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© File photo

Neither negotiation nor surrender, just resistance

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Iran urges clarification on vessel incidents in Oman Sea

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Monday urging a clarification on incidents for several vessels in the Sea of Oman on Sunday. The United Arab Emirates confirmed on Sunday that four commercial vessels had been targeted by what it called acts of sabotage off Fujairah. Also, Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih

said in a statement on Monday that two of its oil tankers were sabotaged off the coast of the UAE in attacks that caused “significant damage” to the vessels. Falih said one of the two tankers had been on its way to be loaded with crude oil from Saudi Arabia’s Ras Tanura oil terminal in the Persian Gulf for customers in the U.S., according to Press TV. **→2**

Iraq says no replacement for Iran’s electricity

TEHRAN — Iraqi electricity minister said there is no alternative for Iran’s electricity in terms of volume, price or speed of delivery, Mehr news agency reported. “This is something [the electricity coming from Iran] that in terms of price and volume and delivery there is no alternative for. We have explored other options in neighboring countries. There is no alternative that competes on volume or price or speed of delivery to make up for that,”

Luay al-Khatteeb told Foreign Policy. The official further mentioned his country’s plans to rebuild the shattered power sector, and the U.S. pressure over continued energy ties with Iran. “To rebuild the Iraqi power sector we need at least 100 substations across the country and interconnections with neighboring countries. This is something we signed with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, with Iran, soon with Turkey and Syria”, he said. **→5**

Nechirvan Barzani frontrunner for president

TEHRAN — The incumbent Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Nechirvan Barzani will “as soon as possible” submit his resume to the parliament for the position of the president, while an Islamic party MP and an “independent” lawyer will also enter the race. According to RUDAW, the election of Barzani, 52, as the president is anticipated

to occur next week as he is the Kurdistan Democratic Party’s (KDP) — the largest party in the Kurdistan Region — candidate for the post. Additionally the KDP reached a deal to secure the support of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Change Movement’s (Gorran) last week. The KDP has 45 seats in the Kurdistan Region’s 111-seat legislature, followed by PUK’s 21 and Gorran’s 12. **→13**

EDITORIAL

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Will U.S. next administration rejoin Iran nuclear deal?

U.S. Democratic party is now getting ready to compete with Donald Trump for 2020 presidential election. Most Democratic candidates, however, have claimed that if they win the elections, they will re-enter Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The truth is, though, that U.S. next administration, even a Democratic one, has no intention to revive Iran nuclear deal and will not do it. We should not forget that the first actions for deterring the deal were actually taken during Obama’s presidency and when Democrats were still in White House.

Everyone remember that over Obama’s presidency and after they signed the nuclear deal with Iran, the United States Department of Treasury still prevented the actual removal of sanctions and inhibited their banking system from having normal transactions with Iranian banks. Additionally, they were Democrats who installed a set of legal and political conditions that later allowed Trump to pull out of the nuclear deal.

In fact, democrat leaders believe that if they go back on the nuclear deal, they should wring more concessions out of Iran. By new concessions, they mean that the temporary limits defined for Iran in the deal should become permanent and eventually to dismantle Iran missile defense.

On this topic, Foreign Policy has recently published a report by Ilan Goldenberg and Eric Brewer. Ilan Goldenberg was the senior advisor to John Kerry, former U.S. Secretary of State and Eric Brewer is a Council on Foreign Relations international affairs at the Center for a New American Security.

The report suggest that the U.S. next president should rejoin the deal but only after they get new concessions from Iran:

“A future president should use the leverage gained from Trump’s exit—however much they might disagree with that decision—to come to some preliminary understandings with Iran on the many issues of contention that remain in the relationship and on the future of Iran’s nuclear program. The message to Iran and the world should be: We absolutely expect to rejoin the agreement, but first, we need to talk.” **→7**

‘Women and children have suffered the most in devastating floods of Iran’

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
 By Syed Zafar Mehdi

TEHRAN — Iran was recently hit by devastating floods, which claimed more than 70 lives and left trails of destruction in many parts of the country. Some of the worst hit provinces include Golestan, Khuzestan, and Lorestan. In the absence of international assistance due to the U.S. sanctions, many Iranian organisations have come forward to provide help and assistance to flood victims.

One of them is Family Health Association of Iran (FHA), a full member of International

Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), established in 1995. FHAI has been providing life-saving Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services through health clinics and mobile vans in the flood-affected areas of Golestan province.

In an interview with Tehran Times, Zahra Fathi, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of FHAI, spoke in detail about her organisation’s work in flood-affected areas of Golestan in close collaboration with Iranian Red Crescent society and the government of Iran.

Following are the excerpts:

■ Q. How is the flood situation now in Golestan

and other provinces? Has the water level receded?

A. Iran has been continuously hit by heavy rainfall for one month that has led to flooding in many provinces, affecting more than 2,000 cities and villages across the country. This emergency is considered to be the most devastating in 15 years. The floods have affected more than 10 million people, killing at least 78, and injuring around 1,200. It has also left 2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. Across all affected provinces, 54,000 houses have been destroyed, another 90,000 damaged. Damage to crops and livestock has affected the livelihood of farmers. **→12**

Badab-e Surt: The rolling hills and lush landscape

By Afshin Majlesi

Sure, trips to Tehran, Isfahan or Shiraz are nice — but sometimes the best vacations come from traveling off the beaten path.

So an alternative suggestion may be to skip the crowds by heading to lesser-known destinations which Iran never falls short of.

Your itinerary may include Badab-e Surt in northern Iran, where a scenic landscape bar-

gains its visitors with a striking panorama of rust-colored travertine terraces adjacent to the Alborz mountain range.

The trodden, limestone formations of Badab-e Surt have been shaped over the span of thousands years by the flowing and cooling of water from hot mineral springs.

“The Badab-e Surt travertine springs take some effort to get to and in real life they aren’t as large as

they appear in photos. However, look closely at the terraces and you’ll see how delicate the layers are and the color of the water and rock is unique. It is very photogenic and if you are able to visit during a clear day and experience sunset/sunrise, the colors changing as they reflect in the water is beautiful... it is one of Iran’s natural wonders,” said Wakitsu-bu from Perth, Australia in a comment posted to TripAdvisor on January 26. **→10**

UAE confirms ships ‘sabotaged’ off its coast

TEHRAN— The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has confirmed, after initial denial, that a number of commercial ships have been targeted by “sabotage” attack near its territorial waters.

The Foreign Ministry of the United Arab Emirates issued a statement, saying that four commercial vessels have been targeted by “sabotage operations” near its territorial waters.

The statement added that there were no victims, but fell short of giving any details on possible

damage to commercial vessels and their flags..

The ministry statement was tweeted by the official news agency WAM.

According to the statement, the incident occurred near the UAE emirate of Fujairah, one of the world’s largest bunkering hubs that lies just outside the Strait of Hormuz, which is a vital oil and natural gas corridor for the global energy market.

“Subjecting commercial vessels to sabotage

operations and threatening the lives of their crew is considered a dangerous development,” the statement added.

The statement claimed that despite the attack, routine port operations at Fujairah port were going on without interruption.

Earlier in the day, the Lebanon-based Al Mayadeen television channel reported that as many as seven tankers had been hit by a massive fire at the al-Fujairah oil tanker terminal. **→13**



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IIDO director Mohammad Qomi meets Afghan art elites

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization (IIDO) director Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Qomi met a number of Tehran-based Afghan art and cultural figures on Sunday.

Writer Mohammad-Sarvar Rajai, poet Mohammad-Kazem Kazemi, publisher Mohammad-Ebrahim Shariati and former Afghan cultural attaché in Iran Asadollah Amiri were among the guests who held talks with Qomi in his office. **→16**

REPORT

Ramin Hossein Abadian
 Mehr News Agency
 journalist

Fujairah explosions, from denial to security scandal

While Abu Dhabi initially denied the Fujairah explosions on Sunday, the country had to reveal the truth only in a matter of hours and acknowledge the security gap behind the incident.

The news on several heavy explosions in the port of Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates was first revealed by Lebanon-based Al-Mayadeen TV on Sunday.

Although the real reason behind the incident has not been revealed yet, the early reports, citing eyewitnesses, further suggested that American and French warplanes have been seen flying over the port at the time of the incident.

The blasts were heard between 4:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. local time (00:00 — 03:00 GMT), the broadcaster reported, adding that from seven to 10 oil tankers were in flames.

Despite Al-Mayadeen’s news that was picked up and reported by other media in a few minutes, the UAE government hastily denied the reports, insisting that the port was functioning as usual; however, it had to admit to the security catastrophe sooner or later.

■ **From denial to scandal**

The UAE, later on Sunday, confirmed that four commercial vessels were hit by sabotage near the emirate of Fujairah. The Persian Gulf state gave no details on the nature of the sabotage or who was behind it.

Saudi Arabia said on Monday that two Saudi oil tankers were among vessels targeted by the attack.

Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih said that while the attack did not lead to any casualties or an oil spill, it caused significant damage to the structures of the two vessels.

UAE called on the international community and international organizations concerned with maritime navigation to assume their political and legal responsibilities to prevent such acts by any parties attempting to undermine maritime traffic safety and security, adding that such irresponsible acts will increase tension and conflicts in the region and expose its peoples to great danger. **→7**

It is essential to implement nuclear deal, German FM says

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said on Monday that it is essential to implement the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

“We in Europe agree that this deal is crucial for our security... We are conducting negotiations again exactly for this purpose,” Sputnik quoted Maas as saying upon his arrival at the Foreign Affairs Council of EU ministers in Brussels.



On May 8, Iran officially announced that it stops selling stockpiles of enriched uranium and heavy water for 60 days. However, Iran warned if a conclusion is not reached in this time period, it will take other measures step by step and will accelerate its uranium enrichment activities.

Iran stated it would no longer observe limits for its stockpile of low enriched uranium (currently capped at 300kg under the JCPOA) and heavy water reserve (capped at 130 tons).

“This announcement is for 60 days. We have announced to the other side, the five countries [Germany, France, UK, Russia and China], that if they come to the negotiating table in 60 days and we reach a conclusion and safeguard our main interests which are oil [sale] and banking relations, we will return to the previous situation of May 7, 2019,” President Hassan Rouhani told a cabinet meeting on May 8.

Under the JCPOA, endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran was tasked to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. However, since Trump pulled the U.S. out of the JCPOA, the European countries cut banking ties with Iran, stopped purchasing Iranian oil, annulled agreements, and their companies left Iran one after another.

In an interview published online by Le Parisien on Saturday, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said that it is a pity that the U.S. is not honoring its commitments under the nuclear deal.

Le Drian warned that the chain of reactions on the JCPOA could intensify into a “bellicose spiral”.

The top French diplomat described Iran’s decision to suspend sale of excess uranium and heavy water as a “bad reaction” in response to a similar “bad decision” by Washington to not honor its commitments, according to Press TV.

Neither negotiation nor surrender, just resistance: Judiciary chief

POLITICAL DESK TEHRAN — Ebrahim Raeisi, the Judiciary chief, said on Monday that Iran can achieve victory over the U.S. economic and political pressure through resistance, suggesting that Iran will not surrender or hold negotiation with the Trump administration.



“What we are facing today is political, economic and psychological warfare. What will bring victory for the Iranian nation is neither negotiation nor surrender and wrong messages that imply backing down or welcome negotiation,” he said during a meeting with top judicial officials.

He added, “We have learned over the past 40 years that victory can be achieved through resistance and reliance on God.”

Kamal Kharrazi, chief of the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, said on Sunday that U.S. President Donald Trump’s act in quitting the landmark 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), “has left no room for trust and negotiation”.

“Trump’s performance in withdrawing from the JCPOA and imposing cruel sanctions against the Iranian people has left no room for trust and negotiation and his invitations to hold talks are just propaganda,” Kharrazi said during a meeting with a number of French think tanks directors.

U.S. President Donald Trump reiterated on Thursday that Washington is ready to negotiate with Iranian leaders. Also, in a press conference at the White House on July 30, 2018, Trump said he would meet with Iran “anytime they want to” and without “preconditions”.

However, hours after Trump’s statements, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo appeared on CNBC to set some conditions. Back in May, Pompeo had set 12 conditions for talks with Iran, which were dismissed by Tehran.

In remarks on August 13, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said there will be no war between Iran and the U.S. and nor will be any negotiation between the two countries.

The Leader noted that negotiation with the current U.S. administration is impossible. “Even if we were to negotiate with the U.S., we would never hold talks with the current U.S. administration.”

Iran urges clarification on vessel incidents in Oman Sea

1 → Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi said that the incident is “worrisome”.

Referring to the negative impact of these incidents on shipping safety and maritime security, he warned against plots by ill-wishers to disrupt regional security.

Mousavi also called for vigilance by regional states in the face of any adventurism by foreign elements.

Tension has been increasing in the Persian Gulf and the wider Middle East region since the U.S. has made military threats against Iran and dispatched aircraft carrier to the regional waters and deployed Patriot missiles in certain regional countries.

Tehran says its new measures are within JCPOA framework

Kamalvandi says Russia will continue to build other phases of Bushehr nuclear plant

POLITICAL DESK TEHRAN — Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization spokesman has said the country has started a new level of activities under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as a countermeasure to the United States’ withdrawal from the deal and reimposition of sanctions.

“The country has decided that part of the deal has not been implemented... and I do not believe that the Europeans or the Americans themselves, or any other country for that matter, would deny the fact that the other party has failed to uphold its commitments,” Behrooz Kamalvandi told Alalam in an interview aired on Monday.

He noted that after one year of patience since the U.S. quit the deal, Iran has started to take actions explained in the JCPOA, therefore it is not practically violating the deal.

“This means to use the capacities of the JCPOA. In articles 26 and 36 this right has been given that if it is decided that some of the sanctions are reimposed, the Islamic Republic can stop fulfilling some or all of its obligations,” the official stated.

He underlined that Iran still has given the other party - Europeans in particular - two months’ time to save the international agreement.

“In fact, we are creating some balance between our rights and our commitments. There should be less commitments as there are less rights,” Kamalvandi said.

On May 8, exactly one year after Washington’s withdrawal from the JCPOA, President Hassan Rouhani announced that as a retaliation against the U.S. pullout from the 2015 deal and reimposition of sanctions, coupled with a failure by the European Union to offset sanctions, Iran stops selling stockpiles of enriched uranium and heavy water for 60 days.

According to the announcement, Iran would



no longer observe limits for its stockpile of low enriched uranium, currently capped at 300kg under the JCPOA, and heavy water reserve capped at 130 tons.

Iran was exchanging heavy water for importation of yellow cake from Russia.

“This announcement is for 60 days. We have announced to the other side, the five countries [Germany, France, UK, Russia and China], that if they come to the negotiating table in 60 days and we reach a conclusion and safeguard our main interests which are oil [sale] and banking relations, we will return to the previous situation of May 7, 2019,” Rouhani told a cabinet meeting.

However, he warned, if a conclusion is not reached, Iran will resume enriching uranium and will not follow obligations under the JCPOA according to which its uranium enrichment should not exceed the purity level of 3.67 percent.

Pointing to a letter he sent to the leaders of the remaining parties to the JCPOA, Rouhani said he has mentioned in the letter that Iran will give a firm response if the remaining parties refer the issue to the UN Security Council.

The remaining signatories to the JCPOA are Germany, Britain, France, Russia and China.

Rouhani noted that Iran has not quit the JCPOA and its action is within the framework of the articles 26 and 36 of the deal.

“No word reduced or added. The JCPOA is the same JCPOA and will not change. However, we are ready to sit at the negotiating table to better implement it and make your implementation of the commitments better,” Rouhani explained.

Under the JCPOA, endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran was tasked to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and

financial sanctions. However, since Trump pulled the U.S. out of the JCPOA, the European countries cut banking ties with Iran, stopped purchasing Iranian oil, annulled agreements, and their companies left Iran one after another.

Even when the oil sanctions were first introduced against Iran in November 2018, which exempted certain countries, including Greece and Italy, these two EU members refused to buy oil from Iran in limited volumes.

Trump’s exit from the JCPOA and Europeans’ refusal to respect their obligations happened despite the fact that International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has issued 14 reports each time confirming that Iran has been fully abiding by the terms of the agreement.

The Europeans have just expressed political support for the JCPOA without taking a concrete step. Iran has said words will not save the JCPOA.

■ Russia continues nuclear co-op with Iran despite U.S. forbiddance

In another part of his interview, Kamalvandi answered questions regarding the continuation of cooperation between Iran and Russian on building nuclear power plants in Bushehr.

“[The development of] power plants 2 and 3 (of Bushehr) is about 3 to 4 months ahead of schedule,” he explained.

“America did a stupid thing saying the new Bushehr power plants are under sanctions.... Russia has said it does not consider the sanctions... so America’s statement is only words and will pose no problem,” Kamalvandi explained.

“The same story was true about Power Plant 1, where Russia did its job despite all the technical hardships and political pressure. They have now announced that the sanctions will by no means affect the Iran-Russia nuclear cooperation especially regarding the Bushehr power plants.”

Report on U.S. human rights violations handed to Majlis presiding board

POLITICS DESK TEHRAN — The Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has submitted its first report on the United States’ human rights violations to the parliament’s presiding board, committee chairman Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh said on Monday.

Falahatpisheh said the committee has 15 bills on its agenda against U.S. actions during the past year which urge the government to pursue the required measures, Mehr reported.

“Bills such as those about the U.S. role in violating human rights issues concerning Iranians, its role in cyber terrorism, etc. are also among the bills being addressed by the committee,” the lawmaker added.

In mid-April, the parliamentary committee approved a bill in retaliation to U.S. designation of the IRGC as a terrorist group. The parliament then ratified the generalities of the bill. Iranian lawmakers overwhelmingly



voted in favor of the 13-article bill to counter the U.S. measure.

Parliament members also prepared a bill, calling on Islamic companies to boycott the American Incorporation, Apple Company on April 16.

According to reports, this is the first time that a comprehensive measure is being documented by the parliamentary committee to prove that the U.S., which claims to be a defender of human rights, is the main violator of it.

Zarif says Iran ready to strengthen ties with Turkmenistan

POLITICS DESK TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said Iran is ready to expand its relations with neighboring Turkmenistan.

Zarif made the remarks in a meeting with his Turkmen counterpart Rasit Meredow in Ashgabat on Monday.

“Our commonalities are more than being neighbors and the Islamic Republic of Iran is fully ready to further expand relations between the two friendly and neighboring countries,” he said, Mehr reported.

For his part, Meredow said his country is determined to enhance cooperation with Iran in different fields.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on different issues, including cooperation in international bodies, regional issues, particularly

with regard to Afghanistan, holding a joint economic commission, Turkmen president’s visit to Iran, cooperation in the Caspian Sea, transit and rail, and energy and electricity.

Earlier on Monday, Zarif met with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow to discuss various aspects of bilateral relations as well as the most important regional and international issues.

Heading a high-ranking politico-economic delegation, Zarif arrived in Ashgabat on Sunday for a visit within the framework of bilateral consultations between the two states.

The visit comes one year after Iranian President Hassan Rouhani paid an official visit to Turkmenistan.

During the trip in March 2018, Rouhani signed 13 accords with his Turkmen counterpart in different fields.

Mogherini reiterates support for Iran nuclear deal

Special adviser to Mogherini says U.S. pressure is making Iran’s compliance with the JCPOA impossible

POLITICAL DESK TEHRAN — European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said on Monday she would continue to support the 2015 nuclear pact because Iran continued to comply with inspections, Euronews reported.

Mogherini made the remarks before a meeting of the three European countries party to the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in Brussels.

In the same vein, Britain’s Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said on Monday Iran and the United States could trigger a conflict by accident in an already unstable Persian Gulf region.

President Donald Trump is seeking to isolate Tehran by cutting off its oil exports after pulling out of the deal. Trump has also sent U.S. warplanes and an aircraft carrier to the Persian Gulf.

“We are very worried about a conflict, about the risk of a conflict ... of an escalation that is unintended,” Hunt told reporters as he arrived in Brussels for a meeting of EU foreign ministers.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday arrived Brussels in an unplanned visit with European foreign ministers who had been meeting to bolster the faltering Iran nuclear deal against a U.S. assault, Reuters reported.

The last-minute decision — announced as he hopped on a plane — set up a confrontation between Pompeo and European diplomats who have been scrambling to save the deal.

Pompeo scrapped a day of mostly ceremonial events in Moscow on Monday

in favor of the Brussels stopover. He plans to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in the Black Sea resort of Sochi on Tuesday. Many EU leaders are furious with Trump’s moves on Iran, and Brussels appeared set to welcome Pompeo only grudgingly, if at all.

Trump has sent an aircraft carrier and B-52 bombers to the Persian Gulf in a show of force against what U.S. officials have said is a threat to U.S. troops in the region.

Iran says the strategy amounts to “psychological warfare” and a senior Iranian Revolutionary Guards commander on Sunday said Iran would retaliate to any aggressive U.S. moves.

Trump’s withdrawal from the 2015 deal is strongly opposed by Britain, France and Germany, the European signatories to the accord, which the EU helped to negotiate.

