



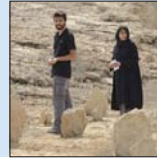
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‘Iran to maintain metal exports despite U.S. sanction’

By Ebrahim Fallahi

TEHRAN — Iranian deputy industry, mining and trade minister said the ministry has taken necessary measures to maintain the country’s metal exports despite U.S. sanctions.

“We have established a special working group in the ministry which is closely assessing the situation and making necessary

arrangements to mitigate the impact of U.S. sanctions,” Jafar Sarqini told the Tehran Times in a press conference in Tehran on Saturday.

The official noted that it is expected for the exports from the country’s mining sector to, at least, reach the last year’s \$8.5 billion by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2020). **→4**

Charity foundation to create 2,000 job plans in Golestan province

TEHRAN — Barekat charity foundation will create 2,000 employment plans in the northeastern province of Golestan by the start of the Iranian calendar month of Bahman falling on January 21, 2020, ILNA news agency reported on Saturday. In order to create the job plans some 1.8 trillion rials (nearly \$43 million) is allotted, the report added. Following the implementation of job

plans some 5,600 employment opportunities will open up in less developed areas of the province. Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, also known as Setad-e Ejraiye Farman-e Hazrat-e Emam, was founded in 1989. In the Iranian calendar year 1386 (March 2017-March 2018) Barekat charity foundation- the social arm of the organization- with the aim of promoting social justice was established. **→12**

Former Qatari PM urges normal ties with Iran

TEHRAN — Qatar’s former prime minister, Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani, has called for peace with Iran, saying “we cannot fight them when we share the same fields of gas and oil.”

In an interview with the British newspaper Telegraph on Friday, Hamad bin Jassem said Qatar does not agree with all of Iran’s policies but he likened cutting

ties with Iran to committing suicide. “If we declare that Iran is our enemy, and our only path to the outside world – by air, sea, and land is Iran, because the border with the surrounding Arab countries is closed, should we commit suicide afterwards by not dealing with Iran because the Saudis say I should not,” he said. **→3**



ARTICLE

Ebrahim Fallahi
Tehran Times journalist

“Redundant” sanctions vs. “resilient” economy

As the United States sanctioned Iran’s Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGPIC) on Friday, many analysts and officials believe them to have no significant impact on the country’s economy in a broad sense.

On Friday, Washington imposed new sanctions on Iran’s largest petrochemical holding group, aiming to dry up yet another source of Iran’s revenues in order to boost pressure on the country’s economy.

The U.S. Treasury said in a statement that it had sanctioned the PGPIC holding group’s network of 39 subsidiary petrochemical companies and foreign-based sales agents.

However, experts and analysts believe this new sanctions to be more symbolic than practical.

According to a Reuters report published on Friday, a former U.S. Treasury official, who asked not to be named, said the new sanctions would have little effect.

Suzanne Maloney from the Brookings Institution think tank described the latest U.S. sanctions as “a natural next step in what I think is a deliberately redundant array of restrictions.”

■ Rising pressure and Iran’s resilience

In May 2018, Donald Trump officially withdrew the United States from the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA.

Later in April 2019, the Trump administration announced that it would no longer extend the waivers for Iranian oil buyers, namely China, India, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, Italy and Greece which allowed them to ship in limited amounts of oil from the country.

As a next step to “compound the pressure” on Iran, Trump has targeted Iran’s petrochemical industry to cut off yet another source of revenue for the country.

The managing director of Iran’s National Petrochemical Company (NPC) said in early May that petrochemical industry is not like oil industry and it is practically unsanctionable. **→4**

With U.S. President Trump, money trumps all

By Martin Love

NORTH CAROLINA — Donald Trump during his career as a real estate mogul cheated any number of contractors over several decades who helped build his real estate holdings. He did not pay them what they were due, just as he cheated the world of continued U.S. participation in the JCPOA, and with that cheated or robbed the Iranian people of relative prosperity by applying draconian economic sanctions. (Not to mention the threats of war.)

