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Sanctions amount to military conflict with Iran 🖪

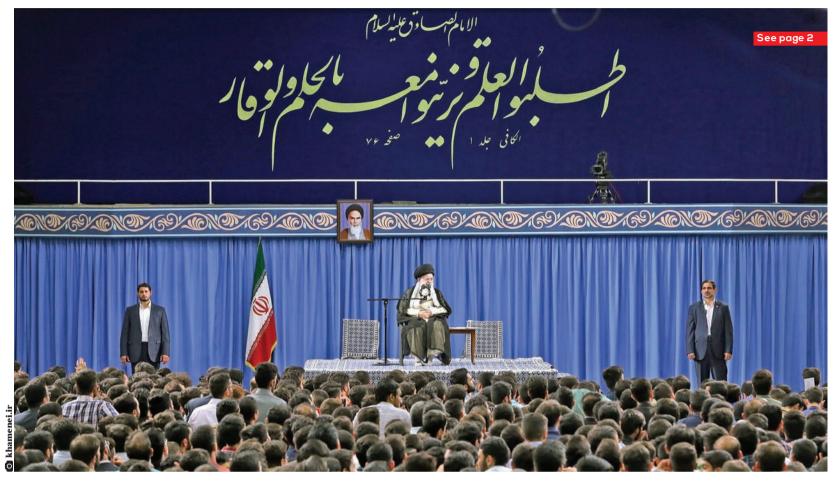


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I had cautioned about **JCPOA**



Iran says its commitment to JCPOA will be commensurate to France's

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi said on Tuesday that Iran is ready to implement the 2015 nuclear deal commensurate to what France and its European partners have been doing.

His comments came as a response to remarks by his French counterpart's statement which urged Iran to continue implementing all of its obligations under the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

'We strongly urge Iran to continue to implement all of its obligations under the JCPOA, as it has done thus far, and to refrain from any measures that would put it in violation of its commitments,' French Foreign Ministry's spokesman said in a daily briefing. \rightarrow 2

First startup weekend on senior care to be held

TEHRAN — The Nursing Organization of Iran plans to hold the first startup weekend on senior care, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

Supported by the vice presidency for science and technology and Abr-e Zendegi accelerator, the event will be held on June

Companies active in website designing, software, video games, applications and smart systems will participate in the event.

Senior care is an ever-evolving industry and a natural fit for startups looking to improve the life and livelihood of people in their golden years

In December 2018, the national council of the elderly announced that the older person's population will grow three-fold within the next 30 years in Iran, as some 700,000 people are added to the aging population of over 60 each year. \rightarrow 11

Yemeni drone attack targets jet hangars at Saudi airport

TEHRAN — Yemeni armed forces have launched another retaliatory drone strike against an airport in Saudi Arabia's southwestern Najran region, this time targeting hangars housing the regime's warplanes.

Yemen's al-Masirah television network reported the counter-strike on Wednesday morning, without giving details about possible casualties or material damage.

A day earlier, the network said Yemeni forces, led by the Houthi Ansarullah movement, had launched a counterattack on an arms depot inside the same airport, using a Qasef-2K combat drone. The strike caused a fire at the airport. \rightarrow 13



y @ghaderi62 A totally

Americanized England at full display!

Penny Mordaunt recently described Iran's activities in the region as "causing tension", adding that London will be supporting Washington.

British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt has also announced that the United States will respond to any activity that threatens its "interests" in the region.

Hunt has claimed that the best way to resolve the Middle East conflict is by making Iran stop what he called its destabilizing activities in the region.

Apart from such statements, it is said that the United Kingdom has sent out some special military forces in order to help American forces to settle what they claim to be "Iran's threat" in the region. This shows that U.K., once again, has adopted a mixed strategy so that it can derive the most benefit out of every situation.

U.K. goals can be interpreted from its activities. The country has not fulfilled its commitments to the Iran nuclear deal; instead it has tried to guard its own interests by keeping U.S. as a traditional ally. At the same time, the U.K. has kept selling weapons to countries in the region and showed itslef as an active member in international arena so that it can cover up its own problems with Brexit.

By analyzing the factors affecting the region, the British are well aware that war might be an unlikely consequence, but they still try to create an atmosphere of fear and imply that "an impending war" might be ahead of us, so that they can reach

the four goals that we mentioned above. Apart from such actions, the U.K. is aiming to maintain its relations with main players in the region, such as Iran, so that it can establish a favorable atmosphere for itself in media and reap its benefits in political and economic, as well as security fields.

The British should have learned by now, that such actions might help them squeeze money out of tycoons of Middle East or have U.S. make some political concessions to them, but such actions will not have any effect on the Islamic Republic of Iran, as it had not over the last 40 years.

Iran, whatever it further suffers, is going to win in the longer term

NORTH CAROLINA —To whom is Donald Trump answering? Ignorance at bottom. There is almost nothing he has not upset. He is like the proverbial bull in the world shop of china. But first, imagine. Imagine for example that Barack Obama had gotten a third term in the White House and carried on as President as he had

during his second term. First, it must be noted, Trump won the 2016 election arguably in significant part because he campaigned with a message of withdrawing the U.S. from overseas military engagements. Hillary Clinton, on the other hand, had largely fomented the attacks on Libya and the destruction of that country - and bragged about it -- and also strongly supported and aided the infusion of arms and terrorists in to Syria and as well she helped

 $devise \ the \ coup \ in \ Ukraine. \ She \ appeared \ relative$ to Trump in 2016 like some crazed crone hellbent on revenge against the world for perceived, personal slights. (But still, had she won the election in 2016, it remains possible that she would have moderated her positions somewhat with respect to belligerent foreign policies.)

But back to Obama and the impossible third term. Had it materialized, he would have likely begun the withdrawal of the U.S. from Afghanistan. He would have maintained U.S. participation the JCPOA and, who knows, may have developed further accords with Iran. And he still did most all of what the craven and thoroughly unappreciative Zionists demanded of him (he's Black, after all, and the Zionists and Trump supporters. many of them anyway, are racists). He gave billions of dollars and arms to Israel, but he likely would have also been making noises about the necessity that Israel eventually come to a fair agreement with the Palestinians, perhaps offering them equal rights west of the Jordan if not a viable state of their own on the West Bank. He would not have moved the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem nor cut humanitarian relief for the Palestinians.

The real question here is IF the U.S. were in difficult straits with respect to its maintenance "empire" in 2016, and it did not appear to be, it certainly seems to be now, and Trump and his advisors are the reason why. From economic sanctions, especially on Iran, to trade tariffs on China and sanctions on other countries, to the attempted but so far failed coup in Venezuela, and recent threats of war on the Mideast, there has never been a President so apparently determined to make the U.S. a rogue, out-of-control and hated menace to world peace. \rightarrow 7

All the buzz about bees

TEHRAN — Bees are very important for food security, preventing from hunger, and preserving the diverse ecosystem, and are indispensable to economic, social and, environmental issues

Bees are nearly responsible for one third of the food we eat, hence they are very much vital to mankind. However, despite their importance bees and other pollinators, such as butterflies, bats and hummingbirds, are increasingly under threat and in decline.

Today one out of 10 pollinators are in decline due to human activities including irregular use of pesticides, climate change and temperature rise, pollutions, etc.

Pollinators allow many plants, including

pollinators contribute directly to food security, but they are key to conserving biodiversity - a cornerstone of the Sustainable Development Goals. They also serve as sentinels for emergent environmental risks, signaling the health of local ecosystems.

Being so vital to the planet and mankind they have their own day. May 20 is designed to spread awareness of the significance of bees.

May 20 coincides with the birthday of Anton Janša, who in the 18th century pioneered modern beekeeping techniques in his native Slovenia and praised the bees for their ability to work so hard, while needing so little attention.

In Iran World Bee Day 2019 was marked in Embassy of Slovenia under the theme of

many food crops, to reproduce. Not only do #SaveTheBee, in presence of diplomats, am bassadors, and United Nations representatives

> "Raising awareness about the bees is not just about the honey it's about continuously repeating that it's an issue of food security, Kristina Radej, Slovenian ambassador to Iran, told the Tehran Times in an exclusive interview on World Bee day.

> "That this is an issue which has to be addressed on a global scale. Especially because of climate change, pollution and the fact we depend on the jobs of these creatures and there will be a food security issue if we will not be more gracious with them and be grateful for the job that they are doing," the ambassador, who is also a beekeeper herself, highlighted. →12



Hundreds gather on sculptural bridge for Ramadan meal

TEHRAN —Large numbers of the faithful gather for a communal iftar meal served on Tehran's Tabiat Bridge, a multilevel, sculptural pedestrian pathway, on May 21, 2019.

The banquet was organized by Tehran Municipality in close collaboration with local

During Ramadan, Iftar, is eaten at sunset at the time of the call for evening prayer following a fasting day that begins before the sunrise.



From Bazaar to Bourse

n 20th May 2019, the Shana news agency reported that NIOC on the instructions of the Ministry of Petroleum will undertake, pursuant to the current Iranian year budget law, a sales programme of six million barrels per month of Iranian Light and Heavy Crude Oil and Iranian gas condensates on the IRENEX exchange platform. These sales will be priced in US dollars against UK Brent/BFOE (BWave) and Dubai US \$ price benchmarks. I am unaware of any reason why this programme should be possible that potential buyers have been discreetly found who are willing and able to buy this material.

I shared my opinion with many experts including Chris Cook, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Strategy, Resilience & Security at University College London, for their views on this new development.

Almost all were sceptical of the sustainability of the policy in the medium and long term energy policy even bearing in mind the need for Iranian lawmakers and Ministry of Petroleum for short term policies to cope with current sanctions. Mr. Cook said: "The first point is that in this sales programme IRENEX is not acting as a Bourse (where financial instruments such as company shares are traded) but rather as a Bazaar, where physical goods are offered for sale by private negotiation or auction."

On this point, I recall that it proved extremely difficult to explain to key officials the legal design of the proposed Kish Island Oil Bourse financial technology (Fintech) developed from 2004 onwards until its controlling shareholder, the Oil Industry Pension Fund (OIPF), eventually decided to discontinue its operation. The proposed Kish Island Oil Bourse market had two elements: firstly, the simple swaps of energy flows pioneered by NIOC during my time there in office, and secondly, believe the winner of the tender to study the Bourse (a consortium in partnership with Wimpole International Ltd) outlined an innovative method of monetising energy flows through energy "Units", since described, to avoid confusion, as Energy Credit Obligations (ECO) but which were never understood. \rightarrow 4

Ayatollah Khamenei: I had cautioned about JCPOA

POLITICAL TEHRAN – In a meeting with university students on Wednesday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said he had warned about the fate of the JCPOA, the official name for the 2015 nuclear deal.

The Leader made the remarks in a question and answer meeting with a large number of university students and representatives of student associations.

On certain remarks which attribute the JCPOA to the Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei said he believed that the way that the JCPOA was being implemented it would face problems.

"We repeatedly reminded the president and foreign minister (about it)," the Leader noted.

Ayatollah Khamenei also said the problems of a parliamentary system are more than a presidential system.

On a question by a student who asked for halting privatization, the Leader said in the process of privatization "great mistakes" have been made but he had "repeatedly warned about it".

He added there are certain problems with the privatization process but it is necessary.

The Leader said certain structural problems which existed with privatization have been resolved but there are still problems in the implementation process.

On a question whether shortcomings in managing the country are related to officials or the structural system, he said there is no problem with the structural system but it should be modified.

The Leader said the "structure of the constitution is good" but structures need to be studied and rectified.

"For example," he said, "One day we did not have Expediency Council but today we have it."

The Leader also said sometimes there are "problems with

There are certain shortcomings with officials and that some officials are not competent enough in handling affairs, he regretted.

He added, "Sometimes officials make a mistake that causes

The meeting with the students on Wednesday was among a series of sessions that the Leader holds with officials and cultural figures during the fasting month of Ramadan.

Tehran rebuffs Ottawa's anti-Iran remarks

POLITICAL TEHRAN – The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has dismissed recent allegations by Canada against Iran and its regional influence.

The Canadian government's "illegal and unconventional" measures against Iran have ruined the good relationship that the two countries enjoyed in the past, Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said in a statement on Tuesday.

On Sunday, Canada's Department of Global Affairs released a statement saying its representatives "continue to work closely with our allies and partners to hold Iran to account" for what it called Tehran's role in regional tension.

Mousavi said such "surprising" allegations levelled against Iran by the Canadian Department of Global Affairs have been stimulated by the North American country's election campaigns.

The accusations show that the Canadian government is deliberately ignoring the realities, he stated, underlining that the government of Canada has taken illegal and unconventional measures against Iran and must be held responsible for these

"Unfortunately, these unlawful and unilateral measures have destroyed the good interactions the two countries had in the past," he concluded.

Corruption in country is cross-partisan: top judge

POLITICAL TEHRAN—Iran's Judiciary chief Hojatoleslam e s k Ebrahim Raisi has said that corruption in the country is a cross-partisan matter, "not specifically characteristic of one party or faction.

In the meantime the assumption that there is systemic corruption is wrong, Raisi said in a meeting with directors of media outlets in Tehran on Tuesday.



Stressing the necessity to counter corruption, the top judge said it is absolutely necessary to prevent corruption from eating into the fabric of

Elsewhere in his remarks, Raisi emphasized the need for a decent support for the Judiciary from all Iranian organizations for the Iranian nationals residing abroad.

"The administration and all the sectors and organizations should provide the necessary judicial support for Iranian expatriates, and we should maintain

the connection of our fellow countrymen residing abroad with their culture and national customs and traditions," he stated.

He underlined that close interaction with Iranian nationals in other countries would be in conformity with the country's policies and would benefit both national security and the expatriates.

The Judiciary chief further described the people of the country as the main "social asset and major component of power", saying that the enemies are unable to take action against the Islamic Republic not because they do not intend to, but because they are faced with the Iranian people who guard the Islamic Revolution.

Warning of hostile plots to harm Iran, Hojatoleslam Raisi said all organizations are duty-bound to stand against the enemies.

In line with this policy, he suggested, the Parliament needs to pass the necessary laws, the administration should adopt the appropriate economic, cultural and social policies, and the Judiciary should also vigilantly take action against the individuals seeking to establish the enemy's foothold in the country.

In a meeting with top judicial authorities in 2017, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei called on the Judiciary to legally pursue international issues and declare its stances on various subjects, such as sanctions or the U.S. freeze on Iran's assets.

"The Judiciary should act through a legal position on issues such as sanctions, American confiscations (of Iran's assets), terrorism, or support for the world's oppressed characters like (Nigerian cleric) Sheikh Zakzaky or support for Muslims in Myanmar and Kashmir," Ayatollah Khamenei underscored.

Rouhani: U.S. fighting 82 million Iranians, not just government

POLITICAL d e s k Hassan Rouhani late on Tuesday denounced the U.S. sanctions campaign against Iran, saying Washington is "fighting" 82 Iranians not just the Iranian government.

'The United States' current actions against the Iranian nation are not just war and sanction, but crime against humanity,' the president told a session of the Administrative Council of West Azarbaijan Province.

"What America is doing today is not war and sanction, but crime against humanity because they are stopping our medicine and foodstuff purchases and preventing patients' travel," the presidential official website quoted Rouhani as saying.

The U.S. has introduced the harshest ever sanctions against Iran in line with the policy of "maximum pressure" against Tehran.

'Today, when the greatest imperialist power in the world, which is the United States is doing its worst against us, the Islamic Republic of Iran is the symbol of religion, dignity and independence against the power that is the symbol of blasphemy," he stated.

The Trump administration has threatened that if any country or company buys oil from Iran will face penalty.

Rouhani said the Trump administration will regret its "unwise" approach toward Iran. "The Americans have repeatedly failed on the same path, but they are doing it again, and they will regret this unwise action against

a great, free nation"

The Americans could choose another path, the president suggested, saying, "They could announce that foodstuff, medicine and people's needs are exempt from sanctions.

Analysts say that sanctions approach

that Washington has adopted against Iran is intended to strangle the Iranian economy. 'America wants to stand against a nation

with all its power and pressure it can use, Rouhani remarked.

Citing a story from his visit to the annual UN General Assembly in September 2018, the president said, "In my last visit to New York, a well-known world leader told me that in his earlier meeting with the U.S.



"Speeches they (U.S. officials) make against Iran are written by Zionists word by word."

president, he had told him not to help Iran for just three months, and there would be no Islamic Republic. In that meeting, I told him to tell that man that Iran is more united and integrated than any other time," he said. 'You, people like you, and your government in the White House will come and go, but the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Iranian nation will be everlasting in history."

With an open reference to remarks by Trump's national security adviser John Bolton who had told a gathering of MEK (also called MKO) in Paris that the Islamic Revolution would not see its 40th annion that year's Christmas. Somewhere else, they said that the Islamic Republic of Iran would not see the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. I told them to write down the date and see where Iran will be after that time.

Miscalculations

The president went on to say that hardliners in the U.S. have miscalculations about

"They have miscalculations and childish thoughts in their heads, which make problems for the Iranian nation, but will leave a bad record of them in history.

versary, the president said, "One of their officials said that they would be in Tehran Noting that a couple of groups have misled the U.S., Rouhani said. "One group is the

"Extremists, Zionists and reactionaries in the region have been thinking for 40 years about the day the Islamic Republic of Iran fails, considering Iran as a great threat to their countries and governments."

extremists inside the U.S., and the second group is the Zionists, whose words we can distinguish.'

"Speeches they make against Iran are written by Zionists word by word. Extremists, Zionists and reactionaries in the region have been thinking for 40 years about the day the Islamic Republic of Iran fails, considering Iran as a great threat to their countries and governments," he stated.

The president said reckless behavior by Trump and those extremists with influence on his administration have failed to make Iran to take radical approaches.

"They had several plans to make us angry so that we would withdraw from the JCPOA, violating the 7-party agreement, but they did not succeed," he stressed. "They (Americans) were working on the other 6 countries, especially the Europeans, to leave the deal all together, but they could not get anyone to agree, and eventually the U.S. had no choice but to exit the deal alone.

Rouhani went on to say that the Trump administration have been working hard to provoke the world including its allies to rescind the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPO).

"America wanted to unite everyone in tearing off the JCPOA, but they did not succeed... It was for the first time that the United Nations and The Hague issued a verdict against the U.S. sanctions, warning them not to implement them," the president remarked. "Despite all hardships, the Iranian nation

are standing strong against the enemies, defending our political, geographical and legal borders," the president emphasized. Rouhani said the Trump administration

will fail to break the will of the entire Iranian population through economic war. "The White House cannot defeat the Iranian nation; they would if they were facing a

group, but they are facing the entire Iranian nation," he concluded. In May 2018, President Trump pulled the U.S. out from the 2015 nuclear deal,

officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and re-imposed sanctions on Iran's economy.

Putin, Merkel and Macron discuss nuclear deal, cooperation with Iran

POLITICAL TEHRAN – Russian President Vladimir Putin, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron held a phone conversation on Tuesday discussing ways to preserve the 2015 nuclear deal and continuing economic and trade cooperation

"Discussing developments related to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear program, the leaders noted the importance of preserving this agreement that is a key factor in maintaining international stability and security. They confirmed the commitment of Russia, France and Germany to continuing mutually beneficial trade and economic cooperation with Iran." Kremlin said in a statement.

On May 8, Iran announced a partial withdrawal from some aspects of the pact, saying that the country would no longer adhere to some of the limits on its nuclear activities. It also threatened to step up uranium enrichment if it was not shielded from the sanctions' effects within 60 days.

Under the JCPOA, Iran agreed to put caps on its nuclear work in exchange for termination of economic and financial

sanctions. However, U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the nuclear deal in May 2018 and ordered reimposition of sanctions against Iran. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran's oil exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4.

Also, on April 22 the U.S. announced that Washington has decided not to extend waivers allowing major importers to continue buying oil from Iran. The waivers ended on May 2.

On January 31, France, Germany and

Britain announced the creation of INSTEX, a special purpose vehicle aimed at facilitating legitimate trade between European economic operators and Iran.

 $Moscow\ \bar{h}as\ repeatedly\ expressed\ support$ for preserving the JCPOA.

Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping issued a joint statement in June 2018 saying, "Russia and China will exert maximum efforts to preserve the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear program, and consider that it is important to protect trade cooperation with Tehran from unilateral sanctions."

Hillary Clinton suggests talks with Iran

POLITICAL TEHRAN – Former U.S. state secretary d e s k and former Democratic presidential Zarif chastised the U.S. president for his genocidal taunts. candidate Hillary Clinton has suggested that the U.S. should engage in diplomacy with Iran instead of threats of force, which U.S. President Donald Trump likes to resort to. "You know Winston Churchill famously said in his typical

quotable fashion: 'jaw, jaw, the jaw is always better than war, war," Clinton said at a memorial service for Democratic Representative Ellen Tauscher, who died in April, Fox News reported Tuesday.

'That is what we did with the Iran negotiations — put a lid on Iran's nuclear program," Clinton said in an apparent reference to her diplomatic efforts during the Obama administration. "That is what we should still be doing."

While Clinton's speech did not mention Trump in person, the 45th U.S. president has repeatedly threatened Tehran with an escalation of force, promising "the official end of Iran" in case of military conflict. Recent reports suggest the U.S. is building up its military presence in Iraq, despite Trump saying he's not looking for a war with the Islamic

"If Iran wants to fight, that will be the official end of Iran. Never threaten the United States again!" he tweeted on Sunday.

In respond, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad

"Goaded by #B Team @realdonald achieve what Alexander, Genghis & other aggressors failed to do. Iranians have stood tall for millennia while aggressors all gone. #EconomicTerrorism & genocidal taunts won't "end Iran". #NeverThreatenAnIranian. Try respect—it works!" Zarif tweeted on May 20.

The B-Team, a term coined by Zarif, includes Trump's National Security Advisor John Bolton, Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel (known as bibi), Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MBZ).

On Monday, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran announced its decision to quadruple its uranium enrichment production but noted that it will remain below the margin set by the 2015 nuclear deal.

Back in 2018, Clinton criticized Trump's decision to unilaterally withdraw from the nuclear deal, warning that such a step will be a blow to U.S. credibility on the international stage.

"As Secretary of State, I helped negotiate the crippling international sanctions that brought Iran to the table. It would be much harder a second time, now that our credibility



is shot," she tweeted in May 2018.

Despite unilateral withdrawal by the U.S., Iran continues to adhere to the multilateral deal, signed by the U.S., EU, UK, France, Germany, Russia and China. All parties (except the U.S.) pledged their intention to uphold the deal as well.

Clinton was the Democratic nominee during 2016 presidential race but lost after Trump's poll-defying victory. The former first lady, senator and secretary of state, Clinton has remained mostly below the political radar since. She announced she will not run for president in the 2020 race.

Iran says its commitment to JCPOA will be commensurate to France's

Mousavi said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to support and implement the JCPOA just as France and its European partners have done in the past year."

On May 8, Iran officially announced that its "strategic patience" has come to an end as the remaining parties to the JCPOA have failed to compensate for the U.S. exit from the deal and reimposing sanctions on the

In the first step, Iran 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.



Under the JCPOA, Iran's stockpile of low enriched uranium is capped at 300kg and heavy water reserve 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.

On January 31, France, Germany and Britain, the three European parties to the JCPOA, announced the creation of INSTEX, a special purpose vehicle aimed at facilitating legitimate trade between European economic operators and Iran.

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

Iran has criticized Europeans for repeated delays in taking actions in line with keeping the JCPOA.

During a meeting with a group of Austrian MPs in Tehran on April 29, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi criticized European delay in implementing its special mechanism to save the JCPOA.

Speaking at the 9th round of Iran-Norway political consultations on April 30, Araqchi also said the international community has not responded properly to the U.S. illegal act in withdrawing from the JCPOA.

"The U.S. proved that it does not understand language of respect and interaction and can just talk with language of bullying,"

Sanctions amount to military conflict with Iran: Saeed Jalili

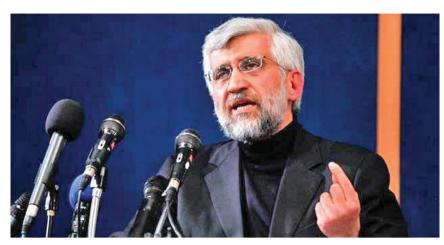
TEHRAN — Saeed Jalili, a former chief nuclear negotiator, says despite claims by U.S. officials that they are not after a war with Iran, Washington's sanctions on the Iranians amount to an all-out military conflict, Press TV reported on Tuesday.

The U.S. claims it is not after a military confrontation with Iran, and even seeks dialogue with the country, but it must know any of its sanctions on the Islamic Republic is considered an act of war by Iran, Jalili said.

Jalili, who is the Supreme Leader's representative at the Supreme National Security Council, added that such acts against Iran will not go unanswered.

"Someone in the U.S. says we are after crippling sanctions, and officially announces his decision to impose 'maximum pressure' on Iran. Aren't they a war against the Iranian nation?" asked Jalili who led nuclear negotiations with the 5+1 group during the Ahmadinejad presidency.

Talking in a gathering in Tehran, Jalili, who ran the post of president in the 2013



elections, said Iran seeks constructive interaction, not one that ends up in loss.

"In defending their rights, interests, and values, the Iranian people do not adhere to the U.S. demands. There is no limit to those demands, and the Iranian nation does not follow what the U.S. wants," he added, according press TV.

The United States in November announced re-imposition of the "toughest" sanctions ever against Iran in an attempt to curtail the country's oil exports and put extra pressure on its economy.

However, a report by the International Crisis Group (ICG), called "On Thin Ice," cites the results of an internal assessment by U.S. President Donald Trump's administration and concludes the policy of "maximum pressure" against Iran has failed.

"A preliminary internal assessment by the administration described to Crisis Group purportedly concludes that the U.S. approach has yet to curb Iran's behavior or entice Tehran back to the negotiating table," the ICG report says, citing an interview conducted by the group with a senior U.S. administration official this month.

"If you look at the range of ultimate objectives different people [in the U.S. administration] have in mind, from protests... to change of behavior, to the Iranians coming back to the negotiating table, none of that is happening," Ali Vaez, director of the ICG's Iran Project, told Al-Monitor.

General says no power able to stop Iran's great victories



POLITICAL d e s k Rahim Safavi, a top military adviser to the Leader, said on Wednesday that no power is capable of stopping the great victories of the Islamic

Noting that the "culture of martyrdom" is the cornerstone of Iran's power, Rahim Safavi said, "No power can stop the victories of the great Iranian nation and also future triumphs of the Islamic Revolution under the guidance of Ayatollah Khamenei," Mehr

Safavi, who was the commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) from 1997 to 2007, said martyrs were never afraid of the enemies and displayed exemplary determination when faced with the enemies.

'Today's message of martyrs to us is that we should believe in our ultimate triumph," he pointed out.

The remarks came against the backdrop of increased tensions between Iran and the United States.

Washington has imposed the harshest ever sanctions on Iran and recently branded the IRGC as a terrorist organization.

On Monday, commander of the Army's Khatam al-Anbiya Air Defense Base said the Army is closely watching the movements of the enemies and trans-regional states in different situations.

The Armed Forces are using all capacities, including good training, to promote their power against all possible challenges, Brigadier General Alireza Sabahi Fard said.

Highlighting the defense capabilities and preparedness of the armed forces, he warned of Iran's crushing response in case of any hostile move by U.S. troops against the country.

In recent years, Iran has made major breakthroughs in its defense sector and attained self-sufficiency in producing important military equipment and hardware.

Iran has also conducted major military drills to enhance the defense capabilities of its armed forces and to test modern military $tactics \, and \, state\text{-}of\text{-}the\text{-}art \, army \, equipment.$

Iran won't negotiate about changes to **JCPOA**, EC member says



POLITICAL TEHRAN – A member of the Expediency Council has said Iran will not enter negotiations which aim to make changes to the text of the 2015 nuclear pact, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"In my opinion, any revision of the agreement which took 12 years to reach is not a proper action," Mohammad Sadr said in an interview with the Hamshahri newspaper published on Wednesday.

The reform-minded politician said amending the JCPOA or attaching an addendum to it would void the agreement. "Therefore, Iran would not enter such negotiations," insisted Sadr who served as deputy foreign minister for Arab and African affairs during the administration of Mohammad Khatami.

He pointed out that a country must have certain characteristics in order to enter negotiations with it, such as having the will to resolve the issues.

"We negotiated with the U.S. with regard to Barjam (JCPOA) for two years and reached good outcomes," Sadr said, criticizing the Trump administration for withdrawing from the agreement.

"How can [we] negotiate with someone who has done this?" he asked.

 $Sadr\,further\,said\,that\,if\,U.S.\,President$ Donald Trump is sincere in his calls for talks with Iran, he must first return to the JCPOA, and only after that talks would be possible.

Back in May 2018, Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the nuclear deal and ordered reimposition of sanctions against Iran. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran's oil exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4.

On May 8, a year after Trump's move, Iran officially announced that it would stop 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.

OIC should not be a platform for division: Iranian diplomat

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign S K Minister for Legal and International Affairs Gholam Hossein Dehghani said on Tuesday that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation should be a platform for promoting unity rather than division.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation and its summits especially the Mecca summit should a platform for promoting unity and integrity of the Islamic community, and should not be turned into a place for division," he said during a meeting with ambassadors of the Islamic countries

The meeting was held ahead of an OIC summit in Mecca later this month.

Dehghani called on the Islamic countries to raise awareness against plots and deviations.

He noted that the Palestine issue should be the priority

"The Islamic governments should counter divisive actions and efforts that are being made to distract the attention of the organization's members from the main issue of the Islamic world which is the Palestine issue," the senior diplomat stated.

He added, "Any effort in this line would only serve (the interests of) the Zionist regime of Israel and the Trump administration.

In the meeting, a number of the ambassadors also elaborated on their respective governments' views on regional and global developments.

The ambassadors also raised questions about the agenda of the meeting which were responded by Dehghani.



Former diplomat says an Iran-U.S. war is unlikely

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – The former e s k Iranian Ambassador to Iraq, Hassan Danaeefar, has said that a war between Iran and the U.S. is unlikely, however, it is essential to monitor the enemies' behavior.

"The U.S. knows that Iran can defend itself if a war is waged. So, it is unlikely that they seek a war," he told IRNA in an interview published on Wednesday.

He added that war serves no one's interests. Tension has been increasing between Iran and the U.S. since the Pentagon has sent the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group and a bomber task force to the Persian Gulf

and made military threats against Iran. The USS Arlington transports marines, amphibious vehicles, and rotary aircraft, as well as the Patriot missiles, are planned to join the carrier strike group.



"The acting secretary of defense has approved the movement of USS Arlington (LPD-24) and a Patriot battery to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) as part of the command's original request for forces from earlier this week," a Pentagon statement said

Iranian officials and analysts have said the dispatch of carriers to the region are just a "psychological warfare" against Tehran. Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah

Ali Khamenei has ruled out the possibility of war between the U.S. and Iran despite heightened tensions between the two sides.

Speaking at a large gathering of officials on May 14, the Leader said Washington knows that engaging in such a conflict would not be in its interest.

In an interview with CNN aired on Tuesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that the U.S. is playing a "very very dangerous game" by increasing its military presence in the region.

"Iran is not interested in escalation. We have said very clearly that we will not be the party to begin escalation, but we will defend ourselves. Having all these military assets in a small waterway (Persian Gulf) is prone to accident, particularly when you have people who are interested in accidents. We believe that the U.S. is playing a very very dangerous game," he said

The chief diplomat said all will suffer if a war breaks out between Iran and the United

"There will be painful consequences for everybody. There is an escalation against Iran. That's for sure. The U.S. is engaged in an economic warfare against Iran. It has to stop. Economic war means targeting the Iranian people. That has to stop. The U.S. does not have the legal position, does not have the moral position, does not have the political position and does not have the international position to impose economic war on Iran," he said.

Zarif set to depart Tehran for **Islamabad on Thursday**



TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad

d e s k Javad Zarif is set to visit Pakistan on Thursday, a trip aimed to step up diplomatic contacts with Asian countries.

Zarif is scheduled to meet his Pakistani counterpart Shah Mehmood Qureshi and other senior Pakistani officials in Islamabad, Tasnim reported.

According to reports, his meetings will focus on Tehran-Islamabad ties, plans to carry out the most recent agreements reached between Iran and Pakistan, and the latest regional and international developments.

In April, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan paid a historic visit to Iran, while accompanied by a big delegation, to sign agreements with Tehran. President Hassan Rouhani said in a joint press conference that the two countries are resolved to expand relations, stressing that no third party could ever disrupt the brotherly and friendly ties between the two nations.

Rouhani said Iran is ready to fulfill Pakistan's demands for oil and gas and voiced the country's readiness for a 10-fold increase in the export of electricity to Pakistan.

Imran Khan, for his part, welcomed the Iranian government's announcement of the release of a number of Pakistani inmates and the adoption of measures for their immediate extradition.

The two sides required their respective ministries to use their capacity to put in place all necessary mechanisms to maximize monetary, financial, and commercial activities

U.S. trapping Iranian scientists, science minister warns

TEHRAN (MNA) – Science Minister Mansour Gholami has rebuked the United States for "trapping Iranian scientists", saying that Tehran is pursuing the case of an Iranian professor detained in the U.S. "The U.S. has gained the names of a number of Iranian professors, who have been researching and publishing articles in some fields and have purchased some laboratory equipment,' Gholami told reporters on Wednesday.

Pointing out that the U.S. has been trapping the Iranian scientists, Gholami said, "They issue visas for Iranian professors and then arrest them as soon as the professors arrive in the U.S.'

This is just a game to capture the Iranian talents, he added. Gholami was referring to the case of Iranian stem-cell scientist Dr. Masoud Soleimani, who has been behind bars in the U.S. without trial for the past seven months.

Back in October 2018, Soleimani, a professor and biomedical researcher at the Tarbiat Modares University (TMU) in Tehran, was arrested by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) upon his arrival in the U.S. Soleimani had been invited by the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota for leading a research program there, but he was secretly indicted by the FBI, which also canceled his research visa. Neither the FBI nor the U.S. prosecutors have so far officially commented on his detention.

Gholami reiterated that Dr. Soleimani's case will be followed until he is released.

He also dismissed any relation between Soleimani's work and the U.S. unilateral sanctions against Iran.

Reportedly, the Iranian scientist has been indicted for purported trade sanction violations over eight vials of human growth hormone. BJay Pak, the U.S. attorney in Atlanta, secured Soleimani's indictment on June 12, 2018, just a month after President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Iran nuclear deal and Soleimani had been fully unaware of such an indictment when he flew to the U.S.

The seizure occurred at a time when Washington was still a member party to the 2015 nuclear deal, and anti-Iran sanctions had not been re-imposed yet.

Almost 50 Iranian nationals are currently imprisoned in the United States under various pretexts, mainly bypassing the U.S.

Naval fleet returns home after 67-day mission in high seas

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Iranian Navy's 61st flotilla of warships docked at the southern port city of Bandar Abbas on Wednesday after a 67-day mission in international waters.

The flotilla, comprising Sabalan destroyer and a logistic warship named Bandar Abbas, had been dispatched to the international waters to safeguard the maritime routes used by Iranian vessels, especially in the strategic Strait of Bab-el-Mandab, which links the Gulf of Aden to the Red Sea.

The flotilla traveled a total of 5,100 nautical miles during its overseas journey, which also took it to Oman's port cities of Salalah and Sultan Qaboos.

It also participated in a joint drill with Oman's naval forces last month. Iran's naval forces, in recent years, have increased their presence in the international waters to protect naval routes and provide security for trade vessels and oil tankers.

The Navy has been conducting anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden since November 2008, when Somali raiders hijacked the Iranian-chartered cargo ship, MV Delight, off the coast of Yemen.

According to UN Security Council resolutions, different countries can send their warships to the Gulf of Aden and coastal waters of Somalia against the pirates and even with prior notice to Somali government enter the territorial waters of that country in pursuit of Somali sea pirates.

The Gulf of Aden – which links the Indian Ocean with the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea - is an important energy corridor, particularly because Persian Gulf oil is shipped to the West via the Suez Canal.

TEDPIX	215168.5
IFX	2671.5

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,882 rials
GBP	53,411 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$72.01/b
WTI	\$62.66/b
OPEC Basket	\$72.47/b
Gold	\$1,275.45/oz
Silver	\$14.48/oz
Platinium	\$811.55/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

'Integrated forex market to be launched in a month'

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The chairman of the Economic S K Committee of Majlis announced that an integrated forex market will be launched in the country by the end of current Iranian calendar month of Khordad (June 21),



a new mechanism.

Mohammadreza Pour-Ebrahimi said by launching this market the other exchange rates like the Sana rate will be omitted gradually.

Central Bank of Iran (CBI) s online Sana system, accessible at sanarate.ir, is a website that records daily forex trade from across the domestic exchange bureaus.

The official further said that the measures taken by the government specially by the CBI over the past months in order to organize and integrate the forex market have

laid the ground for creating balance in this market.

On Monday, Iranian finance and economic affairs minister announced that all necessary measures have been taken for launching an organized forex market.

Farhad Dejpasand said the ministry have done all legal actions to this end and just the affairs related to the company (which is to be set up for such market) are being performed.

Dejpasand said the mentioned market is due to set the real foreign currency exchange rates.

Establishment of this market has been approved by the Money and Credit Council (MCC), the highest banking policy-making body of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), on January 8 as the CBI aims to explore the real volume of demand and supply in the foreign currency market through

Regarding this market, a CBI official said on May 5 that the new mechanism aims to organize the transactions in the foreign currency exchange market between the exchange shops, Mehr news agency reported.

Japan exports fall again as Trump's trade policy threatens economic outlook

Japanese exports contracted for the fifth month in April due to a slump in shipments of chip-making equipment to China, underlining the growing threat to the world's third-biggest economy from a bruising Sino-U.S. trade war.

According to the star.com.my, data also showed Japan's trade surplus with the United States rose for a second month as auto exports accelerated, which could draw U.S. President Donald Trump's ire before U.S.-Japan trade negotiations begin this week followed by a leaders' summit a few days later.

Trump's government is trying to renegotiate trade agreements with major economies to lower the U.S. trade deficit and address what it considers to be unfair trade practices.

That approach has set-off an intensifying tariff dispute between the United States and China - two major trading partners of Japan - in a blow to global businesses, trade and

■ Trade-reliant economy Washington's stance is doubly harmful to Japan because it has slammed the breaks on exports to neighboring China and exposes the trade-reliant economy to curbs on its shipments of cars to the United States.

"Some Japanese companies are still optimistic about a resolution to recent trade friction, but the implications are quite serious," said Hiroshi Miyazaki, senior economist at Mitsubishi UFJ Morgan Stanley Securities.

"On one hand, we may reach a point where Japanese companies shift production from China or other places.

On the other hand, Japanese policymakers need to make sure U.S.-Japan trade stays out of the spotlight.'

Ministry of Finance (MOF) data showed on Wednesday Japan's exports fell 2.4% in April from a year earlier, down for a fifth straight month.

That compared with a 1.8% drop seen by analysts in a Reuters poll, and a similar 2.4% decline in March.

Exports to China fell 6.3% in April from a year earlier, down for the second consecutive month.

The data also showed Japan's trade surplus with the United States rose 17.7% in April from a year earlier to 723.2 billion yen (\$6.55 billion), partly led by an 8.3% increase in auto exports.

Nearly \$13b paid for development projects in a year

TEHRAN — Head of Iran Planning and Budget Organization Mohammad Baqer Nobakht said the government paid 543.99 trillion rials (about \$12.952 billion) for the country's development projects in the past Iranian

calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019).

The official said, "Of the mentioned amount, approximately 216.73 trillion rials (about \$5.16 billion) were paid in cash and the rest was provided through treasury documents", Tasnim news agency reported on Wednesday.

The share of development in last year's budget bill was 600 trillion rials (about \$14.2 billion).

The country's development budget has increased by 20 trillion rials (about \$476 million) in the current Iranian calendar year.

President Hassan Rouhani presented the administration's draft of the national budget bill for the current Iranian calendar

year 1398, to the Majlis in December 2018. The proposed bill amounted to 17.03 quadrillion rials (about \$405 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials).

Supplying basic goods, treatment and medical equipment; securing livelihood; supporting production and employment; promoting tourism; and preserving water

points of the bill. As unveiled on December 7 by Budget and Planning Organization, the proposed budget bill forecasts 1.5 million barrels of oil

resources and environment are the focal

sales per day at the price of \$54 per barrel. The bill attached priority to three sectors for receiving facilities in foreign cur rency; including investment making by private sector and cooperatives in oil and gas development projects, industry and mining projects in deprived regions, and sugar beet processing and supplementary industries.

Over \$16.5b of goods exported from Hormozgan Province in a year

ECONOMY TEHRAN

d e s k Commodities worth over \$16.5 billion were exported from Hormozgan Province in south of Iran during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019), head of the province's Industry, Mining and Trade Department

Khalil Qasemi said that of the figure \$2.7 billion was the value of the exported goods that had been produced in the province, Mehr news agency reported.

He said that most of Hormozgan's

exported goods were shipped to the Persian Gulf littoral states and East Asian countries.

Industrial commodities and minerals constituted 76% of the total exports from the province, while other exported products include fruits and vegetables, construction materials and salt.

Qasemi said that his department has planned to increase the province's exports up to \$3.5 billion by the end of the current



calendar year.

Hormozgan province has 32 active ports, including Iran's biggest container port, Shahid Rajaee, which accounts for more than half of the country's total port throughput. Maritime transportation accounts for 85% of Iran's foreign trade.

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 calendar year while \$42.6 billion worth of commodities were shipped into the country.

TEDPIX gains 10,700 points in a month

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Tehe s k ran Stock Exchange (TSE)'s main index (TEDPIX) increased $10{,}700\,points\,or\,5.24\,percent\,to\,215{,}092$ during the past Iranian calendar month of Ordibehesht (April 21-May 21), Tasnim news agency reported on Wednesday.

As reported, some 110.476 billion securities worth 296.131 trillion rials (about \$7.05 billion) were traded through 7.409 million deals at TSE, indicating 71 percent and 85 percent rise in the number and value of traded securities, respectively, and 82 percent increase in the number of deals.

The first market's index rose 8,221 points to 161,463 and second market's index added 19,819 points to 414,151 showing 5.36 percent and 5.03 percent growth, respectively, in the mentioned

Based on the already released reports and data, Iran's exchange markets wit-



nessed fruitful performances and results in the past Iranian calendar year 1397 (ended on March 20, 2019).

Meanwhile, applying new financial instruments in Iranian capital market was another achievements of the exchange markets during the past year, as TSE officially launched "futures" in mid-December 2018 for more risk management and Iran Mercantile Market (IME) launched "option" in early March 2019 in an approach to diversify financing methods for agricultural products.

Mining sector in Iran needs €18b investment: IMIDRO

ECONOMY TEHRAN – The head of Iranian Mines d e s k and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) said the country's mining sector currently requires 18 billion euros of investment, IRNA reported.

"Only seven billion euros is needed for infrastructure," Khodadad Gharibpour said at a meeting on encouraging investment and removing barriers in the way of expanding mines and mining sector on Wednesday.

"The mining sector is one of the country's most profitable areas for investment so that 30 percent of the profits in the capital market is pertained to the mining and mineral sector," he said.

The official noted that IMIDRO currently has \$3

billion worth of projects underway which is an indication of the good potentials in this sector. In April, Gharibpour said that the mentioned projects

will be inaugurated by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020).

The official has previously announced that projects worth \$2.17 billion have been put into operation in this



sector during the past Iranian calendar year.

He said $20\ projects$ implemented by IMIDRO in the previous year created 4,440 direct jobs and 25,300 indirect jobs, IRNA reported.

The deputy industry and mining minister also said that the projects were implemented through cooperation of private sector.

As previously announced by the Public Relations Department of IMIDRO, the organization intends to renovate 5,000 economic units using 100 trillion rials (about \$2.38 billion) of investment during the current Iranian calendar year.

As well as renovating economic units, reviving small mines and expansion of exploitation activities stand among the top priorities of IMIDRO in this year.

IMIDRO also plans to ease its domestic and foreign trade activities, facilitate international trade, improve competitiveness, and make exported goods variable in

According to IMIDRO, the value of Iran's minerals and mining industries' exports stood at \$9.226 billion

The organization's 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 of \$4.1 billion.

From Bazaar to Bourse

In fact, this misunderstanding reminds me of a wise saying: "It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends on his not under-The importance of Energy Fintech to Iran

Clearly, the early Fintech solutions provided by the Wimpole consortium nearly two decades ago and developed subsequently were well ahead of their time. But perhaps, with the support of the ICCIMA Energy, Refining Indus-

tries & Petrochemical Commission a series of workshops could now be held to take these concepts further? A friend during exchange of views for writing this article told me: "As the famous literary detective Sherlock

Holmes pointed out, once you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be

The lesson to be learnt from this is that, having tried

all other options, Iran may now have no other choice? To explore this fact further I asked Mr. Cook's opinion. He said: "That is correct. We see Russia already supplying oil to Greece through a similar oil for product swap to that first proposed to NIOC managers for the Grangemouth refinery in Scotland, and then subsequently also suggested for Greece and elsewhere. You know an idea has gone mainstream when you see that even the notoriously risk averse and deliberate Saudi Arabia is

now getting in on the act in Europe with similar swaps". But with such inattention to innovative ideas by Iran's decision takers, is it now too late?

The UCL Senior Research Fellow tells me: "Not necessarily. This system architecture bypasses the banking system altogether, because rather than selling physical product flows for dollars or Euros, Iran could exchange instead receive valuable oil product Energy Credit Obligation (ECO) instruments, such as Euro 5 gasoline ECOs to be exchanged for much needed imports.

If this idea were accepted in Iran does this mean the $INSTEX\ system\ is\ no\ longer\ necessary?$

In the light of his research, Mr. Cook responded: "Possibly in due course it will become obsolete, but in the



short and medium term the ECO/Energy Swap proposal could be a Plan B - in other words, a complementary or additional means of payment for transactions impossible

Domestic resistance:

The question is that would it be possible to overcome resistance from vested interests (those who benefit from economic sanctions) within Iran?

By way of response, Mr. Cook said: "A very good question and I suspect that sort of resistance is probably not the sort of resistance economy the Supreme Leader has in mind. However, I should point out firstly that I have never concerned myself in the past with the physical oil market – the Bazaar, if you will - and I certainly do not propose to start now. Whether or not the IRENEX auctions are successful, and I wish my friends at IRENEX every success, a parallel track of bilateral energy swaps can be pursued where my colleagues and I have identified several interesting opportunities.

He further elaborated: "Secondly, it is proposed that the Kish Island Oil Bourse should be reactivated for the purely financial purpose always intended for it. In fact it is to say, as the regional hub of a global wholesale market trading network and clearing union for Energy Credit Obligation (ECO) instruments".

So, this answer encouraged me to ask whether he saw an ECO opportunity for other Iranian exchanges.

He replied: "Yes indeed I do. IRENEX is well-placed to be the domestic Iranian ECO trade liquidity hub, where large-scale wholesale market energy service providers interact with retail energy consumers. The Tehran Stock Exchange, on the other hand may fulfil the traditional Bourse role of bringing ECO investors together with investments in renewable energy, and especially energy efficiency projects, where there are laws in place such as what is known in Iran as the Article 12 incentives are generous, but little used. Such prepaid energy investments give rise to a form of Energy Loan which offers from an Islamic Shariat point of view a sound way of mobilising not only conventional pension investment but also the significant amount of hoarded gold and hard currencies currently sitting idle at people's home in Iran.

Having personally directly recommended all the aforementioned concepts to Ministry of Petroleum, NIOC, OIPF, and Ministry of Energy in addition to many articles published by domestic media, I cannot understand why no-one has so far even paid attention, let alone rejected the ideas based on rational arguments. However, in the course of concluding this friendly consultation with colleagues, I asked Mr. Cook whether he would be returning soon to Tehran, so that further workshops on the subject could be convened?

He said: "I certainly hope so. As you know, we hope to reactivate the dormant Kish Island Oil Bourse as an Energy Fintech hub and this requires negotiations between all the interested parties. By way of a first step we believe that the Energy Credit Obligation (ECO) and energy swap concepts may be rapidly proven in the EU and UK as a parallel path to the Euro INSTEX initiative involving banks. In this way a 20th Century Bazaar could be transformed via Energy Fintech into a 21st Century Bourse for energy payments and investment via the I.R. Iran in Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf energy resources and then beyond, as we always intended.'

10th round of oil offering at IRENEX ends with no sales

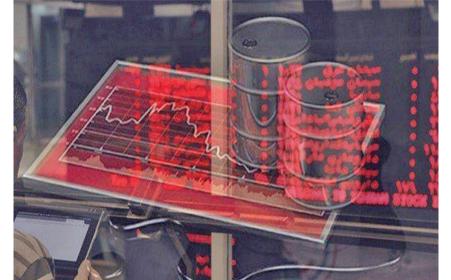
ENERGY
TEHRAN - The 10th
round of National Iranian round of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC)'s light crude oil offerings at Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) ended on Tuesday with no sales, ILNA reported.

As reported, in this round two million barrels of crude oil was offered at the base price of \$67.28, and unlike the previous rounds, this time the least amount of sales was reduced to $1,\!000\,barrels\,so\,that\,the\,buyers\,wouldn't\,need$ high banking guarantees and the loadings would also be easier for them.

According to Amir-Hossein Tabianian, the NIOC's representative for offering crude oil and related products at IRENEX, no deals were registered in this round of offering.

After two unsuccessful offerings of light crude oil in the new Iranian calendar year (started on March 21), NIOC held the year's third round of offerings based on new guidelines which mainly concerned pricing and lowering risks

In the previous round, NIOC offered one



million barrels of crude oil at the base price of

The least amount of sales was 35,000 barrels

for the last nine rounds of offerings. NIOC offered crude oil at IRENEX first on $October\,28, 2018\,just\,few\,days\,before\,new\,U.S.$ sanctions on Iran's petroleum sector took effect (November 4). In the first round, NIOC could sell some 280,000 barrels of crude oil at \$74.85 per barrel. With the daily supply amount of one million barrels, the market wrapped up by selling eight 35,000-barrel cargos of oil on the day.

Since the U.S.'s withdrew from Iran's nuclear pact in May 2018, vowing to drive Iran's oil exports down to zero, the Islamic Republic has been taking various measures to counter U.S. actions and to keep its oil exports levels as high as possible.

One of the main strategies that Iran chose to execute to help its oil exports afloat has been trying new ways to diversify the mechanism of oil sales, one of which is offering oil at the

119 gas supply projects inaugurated, commissioned by Rouhani

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to West Azarbaijan Province, 119 gas supply projects worth about \$14.8 million were started or inaugurated across the province, Shana reported on Wednesday.

According to Hassan Montazer Torbati, the managing director of National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC), the projects include the inauguration or beginning of gas supply operations to 34 villages, 69 industrial units, 14 pressure reducing stations (TBS), and two industrial zones, which were inaugurated on Tuesday by the president through video conference.

Based on NIGC data, some 1,162 or 98 percent of the country's cities are currently joined to the country's national gas network and about 24,000 or 78 percent of the country's total number of villages are also connected to the national network.

During his one-day trip visit to the northwestern province, President Rouhani launched and inaugurated

some development, service, and infrastructure projects worth 44.65 trillion rials (about \$1.063 billion).

Eight water projects worth 36 trillion rials (about \$857 million) were the major projects launched or inaugurated,

These development projects open a new chapter for the border province while creating direct jobs for 117,000 people and indirect jobs for 40,000 persons, as announced by Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, who accompanied the president during his trip.

As reported, the water projects supply drinking water for over 400,000 persons.

Silveh Dam and irrigation-drainage canals, Karam-Abad Dam and water transferring pipeline and three pumping stations, Sardasht Dam and Power plant, and Boylapoush Dam were some of the water projects that President Rouhani launched or put into operation in person or through video conference in the province.

Such projects play some significant role in sustainable



development of the border provinces and promoting the living condition of their people, while preserving the

Oil prices drop on swelling U.S. stockpiles, but markets remain tense

Oil prices fell on Wednesday after industry data showed an increase in U.S. crude inventories and as Saudi Arabia pledged to keep markets balanced.

According to Reuters, analysts said oil markets remained tight amid supply cuts led by producer group OPEC and as polit-

ical tension escalates in the Middle East. Brent crude futures were down 39 cents, or 0.5 percent, at \$71.79 at barrel by 0658

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures for July delivery were down 59 cents, or 0.9 percent, at \$62.54. The June contract expired on Tuesday, settling at \$62.99 a barrel, down 11 cents.

The American Petroleum Institute (API) said on Tuesday that U.S. crude stockpiles rose by 2.4 million barrels last week, to 480.2 million barrels, compared with analyst expectations for a decrease

Official data from the U.S Energy Inormation Administration's oil stockpiles



report is due later on Wednesday.

Outside the United States, Saudi Arabia on Wednesday said it was committed to a

balanced and sustainable oil market. Saudi Arabia has been at the forefront of apply cuts led by the Organization of the

Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), of which the kingdom is the de-facto leader that began in January and are aimed at reducing global oversupply.

Because of the cuts, Bank of America Merrill Lynch said crude output by OPEC

and its allies fell by 2.3 million barrels per day (bpd) between November 2018 and April 2019. That has helped push up Brent crude prices by more than a third since the start of the year.

The bank said some of the impact of the cuts was offset by a slowdown in global oil demand growth due to trade tensions to just 0.7 million bpd in the fourth quarter of 2018 and the first quarter of this year, versus a five-year average of 1.5 million bpd.

Despite the slowdown, U.S. bank Morgan Stanley said it expected Brent prices to trade in a \$75-\$80 per barrel range in the second-half of this year, pushed up by

tight supply and demand fundamentals.

The physical oil market is also showing signs of tightness.

Qatar Petroleum has sold al-Shaheen July delivery crude at the highest average premium since 2013 - \$3.06 per barrel above the benchmark Dubai quote - on robust demand for medium-heavy grades in Asia, according to multiple trade sources

A global energy crisis looms

By Simon Constable

Supplies of energy, such as oil and natural gas, look set to fall short of even a modest forecast of rising global demand.

"Energy supply investment needs to rise under any scenario," states a recent report from the Energy Information Administration titled World Energy Investment 2019. "Notably, approvals of new conventional oil and gas projects fall short of what would be needed to meet continued robust demand growth.'

Ultimately when supplies don't keep up with demand, then prices will rise. While that might not be the best thing for the global economy, there is a way for you to profit from the likely surge in oil and gas prices. That will also likely lift oil stocks, too.

Savvy investors should consider purchasing the United States Oil (USO Get Report) exchange-traded fund and the stocks that produce oil, such as those held in the Energy Select Sector SPDR (XLE - Get Report) ETF.

The EIA report broadly states that underinvestment in the energy patch will have major repercussions for the availability of fuel and power.

"Today's investment trends are misaligned with where the world appears to be heading," the paper says. By "misaligned," the report means that projections for energy supplies will not likely meet the forecast for rising energy $de\underline{m} and. \\$

Total energy supply

"Compared with the annual average investment required for 2025-30 in IEA scenarios, total energy supply investment needs to step up significantly," the report states. "(...) investment levels fall well short of what would be needed in a world of continued strong oil demand."

As the world economy grows, there will be an increasing need for oil, especially from fast-growing emerging markets such as China and India.

Ultimately, if big oil doesn't step up and green light some big projects, there will likely be an energy shortage.

First, the volatility in the price of energy has deterred energy producers from committing capital to major new projects, analysts say.

In early 2016, the price for Brent crude oil, the European benchmark price, slipped to a multi-year low around \$29 a barrel, according to Bloomberg. But it didn't break through \$60 until late 2017. It recently fetched \$71.80.

Changing oil prices dramatically affect the profitability of oil firms, and the likelihood of continued volatility affects planning for the future.

'(...) fluctuating oil prices over the last couple years really prevent oil companies from doing any long-term planning," says Joe McMonigle senior energy policy analyst at investment research firm Hedgeye Risk Management and former chief of staff at the Department of Energy.

In order for any company to sink major money into a new project, they need to be fairly sure that they will make a suitable



profit. But unstable oil prices increase the chances that the firm won't make enough money. That fact is important when the projects in question are likely to have a lifespan lasting many years into the future.

Future oil supplies So when the oil price jumped around

like a Kangaroo, oil firms held off on investing. In turn, that has led to lower future oil supplies.

The second significant part of the matter is that the shale-oil fracking revolution hasn't only made the U.S. into an oil giant; it has also changed the economics of the entire business.

The cheapness of shale-oil drilling means big oil is favoring it over more traditional multi-billion dollar drilling ventures, McMonigle says.

The problem is that while shale drilling is cheaper, alone, it won't produce enough energy to meet the additional global demand.

But the lower expenses of shale oil drilling will deter the oil giants from committing capital to mega projects and in turn exacerbate the supply shortage.

"It's just another example of how shale is revolutionizing the sector, but in this case, there may be a reckoning,' McMonigle says.

That "reckoning" is that supplies might not be adequate.

But that also means that prices for oil will likely rise and that should translate into humongous profits for oil companies, and ultimately for investors in the sector.

(Source: thestreet.com)

Recharge time for renewable power, industry watchers say

By V Rishi Kumar

It's not all tailwinds and sunshine for the country's renewable energy sector. It's actually time to take stock of the various issues impeding the sector's progress, say industry watchers.

Significantly, with 70 percent of fresh power generation capacity set to come from renewable energy, a concerted effort is required for its sustainable growth, they stress.

Interaction with leading players in solar and wind energy shows that while they are bullish about the prospects, they expect some mid-course correction towards the larger goal of achieving the target of 175 giga watt (GW) by 2022. Developers are faced with payment concerns, discoms are

hard-pressed to honor payment commitments, large-scale auctions (giga watt plus) are getting tepid response, integration of renewables with fossil fuel-based projects has been tough, and old power purchase agreements continue to dog discoms. All of these, in turn, are making it tough for developers to raise funds. The receivables for renewable energy companies from discoms

have soared in some States, weakening internal liquidity and necessitating a reduction in their debt service reserve accounts, leading to pressure on their finances.

Experts believe that the renewable energy is now faced with the problems that fossil fuel power plants faced about a decade ago, including piling up of payments, policy hurdles and regulatory concerns in some cases.

Wind and solar projects

Ramesh Kymal, Chief Executive Officer of Siemens Gamesa, says, "Barring a couple of discoms, several of them are delaying payments, causing hardship to developers of both wind and solar

payments, causing hardship to developers of both white and solar power projects. This has a spiralling impact on existing projects and on the setting up of new projects."

Making a case for optimum use of resource, Ashish Khanna, MD & CEO of Tata Power Solar, says, "In a country like India where almost 250 million people still don't have access to power and a sound number have a participation to be a sound number to a solar power and a sound number to a solar power and a solar power power and a solar power power and a solar power and a solar power and a solar power and a solar power power power and a solar power powe and an equal number have erratic power, we have to understand that fossil fuels and renewables need to co-align with each other." Storing the extra generated energy well in advance through battery back-up will provide a continuous flow of energy to the consumers, he points out.

However, Divya Charan, Senior Analyst, Infrastructure, India Ratings, believes that integration of renewables, including hydro, is unlikely to be a concern in the next three to five years. In FY2019, the share of large hydro and remaining renewables as part of the total energy supply was 9.8 percent and 9.2 percent respectively, she says.

She feels improving transmission infrastructure is most critical to avoid grid congestion. "Apart from infrastructure to evacuate $power, integration \, requires \, \bar{b} a lancing \, supply \, with \, load, \, enabling \,$ solar during the day but increasing supply from other sources during night and managing high generation of wind energy during

Renegotiation of power purchase agreements (PPAs) has not resulted in reduction of tariffs. Falling prices in latest tenders could be one of the triggers for this. The other triggers could be excess power supply tie-up by the State, both renewable and non-renew-

able, and continuing losses of some of the discoms. There has been the problem of slowing tenders and tepid response, with some of the tenders not getting fully subscribed. This could be due to some of the States having higher than required

renewable power tie-ups and surplus energy compared to demand. Kymal believes that, "Wind and solar hybrid energy is the best way to go forward. Unlike solar where most of the items are currently being imported, in the case of wind, we have a manufacturing capacity of about 10,000 MW. Focussing on wind projects and sourcing them locally will do good, for the country and its economy.

Referring to prices a couple of years ago, when tariffs had dropped to about 2.40 per unit, Kymal says that should not be taken as the benchmark. There were several reasons for the drop, including glut in equipment. The best price could be around 3 a unit, which is still nearly ?2 lower than the average cost of power procurement by discoms.

Khanna says recent policy developments in the Indian solar power space have opened up a plethora of opportunities and challenges for developers and manufacturers alike.

We should not get fixated on low tariffs in the backdrop of safeguard duty policy," he argues.

A senior official of a leading renewable energy company points out that renewable energy constitutes about 33 percent of the country's total installed capacity. But the problem with it is, it is not able to provide 24x7 power. Therefore, we need to work towards developing the necessary battery back-up or pumped storage facilities. This will ensure round-the-clock reliable power supply.

If the inputs from discoms to the Centre and States are anything to go by, already, there are moves towards battery back-up solutions. Andhra Pradesh has already tendered for a large battery back-up project and the response has been good.

Kymal suggests that while solar energy may be used to provide power from, say, 06:00 A.M. to 06:00 P.M., wind energy could back up with power from noon to midnight. The discoms would have to address the problem of power supply for a few hours from midnight to six in the morning. This could be through storage back-up.

From a discom perspective, managing the surge in renewable

energy production and sudden drop is a matter of concern.

Dynamic load patterns

"Managing a dynamic and variable load pattern requires storage back-up to meet the discom demand profile. To address this problem, Telangana has opted for distributed solar installations as against the large solar park model. This is now being sought to be replicated in other States, says G Raghuma Reddy, CMD of TSSPDCL. Distributed solar or wind power installations cut down on transmission and distribution losses and there is no need to further bolster the transmission network. This model helps consume power close to the generation site, unlike the park concept.

Why is there not much interest for new projects? Divya Charan says that for developers it is also about availability of equity for new projects. She feels a desirable option for renewable developers is equity markets or infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs).

According to Kymal, "There is huge appetite among developers but they need some changes in the system so that the sector gathers momentum again. Apart from the Solar Energy Corporation of India, States should also come up with offers to set up solar and wind projects."

Industry watchers also feel that the problem with centralized auctions is that some States are not on the developers' radar.

About 12 GW of generating capacity was added during FY 2019 with 8.6 GW from the renewable segment and 3.5 GW in the thermal segment. The solar sector added 6.5 GW and wind, in spite of huge capacity and potential, added 1.6 GW.

All this only underlines the fact that there is a case for next generation reforms in the sector.

(Source: thehindubusinessline.com)

UN bodies deliberately underfunded and undermined by U.S., allies



TEHRAN (FNA) — We are living in strange times. The United Nations longstanding mandate to promote and protect human rights worldwide, undermined by right-wing nationalist governments and authoritarian regimes, has taken another hit by the United States

The Geneva-based Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) says six of the UN's 10 treaty bodies are being forced to cancel their sessions this year due to financial reasons. The situation has been described as "an unprecedented consequence of some UN member states delaying payments due to the organization.

The 10 UN human rights treaty bodies are: the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on Migrant Workers, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities And the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture.

The UN is deeply concerned by this deliberate delay in paying assessed contributions, which will have a direct effect on the ability of the world body to carry out its vital human rights work. Without these funds, the UN's human rights mechanisms and international tribunals have been severely affected.

Only 44 UN member states - out of 193 - have paid all their assessments due, with the United States owing the largest amount. And this is only the latest in a worrying trend of reduction in the UN budget allocated to its human rights mechanisms. To put this in perspective, "the budget of the OHCHR is only $3.7\,\%$ of the total UN

In addition to the possible cancellation of sessions of the treaty bodies, mechanisms created by the Human Rights Council such as Fact-Finding Missions and Commissions of Inquiry in places like Yemen are also being deliberately hampered by Saudi Arabia and its regional allies in carrying out their mandate of investigating serious human rights violations.

The OHCHR says the cancellations mean that reviews already scheduled with member states, as well as consideration of complaints by individual victims of serious human rights violations - including air and drone strikes, torture, blockade - will not take place.

"The cancellation of sessions will also have numerous other negative consequences, and will seriously undermine the system of protections which states themselves have put in place over decades," says a statement released

The chairpersons of the 10 Committees are also deeply concerned about the practical consequences of cancelling these sessions and have sent a letter to the UN Secretary General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. requesting they, together with member states, explore ways of addressing this situation as a matter of urgency.

Until that happens, the UN should strongly call on the United States, Saudi Arabia and their allies to prioritize their international human rights obligations. The UN treaty bodies should hold them accountable to their commitments on human rights and increase the international humanitarian response, not cut back in

The UN treaty bodies are the only mechanism for countries like Yemen to hold the invaders to account for violations of civilian rights and for committing crimes against humanity. The international civil society shouldn't allow these voices to be silenced and call on the UN to prioritize the protection of civilians and ensure these treaty bodies have appropriate and sustainable funding and permission to carry out their work.

Meanwhile, the deliberate budget cuts come at a time when the UN is battling a series of setbacks in the field of human rights in the United States. Under the Trump administration, the US has ceased to cooperate with the UN Rapporteurs, and specifically an investigation on the plight of migrants on the Mexican border where some of them have been detained, sexually assaulted and killed - abuses which have equally remained unreported and unprosecuted.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights should call on the US authorities to make a significant effort to confront the pattern of harassment and attacks aimed at civil society representatives and to take all necessary measures to tackle the endemic impunity around

According to the OHCHR, the 10 United Nations human rights treaties are legally binding treaties. This system of independent scrutiny of the conduct of states by independent experts is a key element of the UN human rights system. No member state or a group of member states can be allowed to deliberately underfund or stop them from investigating serious violations of human rights in conflict regions. They should be allowed to carry out their vital work to promote and protect human rights worldwide.

South Korea intends to maintain trade with Iran: ambassador

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — South Korean ambassador to Tehran H.É. Ryu Jeong-Hyun told Tasnim that his country intends to keep its economic ties with Iran as it keeps negotiating with the US to get sanctions exemption.

During a visit to the Tasnim News Agency, Ryu didn't rule out the challenges in Tehran-Seoul relationship, caused by the US sanctions, while expressing hope that the two countries' good ties wouldn't be solely limited

Here's the full text of Tasnim's interview with South Korean Ambassador:

The issue of the continuation of sanctions waivers for Iranian oil imports and the possibility of trade between Iran and Korea has been one of the most important matters after the withdrawal of the US from the nuclear deal. What is your prospect of the future?

A: Our countries are two close friends. Recently due to the US unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA and re-imposition of sanctions, we have both faced problems to deal with. Doing trade with Iran and importing condensates are of great importance to Korean businessmen. Great firms such as Samsung, LG and SK have big branches in Iran and are enduring hardships.

Despite unfavorable trade situation between our two countries, when I met President Rouhani, we agreed that sanctions would stay for a short time and some countries' policies can't stop Iran Korea friendship. We would find a way to continue our friendship and trade despite this difficult situation. My embassy would do all it can for the continuation of a solution or way to boost not just economic ties, but people to people communication and cultural cooperation as well as tourism.

South Korea halted Iran oil import after US withdrawal from the JCPOA. How would you see the future of Iran-Korea economic cooperation, with respect to the importance of trade between the two countries?

A: The announcement by the US on the ceasing of issuing waiver to eight countries, came as a sudden measure, while we had expected a gradual approach which would give us enough time to make changes to our petrochemical industries for better adaptation. Our refineries are designed to refine Iranian condensates and any changes would be time-consuming and costly, therefore we had asked the US for the extension of waivers.

We are in a difficult situation, where we are seeking continuation of trade with Iran through utilizing Iranian reserves in Korean banks, but we've received no clear response on this issue from the US. They emphasize getting Iranian trade and oil import to zero.

We gave them a comprehensive description of the hardships faced by Korean companies. The great volume of trade with the US has put them in a difficult position. While being in need of the important Iranian market, they can't simply ignore US policies.

Does the issue include big compa-

A: Big firms are not the only ones dealing with these issue. SME's are also grappling with the same challenges. Korean government puts great emphasis on supporting SMEs so that they can continue trade with Iran, which is again a tough issue since US sanctions also include banking transactions.

Currently, our main focus is on nonsanctioned items such as the ones aimed at serving humanitarian purposes and essential everyday life items.

In line with our humanitarian goals, we've assisted Iranians dealing with hardships caused by food and medicine shortage. Great advancements have been made in Korea in the field of medicine and medical products, enabling us to help Iranians in distress.

When you talk about finding a way to continue trade, do you mean that you would do it through the US or you would do it separately with Iran? Are you hopeful of getting waivers from the US?

A: US sanctions have different categories and we are primarily focused on non-sanctioned items, while continuing negotiations



for possible waivers.

when you refer to trading with nonsanctioned items, do you mean trade through barter, or bank payments?

A: There are a lot of detail involved in this issue. What I can say is that we can currently trade with Iran by focusing on non-sanctioned items, which demands resolving banking issues, which we intend to get over through negotiations with the US. Unfortunately, the US refuses to give a proper response and refers the issue to different governmental bodies.

Are you still in contact with the US over sanctions waivers?

A: We will continue our contact with the US. Our embassy in the US holds meetings on the issue almost on a daily basis. In the past, Korean diplomacy was focused on super powers including, the US, China, Russia and Japan, but the current administration is advancing with its policy of diversification which includes important regional players such as ASEAN countries in south eastern Asia, India in southern Asia, Iran in the Middle East and Australia in the Pacific. Strong ties with these countries are of great importance to us and is in line with our national interests.

You said before that Korean authorities were seeking to gradually find a high quality replacement for Iranian oil. The question is that have you received any suggestions from the US for replacing Iranian crude?

A: This is our stance: Iranian condensate has the greatest quality in the world and Iran is the number one exporter of condensate in the world. Korea is also the number one importer of Iranian condensate. Almost 50% of our condensate imports are from Iran. The reality is that we cannot change our facilities in one day, therefore we need more time.

We have stored a certain amount of Iranian oil and we're not sure of how long we could continue using our reserves. Maybe a few months or a year. After we run out of our reserves, we would have no choice, but to change our facilities.

Have you received any recommendations from the US in order to change the procedure? What is their solution to this issue?

A: They have announced that each country has to deal with its own issues. Korea, India, Turkey and China are all grappling with the same problem. We either have to continue negotiations with the US or find another way.

20 to 25 percent of Korea's trade with Iran are household appliances. There are reports that LG and Samsung staff have left Iran, and the firms stopped business activities in Iran. With that in mind, do you visualize any solutions to this issue? Will sanctions

A: I had a meeting with Korean businessmen at my residence last week. After the US announcement of an end to sanctions waivers, they all told me that it's hard for them to continue business. At the same time they are fully aware of Iranian market's importance. They have been investing and doing trade in this market for 40 years now. A number of Korean construction firms chose to stay

in Iran and continued business despite war between Iraq and Iran. The issue is that they have to be able to receive the products from Korea, which requires a resolution to cargo ships' insurance issue.

Allow us to distance ourselves from the issue of sanctions and move to the situation in the Korean Peninsula. So far we've seen two summits by the North Korean Leader and the US President, both of which bore no fruits. North and South Korea are neighbors and many analysts believe they can resolve their own issues themselves. Why don't the two Koreas decide to resolve their issues without getting assistance from the US?

A: In Hanoi, the two sides failed to reach an agreement or sign a document. I think this was an indicator of how difficult the North Korean issue is. A long road is ahead and it's filled with obstacles. Many were surprised after the first summit, thinking that the issue can be easily resolved through a top-down

Just like the Issue of Israel and Palestine, which is among the Middle East's complicated issues, the issue of North Korea is a very complex problem to deal with. Recently, North Korea launched a number of projectiles and the US warned North Koreans about their actions. We, South Koreans, are in between and that puts us in a difficult position, but in general, we believe we've made good progress so far.

A year ago, North Korea was testing nuclear bombs and its long-range missiles. We were afraid of an imminent war, but President Moon made great efforts to meet the North Korean Leader. He also facilitated Chairman Kim's meeting with Mr. Trump. We are still in the beginning stages and

are in need of further negotiations in order to bridge the gaps and reach a common un-

South Korea was the first mediator in its efforts to resolve Peninsula's issue, but lack of progress in negotiations has led to a reduction of President Moon's approval rating to less than 50%. Do you think this lack of progress in negotiations, is mostly because of the US or North Korea? Which one is to blame?

A: In Korea we have a multi-party system which consists of two main parties: conservative and progressive. Currently the progressive party is in power and our President is a member of that party. The conservative party is mostly concerned with security issues and has a more hardline view over the North Korean issue. Domestically, we are dealing with different challenges and the parties oppose each other impeding many of the ruling party's proposals.

Despite all the opposition, many people believe that the North Korean issue has to be resolved peacefully; not with waging a war, but through negotiations. They want a denuclearized North Korea and denuclearized Korean Peninsula. This is Koreans' shared

South Korea's attitude on North Korea

is a logical one. I'm not making this statement as a public officer. I studied politics at university and I know that this is the only way. North Korean issue is intricate and time-consuming. Currently the viable solution is peaceful co-existence. North Korea can be a trusted International member and see its industry making progress. This is to the benefit of the Peninsula.

Apart from the emotional aspect of the issue, some analysts speculate that South Korea could use North Korea as a great market, while benefiting its cheap labor force in order to become a bigger economic power and a serious rival for China and Japan.

A: You referred to an important point. The unification of the Peninsula is of importance in both humanitarian and economic perspective. A united Peninsula would be a bit smaller than Japan, which itself is a reasonable size. This is good for Korea. This is the reason why some neighboring countries are not so interested in the reunification of Koreas. Chinese think that American soldiers can get close to their borders and stand face to face with them in a united Korea. There are numerous complicated issues that adds to its complexity.

Regarding North Korean Leader's trip to china and Russia, do you see the possibility of the negotiations going back to their 6-party talks' style and therefore weakening South Korea's role?

A: I don't believe that the North Korean Leader's trips were taken in line with that issue. We need to realize that this is not an issue exclusively related to the US, but China, Russia, and maybe Japan are also involved and 6-party talks could act as a good tool. Bilateral summits are also crucial. President Moon has a warm and friendly approach toward North Korea. At the same time we are experiencing a lot of ups and downs in our path. In general I believe that good progress is being made in line with bringing peace to the Korean Peninsula.

Mr. Ambassador referred to the good relationship between the two Koreas, while the negotiations have taken a trajectory where some sources are talking about the possibility of Japan entering the talks, since Shinzo Abe and Trump enjoy closer friendship. What is your take on that?

A: Japan and the US have had a meeting recently. Also in a phone conversation, they talked about the issue of Korean Peninsula. Powers surrounding the Peninsula are also grappling with the North Korean issue, but eventually I believe that the two Koreas are the main players of the Peninsula. With good coordination among the four powers surrounding the Peninsula, we can peacefully resolve the issue.

So you're not worried about the situation?

A: Japan can definitely play a significant role, since it used to be a 6-party-talks member. Our relationship with Japan is not so good due to historical issues, which complicates the challenges. This is while Japan and Korea are two neighbors who have to collaborate to find a resolution to the North Korean problem. What do you think of Iran after

spending a year in this country?

A: I was surprised when I came to Iran a year ago. I found Iranians stronger than I had expected. Before coming to Iran, I had read that due to sanctions, Iran's infrastructure is old and not enough, but when I set foot inside the country, I realized that it has great and diverse potentials. Its geographical diversity stretching from Tochal's icy peaks to scorching weather in Bandar Abbas is amazing. Your soft potential is more important than these. You have well-educated youth and this is Iran's main source of power. Iranian youth are competitive and they are the ones who will shape Iran's bright future. It depends on politics and politicians and the decisions they make. Iranians are friendly and hospitable. It is saddening to see that they are under pressure because of economic hardships. I believe this situation will be replaced with a brighter future.

Riyadh's lies about targeting Mecca

TEHRAN (MNA) – The recent move by Saudi authorities to level accusations at Yemeni resistance forces over targeting Mecca, as one of the most sacred places for Muslims, can be analyzed in the context of Riyadh's psychological warfare against the Yemeni forces and their recent major field achievements regarding the retaliatory drone strikes on two major oil pumping stations in the Kingdom.

Saudi newspaper 'Okaz' has recently claimed that Ansarallah fired a missile at Mecca which was intercepted by Riyadh. Five years of Yemeni resistance reveals the political and

military defeat of the aggressive Saudi-led coalition. Saudi Arabia is trying to use these allegations to increase the support and approval it needs to continue its brutal attack on Yemen.

These claims indicate a huge bankruptcy which the Saudi regime is trying to get out of by hanging from the covers of the Kaaba, and telling the public opinion that Mecca is



The Yemeni resistance forces have not retreated in the face of this psychological and media warfare and recently announced that they have 300 military and vital enemy positions in their sight.

A Yemeni official maintained that the said targets include the military and vital units and bases of the United Arab

Emirates and Saudi Arabia, as well as their bases in Yemen. Recent Yemeni developments, especially field developments and the operations by Yemeni resistance forces against enemy positions, show that Yemeni forces' harsh response to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates has entered a new, unprecedented phase.

Saudi Arabia, now having fully realized that after five years of aggression against Yemeni people, it has weakened only for the resistance to grow stronger, is creating a false media hype to manipulate Muslims' sentiments and further escalate its attacks on Yemen's residential areas and the massacre of innocent women and children there.

In any case, it must be noted that the claim of targeting Mecca by Yemeni forces is a completely planned move aimed at manipulating the public opinion and the international community against the Yemeni resistance forces. This strategy, however, will ultimately fail to achieve Saudi's desired results, since Saudi Arabia has offered no considerable evidence and has only resorted to creating media hype over the issue.

taker president and vice presidents cannot

be candidates in the election and the caretaker government will be subjected to all

constitutional checks and balances, including

Court of Afghanistan is the sole authority

to amend the Constitution," said Haroon

Chakhansuri, spokesperson of President

Ghani. He said the caretaker government is against the country's Constitution.

President Ghani had harmed government

institutions and it was time for him to leave

"The recent interpretation by the Supreme Court on the continuation of the incumbent

president is in violation of Article 61 of the

Constitution," he remarked. "The second

clause of Article 61 says the election for the

new President shall be held within thirty to

He said the main factor for the fail-

sixty days from the end of incumbent's term.'

ure of inter-Afghan talks, which were

scheduled to take place on April 20 in

Doha, was the government's wrong policy.

He added that the government was not

international community has more influence

on these matters than the local players. "Af-

ter May 22, President Ghani will continue

his work despite the scathing criticism. The

protest won't have any effect on him. It may

be difficult for him only if the U.S throws its

weight behind the protesting candidates,"

said Ahmad Saidi, a senior analyst based

candidates have declared that they will con-

tinue their campaign if President Ghani con-

tinues to ignore their demands. They have

called on the international community and

regional countries to take note of the current

situation in the war-torn country and support

their demand for free, fair and transparent

Meanwhile, the protesting presidential

Observers and analysts believe that the

committed to peace.

in Kabul.

Mohammad Hanif Atmar, one of the oresidential candidates, hit back saying that

But, as expected, the presidential palace dismissed the declaration: "The Supreme

parliamentary oversight.

Power balance in the Pacific: An analysis of naval race between U.S. and China



By Maryam Khormaee

 $\begin{tabular}{ll} \textbf{TEHRAN} - \textbf{The United States Navy ships have sailed through Taiwan Strait seven times since July 2018. The most recent time 1.50×10^{-5} and 1.50×10^{-5} are the sailed through Taiwan Strait seven times since July 2018. The most recent time 1.50×10^{-5} are the sailed through Taiwan Strait seven times since July 2018. The most recent time 1.50×10^{-5} are the sailed through Taiwan Strait seven times since July 2018. The most recent time 1.50×10^{-5} are the sailed through Taiwan Strait seven times since July 2018. The most recent time 1.50×10^{-5} are the sailed through Taiwan Strait seven times since July 2018. The most recent time 1.50×10^{-5} are the sailed through Taiwan Strait seven times since July 2018. The most recent time 1.50×10^{-5} are the sailed through Taiwan Strait seven times since July 2018. The most recent time 1.50×10^{-5} are the sailed through Taiwan Strait seven times since July 2018. The most recent time 1.50×10^{-5} are the sailed through Taiwan Strait seven times since July 2018. The sailed through Taiwan Strait seven times through Taiwan Strait seven through Taiwan Strai$ they passed through this narrow, yet strategic strait was in April.

Clearly, U.S. navy ships have increased their movement in this area compared to last years, however, U.S. Navy has never sent an aircraft career through the strait in past 11 years. taking this much caution reveals that Washington might want to prove its claims that it has the right to sail through international waters,

but it would not go as far as provoking China. China rules over three seas, South China Sea, East China Sea, and the Yellow Sea and despite occasional troubles made by U.S. and recently by United Kingdom, no one really means to cause a serious problem.

Over the last two decades, China has created one of the strongest navies in the world, equipped with most modern missiles in order to rule the waves in the Pacific Sea.

In fact, developing the Navy has been among the top priorities of Chines President Xi Jinping, so that China's armed force turn into the strongest power in the region.

Therefore, it is no surprise that U.S. has not dared to send an aircraft carrier to Taiwan Strait over the last 11 years. According to U.S. Congress Independent Commission, in any war that break out by U.S. threatening China's sovereignty over Taiwan, U.S. will definitely lose.

China military budget: new ambitions for racing in distant waters

As China gains confidence that it can dominate its near seas, it intends to challenge the dominance of the U.S. Navy in distant waters, too, in the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean.

Since 2014, China has launched more navy ships, subma $rines, support ships and amphibious \, war fare \, ships \, than \, the \, entire \,$ number of United Kingdom's Royal Navy which is among the greatest, most ancient fleets in the world.

Between 2015 and 2017, China launched almost 400,000 tons of naval vessels, about twice the output of U.S. shipyards

According to navy experts, China has now about 400 warships and by 2030, the Chinese navy could have more than 530 warships and submarines.

Xi Jinping has also increased the country's military budget. Between 2015 and 2021, total military outlays are projected to jump 55 percent from \$167.9 billion to \$260.8 billion,

Over the same period, the navy's share of the budget has rose significantly to \$57.1 billion.

In its 2015 White Paper on defense, China said its navy would gradually shift its focus from defending its offshore waters to

operations in the open seas. China flaunting cutting-edge aircraft carriers

Liaoning, the first Chinese aircraft carrier, went into operation in 1395. China bought the flat top 60,000-tonne Liaoning from

Ukraine and set out to launch it by 2012. Shandong, China's second aircraft carrier is currently in sea

trials and will soon go into operation. It is going to be stationed near South China sea where is also the center of conflict between Beijing, Washington and neighboring countries in the region.

Shandong is particularly important because it was totally built domestically and is going to go on exhibition in October 2019, on the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

After Shandong, a type 001A aircraft carrier, goes into operation, China Navy will rank second in the world in terms of the number of aircraft carriers, matching the size of U.K. Navy.

However, these two fleets can only carry up to 25 jet fighters, which is half the number of fighters in U.S. aircraft carriers.

But the highlight of the news is how China is getting ready to build its third aircraft carrier, based on domestic technology. According to International Institute for Strategic Studies, this ship is being built in Jiangnan Shipyard in Shanghai. This would be China's biggest aircraft carrier that is capable of launching all types of offensives.

This type 002 aircraft carrier is expected to be significantly larger than France's Charles de Gaulle 42,500 tons aircraft carriers but smaller than U.S. 100,000 tons carriers.

It is also believed that the carrier will include a catapult aircraft launch system, but it is not disclosed whether it has a nuclear

According to the US Department of Defense, the construction of the new Chinese aircraft carrier will end by 2022.

The carriers equipped with catapult system are able to lunch heavier aircrafts, so China People's Liberation Army (PLA) will have a navy fleet that is capable of carrying a vast range of fighters and aircrafts.

However, for obtaining its goal to conquer the international waters, PLA will need at least five to six aircraft carriers, so that each of the navy fleets have at least two aircraft carriers. It means that if one aircraft carrier is under repair, the other one can work.

Finally, PLA still has a long road ahead to achieve the same level of tactic as U.S. this majorly stems from their few number of naval exercises. U.S. navy men's practical abilities are way above the Chinese. However, it seems that China Navy is aware of this weakness and is trying to overcome it.

Afghan politicians call for interim govt; ask Ghani to step down

By Abdul Wahid Haidari

KABUL — There is a palpable buzz in Afghanistan these days about the forthcoming presidential election, with people and politicians discussing, debating and speculating the future of their war-torn country.

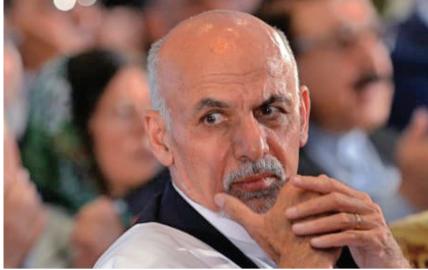
A total of 11 candidates are in the fray, vying for the most powerful yet most dangerous seat in the country. Afghan Constitution stipulates that the president's term shall expire on 1st of Jawza (22 May) of his fifth year in office and election for the new president shall be held within 30 to 60 days after that.

The incumbent Ashraf Ghani has already finished his tenure and the new presidential elections were supposed to be held on April 22, but were delayed due to unspecified reasons. Even the May 22 deadline passed. The country's top election body has announced September 28 as new date for holding the election, which means more delay and more concerns about the abrogation of Constitu-

In a declaration issued on April 21, the Supreme Court of Afghanistan extended President Ghani's term until the next election, but the Lawyers Union of Afghanistan deemed it illegal and called for the formation of an interim government. Now, there is an intense debate on whether the incumbent president should continue till September 28 or an interim government should replace his government.

A week ago, a council of presidential can-didates called for an end to President Ghaniled national unity government (NUG) and demanded a caretaker government. Twelve out of total 18 presidential candidates including Mohammad Hanif Atmar, Ahmad Wali Masoud, Anayatullah Hafiz, Hakim Torson, Ghulam Farooq Najrabi, Mohammad Ibrahim Alkozay, Noorullhaq Ulomi, Rahmatullah Nabil, Mohammad Shahab Hakimi, Shaida Mohammad Abdali, Faramarz Tamanna and Noor Rahman Leval are members of this

On 19th May, the council convened a press conference and announced a plan called



"Safeguarding the Democratic Processes in Afghanistan; Position on Ending Presidential Term-in-Office and the Formation

of a Caretaker Government". They accused President Ghani of seeking extension of his term through illegal means and said that the democratic transition is at $risk\ due\ to\ failure\ of\ the\ government\ to\ hold$

presidential elections on time. They said the government has failed to honor its commitments like convening a Loya Jirga (a countrywide consultancy council) for discussing amendments to the Constitution, creating a post of Prime Minister, introducing electoral reforms and facilitating free and fair election. None of these promises, they said, were fulfilled.

"Divisive politics of the President are at the roots of crisis today. He is seen as obstacle to fair and transparent elections. Out of the Constitution's 162 articles 94 articles have been violated by NUG (national unity government), mainly by President. Government has lost control of more than half of the territory as well as over 45,000 solder have been killed, and President is seen as obstacle

to peace and abuse of authority and state

In its declaration, the council called for the formation of a caretaker government. It said the incumbent President should give up his candidacy for the election and continue his term as the caretaker President $from\,22\,May\,without\,going\,through\,any\,legal$ mechanism till the end of the duration of the government. This option, it added, also applies to the current vice presidents who may continue as caretaker deputies if they

renounce their candidacy.

The declaration further said that if presidential palace won't accept the first option, the second option is: "The incumbent candidates step down. A grand assembly of political and civic leaders from the entire political spectrum, including presidential candidates is formed. Eligible candidates are nominated through registered political parties and civic organizations. A selection procedure is agreed by members of the assembly through consensus. A caretaker president and two caretaker vice presidents are selected".

According to this declaration, the care-

resources," read the declaration

fering Iranians would rise up against their government. If anything, Iranians are tighter with the extant government than they might otherwise be. Any desired internal reform

on the part of Iran's people will wait for expression on the

absence of military threats and sanctions by outsiders. In some odd respects, it may be fair to say that Iran comes out a winner no matter what the U.S. and allies do, although the "victory" should military attacks commence would in the end be largely pyrrhic. But still a victory. Trump simply does not understand Iran's and the Iranian people's capacity for sacrifice to maintain its sovereignty and independent political and social culture, whatever it may be. And Trump also seems to be ignorant that the U.S. has nothing but a handful of "allies" who are primarily posturing selfishly for themselves, not the U.S., unless they all have been rendered utterly daft by hubris.

At the least, it seems accurate to say that the U.S. has become desperate to shore up its flagging influence and its 'empire", and desperation or desperate moves are exactly the things that will prove to be counterproductive in the longer run. Iran has been around for almost 3000 years and is not ever going away even if it suffers, as if has often in the past, outrageous challenges.

Iran, whatever it further suffers, is going to win in the longer term

1 -> And opposition to the Zionists is mounting across the world like never before and also inside the U.S. So far, Iran seems to be making the best moves it possibly can under the circumstances.

President Rouhani has said he welcomes U.S. diplomatic overtures but has refused new diplomacy under the fact of economic sanctions and threats of military actions. He has chosen "resistance". How does any head of state make deals with Trump who has destroyed previous deals like the JCPOA? How could the U.S. be trusted in the absence of anything but threats? How can Iran walk away entirely from the JCPOA without bringing down the wrath of the U.N. and other countries, including the other signatories to the JCPOA? It makes no sense for Trump to insist that Iran, displaying weakness and submission, call HIM for

From a tactical and logical standpoint, Iran's leaders like President Rouhani have said they don't want a war with the U.S. This goes without saving for any country, and as much as Bolton and Pompeo and Netanyahu and Muhammad Bin Salman and others may push for a U.S. attack on Iran, it's hard to imagine that they don't realize that even if Iran suffers mightily as a result of U.S. bombing, Israel and



Saudi Arabia would also suffer mightily from any Iranian defensive retaliations, and so would the economies of every

It seems apparent that the "maximum pressure" the U.S and its "allies" have inflicted on Iran cannot (logically anyway) have any other aim but to bring Iran to its knees with abject demands for relief from sanctions and threats. Trump and minions have made a truly absurd bet: that suf-

Steve Addison: Islamophobia, white supremacy facing real backlash following Christchurch Terrorist Attacks

TEHRAN (FNA) — Steve Addison, journalist and human rights activist, says people in New Zealand have become sensitive to hate speech, forcing those who practice Islamophobia or white supremacy further underground.

Speaking to FNA in an exclusive interview, Mr. Addison also commented on the status of the Muslim community after the terrorist attacks, saying, "They know that people care and are determined to help... The survivors of the terrorist attacks will always hold a special place in New Zealand

Steve Addison is a journalist and human rights activist based in Christchurch, New Zealand. He has special interest in the Middle East, refugees and human rights. He has more than 30 years of experience in the media and journalism.

Below is the full text of the interview: How do you see the response shown by the nation to the christchurch terrorist

A: The response by the nation has been overwhelming and heart-warming. I have never seen New Zealanders come together in this way before. There is a sense of collective guilt. People are questioning their



own actions around stopping racism and whether they had personally done enough to welcome refugees and to ensure Muslim people feel included in society. I don't believe it will be a short-term thing. There seems to be a determination from ordinary people to ensure the Islamic community is protected and included in New Zealand society from this point on.

People are not allowing racist comments or actions to happen in their space. New Zealanders have become more interested in understanding Islam and making sure that Islamic neighbors feel safe and includ-

ed in the community. Islamic neighbors are being invited to dinner and people are dropping by Islamic neighbors with food and good wishes.

Does that mean the terrorists behind the attack were alone and the nation is standing against them? Do you believe the Muslim community feels safe now?

A: I hope so and in general yes. They know that people care and are determined to help. I imagine they do worry about the small element of people who hold anti-Islamic beliefs. They possibly also fear a copycat attack. I heard of a Muslim woman in Dunedin who told our Prime Minister that only now she feels at home in New Zealand. We have an unarmed police force; for the first time in my life, police are carrying firearms, largely to prevent any other attacks. In New Zealand the move to ban semi-automatic firearms should make people feel safer. Certainly, the attacks have brought people in New Zealand closer together. The survivors of the terrorist attacks will always hold a special place in New Zealand society.

The Christchurch attack has possibly triggered a global move against Islamophobia or White Supremacy. Which one do you think has been condemned more?

A: These are two quite different movements, but with shared views on Islam. The white supremacy movement is fighting a campaign against the position of the white male in society. They see themselves as somewhat replaced and irrelevant in modern society. They are generally uneducated and from less well-off backgrounds. They dislike anyone of color and females in positions of power. When they hear Islam, they think ISIS, and believe that all Islamic people are terrorists. Many of their beliefs on the role of women and Muslim community are actually similar to conservative Islam; so it is something of a paradox.

Islamophobia is a fear of a significant Islamic population changing the Western vay of life. Both of these movements are facing a real backlash following the terrorist attacks in Christchurch. They are being forced even further underground and this will make it difficult for them to recruit more people. The community at large has become sensitive to hate speech. People are calling it out online and in the community. It won't be tolerated by employers and people with anti-Islamic or racist views are being socially isolated and may lose their jobs.

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Collision that formed the moon also brought Earth water, planetary scientists claim

Without the moon and water, life on Earth wouldn't be possible. New research out of Germany suggests both were delivered by Theia, which collided with Earth 4.4 billion years ago

Scientists have long puzzled over the origins of Earth's water. Earth was formed in the inner solar system, and the inner solar system was dry. The solar system's wet materials were relegated to the outer solar system.

Water-rich carbonaceous meteorites, for example, hail from the outer solar system. Non-carbonaceous meteorites from the inner solar system are without water.

At some point during Earth's early history, carbonaceous materials delivered large quantities of water. But the details and timing of this delivery process aren't well understood.

"We have used molybdenum isotopes to answer this question," Gerrit Budde, a researcher at the University of Münster's Institute of Planetology, said in a news

"The molybdenum isotopes allow us to clearly distinguish carbonaceous and noncarbonaceous material, and as such represent



a 'genetic fingerprint' of material from the

outer and inner solar system.' Analysis performed by Budde and

his colleagues showed some of Earth's molybdenum hails from the outer solar system. Because molybdenum is an ironloving element, most of it is located in Earth's core -- but not all of it.

"The molybdenum which is accessible today in the Earth's mantle, therefore, originates from the late stages of Earth's formation, while the molybdenum from earlier phases is entirely in the core," said planetary scientist Christoph Burkhardt.

The new research, published this week in the journal Nature, showed large quantities of water arrived after Earth's building blocks had coalesced.

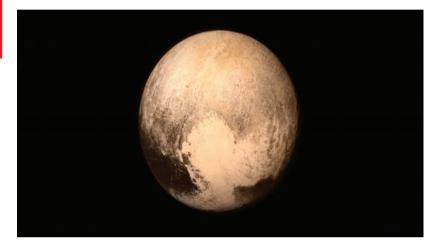
The study's authors suggest much of this water-rich material was delivered by Theia, the Mars-sized planet that scientists theorize struck Earth head on around 4.4 billion years ago, vaporizing much of Earth and triggering the formation of the moon.

"Our data demonstrate that Earth accreted carbonaceous bodies late in its growth history, probably through the Moon-forming impact," scientists wrote.

"This late delivery of carbonaceous material probably resulted from an orbital instability of the gas giant planets, and it demonstrates that Earth's habitability is strongly tied to the very late stages of its growth.

(Source: UPI)

What keeps Pluto's ocean from freezing?



 $When \, NASA's \, New \, Horizons \, spacecraft$ flew past Pluto in 2015, researchers hoped that its data would help them unravel some of the dwarf planet's mysteries. Instead, the discoveries made during the close-up look at Pluto and its moon Charon revealed more questions that needed answering.

One of the big revelations from the flyby was the discovery of an ocean beneath the icy shell encapsulating Pluto. The ice shell was thin in a spot near the equator that's about the size of Texas, known as Sputnik Planitia, which helped researchers notice Pluto's odd topography and suggest the ocean's existence.

But this created a conundrum. Given the age of Pluto, estimated to be between 4.4 billion and 4.6 billion years, the ocean should have frozen hundreds of millions of years ago. And rather than forming a bubble, the ice shell should have flattened over the frozen ocean.

But Pluto's ocean isn't frozen, so researchers used New Horizons data and computer simulations to model what might keep the ocean from freezing. Their study was published Monday in the journal Nature Geoscience

The most likely scenario is gas between the ocean and the ice shell that acts like an insulating later. This layer of gas, probably

methane that originated in Pluto's rocky core when the dwarf planet was forming, would

be thick and have low thermal conductivity. The researchers believe the layer exists in the form of gas hydrates, in which water molecules create lattice-like cages that trap gas molecules, according to the study.

And this insulating gas layer would have caused the ice shell to take more than 1 billion years to achieve uniform

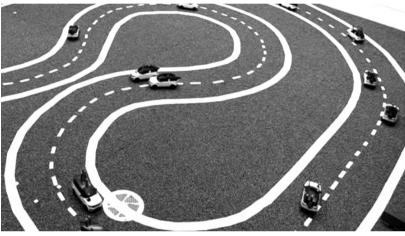
Pluto's atmosphere is rich in nitrogen and low on methane. The gas layer between the ice shell and the ocean might explain where the methane is.

The implications extend to other icy ocean worlds in our solar system, like Jupiter's moon Europa and Saturn's moon Enceladus, as well as exoplanets. If insulating gas layers can keep subsurface oceans from freezing, there could be a wealth of ocean worlds out there, the researchers said.

"This could mean there are more oceans in the universe than previously thought, making the existence of extraterrestrial life more plausible," said Shunichi Kamata, study author and associate professor in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Hokkaido University in Japan, in a statement.

(Source: CNN)

cars may improve traffic flow



New research suggests synchronized, driverless cars can relieve congestion and improve traffic flow by as much as 35 percent.

To test the potential of driverless car technology, researchers at the University of Cambridge built a fleet of small, robotic cars. The cars were released onto a miniaturized track for tests. Researchers measured the impact of a vehicle breakdown on the rest of the fleet.

When the cars were operating independently, the stoppage of a single vehicle caused a significant backup. However, when the cars operated in coordination, communicating with one another as they circled the track, a stoppage in a single lane caused only a brief slowdown.

When the synchronized cars were faced with a breakdown in the inner lane, the robot vehicles in the outer lane slowed down to make it easier for the cars in the inner lane to merge.

Synchronization -- that is, cars in communication with each other -- improved traffic flow by 35 percent. Researchers shared the results of their tests on Monday at the International Conference on Robotics and Automation, held this week in Montreal.

"Autonomous cars could fix a lot of different problems associated with driving in cities, but there needs to be a way for them to work together," Michael He, an

undergraduate student at the University of Cambridge, said in a news release.

He helped designed the algorithms that allowed the communicating cars to synchronize their actions in response to a breakdown.

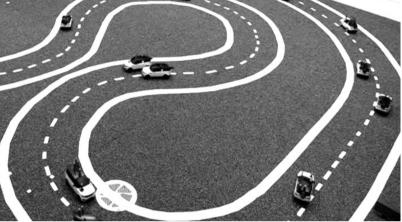
 $Researchers\,used\,motion\,capture\,sensors$ and a Raspberry Pi to allow their miniature robotic cars to sense their surroundings and communicate via wifi. To allow the cars to coordinate their actions, He and his research partners adapted algorithms that real driverless cars use to make safe lane changes

Similar attempts to test driverless car technologies have either relied on computer simulations or actual automotive vehicles. Using real cars, however, is expensive and requires a lot more space. Researchers at Cambridge suggest their methods could make testing driverless car technologies easier and cheaper. Each of their cars cost about \$75 to make.

"Our design allows for a wide range of practical, low-cost experiments to be carried out on autonomous cars," said Cambridge computer scientist Amanda Prorok. "For autonomous cars to be safely used on real roads, we need to know how they will interact with each other to improve safety and traffic flow."

(Source: UPI)

Robots suggest synchronized driverless



Scientists have created a sound so loud it can vaporize water on contact

Scientists have discovered what they believe is the loudest possible underwater sound — a sound so powerful that it can vaporize water on contact.

It's not the sound of a massive underwater earthquake, nor is it the sound of a pistol shrimp snapping its claws louder than a Pink Floyd concert. It is, in fact, the sound of a tiny water jet — about half the width of a human hair — being hit by an even thinner X-ray laser

You can't actually hear this sound, because it was created in a vacuum chamber. That's probably for the best, considering that, at around 270 decibels, these rumbling pressure waves are even louder than NASA's loudest-ever rocket launch (which measured about 205 decibels). However, you can see the sound's microscopically devastating effects in action, thanks to a series of ultra-slow-motion videos recorded at the SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory in Menlo Park, California, as part of a new study.

In the video above, which was filmed in about 40 nanoseconds (40 billionths of a second), the pulsing laser immediately splits the water jet in two, vaporizing the fluid that it touches while sending powerful pressure waves wobbling down either side of the jet. These waves create more waves and, by about 10 nanoseconds in, fizzing black clouds of collapsing bubbles form on each side of the cavity.



According to Claudiu Stan, a physicist at Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey, and one of the study co-authors, these pressure waves likely represent the loudest possible underwater sound. If it were any louder, the sound "would actually boil the liquid," Stan told Live Science — and once the water boils, the sound has no medium to pass through.

Why try to discover a sound that rends apart its own medium? According to Stan, understanding the limits of underwater sound could help researchers design future

Scientists regularly suspend little bits of intriguing matter - say, a specific type of protein crystal, for example — in fluid jets and blast them with lasers to determine their chemical properties. If scientists know precisely how intense a laser pulse can be without accidentally destroying the liquid that could improve the way these experiments are performed, Stan said. That's particularly true for studies where scientists hit samples of material with high-powered beams to test the material's structural integrity.

"This research can help us investigate in the future how microscopic samples would respond when they are vibrated severely by underwater sound," Stan said.

This is not the first time SLAC researchers have used this X-ray laser to test the limits of physics. In a 2017 study, researchers used the same laser to blast the electrons out of an atom, creating a "molecular black hole" that sucked in all the available electrons from nearby atoms. Taken in tandem, that study and the new one result in one unassailable conclusion: Lasers are really, really cool.

(Source: Live Science)

Rise in global sea levels could have "profound consequences"

Scientists believe that global sea levels could rise far more than predicted, due to accelerating melting in Greenland and Antarctica.

The long-held view has been that the world's seas would rise by

a maximum of just under a meter by 2100. This new study, based on expert opinions, projects that the real level may be around double that figure.

This could lead to the displacement of hundreds of millions of

people, the authors say.

The question of sea-level rise was one of the most controversial issues raised by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), when it published its fifth assessment report in 2013.

It said the continued warming of the planet, without major reductions in emissions, would see global waters rising by between 52cm and 98cm by 2100.

Many experts believe this was a very conservative estimate. Ice scientists are also concerned that the models currently used to predict the influence of huge ice sheets on sea levels don't capture

all of the uncertainties about how these are now melting. To try to get a clearer picture, some of the leading researchers in the field carried out what is termed a structured expert judgment study, where the scientists make predictions based on their knowledge and understanding of what is happening in Greenland, West and

In the researchers' view, if emissions continue on the current trajectory then the world's seas would be very likely to rise by between 62cm and 238cm by 2100. This would be in a world that had warmed by around 5C - one of the worst-case scenarios for global warming.

'For 2100, the ice sheet contribution is very likely in the range of 7-178cm but once you add in glaciers and ice caps outside the ice sheets and thermal expansion of the seas, you tip well over two meters," said lead author Prof Jonathan Bamber from the University of Bristol. The IPCC report in 2013 only considered what is "likely" to happen, which in scientific terms means they looked at 17-83% of the range of possibilities.

This new study looks at a broader range of results, covering 5-95% of the estimates. For expected temperature rises up to 2C, Greenland's ice sheet remains the single biggest contributor to sealevel rise. However, as temperatures go beyond this, the much larger Antarctic ice sheets start to come into play.

"When you start to look at these lower likelihood but still plausible

values, then the experts believe that there is a small but statistically significant probability that West Antarctica will transition to a very unstable state and parts of East Antarctica will start contributing as well," said Prof Bamber.

"But it's only at these higher probabilities for 5C that we see those type of behaviors kicking in."

According to the authors, this scenario would have huge implications

They calculate that the world would lose an area of land equal to 1.79 million square kilometers - equivalent to the size of Libya.

Much of the land losses would be in important food growing areas such as the delta of the Nile. Large swathes of Bangladesh would be very difficult for people to continue to live in. Major global cities, including London, New York and Shanghai would be under threat.

That is about 200 times smaller than the number of people who would be displaced in a 2m sea-level rise.'

The authors emphasize that there is still time to avoid these type of scenarios, if major cuts in emissions take place over the coming decades. They acknowledge that the chances of hitting the high end of this range are small, around 5%, but they should not be discounted, according to the lead author.

"If I said to you that there was a one in 20 chance that if you $% \left(1\right) =\left(1\right) =\left($ crossed the road you would be squashed you wouldn't go near it," said Prof Bamber. "Even a 1% probability means that a one in a hundred year flood is something that could happen in your lifetime. I think that a 5% probability, crikey - I think that's a serious risk."

The study has been published in the journal Proceedings of the

National Academy of Sciences.

(Source: BBC)

Astronomers find white dwarf merger that may spawn future fiery explosion

Astronomers have discovered a rare celestial object. Scientists suggest the fiery orb was created when two dead white dwarfs merged and become reanimated.

According to a new paper describing the unusual stellar object, published this week in the journal Nature, the orb is a ticking time bomb -- likely to explode with a fiery bang in the near future.

Scientists first spotted the object while analyzing data collected by the Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer, or WISE, satellite. Astronomers spotted a bright star at the center of a gas nebula, but were surprised to find no visible light, only infrared radiation, emanating from the nebula.

When astronomers analyzed the spectrum emitted by the nebula and its central star, they determined the object contained neither hydrogen nor helium. The absence of hydrogen and helium is a defining characteristic of white dwarfs.

The sun and sun-like stars are powered by hydrogen fusion. When sun-like stars run out of hydrogen to burn, they burn helium, and when they run out of helium, they cool down and become white dwarfs. Unable to generate the temperatures to burn heavier elements, the stars die. But for the pair of white dwarfs in the Joo5311 nebula, there is life after death. "We assume that two white dwarfs formed there in close proximity many billions of years ago," Norbert Langer, a professor at the Argelander Institute for Astronomy at the University of Bonn in Germany, said in a news release. "They circled around each other, creating exotic distortions of space-time, called gravitational waves.'

Eventually, the stars lost energy and their orbits inched closer and closer together. Finally, the pair merged. Miraculously, their merger gave the joined stars enough mass to burn heavier elements, granting the stellar object new life.

'Such an event is extremely rare," said Götz Gräfener, researcher at the Argelander Institute for Astronomy. "There are probably not even half a dozen such objects in the Milky Way, and we have discovered one of them." Simulations showed the strong stellar winds measured around the unusual star can be explained by the object's fusion and rotating magnetic field. But as the white dwarfs that formed it once died, so too will the new object.

As it runs out of material, it will collapse under the weight of its tremendous mass and strong gravitational pull, and the star's final death will be marked by a large supernova explosion, researchers say.

Tehran exhibit hosts retrospective of veteran locksmith

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Tens of traditional-looking e s k locks by Hossein Shams were exhibited at the headquarters of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization in Tehran as a retrospective of the 71-year-old Iranian locksmith.

Works by Shams, who has 62 years of experience in this field, have been put on show at 52 national or international exhibitions, CHTN reported on Tuesday.

He was trained under master locksmiths in Tehran and Alborz provinces since the age of nine, the report said



The exhibit opened to the public on May 18 and came to an end on May 22

According to Encyclopedia Iranica, locks have been made in Iran since at least the second millennium BC. The most ancient lock, dating to the 13th century BC, was excavated at the UNE-

SCO-registered ziggurat of Tchogha Zanbil in southwest Iran. Throughout the Islamic period in Iran, locks were made in all shapes and sizes. In the first centuries after the introduction of Islam (7th-9th centuries.) in Iran, locks followed the same style as those of the Sasanians.

From the 10th century onward, however, lock making went through major changes; figural locks in the form of animals and birds became popular. Nearly all animals, such as the horse, lion, goat, ram, camel, rabbit, and water buffalo, as well as fish and all kinds of birds, were fashioned in locks, which were most often made of bronze and brass

Until not long ago, every Iranian bazaar had a section dedicated to locksmiths (locally known as bazaar-e qoflsaz-ha), but the importation of machine-made locks from the West drove the locksmiths out of competition.

Venezuela to ditch Visa & Mastercard by early 2020

The central bank of Venezuela will develop an independent national payment system to get rid of international giants Visa and Mastercard in response to U.S. sanctions, according to local media citing the regulator.

The document, which also separately mentions multi-national debit card service Maestro owned by Mastercard, orders a suspension of debit card operations starting November 2019 and payments via credit cards from January 2020.

The joint order was reportedly issued on May 16 by the central bank and Superintendency of the Institutions of the Banking Sector of Venezuela (SUDEBAN), responsible for ensuring the country's banks comply with local regulations. It instructs the banks to create a "sovereign" system to process financial operations that will use clients' biometric data.

The central bank denied the reports, saying that it has no intention of getting rid of the international payment systems, but wants to launch an additional and alternative platform.

ROUND THE GLOBE

Historic center of Mexico City and Xochimilco

Mexico City is now one of the world's largest and most densely populated cities. It was built in the 16th century by the Spanish on the ruins of Tenochtitlan, the old Aztec capital.

Mexico City has five Aztec temples, the ruins of which have been identified, a cathedral (the largest on the continent) and some fine 19th- and 20th-century public buildings such as the Palacio de las Bellas Artes. Xochimilco lies 28 km south of Mexico City.



With its network of canals and artificial islands, it testifies to the efforts of the Aztec people to build a habitat in the midst of an unfavorable environment. Its characteristic urban and rural structures, built since the 16th century and during the colonial period; have been preserved in an exceptional manner.

The monuments, groups of buildings or sites located at the heart of the contemporary urban agglomeration amply illustrate the origins and growth of this city that has dominated the region for many centuries.

The capital of New Spain, characterized by its chequerboard layout, the regular spacing of its plazas and streets, and the splendor of its religious architecture is a prime example of Spanish settlements in the New World. The monuments, groups of buildings or sites located at the heart of the contemporary urban agglomeration amply illustrate the origins and growth of this city that has dominated the region for many centuries. (Source: UNESCO)

Remnants of Egyptian fortress once conquered by Achaemenid Persians discovered

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Archaeologists in Egypt have found vestiges of a prehistorical fortress, which was once conquered by Achaemenid Persians during their expedition to the country, IRNA reported on Tuesday.
The mud-brick stronghold dates back to

the 26th Dynasty, the last dynasty in which native Egyptians ruled before the Persians conquered the country in 525 BC, according to the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities, Live Science reported.

The ruined fortress, that comprises northeastern and southeastern towers, is located at the Tell El-Kedwa site in North Sinai.

"Whoever held the fort faced a formidable enemy, as the walls showed evidence of a severe attack, the archaeologists noted,' Hisham Hussein, director general of North Sinai Antiquities, said in the statement.

In addition, the archaeologists revealed the presence of an ancient entrance to the fortress, in the form of a side gate on the northeastern side of the wall, Hussein said.

"Just to the right of this entrance are the remains of the room that may have been occupied by guards who monitored the gate.'

The excavation also uncovered an almost 280-foot-long (85 m) wall on the fortress's southern side and the remains of houses within the western part of the fortress. One of these houses had an amulet with the name of King Psamtik I, who kicked out the Assyrians from Egypt and reunited the



The ruins of the eastern gate of a newly-discovered fortress in Egypt.

country when he founded the 26th Dynasty. He died in 610 B.C.

Based on this amulet, "initial studies suggest that the fortress most probably dates back to the first half of the 26th Dynasty, specifically the era of King Psamtik I," Hussein told the Egyptian news outlet Ahram Online.

In 2008, archaeologists excavated eastern walls of the military citadel, but

the fortress is so large, it took until now to

unearth more of its remains, the report said. Archaeologists have also found the ruins of a younger military outpost that was built on top of the old one.

The original fortress "is considered one of the oldest fortresses to be discovered" in the country, Ahram Online quoted Moustafa Waziri, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities in Egypt, as saying.

The walls of the older fortress are incredibly thick, measuring nearly 23 feet (7 meters) in width, the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities reported in a statement. It also has four towers. In contrast, newer fortresses built in the following centuries were even more protected, with walls that are 36 feet (11 m) wide and include a total of 16 towers.

Curiously, the old citadel also has chambers full of sand, broken pottery and debris, which might have helped to support its heavy walls, Nadia Khadr, head of the Central Department of Lower Egypt Antiquities, said in the statement.

On the death of Cyrus the Great, the Achaemenid Empire passed to his son, Cambyses II (reigned 529-522 BC), that according to Encyclopedia Britannica, there may have been some degree of unrest throughout the empire at the time of Cyrus's death, for Cambyses apparently felt it necessary to secretly kill his brother. Bardiya (Smerdis), in order to protect his rear while leading the campaign against Egypt in 525.

The pharaoh Ahmose II of the 26th dynasty sought to shore up his defenses by hiring Greek mercenaries but was betrayed by the Greeks. Cambyses successfully managed to cross the hostile Sinai Desert, traditionally Egypt's first and strongest line of defense, and brought the Egyptians under Psamtik III, son, and successor of Ahmose,

Middle East leads global tourism arrivals growth in Q1

TEHRAN — The Middle East tops ind e s k ternational arrivals over the first quarter of 2019, with an eight percent growth year on year, according to the latest issue of the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer from the World Tourism Organization.

The Middle East (+8%) and Asia and the Pacific (+6%) experienced the highest increase in international arrivals. Numbers in both Europe and Africa were up by 4%, and in the Americas, growth was recorded at 3%, unwto.org reported on Tuesday.

Though at a slower rate when compared with the last two years, the 4% increase registered in early 2019 is a very positive sign.

"International tourism continues to perform strongly worldwide fueled by a positive economy, increased air capacity and visa facilitation", UNWTO Secretary-General, Zurab Pololikashvili said.

 $\hbox{``Growth in arrivals is easing slightly after two years of}\\$ exceptional results, but the sector continues to outpace the global rate of economic growth.

Europe, the world's largest tourism region, reported solid growth (+4%), led by destinations in Southern and



Tourist guide and international travelers pose for a photo during their visit to Sarv-e Abarkuh ("Cypress of Abarkuh"), which is estimated to date 4,500 years, in Yazd province, Iran.

Mediterranean Europe and Central and Eastern Europe

Growth in Africa was driven by the ongoing recovery in North Africa (+11%). In the Americas, the Caribbean

(+17%) rebounded strongly after weak results in 2018, following the impact of hurricanes Irma and Maria in

In Asia and the Pacific, results for the first three months showed a 6% increase led by North-East Asia (+9%) and a very solid performance from the Chinese market.

"With this growth comes greater responsibility for translating it into better jobs and better lives", Mr. Pololikashvili stressed.

We need to continue investing in innovation, digital transformation and education so that we can harness the many benefits tourism can bring while at the same time mitigating its impact on the environment and society with better management of tourism flows.

UNWTO forecasts growth of 3% to 4% in international tourist arrivals in 2019.

Iran hosted some 7.8 million foreign nationals over the past Iranian calendar year 1397 (ended March 20), which shows a 52.5 percent increase year on year. International travelers spent some \$11.8 billion in the Islamic Republic during the year, according to data compiled by the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization.

The perks of booking your next trip through a travel advisor

Who says travel agents are obsolete?

At a time when travel booking sites and apps are a dime a dozen, and travelers can plan an entire trip without speaking to a real person, travel professionals are actually in high demand.

Just don't call them agents -- today, the industry title for these planning professional is advisors. And the stance on this is official: The American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) was called the American Society of Travel Agents until it changed its name last year.

"Travel agents have become trusted advisors, akin to financial advisors, who make the overall travel experience better and get travelers maximum value for their travel dollar," says the organization's spokeswoman, Erika Richter. "That's why we rebranded ourselves."

As travelers discover the incomparable benefit of working with a professional, business for three of the biggest travel advisor networks is booming.

Henry Harteveldt, a travel industry analyst and the founder of Atmosphere Research Group, confirms travel advisors are alive and well. Harteveldt's job involves looking at the role of online travel bookings and understanding how travelers are making travel arrangements.

Unlike the past when advisors traditionally worked out of a brick-and-mortar strorefront and had mostly local clients, today's advisors are more likely to work virtually and have clients all over the world.

Perks, please

Harteveldt believes there are many perks to using a travel advisor. For one, while there's no denying that online booking sites often offer unbeatable deals, travel advisors can typically find great deals, too.

Plus, they'll leverage their relationships with hotels and cruise lines to arrange for amenities that you can't get if you book on your own.

A real-life example of this: A search of online travel sites for a three-night refundable stay this October at Le Royal Monceau, in Paris, one of the city's most luxurious hotels, turned up an average price of \$930 a night without any additional amenities such as breakfast.

Now, a la carte breakfast at the hotel can easily run more than \$100 for two people. Times that by number of days of your vacation, and that's a lot of money on coffee



At the Alohilani Resort in Waikiki, for example, guests receive breakfast, early check-in and late checkout by booking through Travel Leaders Network. and croissants.

Skylark, a luxury travel advisory part of the Virtuoso network, was able to get a nightly rate of \$832 at the hotel for the same dates.

But that's not all: Travelers who booked their stay through Skylark would receive a guaranteed room upgrade at the time of booking, daily breakfast, a sizable welcome amenity such as a bottle of champagne, \$100 food and beverage credit and a late 4 p.m. check-out.

Skylark's CEO and co-founder, Paul Tumpowsky, estimates about \$400 worth of freebies in this booking.

Help on the way

The other big advantage of using an advisor, according to Harteveldt, is that they have your back if anything goes wrong during

Imagine you're in London on vacation, and just as you're getting ready to go to the airport to head back home after a fantastic few days, you get word that your nonstop flight has been canceled.

There's a mechanical issue with the plane. and you've been instructed to call the airline to rebook your return. You could spend hours dealing with the hassle, or you could simply enjoy a leisurely afternoon tea in London while your advisor handles the situation behind the scenes.

Or, how about this travel nightmare? You check into your hotel only to find out that it's in the middle of a renovation. It's covered in

scaffolding, and the spa that you were looking forward to using is temporarily closed. The gym is out of service too, and in its

place, the concierge apologetically offers you se of another space nowhere near the hotel. This is not the hotel you were looking for. Fortunately, you planned ahead -- with a

travel advisor, and subsequently, you aren't stuck in this hotel. In the unlikely instance that your advisor didn't know about the construction issues, they'd negotiate a refund on your behalf and

book you into another property that meets your expectations. The more likely scenario though is that you'd never have been booked there in the

first place. The hotel you check into welcomes you with open arms and a full tour of its fully

functional facilities. Time is money

Advisors are especially useful for people who are too time-pressed to plan their own vacations or for people who simply don't enjoy the research part of travel. That's not to say that working with an advisor discounts your preferences.

Virtuoso's CEO, Matthew Upchurch, says the modern generation of advisors has a collaborative relationship with their clients. 'Creating that perfect trip involves a backand-forth discussion with clients about what they want and don't," he says. "Advisors do the work to make it happen and share their expertise to make your getaway as seamless and memorable as possible.'

So, when exactly should you use an advisor, and when should you DIY it?

It's hardly surprising that both Harteveldt and Upchurch say that the former is a better bet, no matter how uncomplicated the trip, but a closer look at what the top networks are offering may convince you to change your approach to travel.

Plus, says Upchurch: "You almost always get more for your money when you use an advisor.

Below is a breakdown of Virtuoso. Signature Travel Network and Travel Leaders Network.

All three work in conjunction with hotel loyalty programs. So, for example, travelers who are part of a program such as Marriott's Bonvoy and who want to stay at a Marriott property will reap all the benefits of Bonvov in addition to the benefits they'll get through

their advisor. Virtuoso

The cost: There is no membership fee, but some advisors may charge a trip planning fee that ranges between \$50 and \$1,500 or more, depending on the advisor's experience, connections and the complexity of the itinerary. Many advisors don't charge for simple requests such as hotel bookings, however, if you're just looking to save some time on the legwork.

Number of advisors: 20,000 globally

Best For: Luxury seeking travelers who love VIP service and want and have the budget to pay for insider experiences such as an after-hours visit to the Sistine Chapel or a backstage meet-and-greet with the performers of the hottest Broadway show.

Hotel program and perks: The network has more than 1,300 hotels in 100 countries. 598 of these such as Four Seasons George V and the Café Royal London are exclusive to Virtuoso.

Travelers who book a stay at any Virtuoso-network hotel receive more than \$500 of benefits per property including breakfast, \$100 hotel or food and drinks credit, a room upgrade (depending on availability), and early check-in and late check-out preference subject to availability. They also receive an additional \$100 benefit that varies by property such as a cooking class or massage.

(Source: CNN)

ICT Ministry inaugurates projects worth \$43 million

TECHNOLOGY de S k TEHRAN – Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Minister Seyyed Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi inaugurated four projects valued at 1.840 trillion rials (about \$43 million) in northwestern West Azarbaijan province on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

In the month of Shahrivar last year (August 21-September 21, 2018), about 200 kilometers of the roads did not have telecommunication coverage, which had faced rescue and relief services on roads with difficulty, Azari Jahromi

The ministry has upgraded 1200 telecommunications towers by equipping 200 towers with 3G and 4G internet and 1000 towers with 2G internet, he explained.

To date, 70 percent of the 200km roads have come under the coverage of internet, he noted.

Prior to the inauguration ceremony, President Hassan Rouhani said that Iran needs information and communication technology in order to boost telecommunication and job creation, and introduce its tourism potentials and handicrafts.

"According to statistics, 20 villages have been linked with the National Information Network



over the past two years, which is very notable." Earlier this week, Jahromi announced that over 7,200 villages are linked with

the National Information Network across the country with a total budget of 4 trillion rials (about \$95 million), aimed to provide

infrastructures for ICT development and access of all people to basic services of ICT.

Up to now, 80 percent of rural areas are under ICT coverage. The plan is composed of four electronic services including banking, medical, educational and agricultural systems, which would be available in villages with more than 20 families.

The projects cut the digital gap between rural and urban areas to half, he said.

During the Iranian calendar year of 1396 (March 2017-March 2018) the urban data usage was 5.9 gigabytes, while the number was 600 megabytes in rural areas, however the figure has reached 2.9 gigabytes in villages, he explained

The first phase of e-government services project in Iran officially came on stream under the title of 'Mobile Government' in mid-May 2018.

The project aims to facilitate some government services, reduce unnecessary expenses and ease traffic jam, which is the main cause of air pollution in big cities.

It is based on the National Information Network, an ongoing project to develop a secure and stable infrastructure network in the country.

First startup weekend on senior care to be held

1 -> The population of senior citizens currently exceeds 8 million in Iran and the annual growth rate of the country's aging population is about 3.8 percent.

According to the World Health Organization between 2015 and 2050, the proportion of the world's population over 60 years will nearly double from 12 to 22 percent. By 2020, the number of people aged 60 years and older

will outnumber children younger than 5 years old.

The pace of population ageing is much faster than

in the past. In 2050, 80% of older people will be living in low- and middle-income countries.

All countries face major challenges to ensure that their health and social systems are ready to make the most of this demographic shift.



Can connected technology ever become more ethical?

Thanks to advances on mobile connectivity, we are now able to connect to most devices through our mobile phones. Moving forwards, the opportunities to expand beyond simple connections to mobile phones will be what drives connectivity. With Internet of Things (IoT) technology and the inevitable introduction of 5G, the pace of technology is rapidly developing and we must begin planning for this future.

Technology has the potential to enable a standard of living in ways previously unthought-of. By using self-driving vehicles as a case study, we can begin to understand how businesses can work towards having a more ethical future with connected technology and the introduction of 5G.

Businesses continually reevaluate their strategies and must work to adapt to new technologies as our world becomes more connected. When we reflect on the devices we use, what we currently have are basic, device-to-device connections. In the years to come, everything is going to be connected - with the implementation of 5G, our connections will be multiplied. Individual's day-to-day lives are linked with apps which sync to their home devices, but across sectors such as manufacturing, and healthcare, organizations will also become more connected.

When the Internet was first designed, nobody was able to predict the vast quantities of data that would be created and the potential business uses this data could provide. We have been retro-fitting security and regulation ever since. Now we are in a position to better predict the future of technological development. Most IoT technologies are now being designed with data in mind, resulting in better design and implementation. There-



fore, we can now build connected devices with the user in mind.

The connected technology which is discussed most often in regards to ethics is self-driving vehicles. This year business leaders and governments are all calling for a responsible approach to self-driving cars. It seems making sure connected technology is handled ethically is already on the top of the agenda in this sector, yet much can be done to make the standards consistent globally.

Since self-driving cars are undergoing strenuous testing with intense media scrutiny, the global community has made a commitment to creating a process of advanced trials which not only strengthens the guidelines on trial safety for all manufacturers to follow but also ensures transparency so that the public is aware of the standards being met. These kind of standards should go beyond self-driving vehicles and permeate the ethical guidelines of connected technology.

Governments across the globe must work together to agree and set standards so that the technology industry can move in one agreed direction that also protects individual data privacy as much as it makes the technology safe. Technology is not a barrier and as with all digital technologies, self-driving cars will improve our lives in ways we were not previously able to comprehend.

The potential benefits in terms of personal safety, environmental impact, and more efficient transportation systems are worth the considerable investment and we should look at the challenges not as hurdles, but as opportunities to drive some of the most innovative ideas the industry has ever seen.

In recent years, connectivity has improved dramatically. According to the National Infrastructure Commission, "5G means seamless connectivity. Ultra-fast and ultra-reliable, transmitting massive amounts of data at super low latency. It will support the ever increasing

requirements of the existing network and new applications as unknowable today as the 4G services we take for granted would have been a decade ago." To put the UK at the forefront of this emerging technology will be critical for the growth of the economy.

will be critical for the growth of the economy.

To build this 5G future with the user in mind, we also must consider how to protect users. The debate is no longer about an individual versus the great community; it is about equal protection for all in the connected world we live in. The cumulative use of technologies such as big data, 5G, artificial intelligence and machine learning can facilitate more reliable, evidence-based and precise findings or decisions, often more rapidly and efficiently.

Securing connected technologies

The market has driven many advances since the creation of connected technology. Now Governments must play a role in securing these technologies. From healthcare innovations to face recognition software, new technologies require us learn them, adapt them into businesses and demand measures are put in place to make sure they are developed and utilised ethically.

It is time for technology companies to rethink their strategies while adapting to the increasing levels of complex regulation globally. Technology firms must acclimate to regulatory expectations as they offer protection to society and social issues. Technology has opened, and will continue to open, the realm of possibilities for businesses. It affects the environment, people and the society as a whole. The way we choose to regulate technology will ultimately exemplify its positive force in our world.

(Source: techradar.com)

How technology can help us achieve universal healthcare

This week, the World Health Assembly (WHA) is convening in Geneva to address the implementation of the health-related goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a particular focus on how to make universal health coverage (UHC) a reality.

Earlier this year, the World Health Organization (WHO) published its draft Global Strategy on Digital Health, which puts digital health initiatives and greater use of technology and health information systems at the heart of achieving affordable and universal access to care. While the WHA's focus is, understandably, on the role of the public sector, no government body, NGO or company alone can solve the myriad challenges that stand in the way of achieving universal health coverage. Achieving UHC by 2030 will only be possible if we create a collaborative ecosystem that makes the private sector and governments a major part of the digital transformation.

In the health tech sector, I see a powerful combination of data and technology innovations becoming available that can enable a value-based healthcare revolution. Governments can now confidently accelerate the deployment of connectivity and technology to deliver real impact and scale in their health systems.

Ongoing digitalization and the introduc-

tion of new technologies, like telehealth, are already breaking down boundaries and creating patient-centric healthcare systems. This trend will explode in 2019 and beyond, as the benefits of shifting tasks to less intensive care settings or even at home become increasingly recognised, and the healthcare expectations of digital consumers change.

Telehealth and AI: innovation is bringing patients closer to care

In mature countries, the shift to telehealth is helping eliminate waiting times and reducing transportation costs, but it is also playing an essential role in improving access to care for patients in emerging countries and rural locations (communities in rural locations are half as likely to have access to care as their urban counterparts).

Another area of exciting innovation with great scope for facilitating the delivery of universal health coverage is artificial intelligence (AI). AI is changing the way we treat patients by providing personalised treatment plans and has great potential to improve patient outcomes and the efficiency of care delivery. But the true value of AI can only be unlocked by combining it with knowledge of the clinical and operational context in which it is used - a people-centered

approach that we call 'adaptive intelligence'.

Combined with robotics and automation

Combined with robotics and automation, these technologies will ultimately help doctors spend more time with their patients. To enable this, however, there needs to be investment in upskilling healthcare professionals to adapt to new technologies and discoveries, and a change in the way we train medical students. The WHO estimates that by 2035 there will be a global deficit of about 12.9 million skilled health professionals - that is, midwives, nurses and physicians. Some countries don't even have their own medical schools with which to train healthcare professionals, so there is a real need for these technologies to bridge the gap.

Many of today's doctors, and certainly the next generation of medical practitioners, will be working in the hospitals of the future. These hospitals will be built largely around technology, with AI, telehealth and connected care being the norm, and advanced computers and algorithms taking over administrative and routine tasks - improving both the quality and affordability of care

While the technology and connectivity challenges of this vision are significant, it is important that we do not lose sight of the fact that the patient is the most important aspect of

the delivery of care. To get to a value-based care system centered around the patient, we need to measure our progress against what we at Philips call the 'quadruple aim': supporting a healthy lifestyle and enhancing the patient experience, improving health outcomes, lowering healthcare costs and improving the working life of healthcare providers.

Digitalization can only deliver results through innovative partnerships that bring together organizations to serve a common purpose. That is why we have partnered with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to improve the health and well-being of 50 million women and girls in countries where health challenges are greatest.

Through the partnership, we will develop and scale high-quality healthcare solutions – driven by cutting-edge technologies and supported by innovative financing – to serve the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities. This starts with a pilot in Congo-Brazzaville, where we are working together with the UN-FPA to ensure that women from the poorest communities have a stronger chance of experiencing healthy pregnancies and safe deliveries, getting the care both they and their newborns need at every step.

(Source: weforum.org)

Nanotechnology sector ready lend a hand to sports

TECHNOLOGY

d e s k has the potential to meet demands of sports organizations and help them deal with challenges, IRNA reported on Monday

If the Ministry of Sports and Youth announce demands or challenges in different fields of sports, the Nanotechnology Innovation Council can meet their demands, the secretary of the council, Saeid Sarkar, said.

"We expect Iranian sportsmen and federations to introduce Iranian nano products in international events in order to expand market [for Iranian products] in other countries," he said.



For example if an Iranian sportsman introduces an Iranian-made light wheelchair, its effect will be much more durable on the minds of the audience, he said.

In February, the Nanotechnology Innovation Council announced

In February, the Nanotechnology Innovation Council announced that Iranian knowledge-based companies manufacture 12 to 15 new nano products per month.

According to a report released in January 2019 by the Stat-Nano, a comprehensive statistical database portal, Iran ranks first in 2018 in terms of local share of nano-articles, which is the ratio of the nano-articles carried in a country to the total articles of that country.

In November 2018, the Nanotechnology Innovation Council announced that it is predicted that 30 billion rials (about \$175 million) of nanotechnology products will be sold by the end of the current Iranian calendar year 1397 (March 20, 2019).

There are 194 companies active in the field of nanotechnology in 2018 out of which, 60 percent were initiated as nanotechnology companies and the rest changed or developed as such companies.

Digital economy development park to be established in Arak

TECHNOLOGY
d e s k
park will be established in Arak, the capital of
Markazi Province, in the near future, the head of the provincial
office of Information and Communication Technology (ICT),
Ladan Mahdavi, announced, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

More than 50 startups are currently active in the field of ICT in the province, which have obtained low-interest loans from ICT Ministry, he said.

In February, a digital economy development park was inaugurated in the city of Mashhad and a digital economy development park with a capacity for 150 knowledge-based companies was established in district 22 of Tehran.

The parks are like science and technology parks and benefit from capital venture.



Digital economy refers to an economy that is based on digital computing technologies, although we increasingly perceive this as conducting business through markets based on the internet and the World Wide Web. The digital economy is also sometimes called the Internet Economy, New Economy, or Web Economy.

Bringing tech efficiencies to the agribusiness market, Silo harvests \$3 million

Roughly \$165 billion worth of wholesale produce is bought and sold every year in the U.S. And while that number is expected to go up to \$1 trillion by 2025, the business of agribusiness remains unaffected by technology advancements that have reshaped almost every other industry.

Now Silo, a company that recently raised \$3 million from investors led by Garry Tan and Alexis Ohanian's Initialized Capital and including Semil Shah from Haystack Ventures, angel investors Kevin Mahaffey and Matt Brezina and The Penny Newman Grain Company, an international grain and feed marketplace, is looking to change that.

Silo's chief executive, Ashton Braun, spent years working in commodities marketplaces as a coffee trader in Singapore and moved to California after business school. As part of the founding team at Kite with Adam Smith, Braun worked on getting off the ground Kite's software to automate computer programming, but he'd never let go of creating a tool that could help farmers and buyers better communicate and respond to demand signals, Braun says.

"I was a super young, green, bright-eyed potential entrepreneur," says Braun. Eventually, Braun took the opportunity to develop the software that had been on his mind for four-and-a-half years.*

He'd seen the technology work in another industry closer to home. Growing up in Boston, Braun had seen how technology was used to update the fishing industry, giving ships a knowledge of potential buyers of their catch while they were still out in ocean waters.

"When you're moving a product that's worth tens of thousands of dollars and has a shelf life of a few days there's literally no room for error and there's a lot you need to do," says Braun. It's a principle that applies not only to seafood but to the hundreds of millions of dollars of produce and meat that comes from farms in places like California. "What we want to do is we want communication and data to live in the right places at the right time."

Braun says there's limited data coming in to farmers to let them know what demand for certain produce looks like, so they're making guesses that have real financial outcomes with very little data.

(Source: techcrunch.com)

Iran, Indonesia ink MOU to enhance health co-op

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iranian Health Minister Saeid d<u>e</u> s k Namaki and his Indonesian counterpart Nila Moeloek have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to expand cooperation in the health sector, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

The two officials met on the sidelines of the 72nd World Health Assembly being held from May 20 to 28 in Geneva, Switzerland.



Annually held in Geneva, the World Health Assembly is the decision-making body of World Health Organization (WHO). The main functions of the World Health Assembly are to determine the policies of the Organization, appoint the Director-General, supervise financial policies, review and approve the proposed

As per the MOU, the two countries will enhance cooperation in the fields of medical education and training, research and development, health services, medical emergencies and crisis management, joint production of pharmaceuticals and medical equipment, and prevention of contagious diseases.

Under the agreement, the two sides will cooperate on Primary Health Care, which is an essential health care based on methods and technology made universally accessible to individuals, families, and communities.

The two-day Global Conference on Primary Health Care was organized by WHO and UNICEF in Kazakhstan in October 2018. Health ministers from 194 countries took part in the event.

Philanthropists support 28,000 orphans, deprived children

SOCIETY TEHRAN—Iranian benefactors have made d e s k cash and kind contributions from the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan (starting on May 6) to help 28,000



children who are either orphaned or whose parents are financially struggling, deputy director of Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation has announced.

There are currently 600,000 philanthropists who support orphaned children as well as children living in families in financial distress, IRNA quoted Alireza Asgarian as saying on Wednesday.

The foundation also intends to build housing units for families who cannot afford to rent houses, he added.

Last year, benefactors have allotted contributions in-kind or cash amounting to 7 trillion rials (about \$166 million) to these children, he highlighted.

He further called on the donors to join hands and support 200,000 of such children.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Race riots in Spain

(February 10, 2000)

Anti-immigrant protests continued in the south-eastern Spanish region of Almeria. The immigrants, mostly from North Africa, called on the Spanish authorities to protect them. BBC correspondent Daniel Schweimler reported.

Great black clouds of smoke wafted over the south-eastern Spanish region of Almeria as a plastic recycling factory, set alight by anti-immigrant protestors burnt to the ground. Elsewhere in and around the town of El Ejido there have been clashes as riot police tried to clear roads blocked by the demonstrators. The local immigrant community has meanwhile asked the Spanish authorities for protection, after two days and nights of rioting which have seen their property **ransacked** and their cars overturned. The violence **erupted** on Sunday following the funeral of a twenty-six year old local woman who was killed the previous day, allegedly by a Moroccan immigrant. Some of those at the funeral attacked local politicians, who had to seek refuge in the church, then **directed** their anger at the immigrants, who many local people **blame** for a recent increase in crime in the region.» [Police have made a few arrests and there are signs that some of the violence has been organized by people from outside the area Words

wafted: moved gently through the air

plastic recycling factory: a factory in which objects made of plastic are recycled. If you recycle things that have been used you process them so they can be used again

set alight: to cause something to burn: if something is alight, it is burning. Note that "set" is used as the present, past and past participle of the verb "to set"

anti-immigrant protestors: people who are protesting against the presence of immigrants. An immigrant is a person who has come to live in a country from another country

clashes: when people clash, they argue or fight with each other ransacked: if you ransack a building you disturb everything in it, leaving it in a mess

erupted: if fighting erupts, it starts suddenly, or suddenly gets worse **allegedly:** if you allege that something is true, you say it but do not prove it

directed: they turned and aimed their anger

blame: people think the immigrants are responsible for the fact that there are more crimes

(Source: BBC)

All the buzz about bees

Reversing bees' population decline

Increasing awareness, from childhood, would help in reversing the population decline of the precious pollinators, she said.

'These creatures are working very hard that we are having food on our tables, so that every single one of us have to protect the environment and be very sensitive regarding the pollution to think about how we are using pesticides for extensive agriculture.

'These things all matter and this is something I'm proud on the politics we have in this area in the European Union. We have very high standards we are cancelling one after another pesticides use and also regarding the labeling the origin of the mixed honeys and I think we are on the right track.

"May 20 is now reserved for thinking about the importance of bees. So I'm very honored that what I can do on behalf of Slovenia as a bee keeper and for our children of course," she added.

"In order to make economic developments sometimes we forget what we are doing on the way to achieve bigger economic success,' she highlighted.

"Sometimes we should think about what we are doing on that road. What we are destroying because of what we are gaining.

"I believe Slovenia as a two-million-nation European country is on a good track and I'm very optimistic about our action plan till 2020.

How is setting a date for bees going to help?

"This is empowering beekeepers. On World Bee Day I had a meeting with beekeepers at the Ministry Of Agriculture as every May 20 now they have an annual meeting.

"They are discussing about their problems and if you have a day on calendar it means that you are important. At least on May 20 the politicians are listening, and the governmental institutions are listening and this is something that you have to grab and use for your benefits. I thought about that when I was sitting together with Iranian beekeepers they discussed about bee diseases and about their problems and challenges after the horrible floods in the country. So many bee hives are destroyed so many bee families are destroyed so this is a challenge Iranian beekeepers are facing.

■The path to public Awareness She went on to say that in order to increase

public awareness about bees "we introduce Slovenian tradition on honey breakfast. It's a tradition in Slovenia in the past and we are going to introduce it in our kindergartens and primary schools. The breakfast is a piece



Bees are nearly responsible for one third of the food we eat, hence they are very much vital to mankind. However, despite their importance bees and other pollinators, such as butterflies, bats and hummingbirds, are increasingly under threat and in decline.

of a bread, apple, honey and butter and lots of milk. And this is what we do around May 20, and also in September and October.

"So raining public awareness depends on how active we are. Even our prime minister is going to participate in the tradition in one primary school and other ministers are going to join such events.

T did it last year and I also intend to do this year having honey breakfast in the park. I also did it in one of the schools here in Tehran with the association of beekeepers and I discovered that Iranian children already know very exactly what the breakfast is and they are already eating breakfast so in this country the awareness of the children I think is very high.

"Also you have a lot of beekeepers. I found theses villages which depend on beekeeping as a job and source of income and philosophy of life.

"In Slovenia it's so important because in today life it is easy to forget about having breakfast, honey breakfast is healthy. It's important and you are thinking about honey bees with your children every single morning.

"And we published a book for children and we translated it into English, Persian. and Slovenian. It includes fairy tale stories about the bees and the title is "the most important job in the world" which is about the job of the bees. The children adores this and I'm reading that to children when I'm going to the kindergartens. And this is very simple, people to people discussion.'

Status of bees in Slovenia

Published on World Bee Day, the 'Bees Under Siege' report by WWF and Buglife has found that many species of bee are on the brink of extinction in parts of the UK and some types have been lost entirely, Independent reported. Climate change, habitat loss, pollution and disease are threatening the pollinators, the analysis of 228 species concluded.

Inquired about the status of bees

ambassador explained that "we are very proud we have our own Carniolan honey bee, which is very prominent bee queen. So we are always concerned about the illness of the bees and diseases which are coming and going, climate change, weather conditions, improper dealing with honey or ... which are very unfortunate and sometimes these diseases are unstoppable.

"When you are working with the bees it is very sad when something happens to them like what happened in the UK," she

But together the scientists are working very hard trying to find ways to cure the illnesses affecting the bees.

Cooperation between Iran and Slovenia

"For the second year now together with Iran we are raising awareness about the importance of the bees. I found my partners among the beekeepers in Karaj institute of agriculture and Ministry of Agriculture. We are planning to have workshops here in Tehran. Experts from Slovenia are coming as well as Iranian beekeepers will join together to attend the workshops.

'Iranian beekeepers are very interested in learning about bee diseases. Šlovenia has a very special technique how to do beekeeping. In Slovenia we opened international beekeeping academy which is the only one in the world. So I already encouraged one group to attend the courses in Slovenia. There are different kinds of courses depending on how professional you are in beekeeping. So this is one step at a time.

"We also intend to import beekeeping products to Iran and Iran can also export honey to Slovenia. The two countries can also cooperate on importing and exporting equipment for beekeeping, exchange of science and setting up educational programs, apitherapy, and tourism for example setting up special programs for tourists who are interested in beekeeping.

The ambassador also highlighted that

vocational training and beekeeping workshops for Afghan refugee girls living in Iran, aged 16, are also being held at the

"Iran has been doing a great job for Afghan refugees for a long time so the least I can do is to empower women who need our assistance teaching them be ekeeping $\,$ so that they can produce their own honey and sell it, so that they will not be forced to marry due to financial problems," she

'Vast vegetation cover increases wildfire risk during summer'

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Given that heavy rainfall e s k saturated the country over the past few months, plant and vegetation cover has been expanded which seems to be vulnerable to temperature rise, so wildfire risk increases during this summer (starting on May 22), said Tehran's department of environment deputy director for technical affairs.

Considering temperature increase during the summer, vegetation and plants will dry which enhances the possibility of massive fires, while the direct and indirect involvement of humans is not negligible, Mehr quoted Mehrdad Katal-Mohseni as saying on Wednesday.

Most of the times, people camping in the nature leave a fire unattended or do not monitor the fire to fully extinguish, so winds blow hot combustibles around, which act as the adding that sometimes litter and waste left in the nature can contribute to the wildfires.

To prevent the probable losses, we held some meetings and discussed ways to extinguish the fires instantly using the available equipment and facilities, he highlighted, noting, requirements and shortages also have been assessed and



announced to responsible bodies in order to provide us the necessary facilities.

He further called on the people and environment enthusiasts who camp in nature to take safety precautions and manage the fire responsibly as well as not leaving the waste in the environment.

If a fire has gotten out of control, please call the emergency services immediately on 1540, he concluded. Qasem Sabz'ali, commander of the forest protection

unit of the Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization, said in April 2018 that some 15,000 hectares of forests burn in wildfires annually in Iran that 95 percent of them are caused by humans, ISNA reported.

Forest wildfire brings heavy economic burden amounting to 560 million rials (about \$13,000) per hectare for the

According to Richards Tree Service website, a 10-year average of U.S. forest fires indicates that lightning-started fires burned 2.1 million acres, and human-started fires structive nature of human-started forest fires, they're still far too prevalent. Researchers say that there are almost 10 times more human-caused forest fires than lightning-caused forest fires. During a 10-year average, 88% of U.S. forest fires are human-caused, while the remaining 12% are lightning-caused.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Water level in Lake Urmia rises by 33cm

The level of water in Lake Urmia, northwestern Iran, has increased by 33 centimeters compared to the same time last year, head of the provincial department for the Lake Urmia restoration program in West Azarbaijan province has said. Currently, the volume of water of the lake is 1.920 billion cubic meters which experienced 250 million cubic meters increase compared to last year which was recorded at 1.250 bcm, ISNA quoted Farhad Sarkhosh as saying on Wednesday.

افزایش ۳۳ سانتی متری وسعت دریاچه ارومیه

مدیـر دفتـر اسـتانی سـتاد احیـای دریاچـه ارومیـه در آذربایجـان غربـی گفت: سطح آب دریاچه ارومیه نسبت به مدت مشابه سال گذشته ٣٣ سانتي متر افزايش داشته است.

فرهاد سرخوش روز چهارشنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایسنا گفت: حجــم آب فعلــی موجــود در دریاچــه ارومیــه یــک میلیــارد و ۹۲۰ میلیــون مترمکعـب اسـت. حجـم آب دریاچـه سـال گذشـته یـک میلیـارد و ۲۵۰ میلیـون متـر مکعـب بـود کـه نسـبت بـه سـال گذشـته ۶۷۰ میلیـون مترمكعب افزايش يافته است.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"eury-"

■ Meaning: wide

For example: The red fox is a *euryt*opic species widespread in the area.

PHRASAL VERB **Hammer something out**

Meaning: to decide on an agreement, contract etc.

after a lot of discussion and disagreement: For example: Leading oil producers tried to hammer out a deal

IDIOM

Bring up the rear

Explanation: someone who brings up the rear is the last person in a group of people who are walking or running For example: "The pupils walked calmly down the corridor, with the teacher bringing up the rear.'

Saudi Arabia to execute three prominent scholars after Ramadan

TEHRAN — Saudi officials are reportedly set to sentence three imprisoned dissident scholars to death and execute them shortly after the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan as a brutal crackdown led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman against Muslim preachers and intellectuals widens in the kingdom.

The London-based online news outlet Middle East Eye, citing two unnamed Saudi government sources, reported on Tuesday that the three men are Sheikh Salman al-Ouda, Sheikh Awad al-Qarni and Ali al-Omari.

Oud a is the assistant secretary-general of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, which the Riyadh regime has listed as a terrorist organization.

Saudi authorities detained the prominent cleric on September 7, 2017, and have held him in solitary confinement without charge or trial ever since. The officials have imposed travel bans on members of his family as well.

A family member has told Human Rights Watch that the distinguished cleric was being held over his refusal to comply with an order by Saudi authorities to tweet a specific text to support the

TEHRAN — Venezuelan President Nicolas

Maduro has ordered the country's armed

forces to "capture traitors" within their ranks.

"If a traitor emerges, capture him

mmediately, it's an order: capture him

immediately!" Maduro told army person-

nel at a military rally called the "March of

Loyalty" in the northern state of Carabobo.

sonnel to be vigilant against enemy threats

and to "activate" the "weapons systems...

to make any adventure impossible for im-

perialism," Press TV reported.

The president called on military per-

traitors'

Maduro urges military to 'capture



Saudi-led blockade of Qatar.

Ouda, instead, posted a tweet, saying, "May God harmonize between their hearts for the good of their people," - an apparent call for reconciliation between the Persian Gulf littoral states.

Awda has been prevented from communicating with the outside world since

The trio is currently awaiting trial at the Special Criminal Court in the capital Riyadh. A hearing was set for May 1, but was

once the death sentence has been passed,'

A second source, requesting not to be named, said the beheading of 37 Saudi nationals in a single day on April 23 was used as a trial balloon to see how strong the international condemnation was.

"When they found out there was very little international reaction, particularly at the level of governments and heads of state, they decided to proceed with their plan to execute figures who were promi-

Saudi Arabia has stepped up politically-motivated arrests, prosecution and conviction of peaceful dissident writers and human rights campaigners.

Saudi officials have also intensified crackdown in the country's Shia-populated Eastern Province.

According to Press TV, Eastern Province has been the scene of peaceful demonstrations since February 2011. Protesters have been demanding reforms, freedom of expression, the release of political prisoners, and an end to economic and religious discrimination against the oil-rich region.

The protests have been met with a heavy-handed crackdown by the regime, with regime forces increasing security

postponed without setting a further date. They will not wait to execute these men a source said on condition of anonymity. measures across the province.

The United States has several times threatened to take military action to oust Maduro's government since the deepening of a politico- economic crisis in the

country last year.

A small number of renegade soldiers led by opposition figure Juan Guaido staged an attempted coup d'état against Maduro's government last month. But the bid quickly failed, and many of the putschists have taken shelter at foreign embassies in Caracas. Others have been arrested or gone into hiding.

Netanyahu given October deadline for pre-trial hearing

TEHRAN — Israel's attorney general Wednesday extended until October the deadline for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's pre-trial hearing on corruption allegations, but rejected a request for a 12-month delay.

Netanyahu won a fifth term in office in a general election last month but now faces the prospect of becoming the first sitting Israeli premier to be indicted.

Last month, Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit set a July 10 deadline for the premier to exercise his right to a formal hearing to defend himself, before corruption charges are filed against him, AP reported.

In February, Mandelblit had announced his intention to indict Netanyahu on charges of fraud, breach of trust and bribery, following up on police recommendations.

A letter from Mandelblit's office to Netanyahu attorney Amit Hadad, made public Wednesday by the justice ministry, refers to Hadad's request to put back the hearing until May 14, 2020 so that he can fully examine police evidence passed to

'Terrorists plotting chemical attack in Syria's Idlib, Aleppo'

TEHRAN — The Russian Defense Ministry says foreign-sponsored Takfiri terrorist groups have stockpiled a $large\ number\ of\ chemical\ munitions\ in\ Syria's\ northwestern$ province of Idlib in preparation for a false-flag attack to implicate government troops and invent pretexts for possible foreign acts of aggression on the crisis-hit Arab country.

The ministry's Center for Syrian Reconciliation said in a statement released on Tuesday that the extremists have laced the weapons with nerve agents for this end.

"The militants plan to stage such provocations in the village of Jarjanaz, as well as in the town of Saraqib, where a group of children and adults — refugees from the southern provinces of Syria — have already been gathered. Similar preparations are underway in the west of Aleppo province", Maj. Gen. Viktor Kupchishin said at a daily briefing.

The center went on to say that militant groups, under the leadership of the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham Takfiri terror outfit - formerly known as al-Nusra Front, sought to attack the positions of Syrian army forces in al-Hobait village of



Idlib province as well as the towns of Kafr Nabudah and Kafr Zita in the western-central province of Hama by means of tank shell and car bombs.

"Unfortunately, we continue to see signs that the Assad regime may be renewing its use of chemical weapons, including an alleged chlorine attack in northwest Syria on the morning of May 19," State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said in a statement.

"We are still gathering information on this incident, but we repeat our warning that if the Assad regime uses chemical weapons, the United States and our allies will respond quickly and appropriately," she said.

According to Press TV, on May 17, the center stated that it had received information from the local residents of the northwestern Syrian city of Saraqib that Jabhat Fateh al-Sham terrorists were getting ready to carry out a falseflag chemical attack to frame the Russian air force.

The sources added that the extremists were planning to film the alleged poisoning of civilians next to the fragments of Russian munitions later on, and subsequently publish the video on social media networks or hand it over to Western media outlets to create the false notion that Russian fighter jets have targeted residential neighborhoods in the area

Congress calls exit polls fake

TEHRAN — The National Democratic Alliance has promised to rev up growth, double farmers' income and boost infrastructure spending in the next five years, after exit polls showed it would retain power when general election votes are counted on Thursday.

The exit polls have predicted an outright majority for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's alliance in the seven-phase election that ended on Sunday. However, such surveys have proved misleading before, and the main opposition Congress party on Wednesday dismissed them as fake, Reuters reported.

The NDA, which is led by Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), met in New Delhi on Tuesday confident

"The NDA has resolved to speed up economic growth and fulfil the needs of the people in the next five years of our gov-



ernment," Home Minister Rajnath Singh, a senior member of the BJP, told reporters. "We're committed to a strong, developed and inclusive India.

Six of seven exit polls have predicted the NDA will comfortably exceed the majority mark of 272 seats in parliament's

But Congress has dismissed the polls and urged its workers to remain vigilant at centres where votes are being stored before Thursday's count.

NDA promises to boost India's economy; Turkey 'preparing for bans as U.S. deadline on S-400

TEHRAN — Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar says his country is preparing for potential American sanctions as a deadline reportedly set by the U.S. for Ankara to cancel an arms deal with Russia or face penalties draws near.

Akar made the remarks late on Tuesday after the U.S. State Department reportedly gave Turkey until the end of the first week of June to scrap its purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defense systems or face consequences.

Citing multiple people familiar with the matter, CNBC reported that if Turkey receives the S-400s next month, the country will be ousted from Lockheed Martin's F-35 program, will not receive 100 of the stealth fighter jets it has ordered and will face U.S. sanctions as well as a potential blow-



back from NATO.

According to Press TV, Turkey has signed a 2.5-billion-dollar deal with Russia for the purchase of S-400 system. It has, at the same time, ordered 30 F-35s and plans to buy over 100 in total. The U.S. has claimed that the Russian defense system is not interoperable with NATO equipment. It has urged Turkey to purchase Raytheon Co Patriot missile systems instead of the S-400s.

No one authorized to act on Palestinians' behalf at Bahrain confab: Hamas

TEHRAN —A spokesman for the Islamic resistance movement, Hamas, says Palestinians will not allow anyone to relinquish or trade their cause at a forthcoming U.S.-led conference in Bahrain next month in support of U.S. President Donald Trump's controversial proposal for "peace" between the Israeli regime and Palestinians, dubbed "the deal of the century."

"The insistence on convening the Bahrain conference, despite Palestinians' boycott, constitutes a violation of the decisions taken during the Arab League summit in Tunis, and an attempt to impose the American vision on the Palestinian nation," Sami Abu Zuhri said in a post published on his official Twitter page on Tuesday.

Earlier in the day, Palestinian Freedom Movement de-



scribed the June 25-26 conference in Manama as a serious attack on the Palestinian issue, calling on Bahraini officials to reverse the "dangerous decision."

It also urged the Bahraini nation as well as the country's institutions and executive bodies to act effectively and pressure authorities to overturn the decision, Press TV reported.

On Monday, Hamas called on Arab countries not to accept invitations to participate in the upcoming Bahrain workshop scheduled for late June, saying, 'This is the beginning of the deal of the century.'

"We call on Arab countries not to respond to invitations to participate in the workshop in Bahrain, and stand by the Palestinian nation by all means and tools...," the movement said in a statement.

Europe holds "most important" EU vote

TEHRAN — Europeans start voting on Thursday in four days of elections to the EU parliament that will influence not just Brussels policy for the next five years but, to some extent, the very future of the Union project itself.

In 2014, nationalists hostile to the EU doubled their presence in the assembly, topped the poll in Britain and won a referendum there that yanked out one of the bloc's biggest members. Almost, Reuters reported.

Five years on, polls show euro sceptics gaining again. But Brexit is yet to happen, and may not; Brussels' enemies will still struggle to top 20%; and the far-right goes into the weekend hit by scandal over its Austrian flag bearer's videotaped collusion with a supposed Russian oligarch's niece eager to buy favor.

Others who want to halt or reverse federalist trends if not scrap the European Union altogether, also face headwinds. Some who are tasting national power must also face disillusioned supporters - notably $\rm \tilde{I}$ taly's co-rulers the League and 5-Star.

The European project is facing a list of challenges, including unprecedented transatlantic slights from a U.S. president who fetes Europe's populists, border rows over migrants and an economy hobbled by public debt and challenged by the rise of China.

But parties seeking collective continental action on shared issues such as trade, security, migration or climate change should still dominate the chamber, albeit with a smaller overall majority.

Russia says Syrian troops repelled three big militant attacks in Syria's Idlib

Syrian government troops Wednesday morning repelled three big attacks by militants in Syria's Idlib province, the Russian Ministry of Defense said.

It said in a statement that 500 Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham militants, seven tanks, and about 30 pickups mounted with heavy machine guns had taken part in the attacks.

The ministry said that Syrian militants based in Idlib had also launched a missile attack on Russia's Hmeimim air base We dnesday, but that their missiles were either shot down or did not reach their target.

(Source: Reuters)

Libya's Haftar meets French leader Macron amid fighting

TEHRAN — Libyan commander Khalifa Haftar is in Paris for meetings with French President Emmanuel Macron amid growing international concern about his month-long offensive to take Libya's capital, Tripoli.

Wednesday's closed-door meeting comes two weeks after Macron hosted Libya's struggling UN-backed prime minister, who denounced Haftar's offensive as an attempted coup.

Macron's office has expressed support for Libyan Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj but hasn't openly addressed claims that France

is secretly backing Haftar.

Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army, based in the country's east, is battling rival militants loosely allied with Sarraj's government, AP reported.

The UN envoy warned the oil-rich nation "is on the verge of descending into a civil war" that could imperil its neighbors. Ghassan Salame said Tuesday extremists from Daesh and Al-Qaida are already exploiting the security vacuum.

Jordan urged not to join **U.S.-led confab in Bahrain**

TEHRAN — The Islamic Action Front has called on the Jordanian government not to participate in a U.S.-led conference in Bahrain next month in support of U.S. President Donald Trump's controversial proposal for "peace" between the Israeli regime and Palestinians, dubbed "the deal of the century.

The political party, which is the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, said in a statement on Tuesday that the forthcoming conference falls within the framework of the so-called deal of the century that is aimed at liquidating the Palestinian cause

"Jordan's official and popular position is to refuse any deal which would undermine the rights of the Palestinian nation and interests of the Jordanian state," the statement pointed out.

The U.S. will host the economic conference on June 25 and 26 to purportedly encourage investment in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Mounir Rashid, a member of the Islamic Action Front, said the meeting represents a dangerous attempt to suffocate the Palestinian cause, and is in line with Trump administration's transfer of the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem al-Quds, bids to abolish the right of return, and recognition of the annexation of the occupied Golan Heights as well settlements built on private Palestinian lands.

Yemeni drone attack targets jet hangars at Saudi airport

In mid-May, the Yemeni army launched drone raids on a major oil pipeline deep inside the Saudi kingdom in retaliation for the regime's war crimes against Yemen, forcing state crude giant Aramco to temporarily stop pumping oil on the pipeline.

The Ansarullah movement warned on Sunday that those strikes were the start of operations against 300 vital targets in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — a key member of the Saudi-led coalition waging war on Yemen - as well as positions inside Yemen, where the foreign aggressors and their allied Yemeni militants hold bases.

According to Press TV, the Houthis took over control of Yemen's affairs in 2014 amid a political turmoil, which saw the country's former Saudi-backed officials flee to Riyadh after refusing to continue political talks with the movement.

Saudi Arabia then led many of its regional allies into an all-out invasion of the Arab world's most impoverished nation to restore its favorite government.

Olympic marathon silver medallist Kirwa suspended for doping

 $Bahrain's\ Olympic\ women's\ marathon\ silver\ medallist\ Eunice$ Kirwa has been provisionally suspended after failing a doping test, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) said in a statement.

Kenyan-born Kirwa, who switched allegiance to Bahrain in 2013 and finished second at the Rio Olympics in 2016, tested positive for erythropoietin (EPO), a banned blood-boosting hormone that improves endurance.

"The AIU confirms (a) provisional suspension against... Bahraini long-distance runner Eunice Jepkirui Kirwa... for a violation of the IAAF's (International Association of Athletics Federations') Anti-Doping Rules," AIU said in a statement.

Kirwa becomes the second women's marathon podium finisher at Rio to test positive for the same substance after Kenyan gold medallist Jemima Sumgong, who was suspended for four years by her country's anti-doping agency (ADAK) in 2017.

Sumgong's ban was doubled to eight years by the AIU after the IAAF found her guilty of providing false information while defending herself against the initial sanction but was allowed to keep her gold medal as she tested positive in April 2017.

(Source: Reuters)

Dortmund sign Gladbach's Hazard in five-year deal

Bundesliga runners-up Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday signed Belgium international Thorgan Hazard from Borussia Moenchengladbach on a five-year contract in their second big transfer in two days.

Dortmund, who also signed Germany international Nico Schulz on Tuesday, said 26-year-old attacking midfielder Hazard had signed a deal to 2024. "He is an experienced Bundesliga player and Belgium international who can help us with his speed and finish," said Dortmund sports director Michael Zorc.

"He has continuously displayed his quality in the past years." Hazard, brother of Chelsea's Eden Hazard, joined Gladbach in 2014. He scored 13 goals this season and set up another 12 in 35 matches in all competitions but fifth-placed Gladbach narrowly missed out on a top-four finish and a Champions League spot.

Dortmund finished two points behind champions Bayern Munich last week and will compete in next season's Champions League group stage.

(Source: Goal)

Italy imposes restrictions on Sky over Mediaset pay-TV deal

Italy's antitrust regulator will impose a three-year ban on Sky's Italian unit from distributing exclusive contents on its online

video-streaming service platform, it said on Wednesday.

The move follows a deal between Sky Italia and Italy's biggest commercial broadcaster, Mediaset, which the regulator said would further limit competition in a market where Sky Italia is

Mediaset said last year it was selling its digital terrestrial pay-TV assets, known as R2, to Sky Italia as part of a broader content agreement between the two broadcasters.

The two companies agreed last month to partially cancel the sale, citing the unlikelihood that the watchdog would approve the deal without setting conditions.

However, the Italian regulator said on Wednesday it gave a conditional green light to the deal, adding that the "partial return" of pay-TV assets to Mediaset was insufficient to level the playing field for web rivals.

Mediaset closed its digital terrestrial pay-TV channels and moved its content to a video streaming service, after it lost 80% of its clients after dropping UEFA Champions League and Serie A's soccer matches from its offer.

Sky Italia was not immediately available for comment.

(Source: Eurosport)

EU court cancels 18.4 million euro Real Madrid state aid refund

A top EU court on Wednesday cancelled a European Commission decision from 2016 that forced Spain to recover 18.4 million euros from Real Madrid because it considered a real estate refund as

The Commission could not classify the disputed measure as state aid", as it did not "sufficiently demonstrate that it conferred an advantage to the plaintiff," said the ruling of the General Court of the European Union

In a decision handed down in July 2016, EU Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager said the club and the Madrid City Hall had agreed an illegal transaction involving the sale of municipal land.

In the deal, the club had paid 595,000 euros in 1998 for the land, but the operation had not come to fruition for technical reasons and authorities paid Real Madrid 22.7 million euros in compensation in 2011.

But according to a Barcelona firm mandated by the commission, it should have paid only 4.3 million euros leaving the land in question overvalued by 18.4 million euros, giving Real Madrid an unjustified advantage over other clubs.

Real Madrid lodged an appeal against this decision in October 2016. "I am absolutely convinced that we will win," club president Florentino Perez said at the time.

In February 2019, the European Court of Justice annulled another commission decision involving four Spanish clubs, including Real, but also Barcelona, Osasuna and Athletic Bilbao, to repay illegal state aid.

These clubs were accused of having benefited, without justification, of a corporate tax rate five percent lower than that of other similar companies.

However, the General Court decided the commission had erred in its assessment, not having already sufficiently proved that the contested measure was illegal.

(Source: AFP)

Women's World Cup: Fifa 'doing everything they can' to seat families together

Fifa says it is "doing everything it can" to ensure families will be seated together at next month's Women's World Cup in France.

Fans claim they have not been allocated seats together due to a ticketing error, with some saying they have been separated from their children.

The tournament's Twitter account was inundated with fans complaining, and many have contacted BBC Sport.

Fifa said the problem will affect "only a very small number of fans".

On Tuesday, it said "less than 1% of fans" who requested tickets for the semi-finals and final will be affected.

But the issue appears much more wide-spread, with fans saying the problem is af-fecting group matches and other knock-out

In a new statement, Fifa said matches that were in high demand meant "the only tickets remaining were for individ-

It added: "Of the 1.3 million tickets on sale for the tournament it is estimated that not having side-by-side seats will affect only a very small number of fans.

"Fifa and the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) are continuing to work towards finding the best solution for all fans attending



the Women's World Cup and, in particular, are doing everything they can to ensure that families will always be seated together at each and every match."

The Lionesses have said fans who bought multiple tickets from Football Association website will be sitting next to each other.

The Free Lionesses, a fanzine run by the Football Supporters' Federation (FSF), said the issue "threatens to spoil a keenly anticipated summer of football."

"Our experience of the large numbers of fans who've reported groups and even pairs of tickets bought months in advance being located in different areas of the stadium suggests that the problem is greater than the less than 1% of fans requesting tickets for the semi-final and final' that Fifa has claimed, said Deborah Dilworth of the FSF.

"To find out just 18 days before the tournament kicks off that friends and families who have bought tickets face the prospect of not being seated together, and especially that parents might not be able to sit with their children, threatens to spoil a keenly-anticipated summer of football."

Fifa has advised fans to contact the LOC. But in an email response to a complaint from one fan, seen by the BBC, the organising committee said seats together had been "established by default via the server following

It told the fan the "only option", if they wanted to sit with their children, was to make a request at the ticket office on match day.

According to the New York Times, fans who called a customer service phone number were told to arrive at the stadium early on match day and try to swap their tickets with

The issue was discovered after fans were able to print their tickets on Monday.

BeIN media CEO charged in corruption probe

MEDIA GROUP

 $The \, chief \, executive \, of ficer \, of \, media \, group$ beIN was handed preliminary charges of corruption as part of an investigation into the bidding process for the 2019 track world championships in Qatar, a judicial official said Wednesday.

The official said Yousel Al-Obaidly was indicted on March 28 and also said former IAAF president Lamine Diack was handed preliminary charges of "passive corruption" in the same case.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the case is ongoing

A close ally of Paris Saint-Germain president and beIN chairman Nasser Al-Khelaifi, Al-Obaidly is also a board member of the French soccer club. He denies any wrongdoing.

"I voluntarily attended an appointed meeting as part of a preliminary investigation," Al-Obaidly said in a statement. The allegations raised are not only utterly baseless and unsubstantiated, but they have been -- quite remarkably -- leaked to the media. For the avoidance of any doubt whatsoever, the allegations are completely and categorically denied and will be vehemently challenged using the full force of the law.

In November 2016, Le Monde newspaper obtained documents showing that a former IAAF official received two payments totaling about \$3.5 million from Qatari investors

before the vote for the 2017 track world championships.

Qatar eventually lost to London but was later awarded the 2019 worlds. The championships will be held in Doha from Sept. 27-Oct. 6.

The two payments from Oryx Qatar Sports Investments, an investment fund linked to the Qatari government, were made to Pamodzi Sports Marketing in October and November 2011, days before the vote. Pamodzi was founded by one of Di-

ack's sons, Papa Massata Diack. A former marketing consultant at the IAAF, he has been banned for allegations of extorting hundreds of thousands of dollars from a Russian marathon runner to avoid a doping ban before the 2012 Olympics. France has issued a wanted notice for him via Interpol.

According to Le Monde, Lamine Diack is suspected of favoring the Qatari bid in exchange of money transferred to his son's company.

In another case, Brazilian and French authorities are trying to find out whether Lamine Diack and his son played a role in arranging alleged bribes to help Rio de Janeiro earn the hosting rights of the 2016 Olympics. Diack, who ran the IAAF from 1999-2015, has also been accused of covering up failed Russian doping tests in exchange for money.

(Source: AP)

Arsenal angry Mkhitaryan will miss **Europa League final**



Arsenal are to meet Uefa after midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan opted against playing in the Europa League final in Baku over of security fears.

Gunners managing director Vinai Venkatesham says the situation is "unacceptable".

The Armenian's safety was a concern because of the dispute between his country and Azerbaijan, the host nation of next week's final with Chelsea

"I struggle to find words for how strongly I feel," said Venkatesham.

"We don't feel he can travel and it's $extraordinarily \, sad. \, You \, don't \, get \, a \, chance$ to play in major European finals often and Miki has had it taken away from him.

Venkatesham, speaking at a Financial Times summit, added: "We made our point clearly to Uefa - we have written to them. We will also sit down with them face to face after the final and express how it is unacceptable and how it can never happen again to Arsenal or anyone.

Following the 30-year-old's decision to pull out, Elkhan Mammadov, the general secretary of the Azerbaijan FA (AFFA), told BBC World Service Sport he believes "politics stays away from sport"

"We always protect the integrity of the sport," said Mammadov. "We are confident that nothing would happen here in terms of security and safety. "On behalf of the government and lo-

cal organising committee we gave all the guarantees to Uefa and the club, but I think this was a personal decision of the player together with his family.

"That was of course a security and safety guarantee. Arsenal, who finished fifth in the Pre-

mier League, will qualify for next season's Champions League if they beat Chelsea. It would be their first European trophy since they won the Cup Winners' Cup in

Arsenal manager Unai Emery said: "Mkhitaryan wants to play with the team, but he spoke with his family and decided

"It's a very, very personal decision and we need to respect him. I don't understand the political problems but I must respect

Laurent Koscielny has blasted UEFA after Henrikh Mkhitaryan ruled himself out of the Europa League final, saying the governing body should not have chosen

Azerbaijan to host the game. Arsenal will play Chelsea in next week's all-English Europa League final in Baku - but Mkhitarvan won't be there due to safety concerns over the political tensions

between Armenia and Azerbaijan. (Staff & Agency)

Djokovic concedes he has mountain to climb at French Open

World number one Novak Djokovic has enjoyed two good weeks on red clay but admitted that winning a second French Open title would be a tall order after a crushing defeat by Rafael Nadal in last week's Italian Open final.

Djokovic clinched the Madrid Open without dropping a set and then won a pair of epic battles against Argentines Juan Martin Del Potro and Diego Schwartzman in Rome before succumbing to the imperious Nadal 6-0 4-6 6-1 in

That defeat aside, the Serb's form seems to have peaked in time for the May 26-June 9 tournament. However, the 32-year-old from Belgrade, who has won 15 Grand Slam titles, made it clear Nadal, who is the same age, was the favourite at Roland Garros.

He also named Austrian Dominic Thiem, the 25-year-old world number four, and 11th-ranked Italian Fabio Fognini, who is 31, as strong contenders.

"Nadal (is) the number one favourite without a doubt. and then everyone else," a serene Djokovic told reporters after he was beaten by the Spaniard at the Foro Italico.

"I think it's going to be a really good tournament. Dominic Thiem has been playing some good tennis and he can beat anybody, especially on clay.

"Fognini is also playing quality tennis, he showed against Nadal in Monte Carlo what he is capable of," he added referring to the Italian's 6-4 6-2 semi-final victory.

"On a given day, best of five (sets), with one day between



matches, players will have enough time to really be at their best. "Everybody is trying to peak for Roland Garros and I am really looking forward to it.'

Patchy form

Djokovic's exploits on clay came after several months of patchy form following his January triumph at the Australian Open in Melbourne where he beat Nadal

A quarter-final loss in Monte Carlo came on the back of early exits at Indian Wells and Miami, prompting speculation by pundits that Djokovic was heading for a dip in form similar to the one in 2016 after he won his maiden French Open title.

his decision.'

But the Serb silenced his critics with a vintage run in Rome, including a rip-roaring victory over Del Potro when he saved two match points in the second set before dismantling his close friend in the third.

He then held his nerve against the battling Schwarzman before running out of steam versus, leaving doubts as to whether he will have enough in the tank to match world number two Nadal for energy during the gruelling two-week

event in Paris. Djokovic has already achieved the rare feat of holding all four major honours at the same time, having won the 2015 Wimbledon and U.S. Open titles before clinching the Australian Open and French Open crowns the fol-

After two difficult years dogged by an injury which required elbow surgery and a dramatic loss of form, Djokovic bounced back spectacularly to clinch the Wimbledon and the U.S. Open titles again in 2018 as well as this year's Aus-

He is certainly buoyed by the prospect of emulating his achievement of holding all four majors but knows that nothing less than perfection will be required for what would amount to a carbon copy of his most successful 12 months on tour.

(Source: Reuters)

Sanat Naft coach Paulo Sergio says Donald Trump made his job a nightmare

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Santa NAft coach Paulo Sergio believes that the U.S. President Donald Trump has made his job in Iran one of the hardest of his football career.

The Portuguese coach finished ninth in the Iran Professional League with Sanat Naft Abadan this season. However, Trump's ongoing political battle with Iran badly affected the country's economy.

The falling value of the American dollar made it almost impossible for Sergio to recruit players. That came as a result of the United States president trying to cut Iran's oil exports - their main source of income.

Several of Sanat Naft's existing squad are also looking for transfers to other countries. Sergio, 51, is now considering his future after receiving offers from clubs in Iran and abroad, the Edinburgh Evening News reported.

"I finished my season a week ago in Iran and am looking at some options," he explained. "I have the chance of things coming up in Iran, with my current club and also with some others.

"I will look at it over the next few days and make a

"The job I have been doing was one of the hardest jobs I have had until now because, when I arrived, the situation was different to now. After I went there, Mr Trump put his sanctions on and that made the dollar value go down.

"That has made it hard for the football clubs, especially bringing in foreign players. Some players wanted to leave the club because of the problems, so it was difficult."

He worked in Scotland, Romania, Cyprus, Portugal and the United Arab Emirates before joining Sanat Naft last year. The club are based in the south-west Iranian city of Abadan, near the banks of the Persian Gulf.

Sergio noted a wealth of footballing talent in the region. He extolled the talents of the players he worked with and believes Iran could become a future force at

agreement

Iran, Marc Wilmots still to reach



international level with better infrastructure.

"We brought through a lot of young players this season and won five of the last six matches. Iran is a huge country and there is a lot of talent there," said Sergio. "The players there have the right mentality. I have found them to be strong, very good technically and they are

"I think, if they are organized and if they get the infrastructure there correct, then in the future Iran could become a big player in world football.'

Iran announce squad for FIVB



SPORTS TEHRAN — The Football Federation of Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) has not reached an agreement with Belgian coach Marc Wilmots.

The Iranian federation had held positive talks with the former Belgium coach about leading Team Melli but an agreement was yet to be reached.

The 50-year-old coach had accepted to take charge of Iran national football team until the 2022 FIFA World Cup after visiting the accommodations of the national team in Tehran last week.

Wilmots reached an initial agreement with Iran for an annual salary of US\$ 1.5 million as well as two assistant coaches

But hln.be has reported that Iran has asked Wilmots to settle in the country but

the Belgian, who led his homeland to the 2014 World Cup and Euro 2016, is going to travel to the west Asian country whenever there are international matches on the program

Iran, who are top AFC team in the FIFA rankings at No. 21, will host Syria in Tehran on June 6 in a friendly match.

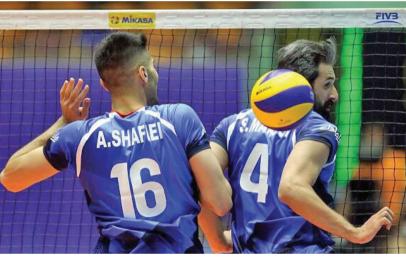
Team Melli will also face South Korea five days later at World Cup Stadium in Seoul.

Iran are preparing for the 2022 World Cup qualifiers that begin in the second half of this year. Former Spain and Real Madrid coach

Julen Lopetegui, Morocco national team coach Herve Renard and former Netherlands coach Dick Advocaat were also nominated for this position.

Iran are without a coach since Carlos Queiroz left Team Melli to take over as Colombia coach in late January.

Volleyball Nations League Week 1



S P O R T S TEHRAN—Iran volde e s k leyball head coach Igor leyball head coach Igor Kolakovic has announced Team Melli roster for the 2019 FIVB Volleyball Nations League Week 1.
The 2019 FIVB Volleyball Men's Nations

League will be the second edition of the FIVB Volleyball Men's Nations League, an annual international men's volleyball tournament contested by 16 national teams.

Iran and Italy will open the second edition on May 31 in the Chinese city of Jiangmen, Guangdong province.

The Jiangmen pool also features hosts China and Germany.

Iran are scheduled to face China and Germany on June 1 and 2, respectively.

The men's VNL features 16 teams playing in round-robin over five weekends. The competition will wrap up on June 30, before

the top six teams move to Chicago for the finals from July 10-14.

This will be the first edition of the World League or the Nations League to have the Final Round hosted in North America.

National Team Roster for FIVB Volleyball Nations League Week 1 in China

Saeid Marouf, Shahram Mahmoudi, Milad Ebadipour, Farhad Ghaemi, Mohammad Mousavi. Pouria Favazi. Mohammadreza Hazratpour, Masoud Gholami, Amir Ghfour, Saber Kazemi, Mohammadjavad Manavinezhad, Aliasghar Mojarad, Ali Shafiei, Meysam Salehi, Mohammadreza Moazen, Pouria Yali, Morteza Sharifi, Amirhossein Esfandyar, Ali Ramezani, Javad Karimi, Amirhossein Toukhteh, Amin Razavi, Amirmohammad Falahatkhah, Mehran Feyz Emamdust and Reza Abedini.

Iran rule Day 1 of Qualifying Draw at FIBA 3x3 Asia Cup 2019

Iran's men started their journey at the 3x3 Asia Cup 2019 undefeated in Changsha, China on May 22.

In the men's category, Iran started with a bang with two wins on opening day over Thailand (21-6) and Samoa (21-9). Still they trail an equally undefeated Qatar, who scored the same amount of points but rank 1st based on seeding number. Their match-up will decide who advances to Pool B of the Main Draw on Thursday.

There were high expectations for Team Philippines, including 3x3 rising star Ricci Rivero. However the 20-yearold-went down with an ankle injury a few minutes into the

1st game and his participation on Day 2 is now up in the air. South Korea and India also are undefeated in Pool



 $B.\ The\ winners\ of\ their\ meeting\ tomorrow\ will\ advance\\ to\ Pool\ C.\ in\ the\ main\ draw.\ Chinese\ Taipei,\ who\ won$ their two games in Pool C - including a 21-18 thriller against Vietnam - are just one win away from a main draw ticket in Pool D.

In the women's side, The Philippines were dominant on their first game against Samoa (21-1) and then, defeated Chinese Taipei (16-13) to book their ticket to the Main Draw. Samoa avenged their early loss with a historic 1st-ever Asia Cup win against Vanuatu (18-15). In the other pool, India and Thailand are tied in 1st place and their matchup tomorrow will decide who advances to the Main Draw.

(Source: fiba.basketball)

China PR ace Sun Wen to play key role with FIFA Technical Study Group

China PR legend Sun Wen has been named as part of FIFA's Technical Study Group (TSG) for the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup which is set to start on June 7 when host nation France take on Korea Republic.

The world governing body has assembled a select group of experts for its TSG, whose analysis of the 52 matches will comprise a detailed breakdown of the action on the pitch and the identification of potential trends for inclusion in the technical report that will be distributed after the competition.

An icon of women's football, Sun was named FIFA Women's Player of the Century alongside former United States star Michelle Akers. Whilst representing the Chinese women's national team, she made it to the final of both the 1996 Women's Olympic Football Tournament and the FIFA Women's World Cup in 1999 – where she landed the Golden Ball and Golden Boot

Sun will cast her experienced eye over proceedings alongside fellow TSG members April Heinrichs from the United States, Germany's Nadine Kessler, France's Elisabeth Loisel and Clémentine Toure from the Côte d'Ivoire.

The TSG experts will be supported by FIFA TSG Deputy Project Leader Patricia Gonzalez, FIFA Goalkeeping Specialist Pascal Zuberbuhler, FIFA TSG Coordinator



and former Swiss women's national team captain Prisca Steinegger, and FIFA Performance & Game Analyst Chris Loxston. Japan, Australia, Korea Republic, China

PR and Thailand will be representing Asia

a tournament which many believe will, in terms of pace, be the fastest ever. "I think this is going to be the fastest

at this year's FIFA Women's World Cup,

Women's World Cup ever if you consider how transitions from defense to attack, or from in possession to out of possession, will be executed from a technical and tactical point of view," said TSG head Heinrichs.

"We can expect to see plenty of adjustments, and in the end I believe that tactical decision-making will be very important. The teams will be taking the initiative, playing proactive football, and trying to win and score as many goals as possible,"

(Source: the-afc)

Qatar stadiums are amazing: Ruud Gullit

 $\textbf{TASNIM} - Former \, Dutch \, international \, Ruud \, Gull it \, believes$ Qatar has made amazing job to host the 2022 World Cup and they have amazing stadiums.

"I think design and everything is beautiful. I have worked

with Qatar from the beginning. It has been amazing and you can see a magic stadium (Al Janoub stadium) and a real football stadium. You can come on the pitch with a wonderful feeling. I think Qatar can be proud of what has achieved," Gullit said.

Asked him what's the main attribute of the stadium, Gullit said, "Pitch for me. It's a beautiful pitch. Sometimes people forget about the pitch and always think about facilities and things like that. But we have to play onto the pitch

and if the pitch is ok, it will be wonderful."

"I think the 2022 World Cup will be very amazing. I was there from the beginning for Belgium—Netherlands 2018 FIFA World Cup bid. I traveled to Qatar all the time and I knew their all plans.

"I think the World Cup will be one of the best World Cups because I can see a lot of games in one day. You cannot do in the other World Cups because of a lot of travels. And I think it will be amazing.

Tasnim correspondent ask the Dutch legend, if Iran can shine in the 2022 World Cup, Gullit said, "of course, If you qualify for the competition, you will have a good performance."

Javad Nekounam named Foolad Khuzestan coach

PLDC — Former Iran captain Javad Nekounam has been appointed as new head coach of Foolad Khuzestan on Tuesday. The 38-year-old coach has replaced Afshin Ghotbi in the

Ahvaz-based football team. Nekounam was without a team after parting company with Nassaji Mazandaran in January.

Foolad ended Iran Professional League as the eighth team under Ghotbi.

Nekounam had already worked as Carlos Queiroz assistant in Iran national football team. He had also coached Iranian First Division football team

Khooneh Be Khooneh. The start of the Iran Professional League's 2019-20 season

will take place on August 1.

Iranian commissaire to officiate road cycling at 2020 Olympics

MNA — Iranian commissaire Majid Naseri has been invited by Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) to officiate at road cycling event of 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

This will be the first time that an Iranian commissaire is going to judge one of the world's most important cycling events, namely the summer Olympics.

'I received the UCI announcement for my officiating at 2020 Olympics road cycling event," he said.

The cycling competitions of the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo will feature 22 events. Since the 1896 contests which featured five track events and an 87 km road race from Athens to Marathon and back, Olympic cycling had gradually evolved to include women's competitions, mountain bike and BMX to arrive at the current 22 events.

The races will start in Musashinonomori Park in Chofu, western Tokyo with the finish at the Fuji Speedway circuit in the Shizuoka prefecture. The men's road race will be 234 kilometers with a total elevation of 4865 while the women's race will cover 137 km with a total elevation of 2692 meters.

Iran chess player wins Abu **Dhabi Champs**

IRNA — Iranian Chess player Sara Sadat Khadem al-Sharieh ranked first in Ramadan Blitz Chess Championship 2019 held in Abu Dhabi, UAE.



Khadem al-Sharieh with 2461 rating received 6.5 points. Serbian player with 2,278 rating and Ukrainian rival with 2,225 rating ranked second and third, respectively.

The event was held with the attendance of 64 players and Khadem al-Sharieh earned \$2,000 award.

On December 30, Khadem al-Sharieh by winning the title of runner-up in the World Speed Chess Championship again made history

In February 2016, Khadem al-Sharieh also ranked second in the Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE) Grand INTERNATIONAL DAILY

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Radio Iran honors

storyteller Maryam Nashiba

CULTURE TEHRAN - Radio e s k Iran honored Maryam Nashiba, the veteran storyteller who has been telling bedtime stories for kids on the radio program "Good Night Kids" since 1990, for her lifetime achievements during a special ceremony in Tehran on Tuesday.

The ceremony was attended by Academy of Persian Language and Literature director Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, Radio Iran director Mohammad-Jafar Mohammadzadeh and a number of cultural

Speaking at the ceremony, Haddad-Adel pointed to the recent speeches of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei who had warned poets and literati of the decay of the Persian language and said, "This is not the first time he has voiced his criticism. He has also instructed the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution to preserve the Persian language," Haddad-Adel said.

In his annual meeting with poets and literati on Monday night, the Leader said, "I am very concerned about the Persian language, because in general, the Persian language has fallen into decay."

He also criticized Persian media and Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) for disregard of the standard language, using "faceless language" and foreign terms and words, and addressed the cultural officials and literati, "Don't let the Persian language fall into decay and ruin.'

Mohammadzadeh in his brief remarks also emphasized preserving the Persian language and added, "My colleagues and I



Radio storyteller Maryam Nashiba unveils a portrait of herself at the Shohadaye Radio Studio in Tehran on May 21, 2019 after being honored for her lifetime achievements.

consider Radio Iran a base for the Persian language through different programs such as making use of precious Persian texts, introducing Persian language and producing Iranian music."

A 12-volume encyclopedia of Persian language and literature compiled by Esmaeil Saadat published by the Academy of Persian Language and Literature was also unveiled

at the ceremony. The ceremony came to an end by unveiling a portrait of Nashiba.

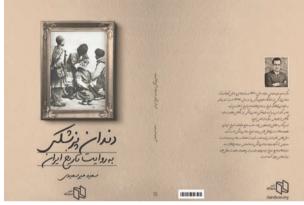
Book on history of dentistry in Iran published

Fear God and do not sin in privacy, for, He Who

is the witness, judges your deeds.

CULTURE TEHRAN – A book that chronicles the history e s k of the field of dentistry in Iran has recently

been published by Dandaneh Publications in Tehran. Written by Saeid Mirsaeidi, "The History of Dentistry in Iran" is a long-term study on the different sources and articles written about the history of dentistry in Iran.



Cover of "The History of Dentistry in Iran" by Saeid Mirsaeidi.

The author has read numerous memoirs and travelogues to collect information on dentistry in Iran.

In one of the chapters, the book carries an account of Qajar king Nasser ad-Din Shah's toothache.

Iranologist Emiko Okada's "Word Country Iran and I" published in Japan

CULTURE TEHRAN – Japanese Iranologist Emiko Okada's latest book "Word Country Iran and I" has recently been published in Japan, publisher Heibonsha



The book released in Tokyo in March 2019 contains Émiko's memoirs during her visit to Tehran in 2017 where she held talks with several Persian scholars and visited the Tehran International Book Fair.

Okada has previously conducted research on the Persian poet Ferdowsi and has translated his masterpiece, the Shahnameh, into Japanese. She has also has translat-

ed the last 100 couplets of Khayyam's poetry remaining untranslated from the original

Okada is one of the last survivors of the U.S. atomic

Front cover of "Word Country Iran and I". bombing of Hiroshima in 1945.

She is also the author of "Persia's Four Stories". A Japanese $translation\,by\,Okada\,of\,the\,Persian\,love\,story, Nezami\,Ganjavi's$ Khosrow and Shirin, has previously been published.

Crawleys await royal visit in "Downton Abbey" movie, trailer shows

LONDON (Reuters) — "Downton Abbey" fans got a glimpse on Tuesday of the television period drama's upcoming movie adaptation, with a new trailer showing the central Crawley family preparing for a royal visit to their sprawling countryside home.

Little has been revealed about the movie, which is set in 1927 and continues the story about a British household in the early 20th century.

"The king and queen are coming to Downton," a surprised Robert Crawley, played by actor Hugh Bonneville, says in the trailer which shows the family and their household staff, also key characters, preparing for the visit.

Actors Maggie Smith, Michelle Dockery, Elizabeth McGovern and Laura Carmichael are all seen reprising their roles as Crawley family members, and Jim Carter, who played head butler Mr

Carson in the series, also returns. The award-winning show first aired in 2011 and went on for six seasons, gaining a huge following in Britain and the United $\,$ States. The movie is scheduled for release in September.

Animated movie to unfold tragedy of Sardasht chemical attack



A scene from Iranian director Pejman Alipur's animated film "Where Do the Winds Die?" about Iraq's chemical attack on the Iranian town of Sardasht in 1987.

TEHRAN – Iranian d e s k director Pejman Alipur is making an animated movie that is about Iraq's chemical attack on the Iranian town of Sardasht in 1987.

The short movie titled "Where Do the Winds Die?" is being produced at the Documentary and Experimental Film Center

"It's a symbolic and formalistic animation," Alipur said in a press release published by the DEFC on Wednesday.

"The film has a poetic look at the daily life in Sardasht three month before the chemical attack, the moment when the attack happened and years after the tragedy," he added.

"Filmmakers have demonstrated little regard for the chemical attack on Sardasht and they have mostly focused on the Halabja 1988 chemical attack, therefore I have always been looking for an idea about the issue to turn it into a film," Alipur stated.

He said that the movie will be completed in October.

Iraq bombarded Sardasht in West Azerbaijan Province with chemical weapons on June 28, 1987, killing over 1,000 and injuring over 8,000 civilians, many of whom were permanently disabled.

"Curse of the Starving Class" to go on stage in Tehran



A poster for the play "Curse of the Starving Class" that will be staged by Iranian director Ashkan Khatibi in Tehran.

TEHRAN – Iranian die s k rector and actor Ashkan Khatibi plans to stage prominent American playwright Sam Shepard's play "Curse of the Starving Class" at Tehran's Iranshahr Theater Complex on June 17.

Written in 1977, the play is a dark comedy that tells the story of the Tates, a working-class family that is living in a farmhouse they are planning to sell, in the hopes of moving on to bigger and better things.

The play follows the lives of four members of the family. Weston is the alcoholic father who has driven his family deep into debt. Ella is the mother who is utterly burned-out and will do just about anything to leave her husband behind. Their daughter Emma is a smart and rebellious teen and their idealistic son Wesley is looking for a way to keep his family together while changing from a boy to a man.

The play has been published in Persian by Nila Publications in Tehran along with Shepard's 1983 play "Fool for Love", both translated by Khatibi, in a book titled "Love and Curse".

Anahita Dargahi, Saeid Molavian, Nura Peydayeshfard and Hamun Seyyedi are the main members of the cast for the play, which has been re-written by Omid Sohrabi to be performed in Iran.

Iran, Iraq discuss plan to make film on Daesh

A R T TEHRAN – Iran's cultural attaché in e s k Iraq Gholamreza Abazari and Iraq's Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities Abdulameer al-Hamdani met in Baghdad on Tuesday to discuss a plan to make a movie on Daesh, the Persian service of IRNA reported on Wednesday.

"Numerous films from Iran including 'Muhammad, the Messenger of God' and 'Damascus Time' have previously been screened in Iraq," Abazari said at the meeting.

Plans to make films on the Arbaeen pilgrimage and

the Popular Mobilization Units - Hashd al- Shaabi have previously been discussed in meetings between Iranian and Iraqi cultural officials.

Dutch-Iraqi film director Mohamed Al-Daradji has reportedly announced his readiness to collaborate in one of the projects.

Ways to screen Iranian films in Iraq and plans to hold joint musical performances and collaborate on cultural heritage were also discussed during the meeting between Abazari and Al-Hamdani.



Iranian cultural attaché Gholamreza Abazari (L) and Iraqi Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities Abdulameer al-Hamdani hold a meeting in Baghdad on May 21, 2019. (IRNA)

Tarantino rolls into Cannes with "dazzling" ode to cinema

CANNES, France (Reuters) — With Hollywood stars Leonardo DiCaprio and Brad Pitt in tow, Quentin Tarantino unveiled his latest opus in Cannes on Tuesday, a story about movie magic and acting pains that wowed many critics

- at least in parts. Set in the late 1960s, when spaghetti westerns ruled the screen, "Once Upon A Time in Hollywood" was one of the most hotly anticipated premieres at the film showcase - not least because it only made it to the competition at the last minute.

Tarantino, a Cannes darling, won the festival's top Palme D'Or prize for "Pulp Fiction" 25 years ago, and his latest offering is not short of big names, with Australian actress Margot Robbie

and Al Pacino also in the line-up. Centered on Ricky Dalton, a TV actor wracked by self-doubt played by DiCaprio, the film is a love letter to the world of cinema, from its glamorous parties to the highs and lows of being on set.

Dalton and stunt double Cliff Booth, played by Pitt, roam the studios of Hollywood, pondering their careers and getting into scraps, running into hippies and martial arts stars.

Ominously, however, it also takes place in the run-up to the notorious Mason murders - the gruesome killings orchestrated by cult leader Charles Manson, which claimed the life of pregnant actress Sharon Tate, married at the time to filmmaker Roman Polanski.

The film's evocative atmosphere, flashes of violence that Tarantino is known for, and darkly comic moments elicited some early rave reviews following the premiere.

"It's shocking, gripping, dazzlingly shot," The Guardian's Peter Bradshaw wrote, giving

The finale was "entirely outrageous, disorientating, irresponsible, and also brilliant," Bradshaw added.

In a message sent out on social media by the movie's promoters ahead of the premiere, Tarantino asked the media and those at the premiere not to ruin the film, his ninth, with any spoilers.

"The cast and crew have worked hard to create something original," the director said. 'I only ask that everyone avoids revealing anything that would prevent later audiences from experiencing the film in the same way."

Some critics highlighted the movie's patchier, more self-indulgent moments, but they still found enough to like in show-stealing scenes and strong performances by DiCaprio and Pitt in particular.

Entertainment site TheWrap called it "big,

brash, ridiculous, too long, and in the end invigorating.'

"It's fun but ... it's too long for a small story in fact," Joachim Lepastier, a journalist from France's Cahiers Du Ĉinema, told Reuters after leaving a screening.

Tarantino, who arrived on the French Riviera last week and has been spotted at several screenings and premieres, hit the red carpet on Tuesday alongside his wife, singer and model

Daniela Pick, who also has a role in the film. DiCaprio, Pitt and Robbie also put in star turns on the Croisette at the glitzy premiere.

The Cannes Film Festival runs until May 25. Tarantino is vying for the top award alongside veteran filmmakers like Britain's Ken Loach or Spain's Pedro Almodovar, and newer ones including French promise Celine Sciamma.