But last week they also rejected “ultimatums” from Tehran, after Iran

relaxed restrictions on its nuclear program and threatened moves that might breach the pact.

Also on Monday, Nathalie Tocci, the special adviser to Mogherini, acknowledged that U.S. pressure was making Iran’s compliance with the JCPOA impossible.

In an interview with CBC News, Tocci said the EU and the U.S. have fundamentally different objectives in their dealings with Iran.

“What is very clear is the fact that, in fact, some of the non-renewal of the sanctions waivers of the United States actually make it impossible for Iran to comply with the JCPOA,” she said.

The advisor said the EU’s objective is to contain Iran’s nuclear program, while the Trump administration’s aim is a regime collapse in Iran.

“Now as for the question, ‘Is the U.S. strategy aimed at a regime collapse in Iran



U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo crashes EU meeting on Iran.

actually delivering? Well, frankly speaking, I don’t see an Iranian regime on the verge of collapse,” she said.

“I didn’t see Iran’s strategy in the Middle East — Iranian foreign policy in the Middle East — actually having changed over the last year. It doesn’t seem to me to be delivering at all,” she said of U.S. aims in pressuring Iran.

Tocci further dismissed the possibility of a military confrontation between the U.S. and Iran.

“I don’t think it’s possible, because to be honest, I don’t think the United States has the military capability of actually conducting a war in Iran. I mean, they can certainly go to war,” she said. “The point is that they want to win it. I mean, they haven’t exactly been able to win a war in Iraq, and it’s a country that is incomparably smaller and weaker. So I don’t think that it is a realistic objective.”

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian also said on Monday that Europe insists that the Islamic Republic of Iran stay in the JCPOA.

Nathalie Tocci, the special adviser to Mogherini, says: “I don’t think it (war) is possible, because to be honest, I don’t think the United States has the military capability of actually conducting a war in Iran. I mean, they can certainly go to war,” she said. “The point is that they want to win it. I mean, they haven’t exactly been able to win a war in Iraq, and it’s a country that is incomparably smaller and weaker. So I don’t think that it is a realistic objective.”

Top political figures call for unity in meeting with Rouhani

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The top political figures who were invited by President Hassan Rouhani for an iftar dinner on Saturday evening have praised the administration's initiative to gather round members of rival political factions and called for continuation of such meetings which will help strengthen unity in the country.

According to the Iran newspaper, during the meeting, all of the attendees acknowledged that the Iranian people are faced with harsh economic condition and called on the Rouhani administration to take steps to remedy the situation.

Speaking at the event, Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, a former top lawmaker, referred to the notion of talks with the United States, likening the idea to being fooled by the same person twice.

"The people's real issue is unemployment, not being allowed to listen to a signer, which everyone has easy access to, and there's no problem there," said Haddad-Adel, a conservative politician. "The people want management and seriousness from the government," he added.

He also appealed for unity among different factions, saying although there are disagreements on domestic issues, all political groups must support the government to deal with the foreign threat.

Ali Rabiei, who had served under the Rouhani administration as labor minister, said in a tweet that the current problems are worse than those of the Iran-Iraq war era in the 1980s and underlined the need for national unity in order to overcome the issues.

"We must come to an understanding on



key issues," he said, adding, "The Saturday night's meeting with the president which was attended by more than 50 individuals from different political factions is a positive step to this end."

Rabiei, a pro-reform figure, further said the active presence of all political factions in such meetings is an essential need of the Iranian society.

Asadollah Badamchian, secretary-general of the Islamic Coalition Party, which is a principlist party, said a deep mutual respect existed between different individuals who

spoke at the meeting and they all emphasized the need to unify against the enemy.

Also, Badamchian said, the president was right to assert that today is not the time to hold talks with the U.S., but it is time to firmly stand up to Washington.

Mohammad Atrianfar, a reformist political activist, said a friendly atmosphere prevailed in the meeting which was attended by top figures of the reformist and principlist camps.

The participants unanimously agreed that all political groups should set aside their differences and help the president and his

administration to overcome such dangerous circumstances, Atrianfar stated.

Former senior lawmaker Mohammad Reza Bahonar also described the meeting as a "friendly" one which he said could have been held sooner "but still hosting political figures from different factions of the country by the distinguished president was noteworthy."

The meeting should be welcomed, however, more efforts are needed to broaden such meetings to include members of political groups instead of just the top figures, said Bahonar, a principlist politician who served as parliamentarian for 28 years.

Meanwhile, it is worth noting that Mohammad Reza Aref, a top reformist lawmaker, was absent at President Rouhani's iftar dinner. Aref's absence led to media speculation that he was sore at the president.

"I'm not sore," Aref said when asked about his absence, explaining that he had already invited guests over for iftar and could not change his plans.

Aref also said he had apologized to the president for his absence.

The meeting and the calls for unity come as tensions between Tehran and Washington have heightened in recent months, after the U.S. designated Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization and imposed new sanctions on Tehran.

Last week, the U.S. said it was dispatching an aircraft carrier group and B-52 bombers to the Middle East in response to purported intelligence that Iran is preparing to retaliate for the sanctions with attacks on American interests in the region.

Navy chief downplays U.S. presence in Persian Gulf, saying it is 'nothing new'

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Chief of the Iranian Navy Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi said on Sunday that the presence of U.S. naval fleet in the Persian Gulf is just for a show, noting that it does not serve any other purpose.

"I don't know why this naval fleet is receiving so much attention," Khanzadi said, Mehr reported.

He pointed out that during the past 40 years, since the Islamic Revolution, American forces have been near Iran's borders.

"However, the presence of U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf has reached its end and they must leave the region," he added.

Last week, the White House announced it would send its USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group and the bombers into the Persian Gulf to counter threats by Tehran.

The Abraham Lincoln carrier on Thursday passed through the Suez Canal on its way to the Persian Gulf.

Tension between Tehran and Washington have been ris-

ing since the Trump administration pulled out of the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and reimposed sanctions on Iran which had been lifted under the accord.

The U.S. pressure campaign against Tehran is not limited to sanctions. It has also put Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) on its list of foreign terrorist organization. Iran, in response, designated the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) in the Middle East as a terrorist organization.

Meanwhile, a year after the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, Iran announced last week that it will stop implementing some parts of its commitments under the JCPOA.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran upholds its rights under articles 26 and 36 of the JCPOA and will stop implementing some parts of its obligation under the JCPOA from today, May 8, 2019, in line with protecting the Iranian people's security and national interests," Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) said in a statement on May 8.



Iran calls Houthis' pullout from Hudaydah 'constructive'

TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry said on Monday that Houthis' withdrawal from key ports of Salif and Ras Isa and Hudaydah is a "constructive" action.

"Sanaa's action was in line with respecting the Stockholm agreement and showed the Yemeni government's commitment to dialogue and fulfilment of obligations and also shows the Saudi-led coalition's non-commitment," ministry spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi said.

He urged the United Nations and also the influential countries to press the Saudi-led coalition to fulfil its obligation under the Stockholm agreement reached in December 2018.

The UN says the withdrawal of Houthi forces from key ports of Yemen's western province of Hudaydah is proceeding "in accordance with established plans".

However, the former Saudi-backed government still refuses to pull out its forces and end its siege of Hudaydah.

Based on a UN-brokered agreement with the ex-government in Sweden in December



2018, warring sides agreed to withdraw their forces from the ports in a two-stage process, the first phase of which from the Houthi side

was unilaterally commenced on Saturday and is due to be completed on Tuesday.

The Saudi-led coalition, backed by the

U.S., started the war on Yemen in March 2015 with the aim of reinstating ousted president Mansour Hadi. The war has led to famine and spread of cholera in the poor country. The UN is calling it "the world's worst humanitarian crisis."

In April 2015, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif submitted a letter to then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outlining a four-point peace plan for Yemen.

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

"It is imperative for the international community to get more effectively involved in ending the senseless aerial attacks and establishing a ceasefire, ensuring delivery of humanitarian and medical assistance to the people of Yemen and restoring peace and stability to this country through dialogue and national reconciliation without pre-conditions," said Zarif's letter.

National spying for Britain gets 10-year sentence

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Judiciary announced on Monday that a female Iranian national has been sentenced to 10 years in prison on charges of spying for Britain.

The national, who was in charge of the Iran desk at the British Council, was sentenced to prison after she confessed that she was spying for Britain, Judiciary spokesman Gholam Hossein Esmayeeli told a press conference.

He refused to identify the person, but said she was a student who had been looking for gaining a residence permit and employment opportunity in Britain and was hired by the British Council after a long process.

"She has later received the necessary trainings under the British security service, and after they trusted her, she was in charge of the Iran desk at the British Council and organized different activities," Esmayeeli explained, according to Fars.

He added that the convict had made frequent visits across



Iran under an alias name and planned and managed different cultural projects in the country in line with London's objectives.

"The person was under detention for over a year without a public announcement because the case was under probe and in the procedures for a court ruling," Esmayeeli said, explaining that she has been charged with acting against internal security.

Every year, Iran identifies and arrests several spies working for foreign intelligence services.

Former Judiciary spokesman Gholam Hossein Mohseni Eje'i declared in November 2018 that a state employee charged with spying on the Iranian Foreign Ministry was found guilty and sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment.

"The individual, namely Kamal Amirbeig (alias Alibeig) who is a Foreign Ministry staff member, has been given a 10-year jail term and confiscation of over \$200,000 of his assets," Eje'i explained.

Police chief lauds security at Iran-Afghanistan border



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Police Chief Hossein Ashtari has hailed as "desirable" the security situation along Iran's common border with neighboring Afghanistan.

General Ashtari visited the border units in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan along the border with Afghanistan on Sunday night, Tasnim reported.

The police chief said the security existing at Iran's southeastern border is a result of interaction and coordination between the border guards and locals.

He referred to the martyrdom of Iranian police forces in the fight against drug traffickers, saying international organizations should act responsibly by supporting the Islamic Republic in fighting drug smuggling.

Iran, which has a 900-kilometer common border with Afghanistan, has been used as the main conduit for smuggling Afghan drugs to narcotics kingpins in Europe.

Despite high economic and human costs, the Islamic Republic has been actively fighting drug-trafficking over the past decades.

The country has spent more than \$700 million on sealing its borders and preventing the transit of narcotics destined for European, Arab and Central Asian countries.

The war on drug trade originating from Afghanistan has claimed the lives of nearly 4,000 Iranian police officers over the past four decades.

UN envoy meets Iranian ambassador to Baghdad

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The United Nations' special representative for Iraq has met with Iran's Ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi.

During the meeting, Jeanine Hennis Plasschaert described her recent visit to Iran as successful, stressing that the UN seeks Tehran's continued help to establish peace and security in Iraq, the Islamic Republic News Agency reported on Sunday.

Plasschaert also congratulated the arrival of the fasting month of Ramadan. She and Masjedi also reviewed developments in Iraq and the larger region.

The Iranian diplomat, for his part, welcomed continued collaboration between Iran and the UN for reinforcing stability in Iraq and hailed Iraq's role in establishing stability and fighting terrorism.

Earlier, Masjedi and Hennis Plasschaert met in late April where the ambassador reiterated Tehran's will to contribute to the reconstruction of Iraq.

The ambassador elaborated on Iran's activities in countering terrorism in the region, in Iraq and Syria in particular.

Masjedi said Iran's counter-terrorism advisory role in Iraq and Syria have been at the request of the two countries.

Iran is after solidarity and friendship between the regional people and governments, he said, adding Tehran's efforts have always been in line with ensuring stability in the region.

The Islamic Republic spares no effort to deepen friendly relations with its neighbor, he concluded.

In that meeting, Plasschaert appreciated the important role Iran is playing in the campaign against terrorism in order to establish security and peace in both Iraq and the wider region.

She also hailed the undeniable role that Iraq's Hashd al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization) played in defeating terrorism and bringing stability to Iraq.

Tehran, Havana call for closer ties in all fields

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran and Cuba on Monday underlined the importance of resistance against the U.S. pressure and called for improvement of bilateral relations in all fields, IRNA reported.

Iran and Cuba should expand their cooperation in all fields, said Mohammad Reza Mansouri, head of the Iran-Cuba Parliamentary Friendship Group.

Mansouri made the remarks in a meeting with Cuban Ambassador to Tehran Alexis Bandrich Vega.

The Iranian lawmaker further called for expansion of economic ties with Cuba, saying Tehran has the desire to promote the level of economic cooperation with Havana.

The Cuban envoy, for his part, said his country welcomes Iran's investment in various economic projects in Cuba.

Improvement of cooperation between Iran and Cuba is necessary in the current situation in which the U.S. is tightening up its pressure campaign on Tehran and Havana, he remarked.

The ambassador also expressed solidarity with the Iranian people and government in face of U.S. sanctions and said for sure, the Islamic Republic will resist the imperialist power's pressure and will emerge victorious.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	207751.7
IFX	2539.69

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,171 rials
GBP	54,648 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$71.75/b
WTI	\$62.53/b
OPEC Basket	\$69.66/b
Gold	\$1,284.50/oz
Silver	\$14.69/oz
Platinum	\$859.25/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

CBI governor holds talks with representatives of private sector

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati held a meeting with the board of directors of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) on Sunday to discuss the government’s monetary policies regarding the private sector.

In the meeting a variety of issues were explored including the country’s foreign currency market and the private sector’s demands in this regard.

Establishing a sense of trust between the country’s private sector and the government was also among the issues that was emphasized by the two sides.

In early May, Hemmati had said that CBI plans for neutralizing or relieving the impact of U.S. sanctions on the country’s economy by monitoring and controlling the foreign currency market.

Maintaining and strengthening the relative stability of the foreign currency exchange market by strengthening and improvement of the performance of Iran’s domestic Forex Management Integrated System (locally known as NIMA), setting foreign currency exchange policies to support non-oil and oil exports and providing liquidity and working capital to maintain and boost domestic production and finally establishing a financial mechanism with neighboring countries were some of the plans which Hemmati said the CBI is going to follow.

Italy in talks with UAE sovereign funds to lure investment

By Sarmad Khan

Italy, the eurozone’s third-largest economy, is looking for partnerships with UAE sovereign wealth funds to jointly invest in Africa and Asia, as it looks to expand trade and investment relations, its Trade Commissioner in the UAE said.

“We would like to engage UAE sovereign wealth funds to be partners ... in Africa to joint venture with them and to fund projects, as ... Africa will be the next lion [big market] in economic terms,” Gianpaolo Bruno, who oversees trade promotion in the UAE, Oman and Pakistan, told The National in an interview.

“Southeast Asia would be another destination. Countries look more and at China and Southeast Asian countries ... (and) we are also looking at that as well.”

Italy, which has struggled to kick-start growth, is laden with debt and is at odds with European counterparts on spending and budgetary plans. Rome needs foreign direct investment to help stabilize its economy and drive growth. The government of Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte is in talks with UAE investors and sovereign funds for potential investment in Italian logistics, tourism and technology-intensive industries.

“We are engaging them (sovereign funds) in order to understand where we can partner with them successfully and of course we would like to see them more and more engaged in Italy. We would like to see more investment flows from the UAE,” Mr. Bruno said. He declined to name the sovereign funds.

Italy is planning to setup at least two large-scale free zones adjacent to ports in the southern part of the country. Italian authorities have already initiated talks with DP World, the fourth biggest ports operator in the world, and Jabel Ali Free Zone Authority in Dubai for potential partnerships for the development of the proposed free zones.

■ Important markets in Europe

Initial response for the UAE counterparts has been “very good” for the projects, which could be the “gateways to access the important markets in Europe”, he added.

Italian companies have major investment interests in the UAE, especially in the country’s oil and sector, one of the biggest driver of foreign direct investments in the UAE. Italian oil and gas major Eni, in January won three concessions in Sharjah’s first-ever competitive bid. The firm has also been on a winning streak in Abu Dhabi, clinching several deals as the emirate forges ahead with plans to boost oil and gas capacities.

Rome is vying to boost non-oil trade between the two countries. In April, Luigi Di Maio, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Development of Italy, led a large business delegation to the UAE, the biggest export market for Italy in the Mena region.

■ Non-oil goods to Italy

Italian exports to the UAE last year reach €4.7 billion euros (Dh19.4b) while the UAE exported €1.1b worth of non-oil goods to Italy. Italian exports, which saw a decline in the past two years on the back of a global economic slowdown and a three-year oil price slump, are expected to rise as much as 7 per cent by 2020, Mr. Bruno said.

“We reached maximum level of exports to the UAE in 2015, which was almost €6bn, but given the economic situation and volatility in the market ... our exports recorded a contraction,” he said. “If we can manage a CGAR (compound annual growth rate of) of 5 percent we will be very happy. It is highly strategic market for us and that is the reason why we are doubling our efforts to further develop our bilateral trade relations.” (Source: Thenational.ae)

Monthly coal concentrate output up 33% yr/yr

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Production of coal concentrate in Iran increased 33 percent during the first Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 20, 2019) compared to the output in the first month of the previous year, IRIB reported on Monday citing the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

As reported, some 67,148 tons of coal concentrate have been produced in Farvardin of this year, rising from 51,492 tons in the first month of the past year.

Iranian mining sector witnessed some prominent growth both in production and export during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019).

According to the data released by IMIDRO, the value of Iran’s minerals and mining industries’ exports stood at \$9.226 billion in the past year.

IMIDRO data indicate that the steel products account for the lion’s share of the exports from this sector in the past year, with the value



Value of textile exports rises 6% in a year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The value of Iran’s textile exports rose six percent during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019), Afsaneh Mehrabi, director general of Textile and Clothing Industry Office at Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade told IRNA on Sunday.

The official also announced that the country’s textile export has experienced a 26-percent rise in terms of weight during the past year.

She said 80,000 tons of textile floor coverings (like carpets and rugs) worth \$417 million constituted the lion’s share of the exports in the previous year.

Iranian textile manufacturers imported 397,000 tons of textile raw materials worth \$1.12 billion during the past year, which indicates 32 percent fall in terms of value and 35 percent drop in terms of weight year on year, Mehrabi further underlined.

According to the official, Iran’s textile and clothing industry needs some \$4 billion to supply raw materials, equipment and machinery, \$2.5 billion of which is imported.

As previously announced by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the value of Iran’s non-oil exports stood at \$44.3 billion in the previous year while \$42.6 billion worth of commodities were shipped into the country.

IRICA data also show that the value of Iran’s non-oil trade

stood at \$4.87 billion during the first Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 20, 2019).

As reported, the worth of non-oil trade during the first month of this Iranian calendar year fell 13.5 percent compared to that of the same month of the past year.

Although, the country recorded a non-oil trade surplus of \$213 million in Farvardin of this year.

Iran exported 8.52 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$2.54 billion during the first month, registering a 7.66-percent increase in weight, but an 18.25-percent decline in value compared to the first month of the previous year.

Monthly non-oil imports amounted to 2.08 million tons worth \$2.33 billion, up 7.75 percent in weight, but down 7.65 percent in value year on year.

Meanwhile, based on the latest data published by Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), the value of Iran’s trade with the neighboring countries stood at over \$36.5 billion in the past Iranian calendar year, that is about 41 percent of the country’s total non-oil trade in the mentioned time span.

Iran shares border with fifteen countries, namely the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia, Oman, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kuwait, Qatar, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia.

The country plans to launch 15 mega export projects to identify more target markets, the acting head of TPO has



recently announced.

Mohammadreza Modoudi said with the implementation of these projects, which mainly focus on the markets of neighboring countries, identifying professional trade and promoting export of non-oil commodities will be put on agenda, Mehr news agency reported.

The official further referred to the \$1.7 billion positive trade balance in the country’s non-oil trade in the past Iranian calendar year and said this positive balance was achieved through cooperation with the private sector.

U.S.-China trade talks stumble on Beijing’s spending at home

By Keith Bradsher and Ana Swanson

One year ago, when he began a multibillion-dollar trade war with China that shook the global economy, President Trump demanded that Beijing end lavish government spending aimed at making the country a world power in computer chips, robotics, commercial aircraft and other industries of the future.

Today, as the two sides struggle to reach a truce, the Trump administration is finding just how difficult that will be.

Trade talks between the United States and China nearly ground to a halt this past week, and a seemingly intractable dispute over subsidies is a big part of it. Robert E. Lighthizer, the United States trade representative, accused China last Monday of reneging on what he described as “good, firm commitments on eliminating market-distorting subsidies.” Vice Premier Liu He, the leader of China’s negotiating team, said that it was normal for negotiations to have ups and downs, but has also nodded to the subsidies issue in vowing repeatedly over the last several days not to bend on China’s principles.

President Trump on Friday raised tariffs on \$200 billion a year worth of Chinese goods, hitting goods leaving China’s shores as of that day. He has directed Mr. Lighthizer to start on Monday the long process for raising tariffs on all Chinese goods.

In talks and in an exchange of documents, Chinese negotiators surprised their American counterparts by calling at the start of this month for numerous changes, people familiar with the negotiations said. While the requests covered everything from intellectual property to currency manipulation, the hardened Chinese stance against limiting government subsidies poses a particular challenge.