But anyway in recent months there’s been something of a big-league and dangerous standoff between the U.S. (such that the Trump gang allegedly represents the U.S., whatever the latter is or has become in these late stages of American “empire”) and a variety of other countries. But most notably there’s been the standoff between the U.S. and Iran, and between the U.S. and Venezuela.

In both cases the U.S. wants a U.S.-friendly government installed in Caracas and Tehran so U.S. business interests, at bottom, can get a grip on the oil resources of both countries. In other words, both countries are expected more or less to give up their sovereignty. Good luck with that: Trump and his completely vapid, clueless, shallow cipher of a son in law, Jared Kushner, cannot even get the desperate, long-abused Palestinians to sign on to the so-called “Deal of the Century” despite the prospect of billions of bucks in bribe money.

One actually has a hard time trying to figure out just what, exactly, has been successful about the Trump Presidency so far.

Iran, meanwhile, has been quite successful as a severe underdog over the past year. It has not disintegrated despite the harshest attacks short of U.S. B-52 saturation bombing runs over Iran;

it has maintained its allegiance to the JCPOA; it has correctly chastised the other signatories to the JCPOA that they have not done enough, or much of anything, to ensure that the benefits of the deal for Iran are intact, or just materialize; it has made a huge effort to try to shore up solid (or at least improved) diplomatic relations with a variety of countries across Asia, and particularly with a few of its Persian Gulf neighbors; it has not panicked.

Iran’s leaders have even, marginally, one hears anyway, relaxed some social controls on Iranians, allowing them to express themselves a bit more freely as individuals than before. What’s not to like? This latter is very hard to discover.

And one might marginally conclude, also, that maybe Trump and Mike Pompeo are modifying their postures towards Iran. (One cannot expect such from John Bolton, the Saudis and above all, the nitwit Zionists.) **→7**

In remembrance of Imam Khomeini (QS)

By Yusuf Abdullah

NIGERIA/ ABUJA — In the name of Allah Who states “... verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves with their own souls” Q13:11

May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon His chosen servant, our master Muhammad and his purified progeny?

Let me start with congratulations to Muslim world on the completion of Ramadan fast and Sallah celebrations respectively. I pray to Allah, the Most High to accept our ibadat and give us the capacity to practice the everlasting lessons of the great month.

The piece for this week is on the 30th commemoration of Imam Khomeini’s demise, 3rd June, 1989. There is no doubt, he was a great man of Allah who demonstrated his love and obedience to Him. He exceptionally succeeded in the struggle against the enemies of Islam and their local and international stooges at the era of advancement in science and technology. But for his Islamic revolution, no one could tell the destiny of Islam and Muslims not only in the Middle-east but world at large. In remembrance like this, it is not easy to decide on which of the various aspects of his successful life to talk.

Imam Ruhollah, al-Moosawi al-Khomeini

was the leader of Islamic revolution and founder of the Islamic republic. He was born on 20th Jimada-thani, 1420 H, equivalent to 20th September, 1902 to a renowned family of scholarship and sacrifice, from Khomein, the central province of Iran. Ayatollah Sayyid Mustapha was his father and Banoo Hajar, the daughter of Ayatollah Khonsari, a famous family of letters was his mother. The Imam married Sayyidah Khadija Khanom, from a renowned family and was blessed with several children. Grand Ayatollah Hajj. Abdul Kareem Haeri Yazdi was his famous teacher in religious disciplines. In addition to that, he had an in-depth studies in Western philosophy. **→7**



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Comic strip on martyr Mohsen Hojaji published

TEHRAN — A comic strip on martyr Mohsen Hojaji, an Iranian soldier who was brutally martyred by Daesh forces in Syria in 2017, was unveiled during a ceremony held at the Student Basij Organization on Saturday.

The book named “Proof of God” has been published by the Ayeh Quranic Cultural Institute and is due to be translated into 30 languages, deputy director of the institute Mehdi Haji said in a press conference held at the organization.

“The English, Arabic and Azeri translations are ready, and other translations will come out soon,” he added. **→16**



ARTICLE

Payman Yazdani
Political analyst

The odds of success for Japanese PM’s visit to Iran

The U.S. president’s recent retreat from his previous rhetoric stances towards Iran should not be misinterpreted as the White House’s retreat from its policy of ‘maximum pressure’ on Iran. In line with its maximum pressure on Iran policy, on Friday the United States imposed new sanctions on Iran that target the country’s petrochemical industry, including its largest petrochemical holding group, the Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGPIC).

The main reason behind the changes to the Trump administration’s tone against Iran in fact is internal pressure on him. Americans are against a new war in the region. Also opposition from the U.S. allies which will suffer from great losses in case of any war in the region is another reason behind change to Trump’s tone.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is slated to visit Tehran on Wednesday, June 12. He hopes to use his warm relation with Iran and the U.S. to mediate between the countries.

Besides Abe’s warm relations with Iranian and the U.S. leaders there are others reasons that potentially make him a proper mediator including Japan’s efforts to have independent Middle East policy and not having imperialistic record in the region which is a good trust building factor for Iran.

Above all, as the third largest economy of the world Japan is very dependent on the energy importing from the region. Japan imports 80 percent of its consuming energy from the Middle East which passes through Hormuz strait, so any war and confrontation in the region will inflict great losses and damages to the country’s economy and consequently to the world economy.

To answer the question that how Mr. Abe’s efforts will be effective to settle the tensions depends on two factors.

First on the ‘real will’ and determination of the U.S. and Iran to solve the ongoing problems especially the U.S. ‘real will’. One cannot ask for talk and at the same time further undermine the trust between the two sides by taking some hostile measures like new sanctions that the U.S. slapped against Iran’s petrochemical section last night on the eve of Mr. Abe’s visit to Tehran. If there is a real will, even no need to mediator. **→13**

Tehran says sanctions on petrochemical company proves Trump's talks offer is hollow

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Foreign Ministry on Saturday strongly denounced the U.S. Treasury's latest move to impose new sanctions against an Iranian petrochemical company.

The United States has hit Iran's Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGPIC) with economic sanctions due to its ties with the country's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), the Treasury Department said on Friday.

The move aims to choke off financing to the country's largest and most profitable petrochemical group and extends to its 39 subsidiaries and "foreign-based sales agents," Treasury said in a statement.

Those include UK-based NPC International and Philippines-based and NPC Alliance Corporation that are controlled by PGPIC.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi described the sanctions as an instance of "economic terrorism" and part of the White House's "constant hostilities" towards the Iranian nation.

"Only one week was enough to prove American president's claim that he seeks negotiation with Iran was a hollow one," Mousavi said, according to the statement published on the ministry's official website.

"The U.S. policy of maximum pressure is a failed policy that had already been tested by the country's previous presidents for several times," he added.

Mousavi said this is a wrong path and the U.S. administration can rest assured it will not achieve any of the goals it had in mind when implementing the policy.

He also referred to certain American officials' calls for negotiation with Iran describing them as deceitful and false claims aimed at attracting the attention of public opinion.

"America's move [to impose sanctions on Iran's petrochemicals] is against the basic principles and rules of international law and relations as well as the U.S. international commitments, and will lead to international liabilities for them [the US]," Mousavi added.

"All countries have a duty to show reaction to the blatant violation of the fundamental principles of the international law, and prevent the international community's achievements in multilateralism from being further destroyed by the U.S. ruling system's bullying and unilateral measures," he noted.

In his Friday statement, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said, "This action is a warning that we will continue to target holding groups and companies in the petrochemical sector and elsewhere that provide financial lifelines to the IRGC."

The PGPIC group holds 40% of Iran's total petrochemical production capacity and is responsible for 50% of the country's petrochemical exports, Treasury said.

Treasury warned that international companies continuing to partner with PGPIC or subsidiaries and sales agents "will themselves be exposed to U.S. sanctions."

Following Trump's decision to abandon the 2015 nuclear deal negotiated by his predecessor, U.S. efforts over the past year to choke off Iran's economy have angered allies as foreign companies get caught up in the dispute.

Several countries have halted oil imports from Iran, while Europe has tried to design a mechanism to continue trading with the country without violating U.S. sanctions.

Treasury claimed it is penalizing PGPIC due to its links to the economic arm of the IRGC, known as Khatam al-Anbiya. It said the holding company has awarded contracts to Khatam al-Anbiya "generating hundreds of millions of dollars for an IRGC economic conglomerate that stretches across Iran's major industries."

Washington in April branded the IRGC a terrorist organization, the first time it has taken the step against part of a foreign government. The move meant anyone who dealt with the Revolutionary Guards could face prison in the United States.

The new sanctions prohibit the firm and its subsidiaries from accessing the U.S. market or financial system, including through other foreign companies, and blocks all funds or property that is in the United States or held by a U.S. firm.

The penalties could extend to "any foreign financial institution that knowingly facilitates a significant financial transaction or provides significant financial services for entities designated," the statement said.

"By targeting this network we intend to deny funding to key elements of Iran's petrochemical sector that provide support to the IRGC," Mnuchin said.

Tensions between Washington and Tehran have escalated in recent weeks after Trump last month deployed additional troops to the region and resumed arm sales to Saudi Arabia to protect against what the United States claimed was the threat of an imminent attack.

Trump on Thursday said he would be willing to reopen talks.

Three analysts and a former Treasury official told the Guardian the latest sanctions will likely have only a modest effect because non-U.S. companies already shy away from doing business with Iran's petrochemicals sector because of existing sanctions.

Suzanne Maloney of the Brookings Institution think tank described the latest U.S. sanctions as "a natural next step in what I think is a deliberately redundant array of restrictions."

"The administration is banking on the overlapping authorities and obstacles to compound the pressure on the Iranians and create a sense that the entire economy is off limits," she said.

"Only one week was enough to prove American president's claim that he seeks negotiation with Iran was a hollow one."

Zarif lambasts 'conceited interpretation' of Resolution 2231

"Our missiles are not 'designed' for nukes, which we're not developing", Zarif tell Pompeo

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has dismissed a claim by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo about the nature of Iran's missile program.

"Our missiles are not 'designed' for nukes, which we're not developing," Iran's chief diplomat said in a tweet he posted on Friday.

Zarif stated that the U.S. and its allies are in no position to criticize the Islamic Republic's missile program and lashed out at the West for making arms deals with the countries that are killing the Yemeni people.

In an interview with The Washington Times this week, Pompeo said, "The objectives (behind sanctions) are to change the behavior of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ... No terror around the world, no expeditionary terror around the world, put your missile program back inside a set of constraints that had been identified in UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and ... have a permanent commitment not to develop your nuclear program."

The UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed the 2015 nuclear accord between Tehran and world powers, calls on Iran "not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons."

Under the nuclear deal, officially called the JCPOA, Iran undertook to put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for the removal of nuclear-related sanctions imposed against Tehran. However, U.S. President Donald Trump pulled his country out of the JCPOA in May 2018 and re-imposed harsh sanctions against the Islamic Republic in defiance of global criticisms.

The U.S. administration claims that Tehran had violated the JCPOA with a series of



"The US—which violated UNSCR 2231 in withdrawing from JCPOA—or its allies (in violation of its provision on normalizing economic relations w/Iran) are in no position to push a conceited interpretation of its missile provision while pouring weapons into hands that kill Yemenis," Zarif states.

ballistic missiles tests over the past four years.

"The US—which violated UNSCR 2231 in withdrawing from JCPOA—or its allies (in violation of its provision on normalizing economic relations w/Iran) are in no position to push a conceited interpretation of its missile provision while pouring weapons into hands

that kill Yemenis," Zarif said in his tweet.

An American think tank said in April that it has found new data showing U.S. arms deals with Saudi Arabia and the UAE are "dramatically understated" and billions more than previously reported.

The data, collected by arms trade watchdog

Security Assistance Monitor (SAM), shows the U.S. has struck at least \$68.2 billion worth of deals with the two countries since they started their war in Yemen.

Zarif emphasized that the UN Security Council resolution does not enforces any prohibition on Iran's conventional missiles.

French President Emmanuel Macron also on Thursday accused Tehran of making efforts to achieve nuclear arms, saying France and the U.S. both wanted to stop Tehran getting nuclear arms and new talks should focus on curbing its ballistic missiles program and on other issues.

In a Thursday meeting with the U.S. president, Macron listed four common priorities of the U.S. and France in addressing "Iranian behavior": preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, reducing Iran's ballistic activity, containing Iran's regional activity and establishing peace in the region.

However, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Moussavi rejected French calls for wider international talks over its nuclear program and said Macron's comments will be of no help to saving the nuclear deal and will just further deepen distrust among its signatories.

Meanwhile, during a meeting with heads of international news agencies on Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin once again stressed the importance of preserving the multilateral nuclear agreement, saying Moscow does not approve of "what is being done against Iran."

In reaction to Macron's remarks, the Russian leader drew a line between Iran's nuclear and missile programs and said, "Yes, someone may be concerned by Iran's missile programs. But that's a different problem."

With sanctions on, talks offer 'hypocritical': Iranian minister

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran's defense minister has questioned the sincerity of U.S. officials' offer for unconditional negotiations, characterizing the offer as "bogus and hypocritical".

U.S. President Donald Trump and his secretary of state Mike Pompeo have said recently that they are prepared to hold negotiations with Iran "without any preconditions."

Speaking at the Defense Ministry's strategic council meeting on Saturday, Hatami said, "Iran's enemies, particularly the Great Satan America, and the Zionists, seize every opportunity such as explosions in a few ships in Fujairah to level accusations against the Islamic Republic of Iran."

"They have already put tens of conditions unilaterally and illegally against our country. They have exhausted all means such as economic war, sanctions, and political pressure," Hatami said, according to the Iran Students News Agency (ISNA).

Elsewhere in his remarks, the defense chief said "first the Zionists and then America benefit from insecurity in the region."

The defense minister also cited a statement by Leader of the Islamic Revolution who told a large gathering last week that detente with the U.S., which has already



imposed the severest sanctions on Iran, will be "more costly" than resisting it, saying, "We will steadfastly go on resisting and calling for the just. The mischief of the enemies will not make any hindrance against the progress of the Islamic Iran."

On Tuesday, Ayatollah Khamenei warned about the U.S. recourse to political approaches, saying these are aimed at creating the impression that Washington has abandoned subversive measures against the Islamic Republic.

He cited the example of Trump's recent comments in

Japan, where he said he was not pursuing regime change in Iran and that Islamic Republic "has a chance to be a great country with the same leadership."

Addressing participants at the shrine of Imam Khomeini in south Tehran, the Leader said the U.S. president was trying to say that "we are prepared to accept you," but cautioned "this is political shrewdness".

"This does not dupe the Islamic Republic's authorities and the Iranian nation. Americans have to stay away. Wherever America set foot, either war, sedition, exploitation, or imperialism has followed," Ayatollah Khamenei pointed out.

Ayatollah Khamenei advised Washington to mind its own business and set its own house in order, reminding how the U.S. was grappling with high levels of crime, drug, and police brutality that was unmatched anywhere else in the world.

"We ourselves know (better) how to behave and act," the Leader noted.

The Leader, however, noted that what the U.S. president had said in terms of Iran's chances with its sitting leadership was "of course true," but the condition for the Islamic Republic to make progress was that Washington "stay away".

EU mechanism for settlements with Iran failing to gain momentum: Russia's EU envoy

(TASS) — The Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), a European Union's mechanism for financial settlements with Iran, is failing to gain momentum, Russia's Permanent Representative to the European Union Vladimir Chizhov told TASS on Friday.

"The mechanism is in place but so far it has not gained momentum. The only thing it can now boast is that it is finally yielding some deals. But these are deals on food products which are not covered by the sanctions anyway," he said.

"So, it gives no experience of bypassing the sanctions," the Russian diplomat

noted. "Naturally, it is logical to ask: well, if it was created to pay for the goods not falling under the sanctions, then is this mechanism needed at all? My European colleagues keep on telling that this is just the beginning..."

But Iran may run out of patience after all, Chizhov argued. "The Iranian have already given to understand that they may take certain steps and timed this statement to the first anniversary of the United States' withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). But these steps don't go beyond the JCPOA and the announcement

of the reciprocal measures fit into the deal so far," he stressed.

The JCPOA, also known as the Iran nuclear deal, was signed between Iran and six international mediators (the United Kingdom, Germany, China, Russia, the United States, and France) in July 2015. Under the deal, Iran undertook to curb its nuclear activities in exchange of abandonment of the sanctions imposed previously by the United Nations Security Council, the European Union and the United States over its nuclear program.

On May 8, 2018, the United States

unilaterally withdrew from the deal and imposed economic sanctions seeking to stop Iranian oil exports.

On May 8, 2019, or exactly a year after the United States' withdrawal, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani declared he was suspending some of Iran's obligations under the JCPOA. In part, he said that Tehran would resume uranium enrichment and terminate the conversion of the heavy water reactor at Arak, if the signatories to the deal fail to comply with the conditions of the agreement, including those concerning banking and oil trade, within a 60-day deadline.

'Iran to give most crushing response to aggressors even beyond borders'

TEHRAN (FNA) — Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi, the top military aide to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, underscores Iran's high deterrence power, warning enemies of an immediate crushing response in case of any aggression. "We are not the starter of any war and aggression against any country and this has several times been stated by Supreme Leader (Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei who is also commander-in-chief of the Iranian Armed Forces). But if enemies, including the Zionists or the Americans, make a move against us at any level, we have a strong defense and deterrence power too and will hit unimaginable reciprocal blows on them and their interests and military bases," General Rahim Safavi told FNA on Saturday.

He stressed that Iran is stronger than all its 15 neighbors, except Russia, in the military field, and said Tehran and Moscow are coordinated in anti-terrorism fight in Syria and are neighbors via the sea.

General Rahim Safavi explained that in case of an enemy aggression against Iran, "we will inflict the most crushing and most

surprising strikes on them not just in areas around the country but also beyond in the seas", adding that this is the strategy devised by Ayatollah Khamenei for the Armed Forces.

In relevant remarks late last month, Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami reviewed the technological advancements of Iran's defense industry in the face of possible U.S. scenarios against Tehran, reassuring that his country had successfully exhausted all enemies' capacity for various types of warfare.

"A guidance and control system capable of steering a ballistic missile to hit a mobile target is a miracle of technology which is possessed by maybe one or two countries (in the world)," Major General Salami said.

"Twelve years ago it happened," he added, reminding that Iran test-fired a ballistic missile in 2007 which hit a target three times smaller than a U.S. aircraft carrier on the sea. "The aircraft carriers' scenario is over for us," reiterated the commander, reassuring that his country is capable of drowning hostile vessels in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea.



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‘U.S., Israel won’t allow the likes of Saudis to acquire atomic bomb’

POLITICAL **d e s k** TEHRAN — An expert on Middle East affairs believes that the United States and Israel would never allow the likes of Saudi Arabia to acquire nuclear weapons because the Zionist regime wants to be the only superpower and nuclear power in the region.

“I am certain that neither the U.S. nor the Zionist regime would ever allow any other country to reach nuclear weapons,” Seyyed Hadi Seyyed Afghahi said in an interview with the Tehran Times.

Asked whether reports of the major contracts struck between Riyadh and Washington over the former’s nuclear program should be considered worrisome, Seyyed Afghahi said such contracts are merely over Saudi Arabia’s nuclear energy program.

“The Zionist regime wants to be the only superpower and nuclear power in the region. Hence, I highly doubt that the U.S. and the Zionist regime would allow Saudi Arabia or any other Arab country to acquire nuclear weapons.”

He cited Washington’s constant pressure on North Korea over its nuclear weapons as an example that the U.S. would never allow other countries, “let alone Arab ones”, to build atomic bombs.

Seyyed Afghahi also referred to Israel’s bombardment of Iraq’s nuclear facilities as yet another example.

“The reason Israel would not attack Iran is that firstly it is afraid of doing so, and secondly we have brought our nuclear activities under the law,” he reasoned.

■ **‘U.S. would destroy the region if it could’**

The Middle East expert was asked to comment on the defeat of Daesh and Washington’s plan for a post-Daesh Middle East, to which he responded, “The U.S. either wants to destroy the entire region or it wants to at least bring the region under its full control according to its New Middle East plan.”

This has always been Washington’s goal but different administrations have adopted different policies and strategies to reach that end, he explained, adding, “The U.S. would destroy the region if it could.”



“The U.S. aims to weaken the countries of the region, their military, infrastructure and economy through its proxies in order to bring security to Israel.”

■ **‘Syrian government is the final decision-maker’**

Asked about media speculations about disagreements between Tehran and Moscow on Syria, Seyyed Afghahi said, “These are merely rumors and psychological warfare.”

“I’m not saying that our relations with the Russians are ideal. At the strategic level, the two countries’ goals are identical, and the two countries share similar views. But at the tactical level, sometimes there are disagreements between Iran, Russia and Syria,” he remarked.

He then said when there are disagreements between Iran and Russia on the Syrian crisis, Tehran’s stance is much closer to that of Damascus compared to Moscow.

The key point, he said, is that the Syrian government is the final decision-maker “whether we or the Russians propose the solutions.”

According to Seyyed Afghahi, Russia is an international player while Iran is a regional one.

“When Moscow wants to adopt a tactic, it

must take into account ten different things, including the status of the Zionist regime,” he said, adding, “But Iran and Syria do not have such considerations.”

Seyyed Afghahi also rejected rumors of disputes between the Islamic Republic and Syria’s Ba’ath Party, saying Iran’s relations with Syria and the Ba’ath party is “beyond strategic”.

“The Supreme Leader [Ayatollah Khamenei] said in his meeting with Bashar al Assad that Syria is Iran’s strategic depth and Iran is Syria’s strategic depth. It shows how close and intertwined the two countries are.”

“Therefore, we will be beside Syria as long as Bashar al Assad is president and shares the same stance on the Axis of Resistance and the Zionist regime,” he concluded.

■ **‘Iran, Syria relations with Hamas is in detente’**

Asked about the prospects of Tehran-Hamas ties, especially after Yahya Sinwar was named the leader of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, he said the development was a positive step in improvement of relations between Tehran and Hamas.

He pointed out that Iran’s relations with Hamas’s military wing has never been completely cut off, but it was tarnished by some

issues, including the Syrian issue and the stances of Hamas’s political leaders toward regional developments.

Throughout all these years, Hamas’s office in Tehran was never closed, he said.

He also said Khaled Mashal, the former chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau, was playing a negative role in Hamas, adding that the defeat of the U.S. and Zionist-backed terrorists in Syria and also the developments in Egypt, especially the coup against the Muslim Brotherhood, harmed Hamas and caused its leaders to review their stances with regard to regional developments.

Fortunately, when Sinwar became the leader of Hamas and Ismail Haniyeh became the chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau, Hamas’s relations with Iran improved, the expert noted.

“We need Hamas and we do not want to deny that Hamas is the biggest and most popular Jihadi group,” he stated, adding, “Today, Iran and Syria’s relations with Hamas is in detente.”

■ **‘Abbas either imprisons Jihadis or hands them to Israel’**

On Ayatollah Khamenei’s emphasis on the necessity of resistance in the West Bank, Seyyed Afghahi said, “The Leader has said the West Bank needs to be armed. He has not said this as an order to Hamas, but a moral obligation that anyone should fulfil.”

“With the West Bank being armed, the heavy burden that has been put on Hamas’s shoulders will be lightened,” he asserted.

“A few armed acts have occurred in the West Bank but not to a large extent, because the West Bank is under the rule of Mahmoud Abbas while there’s total freedom of action in Gaza since it is in the hands of Hamas and other Jihadi groups.”

Seyyed Afghahi went on to strongly criticize Abbas, saying he either imprisons the Jihadis in his prisons or hands them over to the Zionist regime or gives information to the Zionist regime so that it assassinate them.

He also said despite these issues, promising moves have been made in the West Bank, especially after the U.S. embassy relocation to al-Quds.

Abe’s Iran visit can highlight U.S. diplomatic isolation on nuclear deal: senior analyst

Kaveh L. Afrasiabi, the writer of “Iran Nuclear Accord and the Remaking of the Middle East”, says Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe who plans to visit Tehran on June 12-13 to mediate between the United States and Iran “can highlight U.S. diplomatic isolation” on the 2015 nuclear deal, which President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew his country from it and reimposed sanctions on Iran.

Writing a commentary in the Lobe Log on Friday, Afrasiabi, who has taught at the University of Tehran and Boston University, suggests: “If Washington is serious about giving Abe a chance with his Iran initiative, it must not only shift from sticks to carrots but move more fundamentally away from a confrontation strategy, centered on a regime change in Iran, to one of peaceful coexistence and détente.”

Following is the text of the article titled “Shinzo Abe’s crucial Iran visit”:

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will visit Tehran next week to mediate between the United States and Iran, taking center stage in one of the most vexing global issues today threatening international peace and security. Although this is the first official Tehran visit by a Japanese prime minister since 1978, Abe is no stranger to Iran’s leaders and, in fact, has met Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani on several occasions on the sidelines of UN gatherings in New York. Prior to President Trump’s lavish Tokyo visit last month, Abe met Iran’s Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and then openly broached the idea of going to Iran. Trump subsequently embraced this idea, pointing to Abe’s relationship with Iran’s leaders and, simultaneously, dialing back his “regime change” objective and suggesting that the United States can find a modus vivendi with the “existing leaders.” Since then, the Trump administration has offered to engage in direct talks with Iran “without preconditions,” a move rejected by Tehran as tactical “wordplay.” At the same time, both Rouhani and Zarif have mentioned U.S. “respect” for Iran as one of the principal preconditions for U.S.-Iran talks, thus leaving the door for diplomacy ajar. Zarif’s deputy, Abbas Araghchi, who has also served as Iran’s ambassador to Japan, has welcomed Abe’s intervention as potentially easing tensions in the region.

Abe is not the only political leader seeking to act as interlocutor between Tehran and Washington. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has been in Bellinzona, Switzerland, which represents U.S. interests in Iran, reportedly to enlist his hosts for a “limited dialogue” with Iran. But what can Abe and others possibly achieve when the Trump administration is hammering Iran with relentless economic warfare and Iran completely distrusts the current U.S. administration, particularly after it unilaterally exited the Iran nuclear deal? After all, Iran has signaled that no direct talks with the United States is possible unless Washington reverses itself on economic sanctions, which is highly unlikely if Trump can’t point to significant Iranian concessions to U.S. demands.

Abe’s advantage is that his government, while a key U.S. ally, has nonetheless shown vital signs of independence on various Middle East issues. For example, Japan distanced itself from the U.S. recognition of Israel’s annexation of the Golan Heights and refused to follow Washington’s lead when it relocated its embassy to Jerusalem. Equally important, Japan has sided with Europe in defense of the Iran nuclear deal.

From Tehran’s vantage point, