theater Complex in February

"West-East Divan" contains poems, notes and essays by the German poet, dramatist, novelist and philosopher.

Inspired by the Divan of Hafez (c. 1325-1389), Goethe (1749–1832) blends his own character with that of the Persian poet, who was well acquainted with Quranic and theological subjects.

"West-East Divan" was first translated into Persian by Shojaeddin Shafa in 1949. There are other translations of the book by Kurosh Safavi and Mahmud Haddadi.

Haddadi's rendition of the book was republished in 2011.



Actor/director Mohsen Hosseini and his troupe perform "West-East Divan" at the Charsu Hall of Tehran's City Theater Complex on

Iranian musicians visit Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory

TEHRAN – A group d e s k of musicians from the Tehran Symphony Orchestra and National Orchestra paid a visit to the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory on Saturday.

They also held a meeting with the director of the International Cooperation Department of the conservatory, Margarita Karatygina, the public relations team of the orchestras announced on Sunday.

Speaking at the meeting, Karatygina said that they recently celebrated the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the conservatory, but it has not hosted an Iranian performance so far.

Addressing the musicians, she said, "You must know that everyone is waiting to see a good performance here. We are so happy that the conservatory has had negotiations with Iran's Rudaki Foundation.'

Iran's Rudaki Foundation and the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory



The director of the International Cooperation Department of the conservatory, Margarita Karatygina (L), and Tehran Symphony Orchestra conductor Shahrdad Rohani meet in Moscow on June 16, 2018.

signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in Moscow to enhance bilateral cooperation in March.

Continuing, she also said that Iran enjoys a rich culture and has been able to preserve and enhance its traditional

She said that she believes Iran can make good use of Western classical music but of course Iran's traditional music enjoys greater attractions and it seems to be much closer to the music of Russia.

Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory rector Alexander Sokolov arrived in Tehran in late May and visited a number of Iranian cultural centers and officials.

A selection of musicians from the Tehran Symphony Orchestra and National Orchestra gave a performance at the Bolshoi Zal (Grand Hall) of the Saint Petersburg Philharmonia last Thursday. They also repeated their performance at the conservatory on Sunday.

Filmmaker puts spotlight on Iranian expats in Japan

TEHRAN – Iranian d e s k director Amir Bashti is making a documentary about the Iranian

emigrants living in Japan. "After the [1980-1988] Iran-Iraq war, many Iranian men left Iran to Japan to find work and make money," Bashti told the Persian service of MNA and added, "It was interesting for me to learn about their fate, therefore, I made a trip to Japan about three months ago to do research

about them.' He said that most of the people were employed in menial and difficult jobs, and many acquiesced in marriage to Japanese women to enable them to stay in the country for a long time.

'The documentary titled 'Mehrabad-Narita' will shed light on the lives of three



Amir Bashti directs a scene from "Mehrabad-Narita".

Iranian expats that now enjoy a good life and have progressed in their jobs," he stated.

The documentary also traces those Iranians emigrants, who were attracted to illicit affairs in the country.

"There are differences between those Iranian expats living in countries in Europe and America, and those who live in Japan,' Bashti said and added, "The Iranian emigrants in Japan left the homeland to find work and make money, and the documentary intends to show whether they achieved their goals or not.'

Bashti is preparing "Mehrabad-Narita", which is being produced at the House of Documentary, to compete in the Cinema Verite, Iran's major international documentary festival that is organized in Tehran every year in December.

AT&T CEO says ready to invest, WarnerMedia rebranding unveiled

NEW YORK (Reuters) — AT&T Inc is committed to spend as much as needed on the media business of newly acquired Time Warner Inc, Chief Executive Randall Stephenson told CNBC on Friday, with a plan to invest \$21 billion to \$22 billion in

the combined company.

"We're not going to be penny-wise and pound-foolish here," Stephenson said in an interview on the financial news channel. "We intend to invest."

The No. 2 U.S. wireless carrier closed its \$85 billion acquisition of Time Warner on Thursday and now faces the task of integrating a media company into its operations as it seeks to rival Netflix Inc, Amazon.com Inc and other technology companies providing entertainment directly to customers.

Time Warner will be renamed WarnerMedia, according to a memo sent to employees by John Stankey, who will serve as CEO of WarnerMedia

Turner CEO John Martin will leave the company, according to the memo, which was seen by Reuters. Stephenson said on Friday AT&T intends

albeit under a new name. He acknowledged differences in an email to AT&T and Time Warner employees late on Thursday, a copy of which was seen by

to preserve Time Warner's creative culture,



Chief Executive Officer of AT&T Randall Stephenson arrives at a U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., U.S. April 19, 2018. (Reuters/Carlos Barria) Reuters.

"As different as our businesses are, I think you'll find we have a lot in common,' wrote Stephenson. "We're big fans of your talent and creativity. And you have my word that you will continue to have the creative freedom and resources to keep doing what you do best.'

 $Stephenson \,told \,CNBC\,he\,expects\,AT\&T\lqs$ debt levels to come down quickly in about a year, returning to normal levels within four years at about 2.3 times earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization.

Some analysts have raised concerns about $the \, high \, level \, of \, debt \, the \, company \, took \, on \,$ to acquire Time Warner, about \$180 billion at the close of the merger, Stephenson said.

At world's biggest art fair, squeezed mid-market raises concerns

BASEL, Switzerland (Reuters) - In a year when many major galleries made record sales, conversations at the world's biggest art fair this week were not just about the eye-watering sums paid for top works, but also about how to ensure the viability of the market's lower end.

There was no shortage of top-ticket works on sale at Art Basel, which opened to the public in the Swiss city on Thursday: a pair of paintings by 20th-century American abstract expressionist Joan Mitchell sold for \$14 million apiece during the fair's opening days, reserved for VIPs.

"It's like that magnificent moment," said Dominique Levy of Levy Gorvy which sold Mitchell's untitled 1959 work.

Marc Glimcher, who heads one of the world's biggest gallery enterprises, Pace, said: "Art Basel is always good, but it isn't always this-year good. I think many people had the best first day of Art Basel they've

ever had." But with galleries feeling the pressure from lighter foot traffic and the high cost of fairs where much of today's primary buying happens, the art world is considering how to support the market's "squeezed middle".

"It's always been the case that the top end of the market does a little bit better, but the margin between how it's performing and everybody else is performing has become



Two women observe "The Tip of the Iceberg", 1991 of U.S-Artist Barbara Bloom during the Art Basel in Basel, Switzerland, June 13, 2018. (Reuters/Moritz Hager)

wider, and that's obviously a concern," said Clare McAndrew, author of the Art Basel and UBS Global Art Market Report.

Over the last 10 years, works under \$1 million have fallen in value, whereas works selling for over \$10 million have increased

nearly 150 percent, the report found. "It's paralleling what's happening in the world," McAndrew said. "The gap between the ultra-rich and everybody else

has never been wider." Facing a top-end boom that is pricing out museums and avid collectors, the art world must ensure the survival of small galleries that might be supporting the next

Vincent Van Gogh, said New York gallery owner Sean Kelly.