The United States wants China to enshrine limits on subsidies in its national laws. China says it will not let a foreign country tell it how to change its laws. A schedule of planned legislation released by Chinese officials on Saturday did not include any of the subsidy-related measures that Washington has sought.

■ Chinese homegrown industries

Beijing has long helped its homegrown industries in strategically important areas like jetliners and parts for nuclear reactors. It also supports efforts to build up China’s high-tech industries like microchips and self-driving cars to make sure the economy will stay competitive.

Stopping, or even tracking, China’s subsidies is a difficult task. Many subsidies take the form of cheap loans from government-controlled banks or through other opaque arrangements. Foreign companies also complain that they are often shut out of local government contracts through



written and unwritten rules, giving Chinese competitors a strong base at home while they pursue global expansion plans.

China has agreed to disclose more information about its subsidies and stop those that violate rules under the World Trade Organization, the global trade referee. But the two sides are also at loggerheads over how to interpret those WTO rules, said people familiar with the talks, who asked for anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

In his news briefing last Monday, Mr. Lighthizer said China’s trade negotiators had made significant, enforceable commitments to the United States, but added that “some people” in China had objected to them, without saying who. China’s trade negotiators are heavily drawn from the ranks of the country’s market-oriented economic reformers and have long been at odds with officials who want greater reliance on heavily subsidized state-owned enterprises.

The Trump administration insists on leaving in place tariffs on imports from heavily subsidized Chinese industries, at least for this year. That would protect the American market in industries that trade hawks within the administration see as strategically crucial.

Chinese officials oppose those tariffs. Mr. Liu told Chinese state-controlled media on Saturday that the Chinese government “believes that tariffs are the starting point for trade disputes between the two sides — if an agreement is to be reached, the tariffs must all be canceled.”

Chad Bown, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said that tariffs imposed bilaterally were a poor tool to address a global problem like overcapacity. Even if the United States successfully kept part of the

tariffs in place, they would protect only American business at home. Subsidized Chinese business could still compete at home, in Europe and almost everywhere else around the globe, hurting prospects for American exporters.

In the United States, Democrats have been increasingly critical of the Trump administration for not obtaining more trade policy concessions. Yet even some Democrats said they saw limited prospects that China will agree to reduce subsidies.

To “be fair the Obama administration got nowhere, the Bush administration got nowhere,” Derek Scissors, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, said about convincing China to roll back its subsidies. “This is a crucial way the Chinese run their economy.”

If a trade deal does not fully cover subsidies, the United States could resort to unconventional responses. For example, the United States has pushed for an extensive revision of its laws surrounding foreign investments and exports of high-tech products, primarily aimed at China, to try to preserve its commercial and military edge.

The Trump administration has made some progress in the emerging trade deal on other ways the Chinese government props up its industries. Beijing has promised to tell its state-controlled banks to show less favoritism in lending to state-owned enterprises instead of private sector businesses. Beijing has also pledged to open up the bidding for government contracts to foreign companies, instead of reserving them almost completely for Chinese companies.

■ China opens up the bidding

If China opens up the bidding, “that would actually, genuinely move the market needle on

of \$4.1 billion.

The organization has also reported that production of iron ore concentrate has increased 17 percent year on year as the country produced over 45.4 million tons of the product during the past year.

Also, iron ore pellet output has reached 6.3 million tons, registering a nine-percent annual growth.

Furthermore, production of copper concentrate in Iran during the past Iranian calendar year was five percent more than the planned figure.

IMIDRO data has put the country’s copper concentrate output at 1.18 million tons in the past year, which is 1.123 million tons more than the planned amount.

Meanwhile, Iran produced 276,575 tons of aluminum ingots in the past year.

Iran is one of the top 10 mineral-rich countries where 68 types of minerals have been identified so far, including the world’s largest deposits of copper, zinc and iron ore, which are tempting international investors.

opportunities for foreign companies in China,” said Scott Kennedy, a China economic policy specialist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

On the issue of subsidies, China has grown quieter. Its “Made in China 2025” plan two years ago called for \$300 billion in special financing and other assistance for 10 advanced manufacturing industries. China shelved the catchy name for the program in recent months, while expressing determination to continue investing in “high-quality manufacturing.”

China is willing to publicly list and disclose subsidies from its central government, people familiar with the trade talks said. But instead of disclosing these subsidies to the United States, which might be seen by the Chinese public as humiliating, the Chinese government wants to disclose them through the WTO, which would then pass on the list to its members.

WTO rules ban governments from helping exporting companies with cash, free land and other easily measured gifts. The rules are somewhat looser on measures like cheap loans from state-controlled banks or efforts to replace imports by fostering domestic production of the same goods.

Beijing has told American negotiators that it will end subsidies if they are breaking WTO rules. But the Chinese national government’s assistance to industries tends to fall into the categories that are hardest to prove as violating WTO rules.

In China, the subsidies more likely to break WTO rules tend to be given to exporters by provincial and local government agencies in China. In the trade talks with the United States, Beijing has agreed to look for provincial and local subsidies that may violate WTO rules, but has been resistant to passing legislation that would abolish them, people familiar with the talks said.

At least a few market-oriented Chinese government officials have worried that broad subsidies might be squandered by companies more interested in taking the government’s money than in creating competitive products. But these critics appear to be a shrinking minority.

Lou Jiwei, a prominent advocate of economic reform and the chairman of China’s social security fund, told The South China Morning Post in early March that the Made in China 2025 plan “wasted taxpayers’ money.”

Mentions of Mr. Lou immediately disappeared from state-controlled media. There followed a cursory statement by the official Xinhua news agency on April 4 that he had been removed from his post at the social security fund. No reason was given.

(Source: nytimes.com)

Iraq says no replacement for Iran’s electricity

➔ “At the moment, about four gigawatts [nearly one-third of Iraqi electricity] comes directly and indirectly from Iran, either by providing the electricity directly or through natural gas supplies that provide the feedstock for power generation”, al-Khateeb added.

He further underlined Iraq’s strategic relations with its six neighbors, noting “this must not be compromised at the expense of one relationship.”

Earlier this month, Al-Khateeb said Iraq will need to import gas and electricity from Iran for at least three more years.

Other Iraqi officials including Oil Minister Thamer al-Ghazban had also referred to improbability of cutting gas and power imports from Iran under U.S. pressure, before.

Considering Iraq’s geopolitical



improvements in the past few years, the Iraqi government has been seeking to improve the country’s infrastructure and one of the main areas of focus has been Iraq’s electricity network and power infrastructures.

Being neighbor to a country which is the home to the world’s second largest gas resources is a good-enough reason for Iraq to look to Iran as one of its main suppliers of natural gas to meet its energy needs. Therefore, Iran for long has been one of Iraq’s main gas suppliers.

Since Trump withdrew from Iran’s nuclear deal in November, the U.S. government and its allies have been putting all their efforts together to isolate Iran and make the Islamic country bend under economic pressure and doing so, cutting Iran’s energy exports has been Trump’s top agenda.

56,000 agricultural wells equipped with smart electricity meters



ENERGY DESK TEHRAN — With 306,978 new agricultural wells being equipped with smart electricity meters, the number of such wells has reached 56,000 across the country, IRNA reported quoting an energy official.

According to Mohammad-Ali Validad, the deputy director of the Energy Ministry’s national smart metering program (known as FAHAM), in addition to monitoring the electricity consumption, the ministry is also monitoring the amount of water being exploited from the wells.

In March 2009 implementation of FAHAM was placed on the agenda of Iranian government and Energy Ministry.

The target was decreasing electricity loss at least one percent per year and 14 percent decrease in overall network loss by 2015.

FAHAM project is funded by Energy Ministry of Iran and is being executed under the supervision of Iran Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Management Company (TAVANIR).

Iran is facing a rising demand for electricity and the Energy Ministry has been following new policies in recent years to manage the consumption and lessen the electricity losses in the national grid.

In December 2018, Mohammad Hassan Motevalizadeh, the managing director of TAVANIR, said Iran’s power industry needs six quadrillion rials (near \$142.8 billion) to keep the country’s electricity infrastructure up with the rising demand.

Modifying consumption patterns and also electricity tariffs has been offered as practical solutions to reduce electricity consumption in the country.

‘Thermal power plants account for 95% of Iran’s power generation’



ENERGY DESK TEHRAN — Thermal power plants are generating near 95 percent of Iran’s electricity, IRIB reported on Sunday, quoting a senior official with the country’s Thermal Power Plants Holding Company.

“There are 84 power plants with 544 thermal electricity generation units across the country and these power plants generate near 95 percent of the country’s electricity,” Abdolrasoul Pishahang said.

The official noted that the capacity of Iran’s thermal power plants grew by 615 megawatts (MW) in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019) without constructing new plants.

“This increase has been achieved by cooling the air entering the plant’s equipment and increasing their efficiency,” he added.

According to the official, the country’s nominal electricity generation capacity has reached 81,000 megawatts (81 gigawatts). Iran’s total power generation capacity stood at 80,000 MW in the past Iranian calendar year (1397), up from the 78,484 MW of its preceding year.

Pishahang noted that of the total capacity, 68 GW is produced by the thermal and combined cycle power plants, the share of hydroelectric power plants is 12 GW while nuclear plants generate 1 GW of the country’s total electricity, and the share of dispersed generation units is 3 GW.

The Energy Ministry plans to inaugurate 22 new units with a total capacity of 3,933 MW in the current fiscal year along with upgrading and increasing the efficiency of existing power plants to add another 461 MW of new capacity.

‘Renovating oil industry’s pipelines, telecommunication equipment necessary’

ENERGY DESK TEHRAN — The managing director of National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) has emphasized the need for renovation of the country’s oil pipelines and the industry’s telecommunication equipment, Shana reported.

Alireza Sadeq-Abadi made the remarks during a ceremony

held for introducing the new managing director of Iranian Oil Pipelines and Telecommunications Company (IOPTC) on Saturday.

“Due to the vital role of the pipelines in the transmission of energy and considering the fact that most of the country’s pipelines are old, it is necessary to pay significant attention to the renovation and creation of new capacities in this industry”, he noted.

The official emphasized the need to increase the company’s productivity in both hardware and software sectors, adding “Fortunately, due to the IOPTC’s great performance during the recent flood crisis in the country, we didn’t face any serious problems in transferring oil and oil products across the country”, he underlined.

Iran, Pakistan to hold talks over IP gas pipeline by early June

ENERGY DESK TEHRAN — A high-ranking Iranian delegation is due to visit Islamabad in near future to discuss the stalled Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project (known as IP), Mehr news agency reported on Monday, citing Pakistani daily Express Tribune.

As reported, according to Managing Director of Interstate Gas Company, Mobin Saulat, the Iranian delegation will visit Pakistan by early June, however, “the final date will be decided after receiving a reply from Iran.”

“The talks will be held on a technical level,” the official said, adding that Pakistan had signed the pipeline agreement with Iran and wanted the project to be completed.

Earlier this month, Pakistan Prime Minis-



ter Imran Khan said Pakistan is determined on completing the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline known as IP pipeline.

“Coordinating with the Islamic Republic of

Iran, Pakistan will take the necessary steps to complete the IP gas pipeline project.” Khan said.

The official also called on Pakistani Foreign Ministry for taking necessary measures to solve the issues regarding the project through mutual understanding and reconciliation.

Near 20 years after the initiation of talks over the peace gas pipeline, beginning as the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project, and despite the fact that Iran has completed its part of the pipeline in its territory, Pakistan has fallen behind the target to take delivery of gas, initially scheduled for 2014.

Pakistan blames U.S. sanctions on Iran as the main hurdle in the way of the IP project completion.

Renewables growth is stalling, raising alarm bells for clean energy transition

Renewable energy deployment stalled out last year, raising alarm bells about the pace of the clean energy transition.

As per thebull.com.au, in 2018, total deployment of renewable energy stood at about 180 gigawatts (GW), which was the same as the previous year. It was the first time since 2001 that capacity failed to increase year-on-year, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Adding 180 GW of clean energy is a massive total, but still falls short of what is needed to clean up the electricity sector. It equates to roughly 60 percent of what is needed each year in order to meet long-term climate goals, the IEA said. The agency said that the world needs to add about 300 GW of renewable energy each year through 2030 in order to meet the targets laid out in the Paris Climate Agreement.

Worse, last year, CO2 emissions from energy rose 1.7 percent, setting another record high at 33 Gigatonnes. So, while emissions need to decline sharply, they haven’t even flattened out yet. Renewable energy continues to grow, but so does demand for oil and gas.

Expansion of renewables

The “world cannot afford to press “pause” on

the expansion of renewables and governments need to act quickly to correct this situation and enable a faster flow of new projects,” Fatih Birol, the IEA’s Executive Director, said in a statement.

“Thanks to rapidly declining costs, the competitiveness of renewables is no longer heavily tied to financial incentives. What they mainly need are stable policies supported by a long-term vision but also a focus on integrating renewables into power systems in a cost-effective and optimal way. Stop-and-go policies are particularly harmful to markets and jobs,” Birol added.

For the last four years, growth of wind had slowed, but the gap was made up by faster growth from solar. The difference in 2018 was that solar’s exponential growth flattened out.

The reason for that lies in China, where the government pared back incentives on solar in order to cut expenditures and cope with grid integration challenges, the IEA said. Still, China added 44 GW of solar last year, the most by far out of any other country and nearly half of the 97 GW global total. But that was down from 53 GW that China installed in 2017.

Costs continue to fall, making renewable energy the cheapest option in many markets, which should ensure strong growth going forward. In

the U.S., wind and solar are now cheaper than operating existing coal plants in much of the country.

Renewable energy surpassed coal

In fact, in April, renewable energy surpassed coal in terms of electricity generation for the first time, accounting for 24 percent of the total, compared to coal’s 20 percent market share.

But, despite the momentum, the transition is not fast enough. A new UN report finds that the world is facing a mass die-off of biodiversity, with as many as one million plant and animal species at risk of extinction.

Also, the world is on track to blow through its carbon budget within 12 years.

Because of this urgency, a wave of new policies supporting a faster roll out of electric vehicles and renewable energy is inevitable. At the state level, renewable energy mandates are proliferating.

In the Democratic primary for president, candidates are trying to outdo each other in terms of ambition on clean energy and climate change. For instance, what was once considered an extreme position, such as banning oil and gas drilling on public lands, has now become a mainstream position in the Democratic Party, at least for the candidates running for president.

Oil prices rise as Middle East tanker attack increases supply concerns

Oil futures rose on Monday on increasing concerns about supply disruptions in the crucial producing region of the Middle East even as investors and traders fretted over global economic growth prospects amid a standoff in the Sino-U.S. trade talks.

Reuters reported Brent crude futures were at \$71.00 a barrel, up 38 cents, or 0.5%, from their last close by 0624 GMT.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) futures were at \$61.73 per barrel, up 7 cents, or 0.1%, from their previous settlement.

Saudi Arabia said on Monday that two Saudi oil tankers were among vessels targeted by a “sabotage attack” off the coast of the United Arab Emirates, condemning it as an attempt to undermine the security of global crude supplies.



Saudi Arabia and the UAE are the largest and third-largest producers, respectively, in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

“Rising geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, together with sharply declining oil supplies from Venezuela and Iran, will remain bullish for prices,” said Abhishek Kumar, head of analytics at Interfax Energy in London.

Markets have been supported by Washington’s bid to cut Iran’s oil exports to zero and reduce exports from Venezuela, where infrastructure problems have also cut output.

The United States reimposed sanctions on Iran in November after pulling out of a 2015 nuclear accord between Tehran and world powers last year.

Investors are also focused on tightened supplies following OPEC-led production cuts since the start of the year. There is a consensus that OPEC and its producer allies will extend the six-month output-cut agreement when they meet in June.

But the trade friction between Washington and China, which intensified last week will keep a lid on prices, said Kumar.

The United States and China together accounted for 34% of global oil consumption in the first quarter of 2019, data from the International Energy Agency showed.

The “U.S.-China trade war is set to intensify, which will limit gains in prices,” Kumar said.

“Market participants will closely watch China’s retaliatory steps in response to the imposition of additional U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods,” Kumar said, adding the dispute “could be particularly detrimental to the growth in global oil demand”.

The trade turmoil has prompted hedge funds to cut their bullish wagers on U.S. crude oil to the lowest level in a month and raised their bets on Brent crude to the highest in nearly seven months, U.S. government data showed on Friday.

First Announcement			
Call for public tender (First/Second publish)			
One -Stages (semi compressed) tender			
N.I.O.C 1398.826		Subject of Tender: (Equipment/Spare parts/Material purchase) Subject of Tender: Parts For Caterpillar Equipment	
National Iranian Drilling Company		National Iranian Drilling Company	
The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3,199,533	Tender No.: EF09-98-011 Indent No.: 01-22-9747001	21,324,128,108
Qualitative evaluation of tenderers			
Method	R Based on minimum scoring (60 Points) made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms.		
	1- Applicants who have more than 4 in process contracts with NIDC are not allowed to participate in this tender. Applicants which have more than 2 in process contracts with NIDC in similar subject (exclusively same subject) are not allowed to participate in another tender		
Purchasing & Submitting			
Tender Document Distribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof.		
	Distribution Place	Hall No.:113, 1-floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN – Tel : 061 34148601	
	Submitting Method	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. Avoid any payment other than the bank method (in person) and also provide a deposit. Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.	
	Closing date	Days after the last time of Purchasing 14	
Documents Receiving Method	Address	Hall No. 107, 1-floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569	
Value of guarantee	1,067,000,000 Rial/ 22,421 Euro		
Types of guarantee	✓--Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran ✓--Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.		
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.		
(Foreign Procurement Dept.) More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir http://sapp.ir/nidc_pr تهران تایمز نوبت اول ۹۸/۲/۲۴ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۲/۲۵			

Can Iran nuclear deal avoid collapse?



Global Times — One year after the US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, Iran made an announcement on May 8 that it would withdraw from some of the provisions of the deal. Iran gave the deal's remaining signatories a 60-day grace. This was a response to the US sanctions, as well as a signal to international society: Act or lose the deal.

Most people are pessimistic. They think the nuclear deal, as a milestone, is almost collapsing, and the region is entering a more dangerous stage. We have to say that Washington leads this trend.

The Iran nuclear deal is the most important achievement of non-proliferation negotiation in recent years. It is also regarded as the Obama administration's most important diplomatic legacy. Five UN Security Council permanent members -- the US, China, Russia, the UK and France -- and Germany joined in the 18-month negotiations and signed the deal. The deal was approved by the UN Security Council.

But the Trump administration tore up the deal, ignoring international society's unanimous opposition. Credit, morality and justice can be trodden underfoot in Washington's partisan politics.

Washington's actions have created more problems. The US labeled Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps a terrorist group, enforced a complete ban on Iran's oil exports and is deploying aircraft carrier strike group to the Middle East. This triggered Iran's tough reaction, escalated the situation and left no space for talks.

The US kept pushing Iran as it is much more powerful than Iran. Some believe the US government is using a maximum pressure policy to maximize its own interests. Some say Israel was behind the issue. Others point out that Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates increased arms purchases from the US and the tense situation in the Middle East helps US arms sales.

These motivations are either selfish or shortsighted. We do not know Washington's true intentions, but confrontation is dangerous in the tense Middle East and may accidentally trigger serious consequences. Washington may not want to see the situation get out of control, but its brinkmanship leads to such risks.

The US blockade and pressure will also hurt Iranians' self-esteem and leave a humiliating collective memory. This is also bad for the US.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said Wednesday that China appreciates Iran's strict fulfillment of its obligations under the deal so far, firmly opposes unilateral sanctions and the so-called "long-arm jurisdiction imposed by the US on Iran." China's attitude supports justice on the Iran nuclear deal. China, Russia, the UK, France and Germany all have a basic consensus on this deal.

The UK, France and Germany put great efforts into the nuclear deal. The deal's collapse is not in line with their will and interests. But under US pressure, they worry and hesitate, and their policies swing. We hope the three countries can be independent on the Iran nuclear deal.

The undisguised overbearing and capricious manner of the US has affected the world. Such behavior is targeted at Iran today, and it may be another country tomorrow.

China will not yield to extreme pressure of any kind

People's Daily — The 11th round of China-US trade talks were held on May 9 and 10 with extreme difficulty and sensitivity. The two sides have made substantial progress on several issues including enhancing intellectual property protection, broadening market access, improving the bilateral trade balance, but no agreement on China's core concerns has been reached.

After Washington announced to impose a 25 percent tariff on Chinese imports, in response, China made clear that necessary countermeasures will be taken.

China has always promoted trade negotiations with the US with highly responsible attitudes and utmost sincerity. But China will never yield to the US' extreme pressure and will never compromise on issues concerning the country's principles.

The US' excuse for creating trade conflicts is to pursue fair trade. However, Washington has ignored the fact that the fair trade has to work both ways. There will be no fairness without a win-win outcome. The US choice of putting extreme pressure on China will ultimately lead to missed opportunities for solving problems.

Washington's risky decisions have sparked intense op-

position inside the US. There was widespread opposition, saying that such practices will disrupt markets, hurt people's interests, and bring economic shock to the country. Criticisms of Washington's recklessness also ran through the international society.

China has made a resolute stand against the tariffs imposed by the US, but is well-prepared for other potential outcomes. China's calm and rational approach has attracted the world's attention, which shows the country's ample confidence in its economy.

With trade partners all over the world, China is speeding the pace of transforming itself from a big trading power to a strong one. China-US trade disputes cannot stop China's development.

Of course, the window of hope for better China-US trade ties has not been and will not be shut. The two sides agreed to keep lines of communication open, in accordance with the will of the two peoples.

Over the past year, the progress and setbacks of China-US trade talks have triggered new reflections on bilateral relations. Looking at the overall picture of China-US ties,

we can still see hope through the clouds.

Cooperation is the only correct choice. The establishment of China-US diplomatic ties 40 years ago, have proved that China-US cooperation is an irresistible trend. Safeguarding bilateral relations is beneficial to China, to the US, and to the whole world.

Economic and trade relations are the ballast and propellers of China-US ties. This is an objective fact that cannot be subverted. The trade talks serve as the historical mission of promoting a new China-US economic and trade order, which is balanced, inclusive and win-win.

For the two peoples' well-being and the two countries' long-term development, both sides should bear the responsibility and obligation to take the trade talks seriously. The two countries should manage differences with mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, and seek solutions acceptable to both sides. In particular, the US has to follow the trend and work in tandem with China to solve problems through consultations as equals and create a future with win-win outcomes.

This is an editorial of the People's Daily on Saturday.

To globalize China bond market, ratings key

By Richard Cook

Asiatimes — Chinese credit rating agency issues what it says is a milestone international rating for offshore US dollar bonds

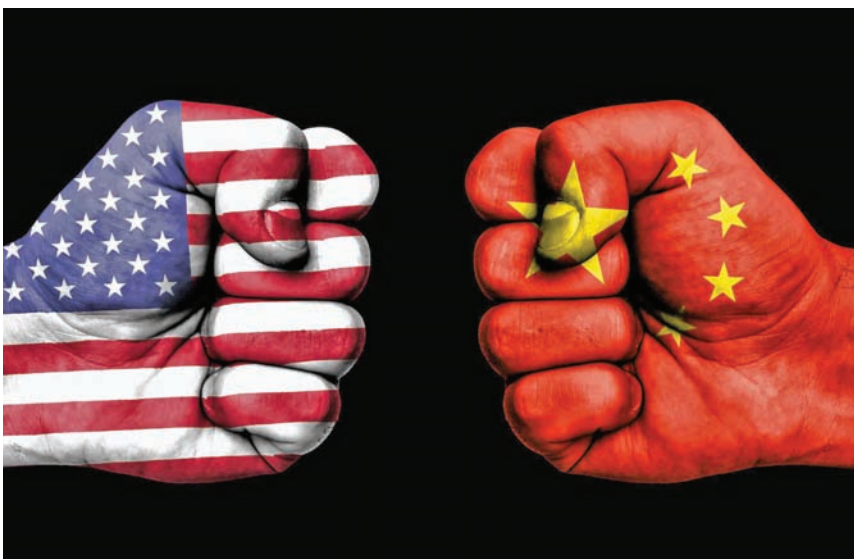
On April 1st, 2019, 364 Chinese government and policy bank bonds began to be included in the Bloomberg Barclays Global Aggregate Bond Index. Full inclusion is expected by end 2020.

When it's all done and dusted, China's bond market, that has just eclipsed Japan to become the world's second largest after the US -- and according to Bank of International Settlements data, is now worth US\$12.8 trillion -- will have attracted some \$180 billion in foreign funds.

And that doesn't count the potential international inflows into the domestic Chinese corporate bond market, also the world's second largest, that to date remains largely untouched by foreign investors. Of the total of 1.73 trillion yuan (\$255 billion) in foreign holdings of Chinese debt, only about 8%, a minuscule \$20 billion, is invested in debt other than sovereign or quasi-sovereign.

But why have foreigners been shying away from the far more attractive yields of domestic corporate and financial bonds? One simple and straightforward answer is because of the utter lack of PRC credible ratings. A more nefarious reason are the widespread allegations of flagrant rating shopping.

Indeed, among the 1,744 Chinese bond issuers rated at the end of June 2018, 97% were rated AA, AA+ or AAA, according to China's National Association of Financial Market Institutional Investors (NAFMII). Of these, 464 issuers were rated AAA. A Beijing regulator "cash for ratings" investigation in



2018 found conflict of interest discrepancies across the system. In August 2018, Dagong Global Credit Rating Co. was suspended by the Chinese financial regulator for a year after it was found to have been selling ratings to issuers. Among China's ratings agencies, Dagong, with 20% market share, was both well known and highly regarded.

It was these factors that led Pengyuan International (PYI), the wholly-owned Hong Kong subsidiary of the PRC's CSCI Pengyuan Credit Rating Co, to start rating mainland corporates and financial institutions in accordance with international standards.

On April 10, PYI entered the fray in the crowded US\$500 million offshore market for US dollar denominated bonds issued by Chinese corporations and financial institutions -- or "Kungfu bonds" as Bloomberg calls them -- and became the first Chinese rating agency to issue an international-standard rating to a mainland Chinese corporate. It assigned a Long-Term Issuer Credit Rating (LTICR) of BBB- to Huai'an Water Conservancy Holding Group Co. Ltd. (HWC), and gave the company a "stable" outlook. On April 17, it confirmed this BBB- rating for HWC's US\$300 million 6.2% notes.

Local factors with international criteria

Huai'an is a municipality in China's eastern Jiangsu Province, is home to 5 million people, and Huai'an Water is wholly owned by the municipality's SASAC (State Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission).

With its strong local government ties and a clear public infrastructure focus, the Huai'an issuance could be understood as a typical example of PRC's burgeoning offshore bond market. However, there is a significant difference here, according to Pengyuan, as the Huai'an bond has been issued internationally and its credit rating is the first ever that maps local Chinese economic and political factors alongside international rating criteria.

"Fundamentally this rating is about our detailed understanding of Chinese government," Pengyuan's CEO Jonathan Hu told Asia Times. "This understanding allows us to provide detail and an additional layer of transparency."

Unlike in the States, there are no actual municipal bonds in China, explains Hu. And this, he thinks, has caused confusion for international investors. "These investment vehicles, these LGFVs," explains Hu, "normally sit underneath the provincial level of government and are focussed on core infrastructure projects like water, electricity, city development or railway building."

"In the west," continues Hu, "it is a big economy with small government... but in China we have big government and small economy. It means different layers of government can and do play significant roles in supporting these types of [infrastructure] companies... US dollar bond issuance has recently seen exponential growth in China and there are now many Chinese company doing USD issuances. But we believe to understand how this

really works, you have to really understand China and that means understanding the market sensibilities."

According to Hu, Pengyuan can do this by making a dual assessment.

"We look at the standalone strength of the company, using conventional international criteria. But, because of the way different government departments allocate different finances, an entity may not make money so its standalone rating will be low." However, says Hu, "their assets can actually be considerable, worth a few billion dollars. To accurately assess them, you need to know that information. And if you do, you can offer international investors a different opinion."

Pengyuan International CEO, Jonathan Hu says "US dollar bond issuance has recently seen exponential growth in China and there are now many Chinese companies doing USD issuances. But we believe to understand how this really works, you have to understand China and that means understanding the market sensibilities."

Government policy fuels market growth

China's bond market has grown rapidly in recent years. Valued at less than \$2 trillion a decade ago, it will, soon top \$13 trillion. This expansion has been underpinned by Beijing's policy of attempting to stimulate a sluggish economy through local-level infrastructure investment while at the same trying to control escalating domestic and corporate debt and managing the risk of loan defaults.

In October 2017, when the 19th National Congress brought in a raft of new legislation that set out to reform domestic investments reforms and control capital flows, it started the push toward offshore dollar bonds and this helped open the market for international investors.

However, China's onshore bond market is still almost entirely dominated by quasi-sovereign financial institutions and banks, and a Goldman Sachs report from last month shows foreign investors still only make up 2% of this onshore sector. The Goldman report says international players have stayed away because of a fear of PRC investment bureaucracy, because of liquidity risks, and of course because of the above mentioned widely perceived lack of credibility and transparency from China's domestic credit agencies who have regularly been accused of not just corruption but also complex conflicts of interest that has led to inability to fully disclose risk.

China's road to global ratings Global bond markets have long relied on alphabetic-based credit ratings systems -- that, in summary, range from multiples of "As" for the best prime investments to multiples of "Cs" for so-called junk -- to provide evaluations, that in theory are independent, about an issuer's creditworthiness.

However, the system in China has remained muddled because domestic agencies have regularly issued starkly higher ratings for Chinese bonds than the ratings issued by international agencies. As the NAFMII data

shows, the standard issue in China has been a double A or higher, while a Bank for International Settlements report from 2017 found that the "big three" international agencies, Standard & Poor's, Moody's, and Fitch, regularly graded PRC bonds six levels below their Chinese counterparts.

Frank Gong, founder of First Seafrost Financial and former Chairman of JP Morgan's China Investment Banking division told Asia Times that, for China's bond market to fully open up to foreign investors, credit rating "usability" is key, and added that the combined local-international approach by Pengyuan should prove "very helpful."

A lot of domestic bonds, says Gong "have not, in my view, been rated properly, which means, of course, their credibility is very low. Credibility directly effects how usable that rating is, and usability is key for global investors."

Gong adds that China will continue to "modernize" its ratings infrastructure and, once the US and China reach a trade deal, these factors will combine to transform the local bond market into a truly global one. What we are seeing now, says Gong, "is just the start."

Connecting international bond flows

Julien Martin, General Manager of Bond Connect -- a Hong Kong-based investment platform that facilitates overseas investment in Chinese bonds -- says local-global credit agencies can play an important role in "bridging the information gap" between issuers and international investors.

"But it is in both directions," says Martin. "Chinese regions have different legislation and market infrastructures" which means operations like Pengyuan's "can allow offshore investors a better understanding of these local market factors and political structures while also teaching Chinese issuers about international requirements." And this, says Martin, will also help Chinese issuers raise their credit profiles.

Martin adds that the move by a domestic Chinese rating agency to rate an international US dollar bond is "an important milestone." Others, he says, are the continued publication of professional research papers and company prospectuses, the continued expansion of international credit agencies into China and April's establishment of Barclays / Bloomberg Index.

Unsurprisingly Martin also says Bond Connect, that is a joint venture between China Foreign Exchange Trade System and Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Ltd, will make a significant difference to the opening up of Chinese bonds. It only started in 2015, says Martin, but in recent months it has "boomed."


"We now have more than 900 investors, with significant numbers from the UK and USA. The process is accelerating and, as it does, the infrastructure that facilities this process will only expand too... The market is developing more and more and 2019 has been a fantastic year. It is," concludes Martin, "a milestone year."

Developing market

Pengyuan International's move to international ratings may have come just in time. On January 29th, S&P was granted a license to conduct credit rating business in mainland China and Moody's and Fitch have both opened wholly owned subsidiaries in the country and are awaiting government permission to start operating.

Some have expressed concerns that these big three players will, because of the complexities of China's state-entwined market, be forced to create a custom credit-rating scale for China but for Jonathan Hu, the expansion by international players and the modernization by local players, is to be welcomed.

"By China showing strong corporate governance, showing transparency for data, and with the rise of modern domestic credit rating agencies," concludes Hu, "these are things that will provide the granularity that global investors require."

First Announcement			
 Call for public tender (First/Second publish) One -Stages (semi compressed) tender Subject of Tender: Parts For Caterpillar Equipment			
N.I.O.C 1398.827		National Iranian Drilling Company	
• Tender descriptions			
The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3199538	Tender No. :FP/09-98/012 Indent No.:01-22-9747002	46,443,243,850
• Qualitative evaluation of tenderers			
Method	R Based on minimum scoring (60 Points) made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms. 1- Applicants who have more than 4 in process contracts with NIDC are not allowed to participate in this tender. Applicants which have more than 2 in process contracts with NIDC in similar subject (exclusively same subject) are not allowed to participate in another tender		
• Purchasing & Submitting			
Tender Document Distribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof.		
Distribution Place	Hall No.:113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN – Tel : 061 34148601		
Submitting Method	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. Avoid any payment other than the bank method (in person) and also provide a deposit. Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.		
Documents Receiving Method	Closing date	Days after the last time of Purchasing 14	
	Address	Hall No. 107, 1 st floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569	
• Tender Guarantee			
Value of guarantee	2,323,000,000 Rial/ 48,812 Euro		
Type of guarantee	✓--Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ✓--Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.		
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.		
(Foreign Procurement Dept.) More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir http://sapp.ir/nidc_pr تهران تایمز نوبت اول ۹۸/۲/۲۴ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۲/۲۵			

Nigeria's Buhari under Saudi influence in respect to Sheikh Zakzaki

By Mohammad Fatemizadeh

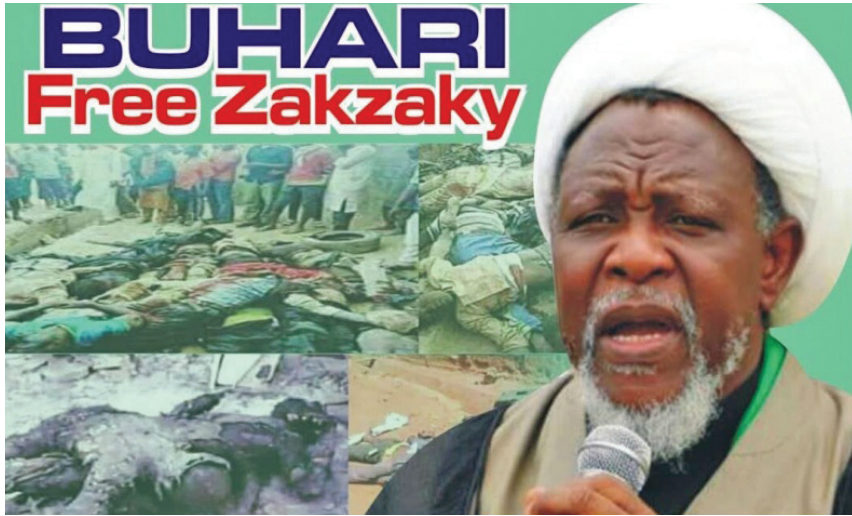
TEHRAN (MNA) – Nigerian senior member of Islamic Movement Dr. Ibrahim Suleiman said that Saudi regime has a Zionist system and structure while stressing the Nigerian President has been supported by Saudis regarding Sheikh Zakzaki.

Recently, the Nigerian government permitted a medical team to visit and examine Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaki, the leader of Nigeria's Shia community, and his wife which was also welcomed by the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

To shed more light on the issue we discussed it with Dr. Ibrahim Suleiman, senior member of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria. Here is the full text of interview with him:

■ Please explain about the latest situation of Sheikh Zakzaki and his wife and the reason why they don't enjoy freedom completely?

A: Sheikh's lack of freedom is strange because three years have passed since the issuance of Sheikh Zakzaki's freedom verdict but Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari has been preventing implementation of the verdict. However, various groups and insti-



tutions have been calling for implementing freedom verdict of Nigeria's top Muslim cleric Sheikh Ibrahim al-Zakzaki.

On the other hand, the actions of Nigeria's president indicate that he is under control and influence of Saudi Arabia regarding Sheikh

Zakzaki. Also we do not forget that Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman has admitted that they prevented Zakzaki's activities. The silence of the great countries against the shedding of Shia blood in Nigeria is also a clear indication of our claim.

■ Can the leaders of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria meet Sheikh Zakzaki and his wife in prison?

A: Following lots of efforts made his famil, only his family members were permitted to visit Sheikh Zakzaki and his wife. Sheikh Zakzaki is about 70 years old and his wife is about 60 and they need a doctor for their treatment. He is in bad physical situation.

■ Do the decline of Saudi power in the region and the failure of their policies reduce the support of Nigeria's President to suppress Nigeria's Shia community?

A: The decline of Saudi power in the entire Muslim world is effective.

■ What is your opinion and position on 'Deal of the Century' and the normalization of the relations of some Arab regimes with Zionists?

A: Wahhabi Al Saud was founded by the Zionists and it has a Zionist system and structure. Al Saud's allies among some Arab countries are the same.

It's really hard but possible to stop implementation of 'Deal of the Century'. The Palestinian Intifada is able to stop its implementation, but at a great cost.

Iran should evade U.S. sanctions, maintain ties with EU, Russia, China: analyst

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — An American political scientist said Iran should maintain its normal ties with Europe, Russia and China and at the same time find some way to "isolate its economy" from US sanctions.

"Given the overwhelming advantage the US and its allies have militarily, Iran must find some way to isolate its economy from US imposed sanctions and effectively combat the ideological/economic war being waged by the US/Saudi/Israel alliance against it. In the end, Iranian officials must find a way to maintain its normal (thus anti-US regime change policy) relations with Europe, Russia and China. If successful, it will have built a diplomatic, economic 'counterweight' against US/Israel/Saudi aggression," Beau Grosscup, California State University Professor Emeritus of Political Science, told Tasnim.

Following is the full text of the interview.

■ Late Sunday night, the White House made an announcement that the USS Abraham Lincoln and a bomber task force were being deployed in response to unspecified "troubling and escalatory indications and warnings." What is your take on the deployment?

A: The military deployment signals a new phase in the effort to demonize the Iranian government as the 'aggressor' in the Middle East. With the diplomatic (end of the nuclear pact) and economic (sanctions, end of oil waivers) components in place, the US is now positioning its military force to 'react' to Iran's alleged, unspecified military provocations. By stressing the military threat to US interests, the Trump Administration is using the time-worn 'Image of the Aggressor' to unify all members of the US political establishment and rally support for the US/Israel/Saudi

Arabia alliance plan for war against Iran.

■ A statement from National Security Adviser John Bolton said the deployments were intended "to send a clear and unmistakable message to Iran that any attack on United States interests or on those of our allies will be met with unrelenting force." Why do you think Bolton, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the Israeli PM are pushing the US into a war with Iran?

A: The Trump Administration represents the return to power of the Neoconservative constituency (thought to be discredited by the Iraq War) and their openly acknowledged plan to shape the Middle East to serve US and Israeli interests via regime change. John Bolton is the most aggressive advocate of using the military instrument (principally air power) to achieve this goal. In their view, Iran is the last major bastion of opposition power to their post-Cold War plan.

■ The deployment of the warship was reportedly based on claims of a possible attack on US forces stationed in the region. So far, there is little detail from the Americans of the alleged Iranian actions that have prompted this warning nor of the specific US deployments under way. It seems that the Trump administration is looking for pretexts to wage war. How do you see this? What is the goal of the administration?

A: As the world's major military power, the US is in the privileged position of being able to tell the world who the aggressors are and who is not, and give meaning to that distinction without having to provide concrete evidence for their designation. This 'lack of specific detail/evidence of Iranian aggression' is a case in point. Having demonized

Iran as the 'aggressor' and 'the cause of all Middle East instability and chaos,' any incident large or small' (especially 'evidence' provided by Israel) depicted as anti-US, Israel, Saudi or even anti-West, such as the threat to close the Strait of Hormuz, is to be laid at the feet of Iran and proof of the need for regime change in Iran. The goal is regime change in Iran, preferably via diplomatic/economic (sovereign) surrender (by domestic revolution) or by a 'reactive' military assault if necessary.

■ Many critics of the US administration fear a developing drumbeat towards a conflict which, they fear, could erupt either by accident or by design. Iranian state and military officials have repeatedly stressed Iran will never start a war and it will only defend itself. What are your thoughts on this?

A: Though a formidable military presence, it makes no strategic or tactical sense for Iran to start a military war with the US and its powerful allies. At the same time, as a sovereign state, Iran has the right and responsibility to defend itself. Given the overwhelming advantage the US and its allies have militarily, Iran must find some way to isolate its economy from US imposed sanctions and effectively combat the ideological/economic war being waged by the US/Saudi/Israel alliance against it. In the end, Iranian officials must find a way to maintain its normal (thus anti-US regime change policy) relations with Europe, Russia and China. If successful, it will have built a diplomatic, economic 'counterweight' against US/Israel/Saudi aggression. Whether the US Neo-conservative Trump regime, under Bolton's leadership will allow Iran the time to do so, is the real question.

Fujairah explosions, from denial to security scandal



➔ ■ Hiding security crisis in UAE

The fact is that United Arab Emirates officials have been trying to cover up the existence of a major security void in the port of Fujairah since the very first moment of the incident and hide a major security crisis in this important harbor to misguide the general public.

In fact, all media manipulation and mobilization of propaganda to prevent the spread of massive explosions in the port of Fujairah by Abu Dhabi authorities was carried out for this purpose: Emiratis intended to hide the incident on this scale by exploiting their media and advertising facilities.

Another point to be considered is that the news of major explosions was a few hours after the media incident, and this is another big scandal for Abu Dhabi, as many political experts and observers believe that the country may have seen similar incidents in the past, and has hidden them from the public by its dominance on the media.

■ Rage over revelation of security gap

But another issue is that UAE officials are quite anxious about the emergence of a major "security gap" in their country.

Despite many efforts and mobilization of all the media and propaganda tools, Abu Dhabi did not succeed in preventing the publication of the news.

The reason that this issue has been so important for Emiratis is that the country has been killing the innocent and defenseless people of Yemen along with the Saudi insurgent regime, and it has previously been targeted by Yemen's ballistic missiles and popular Yemeni committees.

Therefore, Abu Dhabi officials are deeply concerned that large-scale explosions at the port of Fujairah have exposed the security gaps in the port to the public, and there is a possibility that Yemeni groups, in response to the numerous Emirati aggressions, will target Fujairah in the future, as they have previously targeted Abu Dhabi.

■ Emirates worry about similar attacks

There is also a major concern with Emirati officials that similar attacks may occur in the future on the country's economic or even military infrastructures. This has also become a concern to the Saudi authorities as Emirati's main allies.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are well aware that waging massive attacks on their military and economic infrastructure can greatly affect foreign investments in these countries.

Therefore, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, while always trying to make their countries a focal point of peace and stability in the region, are now facing a lot of military and economic concerns, and the blasts of the UAE's Fujairah port have increased and intensified such worries.

Will U.S. next administration rejoin Iran nuclear deal?

➔ These statements clearly show that Democrats have planned a complex scheme for their return to Iran nuclear deal, in case they win the elections. The mastermind behind this multilayered scheme is obviously John Kerry and his special advisors.

Goldenberg goes on as saying that "since Tehran has decided that abiding by the nuclear deal is in its interests despite Washington's withdrawal, a U.S. return and the corresponding sanctions relief would essentially be a unilateral concession to Iran. Washington will have the ability to ask for something in return."

It is clear what Democrats mean by "something in return"; they seek to constrain Iran's missile program and power in the region, in exchange for reviving the "dead" and "distorted" JCPOA with putting even more restrictions on Iran in comparison to when Barack Obama was in office.

This scheme devised by John Kerry for Iran will become even more complicated when they start to request other international players to join this scheme.

If Democrats win the 2020 presidential election, he will definitely try to drag the European troika into this scheme of "redefining the JCPOA based on U.S. benefits", the same as what Trump did in 2017 before he finally thwarted the deal.

However, the Democrats' scheme is different from that of Trump's, as Democrats are trying to forge general consensus to "restrain the powerful Iran".

■ Democrats' role in U.S. withdrawal from nuclear deal

It is also worth noting that Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear deal only became possible due to the set of legal and political conditions that Democrats installed in the first place! In fact before leaving the nuclear deal all together, Trump used these conditions as "triggers" which allowed him to justify himself in abandoning the deal.

Moreover, it was Democrats who set a pre-

cedent so as the U.S. president should "waive the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions" every 120 days. They were Democrats who put the fate of the Iran nuclear deal in the hands of every incumbent president. So, it can be concluded that, apart from Trump administration, Democrats should also be widely blamed for the shutdown of Iran nuclear deal.

■ Democrats planning for dissolution of the region

Democrats have very dangerous strategies in regard to West Asia and North East Asia and generally the Muslim world. For example, Joe Biden, one of the primary Democrat candidates in 2020 presidential elections, has a dangerous and aggressive theory for "dividing Iraq".

He believes that not only Iraq, but also other countries in West Asia and North Africa should be divided based on religious, ethnical, and geographical features. He is in favor of strategies to turn these regions to a "scattered", "fractured" zone where Washington and Tel Aviv can easily expand their authority. By taking such strategies, Biden hopes to get the unconditional support of Europeans and other traditional Washington allies.

Starting proxy wars, supporting terrorist and Takfiri groups and pressuring the countries until they fall apart are all among the plans that Democrats have for Muslim countries in the region.

It is worth mentioning that Democrats played an important role in creation of the terrorist group, ISIS during Obama's presidency.

■ U.S. commitments means nothing Violation of JCPOA revealed that the promises, commitments or deals made by any U.S. official, whether Democrat or Republican, have absolutely no credibility. The next U.S. president will follow in the footsteps of former untrustworthy presidents. It doesn't matter who wins the next elections, Bernie Sanders, Joe Biden or even Trump again!

Whether Democrat or Republican, the white

house officials are not going to keep their commitments. By "abandoning the JCPOA" Trump proved the unreliability of U.S. promises and the next administration, if a Democrat one, will do the same after staging a "fake return to Iran nuclear deal".

Relying on any deal or contract that is signed an approved by U.S. officials, is not only a tactical but also a strategic mistake and would be to the cost of our economic as well as political stability.

We have already learned this bitter lesson by signing JCPOA and facing the events that succeeded it. Clearly, it is not the time for taking our chances and making yet another mistake.

■ The outcome of conflicts between Iran, Republicans and/or Democrats

Donald Trump has ominous plans for Iran, and so do the Democrats.

White House intends to put extensive economic sanctions on Iran and reduce its power in the region at the same time.

In other words, the full-fledged anti-Iran scheme that Jimmy Carter adopted after the Iranian revolution in 1979 is now once again started by Trump, yet with using other means and methods.

In this scheme, there would be no difference between Democrats and the Republicans.

Now that Trump's plans against Iran have been proven fruitless after two years that he has been in the office, other theories are gaining ground in U.S. political arena, especially that of Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former U.S. National Security Advisor.

Before his death, Brzezinski said that the only solution for U.S. is to try to recognize "the powerful Iran" and how to live with it.

Finally, it seems that both Democrat and Republican parties have no fate other than failure in interaction with Iranian nation and government; and this would be the fate of Trump and any other president who comes after him.

First Announcement			
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N.I.O.C 1398.829		National Iranian Drilling Company	
• Tender descriptions			
The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. / Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3,198,929	Tender No. PFP/KSH/96/001 Indent No. 48-22-9522028	10,300,000,000
• Qualitative evaluation of tenderers Method			
Based on minimum scoring (60) made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms.			
1. The tenderers who have more than four (4) active contracts with NIDC are not allowed to attend in this tender.			
2. The tenderers who have more than two (2) active contracts with same subject (exactly compliance with this subject) with NIDC are not allowed to attend in this tender.			
• Purchasing & Submitting			
Tender Document Distribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof.		
Distribution Place	A) Hall No. 316, 3th floor, Foreign Procurement Dept. (DRILLING PROJECTS), National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. 06134148		
Submitting Method	B) Jomhouri street, Yaghma alley bloc, 8th building floor no : 04 room no 428 - Tehran, Iran. 02166700249		
Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of ... Iranian Rials under account number 400114004020491 (Shaba No. IR35010000400114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. Of Iran Central Bank.			
Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.			
Documents Receiving Method	Closing date	14 Days after the last time of Purchasing.	
	Address	Hall NO.107, 1st floor, Tender committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148350 +98-61-34148369	
• Tender Guarantee			
Value of guarantee	515,000,000 Rial/ 10,730 Euro		
Type of guarantee	• ✓ Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. • ✓ Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 400114006376636 (Shaba No. IR35010000400114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran. • "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.		
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for onetime in initial validity duration.		
(Name of department)			
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Protect solar system from mining “gold rush”, say scientists

Great swathes of the solar system should be preserved as official “space wilderness” to protect planets, moons and other heavenly bodies from rampant mining and other forms of industrial exploitation, scientists say.

The proposal calls for more than 85% of the solar system to be placed off-limits to human development, leaving little more than an eighth for space firms to mine for precious metals, minerals and other valuable materials.

While the limit would protect pristine worlds from the worst excesses of human activity, its primary goal is to ensure that humanity avoids a catastrophic future in which all of the resources within its reach are permanently used up.

“If we don’t think about this now, we will go ahead as we always have, and in a few hundred years we will face an extreme crisis, much worse than we have on Earth now,” said Martin Elvis, a senior astrophysicist at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory in Cambridge, Massachusetts. “Once you’ve exploited the solar system, there’s nowhere left to go.”

Fledgling space mining companies have set their sights on trillions of pounds worth of iron and precious metals locked up in asteroids, along with valuable minerals and trillions of tonnes of water on the moon. In Britain, the Asteroid Mining Corporation hopes to send a satellite into orbit in the coming years to prospect for nearby asteroids.



Precious metals such as platinum and gold could be ferried back to Earth, but much of the mined material would be used in space to build habitats on the moon and make rocket fuel. The European Space Agency has plans for a moon village that foresees buildings and equipment installed on the lunar surface. Meanwhile water ice, such as that beneath the lunar poles, can be split into hydrogen

and oxygen and used to make fuel for probes that launch from space instead of Earth.

Working with Tony Milligan, a philosopher at King’s College London, Elvis analysed how soon humans might use up the solar system’s most accessible resources should space mining take off. They found that an annual growth rate of 3.5% would use up an eighth of the solar system’s realistic resources in 400

years. At that point, humanity would have only 60 years to apply the brakes and avoid exhausting the supply completely.

Because humans might struggle to mine the sun, or extract useful materials from Jupiter, a gas giant with more mass than the rest of the solar system’s planets combined, the researchers see asteroids, the moon, Mars and other rocky planets as the most realistic targets for space miners. Elvis points out that one eighth of the iron in the asteroid belt is more than a million times greater than the estimated iron ore reserves on Earth, which may suffice for centuries.

But which areas to protect from mining is a nuanced decision, the scientists write in a forthcoming issue of Acta Astronautica. The Valles Marineris on Mars, the largest canyon in the solar system, might deserve protection as much as the Grand Canyon is protected on Earth. But there are other sites too, said Elvis. “Do we want cities on the near side of the moon that light up at night? Would that be inspiring or horrifying? And what about the rings of Saturn? They are beautiful, almost pure water ice. Is it OK to mine those so that in 100 years they are gone?”

“If everything goes right, we could be sending our first mining missions into space within 10 years,” he added. “Once it starts and somebody makes an enormous profit, there will be the equivalent of a gold rush. We need to take it seriously.”

(Source: The Guardian)

Great chocolate is a complex mix of science, physicists reveal

The science of what makes good chocolate has been revealed by researchers studying a 140-year-old mixing technique.

Scientists have uncovered the physics behind the process -- known as conching -- which is responsible for creating chocolate’s distinctive smooth texture. The findings may hold the key to producing confectionary with lower fat content, and could help make chocolate manufacturing more energy efficient.

A team led by the University of Edinburgh studied mixtures resembling liquid chocolate created using the conching process, which was developed by Swiss confectioner Rodolphe Lindt in 1879.

Their analysis, which involved measuring the density of mixtures and how they flow at various stages of the process, suggests conching may alter the physical properties of the microscopic sugar crystals and other granular ingredients of chocolate. Until now, the science behind the process was poorly understood.

The new research reveals that conching -- which involves mixing ingredients for several hours -- produces smooth molten chocolate by breaking down lumps of ingredients into finer grains and reducing friction between particles.

Before the invention of conching, chocolate had a gritty texture. This is because the ingredients form rough, irregular clumps that do not flow smoothly when mixed with cocoa butter using other methods, the team says.

Their insights could also help improve processes used in other sectors -- such as ceramics manufacturing and cement production -- that rely on the mixing of powders and liquids.

The study, published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, involved a collaboration with researchers from New York University. The work in Edinburgh was funded by Mars Chocolate UK and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council.

Professor Wilson Poon, of the University of Edinburgh’s School of Physics and Astronomy, who led the study, said: “We hope our work can help reduce the amount of energy used in the conching process and lead to greener manufacturing of the world’s most popular confectionary product. By studying chocolate making, we have been able to gain new insights into the fundamental physics of how complex mixtures flow. This is a great example of how physics can build bridges between disciplines and sectors.”

(Source: Science Daily)



Feed mosquitoes sugar to keep the bites away

A spoonful of sugar may help keep the fever medicine away, according to new research that has pinpointed a protein in disease-carrying mosquitoes that can curb their attraction to human blood.

According to new research, feeding sugar to mosquitoes affects this protein enough that the bloodsuckers temporarily keep from biting humans.

“If you can avoid mosquitoes being attracted to human hosts, you can reduce the chance humans have to be infected by viruses,” said Paolo Gabrieli, a zoologist at the University of Milan in Italy and one of the co-authors of the new study, published today in the journal PLOS Biology.

The researchers looked at the behavior of the Asian tiger mosquito (Aedes albopictus), which is originally native to parts of Southeast Asia, but has spread as an invasive species to many other tropical countries around the world. The mosquito is particularly attracted to humans, often living in urban areas, and can transmit a number of nasty diseases like dengue, Chikungunya and yellow fevers, and possibly the Zika virus.

While female tiger mosquitoes must suck blood to gain the energy necessary to develop their eggs, they also feed on sugar from plant nectars or sap.

Researchers want to see whether a bellyful of sugar might reduce their vampiric urges. They fed a solution of sugar to young female mosquitoes. They then put 10 to 12 of the insects in clear plastic cups and put the open side of these on their hands to see how interested mosquitoes would be in taking the bait. They could see how many tried to bite through a special screen which blocked them from actually biting the scientists.

They found that the young females weren’t interested in human blood after indulging in their collective sweet tooth. This effect lasted up to five or six days, said Gabrieli, who was a zoologist at the University of Pavia in Italy while conducting this research.

Jeff Riffell, a biologist at the University of Washington who wasn’t involved in the study but whose laboratory also looks at sugar feeding and mosquitoes, said that we know a little bit about how feeding on blood regulates subsequent



When the bloodsucking insects eat sugar, they express more of a specific protein that can curb their attraction to humans.

mosquito feeding behavior, but “decidedly less” about how sugar feeding regulates attraction.

“This study closes an important gap,” he said.

The researchers also sequenced the RNA of the mosquitoes which had fed on sugar. They found a number of gene expression changes that were associated with the bugs becoming less interested in feeding on human blood. One of these genes was a vitellogenin gene called Vg-2 which also plays a role in ovary development for female mosquitoes -- when they eat sugar, more of this gene is expressed.

“When the eggs are developing, these kinds of proteins are used to fuel the development of the embryo,” Gabrieli said.

When the researchers subsequently performed another experiment in which they interfered with the RNA and reduced the expression of Vg-2, they noticed that the female

mosquitoes would be hungry for human blood despite just eating the sugar.

“It’s a really great, balanced interdisciplinary study,” Riffell said, adding that the combination of behavior and molecular work shows how and why mosquitoes make feeding decisions. “We’re actually very interested in how these hormones and chemicals are regulating the attraction in these mosquitoes.”

This type of information can be used, Riffell said, to develop a nonlethal way to suppress mosquito biting behavior.

“The animals are already naturally producing these chemicals. If we actually start synthesizing analogues or the chemicals themselves and somehow deliver it to the mosquito ... it could be a way to suppress their biting behavior,” he said.

Gabrieli said that while this technique may be good for short periods, it won’t keep tiger mosquitoes away forever, particularly since they can live about 60 days (at least in the lab) and the sugar-induced suppression of biting behavior lasts less than a week. The sugar feeding also only seemed to have an impact on young female mosquitoes, which may feed on sugar more after morphing from their larval stage than older bugs.

But Riffell said that any reduction in overall bites in humans should have an effect on lowering the rate of disease transmission. This in turn could have a huge impact on the number of worldwide deaths.

Malaria, though transmitted by a different type of mosquito, caused 429,000 deaths in 2015 alone, according to the World Health Organization, while severe dengue is a leading cause of death among children in some Latin American and Asian countries.

“If you can knock down their biting then you can really mitigate the chance for these diseases to be transmitted,” Riffell said. (Source: Inside Science)

Never underestimate a wasp - new study shows they’re smarter than we thought

Summer is approaching in the northern hemisphere, heralding the return of that great scourge of al fresco diners everywhere: the wasp.

Now, a new study out of the University of Michigan reveals that the striped critters aren’t just pesky -- they’re smart.

The research found that wasps can use a form of logical reasoning to infer unknown relationships from known relationships, according to a press release. Essentially this means they can work out that if X is greater than Y, and Y is greater than Z, X is greater than Z -- an ability that was thought to be a key human trait for thousands of years.

In recent decades, however, scientists have shown that vertebrate animals such as birds, monkeys and fish also have this ability, known as transitive inference (TI).

And Elizabeth Tibbetts, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Michigan, has found the first evidence of TI in an invertebrate animal -- namely the paper wasp.

The insects, which are found around the world, are known for making distinctive nests out of chewed wood mixed with saliva that look like paper.

While the paper wasp’s sting is toxic to humans, it is less painful than those of other wasp species.

A previous study investigated TI in honeybees, which failed the test, with their small nervous system thought to be a possible explanation.

Paper wasps have a similar-sized nervous system to honeybees, and both insects have brains about the same size as a grain of rice.

However paper wasps show more complex social behaviors.

Tibbetts was intrigued to discover whether these behaviors had any bearing on TI, and investigated by training wasps to discriminate between different pairs of colors.

She found the wasps quickly and accurately learned the pairs, and were later able to use what they had learned to organize a hierarchy of colors when confronted with new pairs of colors.

“This study adds to a growing body of evidence that the miniature nervous systems of insects do not limit sophisticated behaviors,” Tibbetts said in the release.

“We’re not saying that wasps used logical deduction to solve this problem, but they seem to use known relationships to make inferences about unknown relationships.”

Tibbetts believes the explanation may lie in the differing social behaviors of paper wasps and honey bees. While a honeybee colony has a single queen and multiple female workers of equal rank, paper wasp colonies are home to multiple reproductive females, called foundresses, which compete for dominance.

In such a situation, TI would help wasps make quick deductions about social interactions.

This means they can build and manipulate an implicit hierarchy, helping them to live in the colony, the press release said.

“Our findings suggest that the capacity for complex behavior may be shaped by the social environment in which behaviors are beneficial, rather than being strictly limited by brain size,” said Tibbetts, who has been researching wasp behavior for 20 years.

Gavin Broad, Principal Curator in Charge (Insects) at the Natural History Museum in London, agrees with these conclusions.

“The paper wasps in the study are more flexible than many wasps (or indeed honey bees) in their ability to transition from being workers to queens,” Broad told CNN via email.

“So dominance hierarchies are important to these paper wasps as the workers can become the queens, whereas a worker honey bee can never become a queen.”

Broad also pointed out that wasp society is entirely female, and males don’t contribute to social dynamics.

Tibbetts told CNN via email that the next step is to study how wasps use TI in social interactions, including figuring out their relative strength without fighting a rival.


“For example, if a wasp saw Jane win a fight with Lisa and that wasp had previously won a fight with Jane, the wasp could infer that she could probably beat Lisa,” said Tibbetts, who added that other animals use TI in this way during social interactions.

In a previous study, Tibbetts showed paper wasps can recognize variations in facial markings and are more aggressive toward wasps with unfamiliar markings.


And another piece of her research found the insects use memories of previous social interactions with other wasps to determine their behavior, relying on surprisingly long memories.

The full results of the research are published in the journal Biology Letters.

(Source: CNN)



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First Announcement

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National Iranian Drilling Company	3,200,029	INDENT No: 01-22-9746003 TenderNo.: FP/11-97/025	10,761,014,000

Qualitative evaluation of tenderers

Method	Qualification process will be done in plain mode in offers opening session according to presentation of valid practice certificate / legal documents (certificate of corporation/ supply announcement up to latest changes) which should be related to tender subject.
	1- Applicants which have more than 4 in process contacts with NIDC are not allowed to participate in this tender. 2- Applicants which have more than 2 in process contacts with NIDC in similare subject (exclusively same subject) are not allowed to participate in another tender

Purchasing & Submitting

Tender Document Distribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof.
	<div>Distribution Place Hall No.:113, 1stfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Com Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN(061-34148601-34148253)</div> <div>Submitting Method Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of \$10,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. (Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving .Tender Documents</div>
<div>Documents Receiving Method</div>	<div>Closing date Days after the last time of Purchasing 35</div> <div>Address Hall No. 107, 1stfloor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569</div>

Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	539,000,000Rial/ 11,348 Euro
Type of guarantee	✓--Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ✓--Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.(Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636)
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Foreign Procurement Dept.)
More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir http://sapp.ir/nidc_pr
تهران تایمز نویت اول ۹۸/۲/۲۴ نویت دوم ۹۸/۲/۲۵

Iranian Space Research Center provides equipment for Iranian satellites

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Space Research Center (ISRC) designs and manufactures sensors, spacecraft energy storage system and Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) for Iranian satellites, which are under construction, ISNA reported on Monday.

Three separate groups are working on sensors, SAR and energy storage system, the head of mechanics research center of ISRC announced.

Earth horizon sensor, star tracker, magnetic sensor, sun sensor are used in the satellites, he explained.

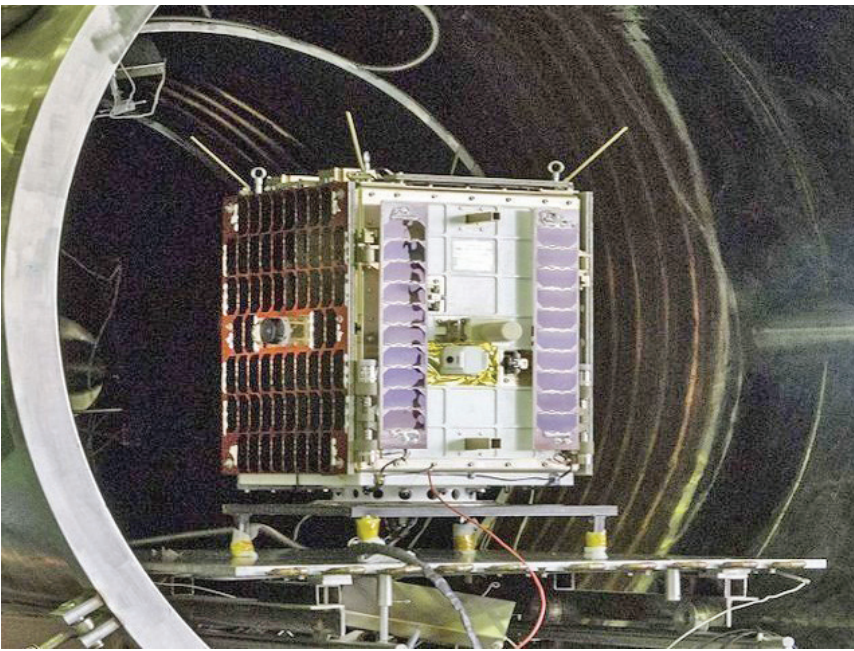
In January 2019, Iran launched homegrown Payam satellite, however, the satellite's carrier rocket could not reach the "necessary speed"

and so neither reach the orbit, the information and communication technology (ICT) minister told the state TV.

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi said that the satellite successfully passed the first and second stages of the launch, but could not reach the "necessary speed" in the third stage.

Payam, a 90kg non-military satellite, was planned to be sent into a 500km orbit using domestically-made Safir satellite-carrier rocket.

Manufactured by the Amirkabir University of Technology, the image resolution of the Payam satellite is 45 meters and can stay in orbit for three years.



Later Azari Jahromi announced that Iran has spent 1.2 million euros for manufacturing Payam satellite over a period of ten years saying that the budget is not an expenditure

but an investment, just like e-government, the remote sensing satellite will improve usage of water resources and methods of agriculture.

Seawater greenhouse using renewable energy to be established

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The technology development council of water, drought, erosion and environment at science and technology vice presidency plans to establish a seawater greenhouse using renewable energy in southern Iran, IRNA reported on Sunday.

Bushehr province and Makran coastline in Sistan-Baluchestan province are the pilot sites for establishment of seawater greenhouse, Jahangir Porhemmat, an official with the council, said.

The seawater, air and solar energy provides the cool air for inside of the greenhouses, he explained.

A seawater greenhouse is a greenhouse structure that enables the growth of crops in arid regions, using seawater and solar energy. The technique involves pumping



seawater (or allowing it to gravitate if below sea level) to an arid location and then subjecting it to two processes: first, it is used to humidify and cool the air, and second, it is evaporated by solar heating and distilled to produce fresh water.

Finally, the remaining humidified air is expelled from the greenhouse and used to improve growing conditions for outdoor plants.

Iran supports marine startups

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The vice presidency for science and technology supports marine startups, Mehr reported on Sunday.

The vice presidency held several meetings attended by selected startups at the Marine Propulsion Startup event and the investors, the secretary of the event Mohsen Naderi said.

The first Marine Propulsion Startup was held on the sidelines of the 2nd Marine Propulsion, which was held on February 25, 2019.

Some fields like smart marine propulsion, smart ports and smart propulsion system used for naval ships seems more attractive for the investors, he said.

Such startup events are great steps toward entrepreneurship and job creation



nationwide, he said.

As Startup Wharf, the first Accelerator specific to the Marine sector, wrote on its website, marine was dubbed by TechCrunch as the hidden Trillion Dollar sector, with huge opportunities to improve and disrupt the current business models with digital technologies.

Just add water: Salt battery could help renewable energy use

Amid the hum and heat of Berlin's Reuter thermal power station stands a shining contraption that looks out of place in the decades-old machine hall.

Its silver pipes and vats contain a substance that Vattenfall, the plant's operator, says could become a key ingredient for a fossil fuel-free future.

The energy company, together with a Swedish start-up, is testing the use of salt — though not quite the common table variety — to store heat, which accounts for more than half the power consumed in Germany.

If it works well, the system could help solve a problem posed by renewable energy sources like wind and solar the world over: they are unreliable, meaning they sometimes generate too much, and sometimes too little power.

"Germany currently has enough installed renewable energy capacity to produce twice as much as it needs, it's just not constant," says Hendrik Roeglin, who oversees the salt storage

project for Vattenfall. Rival utility E.ON recently calculated that solar and wind power generated up to 52 gigawatt hours of electricity during peak daylight hours on Easter Monday. Germany's energy consumption at the time was just 49.5 gigawatt hours.

"With many facilities like this one, in theory you wouldn't need gas or other fossil fuel backups," said Roeglin.

Phasing out nuclear, coal and gas is an ambitious undertaking for a heavily industrialized country such as Germany. The government has set a deadline to shutter all the country's nuclear plants by 2022 and stop burning coal for electricity by 2038; gas will be a stop-gap technology until a way is found to rely wholly on renewable technology sometime around the middle of the century.

The plan, known as the Energiewende, or energy transition, is being closely watched by other countries trying to figure out how to curb greenhouse gas emissions and meet

the Paris climate accord that aims to keep global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit).

Experts agree that a range of technological solutions will be necessary to replace fossil fuels, some already existing and some still at the experimental phase. California-based automaker Tesla has already shown in Australia that it can provide large lithium-ion battery systems to stabilize electricity grids.

At the Reuter power plant in Berlin, which supplies 600,000 households in the capital with heat, the solution now includes calcium oxide, also known as quicklime. Vattenfall and Swedish start-up SaltX have been taking advantage of a simple chemical reaction that occurs when quicklime becomes wet: the salt-like grains soak up the water, becoming calcium hydroxide and releasing large amounts of heat in the process. By removing the water again — a process not dissimilar to baking — the substance turns back into calcium oxide.

(Source: msn.com)

National center for cyberspace mulls over digital book release

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The national center for cyberspace discussed the necessity of releasing digital books in Iran during a meeting on Saturday, Mehr reported.

Iran Book House reported that in past 40 years, about 1.3 million books were published, of which 750 thousands are not available.

The books are available for book readers in digital forms as an economic solution.

■ E-books - Statistics & Facts

Technology and mobility have influenced every step of consumer's life, including the way they read books. Book readers have started to change their reading habits, opting for different types of formats of books, such as e-books. An e-book, also known as an electronic or digital book, is a digitally released version of a book, often consisting of text and images and available on electronic devices, such as specifically designed e-book readers.



To a certain extent, e-books have become popular amongst American bookworms — 20 percent of book readers in the U.S. stated they read more e-books than hard copy books, and 23 percent read about the same number of hard copy books and e-books, demonstrating an open attitude among readers to exploring the many benefits e-books can offer the reader. In 2018, about 26 percent of American book consumers stated they had read an e-book in the last year, however print books were still arguably the more popular format among U.S. readers.

Iran to support startups by launching food, medicine accelerator

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The biotech development center (BioDC) at science and technology vice-presidency aims to establish an accelerator for medicine and food startups, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The center signed a tripartite agreement with a private sector accelerator and a food company to support medicine and food startups.



It is anticipated that ten selected teams would become active at the accelerator and receive financial support for research and development.

The selected products will be offered to the food company and in case of final agreement, mass production and commercialization will start with the support of BioDC.

Your most sensitive data is likely exposed online. These people try to find it

Justin Paine sits in a pub in Oakland, California, searching the internet for your most sensitive data. It doesn't take him long to find a promising lead.

On his laptop, he opens Shodan, a searchable index of cloud servers and other internet-connected devices. Then he types the keyword "Kibana," which reveals more than 15,000 databases stored online. Paine starts digging through the results, a plate of chicken tenders and fries growing cold next to him.

"This one's from Russia. This one's from China," Paine said. "This one is just wide open."

From there, Paine can sift through each database and check its contents. One database appears to have information about hotel room service. If he keeps looking deeper, he might find credit card or passport numbers. That isn't far-fetched. In the past, he's found databases containing patient information from drug addiction treatment centers, as well as library borrowing records and online gambling transactions.

Paine is part of an informal army of web researchers who indulge an obscure passion: scouring the internet for unsecured databases. The databases -- unencrypted and in plain sight -- can contain all sorts of sensitive information, including names, addresses, telephone numbers, bank details, Social Security numbers and medical diagnoses. In the wrong hands, the data could be exploited for fraud, identity theft or blackmail.

The data-hunting community is both eclectic and global. Some of its members are professional security experts, others are hobbyists. Some are advanced programmers, others can't write a line of code. They're in Ukraine, Israel, Australia, the US and just about any country you name. They share a common purpose: spurring database owners to lock down their info.

The pursuit of unsecured data is a sign of the times. Any organization -- a private company, a nonprofit or a government agency -- can store data on the cloud easily and cheaply. But many software tools that help put databases on the cloud leave the data exposed by default. Even when the tools do make data private from the start, not every organization has the expertise to know it should leave those protections in place. Often, the data just sits there in plain text waiting to be read. That means there'll always be something for people like Paine to find. In April, researchers in



Israel found demographic details on more than 80 million US households, including addresses, ages and income level.

No one knows how big the problem is, says Troy Hunt, a cybersecurity expert who's chronicled on his blog the issue of exposed databases. There are far more unsecured databases than those publicized by researchers, he says, but you can only count the ones you see. What's more, new databases are constantly added to the cloud. "It's one of those tip-of-the-iceberg situations," Hunt said. To search out databases, you have to have a high tolerance for boredom and a higher one for disappointment. Paine said it would take hours to find out whether the hotel room service database was actually a cache of exposed sensitive data. Poring over databases can be mind-numbing and tends to be full of false leads. It isn't like searching for a needle in a haystack; it's like searching fields of haystacks hoping one might contain a needle. What's more, there's no guarantee the hunters will be able to prompt the owners of an exposed database to fix the problem. Sometimes, the owner will threaten legal action instead.

Your login credentials could be in the cloud for anyone to grab.

The payoff, however, can be a thrill. Bob Diachenko, who hunts databases from his office in Ukraine, used to work in public relations for a company called Kromtech, which learned from a security researcher that it had a data breach. The experience intrigued Diachenko, and with no experience he dove into hunting databases. In July, he found records on thousands of US voters in an unsecured database, simply by using the keyword "voter."

"If me, a guy with no technical background,

can find this data," Diachenko said, "then anybody in the world can find this data."

In January, Diachenko found 24 million financial documents related to US mortgages and banking on an exposed database. The publicity generated by the find, as well as others, helps Diachenko promote SecurityDiscovery.com, a cybersecurity consulting business he set up after leaving his previous job.

■ Publicizing a problem

Chris Vickery, a director of cyberrisk research at UpGuard, says big finds raise awareness and help drum up business from companies anxious to make sure their names aren't associated with sloppy practices. Even if the companies don't choose UpGuard, he said, the public nature of discoveries helps his field grow.

Earlier this year, Vickery looked for something big by searching on "data lake," a term for large compilations of data stored in multiple file formats.

The search helped his team make one of the biggest finds to date, a cache of 540 million Facebook records that included user's names, Facebook ID numbers and about 22,000 unencrypted passwords stored in the cloud. The data had been stored by third-party companies, not Facebook itself.

"I was swinging for the fences," Vickery said, describing the process.

■ Getting it secured

Facebook said it acted swiftly to get the data removed. But not all companies are responsive.

When database hunters can't get a company to react, they sometimes turn to a security writer who uses the pen name Dissent. She used to hunt unsecured databases herself but now spends her time prompting companies to respond to data exposures that other researchers find. "An optimal response is, 'Thank you for letting us know. We're securing it and we're notifying patients or customers and the relevant regulators,'" said Dissent, who asked to be identified by her pen name to protect her privacy.

Not every company understands what it means for data to be exposed, something Dissent has documented on her website Databreaches.net. In 2017, Diachenko sought her help in reporting exposed health records from a financial software vendor to a New York City hospital.

(Source: cnet.com)



N.I.O.C
1398.861

First Announcement

Call for public tender (First/Second publish)
Two-Stages (semi compressed) tender

Subject of Tender: (THE LEASE OF ONE OFFSHORE DRILLING RIG



National Iranian Drilling Company

* Tender Descriptions :

The Tender Holder	Registration No. Through National Electronic Tendering System	Tender No.:	Estimated Value (Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3/200/277	97/DP-33-06-5249	(35,000,000) Euro

* Qualitative evaluation of tenderers

method	1-Based on minimum scoring made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms: (65 score). 2-Tenderers which has a four active current contract with NIDC will not be allowed to participate in other tenders. 3- Tenderers which has a two active current contract with same subject (exactly same subject) with NIDC, will not be allowed to participate in other tenders.

* Purchasing & submitting of Tender documents

Distribution of tender documents by NIDC	Starting date for receiving	(The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement)
	Last time for receiving	Last time for receiving (ended on the following tenth day thereof)
	Distribution place	Contracts department – part A – first floor – operational building – koveemallet – Ahvaz- Iran- 061-34146525
	Submitting method	Submitting one original bank fund receipt in the amount of 990,000 rials under account number 4001114004020491 (IBAN: IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC incomes centralized fund" issued by I.R. of Iran central bank. Submitting formal request for the purpose of receivingof tender doc 14 Days after the last time of purchasing of tender documents.
Tender Envelopes Delivery Date	Closing date	Hall no. 107,1st floor, tender committee, operation building, nationa drilling company, airport square, Ahvaz, Iran. Tel : +98-61-34148581 +98-61-34148569
	Delivery address	


* Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	45,224,000,000 Rials or 964,676 Euro
Acceptable	Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtained activity license from the central bank of the Islamic republic of Iran.
Type of guarantee	Submitting one original bank fund receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (IBAN: IR 350100004001114006376636 in name of "NIDCsaving centralized account" by the central bank of Islamic republic of Iran.
Duration of credit for quotation	Tender guarantee /quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one more time in ceiling of initial validity duration.

(Name of department)

More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir <http://sapp.ir/nidc-pr>

تهران تایمز نویت اول ۹۸/۲/۲۴ نویت دوم ۹۸/۲/۲۵




N.I.O.C
1398.907

First Announcement

Call for public tender (First/Second publish)

One Stages tender



National Iranian Drilling Company

Subject of Tender: P/F: "MH" POWER TOP DRIVE

* Tender Descriptions :

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3.200.396	Tender No.:EP/04-98/023 Indent No.:08-22-9745186	9.732.000.000

* Qualitative evaluation of tenderers

Method	Qualification process will be done in plain mode in offers opening session according to presentation of valid practice certificate / legal documents (certificate of corporation/ supply announcement up to latest changes) which should be related to tender subject.
	1- Applicants which have more than 4 in process contacts with NIDC are not allowed to participate in this tender. 2- Applicants which have more than 2 in process contacts with NIDC in similar subject (exclusively same subject) are not allowed to participate in another tender

* Purchasing & Submitting

Tender Document Distribution by Company		The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof (closing date : 98/03/06)
	Distribution Place Hall No.:113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 40011140064020491(Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank .Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents
	Submitting Method	
Documents Receiving Method	Closing date	(Days after the last time of Purchasing (closing date (10/04/98 35 (98/04/11) The envelopes will be opened At 2.15. a.m. On
	Address	Hall No. 107, 1 st floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569

* Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	487.000.000 Rial / 10 , 389 Euro
Type of guarantee	✓-Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ✓-Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Foreign Procurement Dept.)

More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir

http://sapp.ir/nidc_pr

تهران تایمز نوبت اول ۹۸/۲/۲۴ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۲/۲۵

Gaza matches Hezbollah, can fire 1,000 missiles a day: Israel

TEHRAN — Israeli officials have concluded that resistance groups in the besieged Gaza Strip now match their Lebanese counterpart Hezbollah in terms of missile prowess.

According to a new report by the Israeli new site Walla, Israeli military experts have confirmed after extensive research that Hamas and Islamic Jihad can launch a barrage of 1,000 missiles a day in case of future conflicts.

That's significantly higher than the resistance groups' impressive tally of firing around 700 rockets and missiles at Israeli targets during a two-day standoff earlier this month.

The sheer number of the rockets was enough to overwhelm Israeli missile systems and force Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to agree to yet another truce agreement to prevent a further escalation last week.

But the threat is not limited to missiles and rockets. Maj. Gen. Herzi Halevi, the head of the Israeli military's Southern



Command, admitted that his forces were preparing to face a wide variety of weapons including Kornet-type anti-tank guided

missiles, drones and balloon-borne bombs. Hamas carried out its first ever drone attack against Israel during the recent

confrontation. Israeli media stated that a Hamas drone had fired a missile at an Israeli military convoy but the extent of damage and possible casualties were not clear.

According to Press TV, Israeli media had reported earlier that the regime was considering building a wall near the Gaza fence to prevent Kornet attacks like the one that destroyed an Israeli armed vehicle during the recent battles.

The Gaza escalation erupted last Friday following the deaths of four Palestinians in an Israeli air raid on the coastal sliver of land and the regime's live fire targeting Gaza protesters.

Israeli warplanes struck some 350 sites in Gaza, claiming the lives of 27 Palestinian people.

In response, the Palestinians fired some 700 rockets at the occupied lands between Saturday morning and early Monday morning, killing four Israelis and injuring 200 others.

'Several Saudi soldiers slain in Yemeni drone strike'

TEHRAN — Several Saudi soldiers have been killed and dozens of others sustained injuries when Yemeni army soldiers, backed by allied fighters from Popular Committees, launched an airstrike against a military position in the kingdom's border region of Asir.

An unnamed Yemeni military source told Arabic-language al-Masirah television network that Yemeni soldiers and their allies attacked a gathering of Saudi troops in al-Rabu'ah town of the region on Sunday, using a domestically-designed and -manufactured Qasef K2 (Striker K2) combat drone.

The source added that several Saudi soldiers were killed in the aerial assault, and dozens of others sustained injuries.

Separately, scores of Saudi-sponsored militiamen loyal to Yemen's former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, have been killed and injured when Yemeni soldiers

and their allies struck their strongholds in the al-Wazi'yah and Hayfan districts of the southwestern Yemeni province of Ta'izz.

According to Press TV, Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched a devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing the government of Hadi back to power and crushing the Houthi Ansarullah movement.

According to a December 2018 report by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, the Saudi-led war has claimed the lives of over 60,000 Yemenis since January 2016.

The war has also taken a heavy toll on the country's infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories. The UN said in a report in December 2018 that over 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme levels of hunger.

Washington requested Trump-Putin meeting

TEHRAN — Washington has reportedly requested a meeting between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, according to Russian newspaper Kommersant. If confirmed, a meeting could take place on the sidelines of the upcoming G20 summit.

Citing a U.S. State Department source, Kommersant said on Monday that the likelihood of a meeting between the two leaders is high. Washington is now waiting on Moscow's response, the report claimed.

Such a meeting could potentially take place on the sidelines of the upcoming G20 summit in Osaka, Japan, at the end of next month, RT reported.

The Kommersant report comes a day before U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is set to meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Moscow on Tuesday. Pompeo and Lavrov are expected to clash over the ongoing Venezuela

crisis and Iran's nuclear program, as well as the U.S.' recent withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

Russian Deputy FM Sergey Ryabkov told RIA Novosti that Pompeo and Lavrov will likely also discuss the rumored Putin-Trump meeting.

The report comes less than two weeks after Trump and Putin discussed trade, arms control, and geopolitical issues in a lengthy phone conversation. Although cleared of all accusations of 'Russian collusion' by Special Counsel Robert Mueller's final report, Trump was nevertheless excoriated by the American media for the phone call, as he was for meeting with Putin in Helsinki last summer.

RT has reached out to the U.S. State Department for comment on the unconfirmed meeting plans, and is awaiting a response.

Yemen warring parties hold fresh talks

TEHRAN — Yemen's warring parties started fresh U.N.-sponsored talks in Jordan on Monday, Yemeni officials said, two days after Houthi forces began withdrawing from the ports of Hudaydah, a breaking a six month stalemate.

The talks will focus on sharing out revenues from Hudaydah's three Red Sea ports to help relieve an urgent humanitarian crisis, Reuters reported.

Meanwhile, The United Nations says the withdrawal of Houthi forces from key ports of Yemen's western province of Hudaydah is proceeding "in accordance with established plans" for a second day, as the Saud-backed former government still refuses to pull out its besieging forces from Hudaydah in line with an accord the two sides reached in Sweden last year.

Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement is in control of key ports of Salif and Ras Isa and Hudaydah, which have been under a tight siege by country's former Saudi-backed government, led by ex-president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, since June last year.

More than 70 percent of Yemen's imports used to pass through the docks of Hudaydah, a lifeline for the war-ravaged



country's crippled economy. Salif was used for unloading all main types of grain and Ras Isa, a vital oil terminal, used for exporting Ma'rib light crude's oil.

The lengthy siege pushed tens of thousands of people in Yemen to the verge of starvation and crippled the country's economy. In an attempt to prevent the humanitarian situation

from further deterioration and to avert a full-scale assault by the Saudi-led coalition on the ports, Houthis signed a UN-brokered agreement with the ex-government in Sweden in last December.

According to Press TV, the warring sides agreed to withdraw their forces from the ports in a two-stage process, the first phase of which from the Houthi side was unilaterally commenced on Saturday and is due to be completed on Tuesday.

"All three ports were monitored simultaneously by United Nations teams as the military forces left the ports and the Coast Guard took over responsibility for security," Lt Gen Michael Lollsegaard, head of the UN Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC), said in a statement on Sunday.

In the first stage, Houthis are to draw back five kilometers from the three ports until Tuesday, while forces of the former government, backed by troops of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), currently massed four kilometers from Hudaydah, are to withdraw one kilometer from, two other flashpoint ports.

Sweden reopens Assange rape investigation, to seek extradition

TEHRAN — Sweden reopened an investigation into a rape allegation against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange Monday and will seek his extradition from Britain, potentially delaying efforts by the United States to bring him to its courts to face trial over a huge release of secret documents.

Deputy Chief Prosecutor Eva-Marie Persson told a news conference she would continue a preliminary investigation that was dropped in 2017 without charges being brought because Assange had taken refuge in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, Reuters reported.

Assange was arrested in Britain last

month after spending seven years hiding inside the embassy.

The United States is also seeking his extradition on conspiracy charges relating to the public release by Wikileaks of a cache of secret documents, including assessments of foreign leaders, wars and security matters.

The Swedish prosecutor said it would request Assange be detained in his absence on probable cause for an allegation of rape and that it would issue a European arrest warrant - the process under which his extradition would be sought.

The 47-year-old Australian - who denies the allegations - is currently in a

London prison serving 50 weeks behind bars for jumping bail when he fled to the Ecuadorian embassy in 2012.

The decision to reopen the investigation poses the question of whether Assange will be moved to Sweden or to the United States.

"I am well aware of the fact that an extradition process is ongoing in the U.K. and that he could be extradited to the U.S.," Persson said.

A British judge has given the U.S. government a deadline of June 12 to outline its case against Assange.

The statute of limitation for rape in Sweden is 10 years - a deadline which would



be reached in mid-August next year for the alleged incident involving Assange, leaving prosecutors pressed for time should they decide to file any formal charge.

U.S. and China at impasse over trade

TEHRAN — The United States and China appeared at a deadlock over trade negotiations Sunday as Washington demanded promises of concrete changes to Chinese law and Beijing said it would not swallow any "bitter fruit" that harmed its interests. The trade war between the world's top two economies escalated Friday, with the United States hiking tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods after President Donald Trump said Beijing "broke the deal" by renegeing on earlier commitments made during months of negotiations.

White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow told Fox News Sunday that the United States needs to see China agree to "very strong" enforcement provisions for an eventual deal and said the sticking point was Beijing's reluctance to put agreed changes into law. He vowed the tariffs would remain in place while negotiations continue, Reuters reported.

Beijing remained defiant, however. "At no time will China



forfeit the country's respect, and no one should expect China to swallow bitter fruit that harms its core interests," said a commentary, due for Monday publication, in the ruling Communist Party's People's Daily.

It said Beijing's doors were open to talks but it would not yield on important issues of principle.

Kudlow said there was a "strong possibility" that Trump will meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping at a G-20 summit in Japan in late June. Until last week, there were expectations Trump and Xi would sign a trade deal at the summit.

However, the trade talks suffered a major setback last week when China proposed extensive revisions to a draft agreement. It wanted to delete prior commitments that Chinese laws would be changed to enact new policies on issues from intellectual property protection to forced technology transfers.

Trump plan includes extending Israeli law to West Bank

TEHRAN — U.S. President Donald Trump's controversial "deal of the century" is expected to include recognition of Israeli law extending to all settlements in the occupied West Bank, Israel's Channel 12 News says.

Trump's so-called peace plan will provide for all illegal Israeli settlements to "remain in Israeli hands under a permanent accord" and "the Americans will not oppose Israeli steps relating to the settlements," it said.

The report said while the U.S. will not explicitly back the formal "extension of Israeli sovereignty" to the settlements or their annexation, it will not object to the "extension of Israeli law" to the settlements.

In the run-up to last month's elections, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promised to extend "sovereignty" to West Bank settlements and hoped he would be able to do so with American support.

According to press TV, Channel 12 News said if Tel Aviv extends Israeli law to all the settlements, the U.S. "won't oppose, or will be okay with, or won't make a fuss about" such a move.

The White House has declined to comment on the matter.

Trump's so-called peace plan has been dismissed by Palestinian authorities ahead of its unveiling at the end of the holy fasting month of Ramadan and the formation of the new Israeli cabinet, most likely in June.

Bahrain court upholds death sentences against two anti-regime activists

TEHRAN — Bahrain's supreme court of appeal has upheld death sentences against two anti-regime activists.

According to Press TV, the defendants, identified as Zuhair Ibrahim Jassem and Mohammad Mahdi, were sentenced to death by the Court of Cassation, after the court relied on statements extracted under torture, the Arabic-language Lualua television network reported.

Amnesty International has called on its advocates to appeal to Bahraini monarch King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah over the cases of two death row inmates, who are at the risk of execution.

The London-based rights group urged the monarch "not to ratify the death sentences imposed on the two men and ensure they are not executed."

It also called for a "retrial that fully complies with international fair trial standards, excludes evidence obtained under torture and without recourse to the death penalty."

UN kicks off major climate change effort

TEHRAN — Secretary-General Antonio Guterres kicked off a major United Nations push for progress on what he calls the defining issue of our time: climate change.

Guterres travelled to New Zealand, from where he is set to visit several Pacific islands where rising sea levels are threatening the very existence of those small countries, AFP reported.

The stepped-up diplomacy will culminate with a climate action summit at the UN in September, an event billed as a last chance to prevent irreversible climate change, three years after the Paris agreement went into force.

"We are seeing everywhere a clear demonstration that we are not on track to achieve the objectives defined in the Paris agreement," Guterres said on the failure to limit rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial revolution levels.

In a strong message for action on climate change, Guterres said international political resolve was fading and it was the small island nations that were "really in the front line" and would suffer most.

Nechirvan Barzani frontrunner for president as parliament prepares for vote

1➡ Parliament opened a three-day window for those wanting to run for the presidency to submit their candidacy. Once the parliament receives all the applications, it will announce the names in two days. Then, parties will have three days to appeal the names.

Hevidar Ahmed, a member of the KDP bloc believes other than Barzani no one else will run for the president.

"It seems no other party will have a candidate to stand against Nechirvan Barzani," Ahmed said, saying Barzani has an outright majority support following the KDP-PUK-Gorran agreement.

Ahmed believes the post of the president is certainly for his party's candidate "as the result is clear already."

UAE confirms ships 'sabotaged' off its coast

1➡ The report stated that several powerful explosions were also heard at the port.

Later, the media office of the government of Fujairah denied the report of the explosions altogether, saying that transit and other activities at the port were underway as usual. Additionally, Brigadier Ali Obaid al-Taniji, the director of the department of civil defense in Fujairah, told the Emarat al-Youm daily that there had been no fire or explosion at the port.

Despite the UAE government's denial, witnesses have emphasized that the blasts have taken place and some media sources have even went further, identifying a number of oil tankers hit by the explosions.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia says two of its oil tankers were sabotaged off the coast of the United Arab Emirates(UAE) in attacks that caused "significant damage" to the vessels.

One of the ships was en route to pick up Saudi oil to take to the United States, Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih said on Monday.

The announcement by al-Falih came as the UAE's regional allies condemned the reported sabotage on Sunday of four ships off the coast of the port city of Fujairah.

Grasshoppers president says he was blackmailed by own fans

The president of fallen Swiss giants Grasshopper Zurich wants tougher sentences for football hooligans and has said he was “blackmailed” by the club’s own fans on Sunday.

Angry Grasshopper supporters threatened to storm the pitch after their team fell 4-0 behind to Lucerne in a Swiss Super League match, forcing a match involving the team to be called off for the second time in two months. If the result is confirmed by the Swiss Football League disciplinary commission, the 27-times Swiss champions will be relegated, ending an unbroken 68 years in the top flight.

“I will look to speak to politicians and the federation. We need action now,” Stephan Rietiker told a news conference on Monday. “A mix of repression and dialogue is needed. It is a society problem. Dozens of fans moved to the front of the terraces and threatened to storm the pitch after Lucerne’s fourth goal and Rietiker said he had no option but to talk to them.

The fans demanded the players hand over their shirts as they were “not worthy” of wearing them - a demand to which the club agreed. “The intention was to calm things down,” said Rietiker.

“I went against my heart and agreed to giving up the shirts. It was the best thing to do in this situation otherwise we could have had hooligans in the dressing-room.”

“Clear threats were been made by fans. It was clear blackmail. But I had to weigh things up. There was not much police there. I decided to fulfil the jersey gesture.”

Coach Uli Forte, meanwhile, said he would stay with the club for next season’s campaign in the second tier.

Swiss football has been plagued by fan violence over the years, far removed from the Alpine nation’s reputation for peace and order.

(Source: Reuters)

Drinkwater slapped with long ban for drink driving

Out-of-favor Chelsea midfielder Danny Drinkwater has been banned from driving for 20 months after admitting to drink driving.

The 29-year-old -- capped three times by England on the back of his pivotal role in Leicester’s fairytale 2016 title victory -- was two-and-a-half times over the legal limit when he crashed his Range Rover through a wall last month.

Drinkwater, who had two women passengers in the car, caused £50,000 (\$65,000) damage to his car and suffered a graze to his forehead. Aside from the ban, Drinkwater was also ordered to perform 70 hours’ community service.

Drinkwater, unlike former Leicester City teammate N’golo Kante, has failed to impose himself at Chelsea after a £35-million transfer in 2017 and last played for them in the Community Shield in August 2018 when he came on as a substitute.

(Source: Mirror)

‘Inspirational’ Djokovic wins third Madrid title and 33rd Masters

Novak Djokovic joined Rafael Nadal as a 33-time Masters champion on Sunday when he swept to a 6-3, 6-4 win over Stefanos Tsitsipas to claim a third Madrid Open title.

The world number one dominated a clearly exhausted opponent less than 24 hours after the 20-year-old Greek had stunned five-time champion Nadal in a semi-final which ended around midnight on Saturday.

Djokovic and Nadal will now attempt to claim a 34th Masters title in Rome this week in a key indicator ahead of Roland Garros which gets under way on May 26. Djokovic never let Tsitsipas get into gear in a final which lasted just over 90 minutes

“This is a very important win for me, especially for my confidence,” 15-time Grand Slam winner Djokovic said.

“I was not playing my best after winning the Australia Open but I started this week well, not dropping a set all through. I’ve played some of my best tennis here.”

Tsitsipas, who beat Djokovic in their previous meeting last summer in Canada, was broken once in each set, enough of a margin for the top seed to take the trophy, his second of the season after the Australian Open.

The Serb still needed four match points to get the job done with Tsitsipas finally beaten when Djokovic sent a winning volley into the corner. Tsitsipas hailed Djokovic who will hold all four Slam titles if he goes on to claim a second French Open next month.

“It’s inspiring what you do, simply amazing. You deserve it,” the Greek told the Serb.

“You had a great week. It was also a great one for me, with good memories and good crowd support.”

(Source: Guardian)

Atletico Madrid believe Griezmann will join Barcelona

Atletico Madrid now ‘believe that Antoine Griezmann will go and join Barcelona this summer’ with his future once again a topic of debate.

According to Cadena SER, via Mundo Deportivo, just a year after announcing he was to turn down Barcelona advances to stay with Atletico, the World Cup winner now looks to be edging closer to a switch. A meeting between the player, his representatives and the club is due later this week to this discuss his future heading into the summer transfer window.

The club are believed to be tired with constant speculation over the future of the Frenchman and the report reveals they want an answer face-to-face whether he will stay or go.

From July 1, Griezmann’s contract sees a €120million (£104m) release clause and that would represent an affordable fee for Barcelona, who paid more for Ousmane Dembele and Philippe Coutinho. Atletico manager Diego Simeone was less than enthused to discuss the future of Griezmann ahead of the weekend’s draw with Sevilla.

‘Since the subject of Griezmann going to Barcelona started to pop up in the media, I always said that I think he’s okay, he’s cool and happy with his team-mates,’ Simeone said on Saturday.

(Source: Daily Mail)

‘Half man, half god’ Maradona is king of Cannes



Diego Maradona is sure to cause a stir when he turns up next week at the Cannes film festival for a new documentary about his jaw-dropping life by the Oscar-winning maker of “Amy”.

It is only one of a wave of new works about the flawed Argentine football genius that include a just-wrapped Amazon biopic series that follows every step of his dramatic rise and fall.

The poster for Asif Kapadia’s striking documentary “Diego Maradona” also pulls no punches, calling him both hero and a “hustler”.

Yet Maradona will still walk the Cannes red carpet for the man who won plaudits and prizes for his insight into the life and tragic death of singer Amy Winehouse.

Brad Pitt, Leonardo DiCaprio, Bono and Iggy Pop will climb the same carpet during the festival, which starts Tuesday, but few if any of them can draw the crowds or the passion as the short man born in a Buenos Aires shantytown.

It is this complex yet unshakable adoration, forged in Maradona’s frequent flirtations with death, that drew Kapadia to his story.

After his acclaimed portrait of the Brazilian Formula One ace Ayrton Senna, who lost his duel with death at 34 as he was leading the San Marino Grand Prix, the filmmaker said he had to steel himself to tackle another sporting hero who lived life on the edge.

Despite swearing never to make another sports film after “Senna”, Kapadia caved in when he discovered a cache of footage from Maradona’s mythic period playing for Napoli.

■ **Partying with the Camorra** - “It was infamous,” he told a documentary

conference in Copenhagen earlier this year, with some sequences showing the player partying with dons from the Camorra, the Neapolitan mafia.

They were meant to go into a 1991 documentary that was never shown.

“We managed to get our hands on them and thought, ‘He is really interesting and his journey is incredible.’ What he gets up to, and what happens to him, has much wider themes,” Kapadia said.

Maradona also agreed to talk, sitting down for three long interviews because “he liked ‘Senna’. That was one of the reasons we were able to get through the door.”

Mercedes dominance bad for F1 box office -- Hamilton



Lewis Hamilton cut short his celebrations after winning the Spanish Grand Prix to warn that Mercedes’ dominance could be a menace to Formula One’s box office appeal.

The defending five-time world champion seized the initiative at the start of Sunday’s race and then cruised to his 76th career victory ahead of team-mate Valtteri Bottas, who had started in pole position.

It was the Mercedes pairing’s fifth consecutive one-two finish and left rivals Ferrari floundering in pursuit.

The two Mercedes drivers are competing against each other ... and it’s not much fun for outsiders, admits Hamilton, especially for spectators.

Having hoped to see a Ferrari renaissance at the Circuit de Catalunya, where they were so dominant in pre-season testing, Hamilton was disappointed again at their lack of pace, which, almost incredibly, prompted paddock talk of the Silver Arrows winning all 21 races.

Mercedes locked out the front row of the grid and then took a stranglehold on the race in such fashion that some observers

talked of them being ‘the invincibles’ with 16 races remaining including the classic Monaco Grand Prix later this month.

That street circuit challenge will be very different to all that has gone before, but rivals have already installed Mercedes as favourites and the drivers’ championship as a two-man race.

Hamilton is hopeful that for the sake of the sport, any such scenario never happens. “The biggest threat is always the person that’s closest to you,” he said. “And that person is Valtteri, but it still feels too early ...

“It’s not as much fun, for sure, as when you are competing against another team. That’s what F1 is about.

“That’s the exciting part, when you arrive and you’re competing against one or two other teams who are also bringing their A-game. Naturally in those teams, that’s another two drivers.

“That puts another spanner in the works and often when the cars are close, there’s strengths and weaknesses of either team and how you play those and benefit from those, it’s awesome.

(Source: BBC)

S.African government instructs athletics body to appeal Semenya decision



The South African government said on Monday it was “instructing” the country’s athletics governing body to appeal against the Court of Arbitration for Sport decision on female eligibility that directly affects their Olympic champion Caster Semenya.

Yet Athletics South Africa (ASA) maintained silence on the matter with sources telling Reuters they were still considering their options and would not be issuing any statement until ready. Any appeal would have to be made by the end of the month to the Swiss Federal Tribunal. Sport minister Tokozile Xasa, who has no direct authority over ASA, said in a statement she was making the instruction after receiving ad

The panel had met to discuss the way forward after CAS ruled that the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) could go ahead with its regulations on female runners with differences of sex development (DSD).

Athletes like the double Olympic 800m champion Semenya with male XY chromosomes must now take medication to lower naturally occurring high levels of testosterone before being allowed to compete

Two-time Cannes winner Emir Kusturica, who tackled him in his 2008 documentary “Maradona by Kusturica”, identified three Maradonas: “The football teacher, the politically incorrect citizen and the family man.”

Italian Oscar winner Paolo Sorrentino created an unforgettable image of the ravaged hero in “Youth”, his movie on ageing, with an overweight Maradona lookalike in an oxygen mask doing kick ups with a tennis ball.

That tragic but defiant figure is the heart of a new Maradona play in Paris based on a book by Argentinian writer Alicia Dujovne Ortiz, where this “demi-god tries to escape destiny for something worse”.

The big-budget Amazon series “Maradona” -- which will go out later this year -- follows the “Golden Boy” from the cradle through the highs and lows of his career at Sevilla, Barcelona and Napoli, with a relay of actors playing Maradona through the ages.

All eyes at Cannes will be on how the hugely unpredictable icon performs before the eyes of the world, having made headlines at the last World Cup in Moscow with his antics in the stands.

Never one to avoid the grand gesture, he dedicated a recent victory of the Mexican club he manages, Dorados de Sinaloa, to the Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro, who has just survived a coup attempt.

Maradona had previously fallen asleep during one of Maduro’s speeches and had to be woken when the cameras turned to him when the president praised him.

(Source: AFP)

Man City and Liverpool’s epic title race was decided by millimeters and seconds

Eighty-three seconds; that’s all they had. For just under one and a half minutes, Liverpool and their supporters allowed hope to turn into belief that a 29-year wait to be champions of England would come to an end on the final day of the Premier League season.

Having taken a 17th-minute lead against Wolves at Anfield through Sadio Mane, news came through that Glenn Murray had headed Brighton in front against Manchester City at the Amex Stadium. A murmur went around Anfield before turning into a deafening roar.

At first, though, it was a false dawn. In the modern era of instant news on social media, the phenomenon of misheard score lines and false alarms about goals should be a thing of the past, but Liverpool fans repeatedly jumped up and celebrated wildly, under the incorrect impression their title rivals were trailing.

Moments later, though, a second ripple became a crescendo of noise. Brighton had scored and The Kop erupted. Flares were lit and songs were sung; the title was finally within Liverpool’s grasp. Some 215 miles south, Pep Guardiola removed his grey coat as his agitation grew.

For Liverpool to win their first title since 1990, they needed to win their game and hope for City to slip up. Nobody really believed it would happen -- Guardiola’s men had not even fallen behind in a league game since losing at Newcastle



in January -- but on the very last day of the season, it was happening.

Fate? Maybe it was on Liverpool’s side. Maybe that incredible 4-0 Champions League semifinal second leg victory against Barcelona last Tuesday was merely the precursor to the main event five days later.

But within 83 seconds of Murray’s goal, Sergio Aguero levelled for City and the elation gave way to deflation inside Anfield. At that stage, with Liverpool winning and City drawing, Jurgen Klopp’s team were still on course to end the day as champions.

Liverpool supporters knew, though. A lull descended over

the stadium, punctured only by the Wolves fans celebrating. More City goals were inevitable and so it proved. Aymeric Laporte made it 2-1 with a storming header eight minutes before half-time, then Riyad Mahrez and Ilkay Gundogan completed City’s emphatic victory in the second period.

Wolves supporters, basking in the Anfield sunshine, mocked their counterparts by cheering City’s goals and singing the name of former Liverpool winger Raheem Sterling -- now a key man at City -- before rubbing it in by chanting, “you nearly won the league!” It summed up the situation in one way, yet did little to explain how remarkable the battle at the top has been.

Liverpool ended the season on 97 points, having suffered just one defeat -- against City in early January -- but still did not walk away with the trophy because City racked up 98. Legendary former Anfield manager Bill Shankly used to say that first is first and second is nowhere, but that is harsh on his old club this season.

They played their part in the most incredible title race for at least 20 years -- nothing has compared to their battle with City since Manchester United’s Treble winners edged out Arsene Wenger’s first great Arsenal side in 1999 -- but at the end of it, ended as runners-up because Pep Guardiola’s City have been so good.

(Source: ESPN)

Marc Wilmots reaches agreement with Iran: report

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – Ex-Belgium coach Marc Wilmots has reportedly reached an agreement with Iranian Football Federation to take charge of Team Melli.

RTBF has reported that Iran has reached an agreement to pay the 50-year-old coach and his two Belgian assistants \$1,500,000 per year. The Iranian federation also wants former Team Melli captain Javad Nekounam to be a member of the coaching staff.

The Belgian led his homeland to the 2014 World Cup and Euro 2016, but was sacked after that tournament in France.

Wilmots, who is also on the Scotland's list of candidates, will replace Carlos Queiroz in Team Melli.

Carlos Queiroz left Iran to take over as Colombia coach after Team Melli's AFC Asian Cup 2019 campaign in the United Arab Emirates in January earlier this year.

The Portuguese tactician spent eight years as Iran trainer and coached 100th match in 3-0 defeat by Japan in the 2019 AFC Asian



Cup semis.

Queiroz's highlights during his time with Iran include two trips to the FIFA World Cup, becoming the first coach of the Iranian national team to lead the nation to consecutive world finals. On both occasions, Team Melli failed to progress past the group stage.

Wilmots has been without a team after leaving the Ivory Coast coaching position in November 2017. Another Belgian coach is currently in Iran. Georges Leekens, another former Red Devils coach, is in charge of Tractor Sazi football club.

Wilmots will start his work as Iran coach in two friendly matches against Syria and South Korea.

Iran, who are top AFC team in the FIFA rankings at No. 21, will host Syria in Tehran on June 6.

Team Melli will also face South Korea five days later at World Cup Stadium in Seoul.

Iran are preparing for the 2022 World Cup qualifiers that begin in the second half of this year.

Iran welcomes expansion of sporting events: official

IRNA — President of Iran's National Olympic Committee Reza Salehi Amiri said on Monday that expansion of sport relation preludes relations in other fields.

Speaking on the sidelines of his meeting with Azeri Minister of Sports Azad Rahimov, Amiri referred to strategic relations between Iran and Azerbaijan, saying that Iran's strategy is to expand relations between Tehran and Baku.

He added that Iran is looking forward to promoting sport cooperation with Baku.

He noted that during the meeting, both sides discussed holding joint camps with the nature of scientific and academic activities and holding friendly matches.

Referring to strong ties between Tehran and Baku, Salehi Amiri said the meeting will be regarded as initiation of

developing sport relations.

Azeri minister of sports paid a visit to Azadi Sport Complex on Monday.

The Azeri minister is to hold talks with President of Iran's National Olympic Committee Reza Salehi Amiri and while touring Iran's National Olympic and Paralympic Academy during his stay in Iran.

Iranian and Azeri ministers will attend a dinner banquet in Azerbaijan's diplomatic mission in Tehran on Tuesday evening.

Iran and Azerbaijan signed their first memorandum of understanding (MoU) on April 9, 2014.

The first executive plan was signed between the two sides on March 28, 2018.



Paralympic champion Alex Zanardi storms back to the top



Four-time Paralympic champion Alex Zanardi celebrated a revenge victory in front of the Italian crowd at the UCI Para Cycling World Cup in Corridonia, 10 months after failing to reach the podium at his home World Championships in Maniago.

The veteran was the fastest in the men's time trial H5, finishing ahead of Dutchman Mitch Valize and France's Loic Vergnaud.

He then posted two photos on his Instagram @zanardiofficial and wrote: "After last year's defeat, I could again win in my homeland! A wonderful audience made it even more special."

■ Netherlands top standings

Dutch cyclists were in outstanding form as they finished as leaders of the World Cup overall standings with 10 golds, four silvers and one bronze. Italy claimed a total of 24 medals but less golds (seven). USA rounded off the podium.

Netherlands' Paralympic champions Vincent Ter Schure and pilot Timo Franssen

won the men's time trial B, with their compatriots Tristan Bangma and pilot Patrick Bos taking the road race.

Rio 2016 triathlon gold medallist Jetze Plat was unstoppable in the men's H4, securing double gold in the time trial and road race. Carmen Koedood (women's H2) was another Dutch cyclist who enjoyed two wins on Italian soil.

The home crowd also celebrated victory through Paralympic silver medallist Giorgio Farroni both in the men's time trial and road race T1.

US two-time Paralympic champion Shawn Morelli did not disappoint and won the women's time trial and road race C4 races.

It was interesting to see two multiple Paralympic champions going head-to-head in the men's C1, with German Michael Teuber winning the time trial and Spain's Ricardo Ten Argiles the road race.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Andy Anson named new chief executive of British Olympic Association



The British Olympic Association (BOA) has named Andy Anson as its new chief executive.

Anson replaces Bill Sweeney, who departed the UK's National Olympic Committee in March to take up the same role at England's Rugby Football Union (RFU).

The 54-year-old's first task will be to lead Team GB into the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, which get underway in just over a year.

Anson is yet to be given an official start date, although the BOA expects it to be in autumn this year.

Commenting on his appointment, Anson said: "I have been fortunate to enjoy a rewarding career across different aspects of the sports industry over many years, but the BOA is an organization close to my heart and I am extremely motivated to play a role in the future of the organization on behalf of the athletes and the member National Governing Bodies.

"With Tokyo 2020 on the horizon, I

believe the BOA and Team GB has an exciting future ahead and I am delighted to be asked to lead a team of talented and dedicated professionals to ensure we give the athletes and sports every chance to succeed on sport's biggest stage."

Anson, who was most recently chief executive of Goals Soccer Centers, previously led England's unsuccessful bid to host the 2018 FIFA World Cup, while he was also a commercial director at Premier League side Manchester United.

His previous experience also includes a stint with the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP), while he has served as an unpaid independent non-executive director of the BOA since 2011.

"Andy is a very high-grade individual who has a unique combination of sports experience and commercial expertise," said BOA chairman Sir Hugh Robertson. "We are delighted to have him on board to lead Team GB into Tokyo 2020 and beyond."

(Source: Press Association)

Hughton sacked as Brighton manager

Chris Hughton was sacked as manager of Brighton and Hove Albion after four-and-a-half years at the helm, the Premier League club said in a statement on Monday.

Hughton led Brighton into the top flight in 2017, ending a 34-year absence, and they have just survived their second season despite failing to win any of their last nine games.

"Undoubtedly, this has been one of the most difficult decisions I have had to make as chairman of Brighton and Hove Albion, but ultimately one I have made due to how we struggled in the second half of the season," chairman Tony Bloom said.

"Chris has done an excellent job, first stabilising our club, reaching the play-offs in his first full season, securing our first ever promotion to the Premier League, and retaining our status in successive seasons."

Hughton's final game in charge was Sunday's 4-1 home defeat by title-winning Manchester City.

Brighton, who reached this season's FA Cup semi-final,



ended two points above the relegation zone with 36 points. "Our run of three wins from 23 Premier League matches put our status at significant risk," Bloom added.

"It is with that in mind, and the performances during that period, that I now feel it's the right time for a change."

Hughton is the seventh Premier League manager to lose his job this season. The club also confirmed that his assistant Paul Trollope and first-team coach Paul Nevin had also left.

Former Ireland international fullback Hughton, who enjoyed a long playing career with Tottenham Hotspur, joined Brighton in December 2014 with the team struggling near the bottom of the second-tier Championship.

The following season he took them into the promotion playoffs and a year later they were promoted automatically as runner-up behind Newcastle United, the club he once managed. Brighton finished a creditable 15th last season but have laboured in their second campaign, struggling to score goals.

(Source: Reuters)

Iranian Wushu fighter winner of China trophy

IRNA – Iran's female Wushu fighter Elaheh Mansourian ranked first in China championship league on Monday and grabbed a gold medal. Mansourian said that she is a member of Shanghai team and had to compete with a very powerful Chinese rival.

She also outlined a number of difficulties she experienced before achieving this ranking.

The Iranian athlete said she had lots of hope for compensating her earlier defeat against her Chinese rival.

Given a course of tough exercises she experienced, she said her victory will shed light on her future.

Elaheh Mansourian is an Iranian wushu athlete who competes in the sanda 52 kg category. She snatched the world titles in 2013 and 2017 and grabbed three medals at the Asian Games in 2014–2018. Her sister Shahrbanoo Mansourian is also a world champion in wushu.

Esteghlal forward Goncalves sidelined for four weeks

TASNIM — Esteghlal striker Esmael Goncalves has been ruled out for at least four weeks due to the foot injury.

Goncalves suffered a torn muscle in the match against Sanat Naft in Abadan on Saturday.

The 27-year-old forward will miss Esteghlal's last match against Sepidrood in Iran Professional League, scheduled for Thursday.

Goncalves will be absent in the next week match against Al Ain of the UAE in the AFC Champions League group stage.

Esteghlal forward Allahyar Sayyadmanesh is also suffering a foot injury and according to the club, he will undergo further tests to discover extent of injury.

Son makes clean sweep of Tottenham awards

Korea Republic international star Son Heung-min swept the board at the Tottenham Hotspur end-of-season awards following Sunday's 2-2 draw with Everton in the English Premier League.

The all-action forward, who couldn't feature against the Toffees, emerged from the tunnel after the match to collect Spurs' Goal of the Season award for his marvelous solo effort in the 3-1 win over Chelsea at Wembley on November 24.

With the majority of the Spurs fans still in their seats and enjoying the celebrations after the last game of the Premier League season inside the London side's new home, Son then came back out to pick up the trophies for One Hotspur Player of the Season, One Hotspur Junior Player of the Season and Official Supporters' Clubs' Player of the Season.

Over the course of the campaign, the attacker has scored 20 goals in 47 appearances in all competitions so far, with the UEFA Champions League Final against Liverpool still to come in Madrid on June 1.

Son is also expected to feature for Korea Republic in international friendlies against Australia (June 7) and Islamic Republic of Iran (June 11) in their build-up to the first round of the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar Qualifiers which kick-off in September.

Asia's preliminary round of the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar Qualifiers will be played on June 6 and 11, featuring 12 teams.

(Sources: AFP)

Massimo Carrera new nomination for Esteghlal hot seat

Tasnim – Italian coach Massimo Carrera has been nominated to coach Iranian football club Esteghlal.

The ex-Juventus defender has most recently coached Russian football club Spartak Moscow.

The 55-year-old coach started his coaching career as Juventus technical director in 2011 and was appointed as the Italian team caretaker in 2012. Carrera also worked as Italy assistant coach from 2014 to 2016. The Iranian club had also been linked with Qatari club Al Shahania coach Jose Murcia.

Esteghlal parted company with their German coach in late April following poor results in the Iran Professional League.

Assistant coach Farhad Majidi replaced Winfried Schäfer until the end of the season.

Esteghlal general manager Amir Hossein Fathi had already said the team's next coach will not be an Iranian coach.

Olympic snowboard medalist Hirano wins national skateboarding title

Two-time Olympic snowboard silver medalist Ayumu Hirano strengthened his bid to represent Japan in skateboarding at the 2020 Tokyo Games by winning the men's park event at the national championships on Sunday.

The 20-year-old overcame a strong field including defending champion Kensuke Sasaoka to claim his first national title at Murakami City Skate Park in Niigata Prefecture. Sasaoka, who won the recent Japan Open, finished third.

"I feel like I have taken another step toward the Olympics," Hirano said following his victory.

After winning his second straight silver in the men's halfpipe at the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games, Hirano said he was considering making a run at skateboarding when the sport makes its Olympic debut on home soil next summer.

Each National Olympic Committee can obtain a maximum of three spots in each of the four events in Tokyo, including men's and women's park and street.

Out of the 20 available spots in each event, one berth is given to Japan as hosts, while three are granted from the world championships and 16 from the world rankings.

Should Hirano qualify, he may face snowboard rival and three-time Olympic halfpipe champion Shaun White, who has also indicated interest in an Olympic skateboarding bid.

(Source: Japan Times)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Losing an opportunity produces grief.
Imam Ali (AS)

Conference on Shahnameh, Silk Road opens in Mashhad

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — An international conference linking together the Shahnameh, the epic masterpiece of the Persian poet Ferdowsi, and the Silk Road opened in the northeastern Iranian city of Mashhad on Monday.



A poster for the international conference on the Shahnameh and the Silk Road.

A number of Iranian and foreign experts on the Shahnameh are attending the conference.

“The lands the Shahnameh talks about are where the route of the Silk Road connects East and West,” director of the conference Mohammad-Jafar Yahaqi has said during a press conference.

He noted that scholars have demonstrated little regard for international issues in the Shahnameh, and expressed his hope that the conference would bring the thoughts of Ferdowsi and the Shahnameh to the attention of the scholars across the world.

A number of articles submitted to the secretariat of the conference will be published in a book after the conference concludes.

The three-day conference will end with a celebration of Ferdowsi Day on Wednesday at the tomb of Ferdowsi in the northeastern Iranian town of Tus.

Cannes Film Market to showcase “Cinema Donkey”

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Shahed Ahmadlu’s dark comedy “Cinema Donkey” will be showcased during the Cannes Film Market — Marché du Film, the public relations team for the movie announced on Monday.

Starring Mohammadreza Davudnejad, Hassan Rezaei and Puria Shakibai, the movie satirizes professional misconducts in Iranian cinema.

The Cannes Film Market will open today and will be running until May 23.

The Marché du Film is the business counterpart of the Cannes Film Festival, and is the largest film market in the world. It was created in 1959

and has been held annually since then, simultaneously with the major international film event.

IIDO director Mohammad Qomi meets Afghan art elites

I → Qomi said that he has had learned teachers from Afghanistan, while he has also had very talented Afghan students while he was teaching at the Religious School of Hoojatieh.

“I have also taught many seminary students from Europe, America and South-East Asia but the best of them were students from Afghanistan,” he said.

“I also have good memories of cooperation with the Afghan students during my teaching career,” he added.

Iranian pop star Behnam Safavi dies of cancer complications at 36

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian pop star Behnam Safavi died on Monday at the age of 36 after a nearly four-year battle with brain cancer.

“Iran’s polite boy of music, the creator of the albums ‘Be My Love’, ‘Calm’, ‘Extraordinary’ and ‘The Miracle’ rested in a perfect peace forever in Isfahan a few minutes ago,” his publicist Reza Foadian said in a post published on his Instagram at 10:40 am.

He stayed in the Milad Hospital of the central Iranian city after he went into a coma in January 2019.

Safavi underwent successful surgery in July 2015 at Tehran’s Erfan Hospital to remove a small tumor from his brain.

In early October of the same year, he announced his plan to perform a concert to raise his spirits sufficiently to allow him to continue chemotherapy treatments.

His medical team permitted him to perform the concert on October 9 at Tehran’s Milad Tower while sitting in a chair.

In June 2017, he announced that he was preparing to have a new operation at a German hospital as the tumor re-crudesced.

After a successful operation performed by Professor Majid Samii and his team in a Hanover hospital in July, Safavi returned to pursue medical treatment in his homeland.

However, in early January 2019, he went into a coma. His fellow pop singer Sirvan Khosravi along with his brother Xaniar and Shahab Ramezan performed



Iranian pop singer Behnam Safavi performs at Tehran’s Milad Tower on October 9, 2015. (Honaronline/Farzan Qasemi)

several joint concerts in Tehran to sympathize with Safavi’s family.

Safavi’s debut album, “Be My Love”,

was released in October 2009 and a song by the same name from the collection soon became a smash hit at that time.

Two years later, he released his second album, “Calm”, which earned him a firm place in the Iranian pop music arena.

Ronak to perform at Asian Culture Carnival



Ronak band leader Keyvan Ali-Mohammadi holds a flag of Iran along with members of his group in Beijing on May 12, 2019.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Ronak, an Iranian ensemble led by vocalist Keyvan Ali-Mohammadi, will attend the Asian Culture Carnival, which will be held in Beijing, China on Wednesday as a part of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations.

The band, which is scheduled to perform a selection of Iranian traditional and regional music, features tar player Hanieh Ali-Mohammadi and oud player and percussionist Neda

Rezaian.

Over 30,000 people from China and abroad are expected to attend the carnival, which will include music concerts and dance performances by artists from Asian countries.

A number of cultural performances, food and film festivals, and tourism exhibitions will also be organized on the sidelines of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations, which will come to an end on May 22.

Paris Revelations to display works by Iranian artists



Sculptures by Iranian artist Behzad Ajdari. (Honaronline/Ramona Mirian)

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Works by 10 Iranian artists will be showcased during the 4th edition of the International Fine Craft and Creation Biennial — Revelations in Paris, the organizers have announced.

Works by sculptors Mehdi Shirahmadi, Mohammad Behabadi, Kurosh Arish and Mohammadreza Khalaji and enamels by Nima Nasiri have been selected to be put on display at the Exhibition le Banquet of the biennial, which will be held in Grand Palais from May 23 to 26.

The collection, which has been accumulated by curator Rojhaneh Hosseini, includes ceramics by Nafiseh Khalaj, Behzad Ajdari, Mohammad-Ali Sajjadi, Mohsen Tohidi and Hirbod Hemmat-Azad.

The exhibition will host artworks from 10 more countries including Cameroon, Canada, Chile, India, Luxembourg, Spain, South Africa, Romania, Thailand and France.

Over 450 artists from 33 countries will attend the biennial, which aims at promoting contemporary fine crafts from across the globe.

Arthur Jafa, Lithuania win top prizes at Venice Biennale

VENICE (Art News) — After a whirlwind week of opening events, the Venice Biennale has announced the winners of its prizes, the Golden Lions and Silver Lion.

The Golden Lion for best national participation at the 58th Biennale went to Lithuania, which presented Sun & Sea (Marina), an opera about climate change by Rugil? Barzdziukait?.

Vaiva Grainyt?, and Lina Lapelyt? that is set on a manmade beach in a building on the outskirts of the Arsenale. It was selected from among about 90 national pavilions.

A special mention in the national-participation category was given to Belgium, which presented animatronic figures by Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys.

Schumacher documentary in the works and headed to Cannes

CANNES, France (Reuters) — Former Formula One world champion Michael Schumacher will be the subject of a new documentary featuring unseen archive footage and rare interviews, producers announced on Sunday before the Cannes Film Festival.

The film, directed by German duo Michael Wech and Hanns-Bruno Kammertöns, was made with the blessing of the driver’s family and will include interviews with them as well as companions and competitors, the filmmakers said.

Schumacher turned 50 on Jan. 3 but has not been seen in public since a skiing accident in the French Alps five years ago which left him with severe head injuries and in a medically-induced coma.

The film is in post-production, with international rights sales to be launched at the Marche du Film, a business event held in parallel to the cinema showcase on the French Riviera that kicks off on May 14.

Other films set to be introduced to buyers include a documentary about rock band Led Zeppelin. As yet untitled, it will



Former Ferrari driver Michael Schumacher of Germany looks on during the qualifying session for the Italian F1 Grand Prix race at the Monza racetrack in Monza, near Milan, in this September 13, 2008. (Reuters/Alessandro Bianchi)

feature band members Jimmy Page, Robert Plant and John Paul Jones.

Schumacher remains motor racing’s most successful driver, with a record 91 grand prix wins. He won his first two titles with Benetton in 1994 and 1995 before five in a row with Ferrari between 2000-2004.

In January his family released a statement saying he was in the “the very best of hands”.

Peggy Lipton, “Mod Squad” and “Twin Peaks” star, dies at 72

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Peggy Lipton, a star of the groundbreaking late 1960s TV show “The Mod Squad” and the 1990s show “Twin Peaks,” died of cancer Saturday. She was 72.

Lipton died surrounded by her family, her daughters, Rashida and Kidada Jones, said in a statement.

“We are heartbroken that our beloved mother passed away from cancer today,” they said. “She made her journey peacefully with her daughters and nieces by her side. We feel so lucky for every moment we spent with her. We can’t put all of our feelings into words right now but we will say: Peggy was, and will always be our beacon of light, both in this world and beyond. She will always be a part of us.”

Lipton played one of a trio of Los Angeles undercover “hippie cops” on “The Mod Squad,” which aired on ABC.

The Los Angeles Times says it was one of pop culture’s first efforts to reckon seriously with the counterculture and one of the first TV shows to feature an



In this Jan. 16, 2018 file photo, Peggy Lipton arrives at the Stella McCartney Autumn 2018 Presentation in Los Angeles. (Photo by Jordan Strauss/Invision/AP, File)

interracial cast. Lipton was nominated for Emmys and won a Golden Globe in 1971 for her performance. The show addressed issues such as the Vietnam War, drugs and domestic violence.

Lipton married music producer Quincy Jones in 1974, and they had two daughters. The couple divorced in 1989.

In the 1990s, she played the role of Norma Jennings in the TV series “Twin Peaks.”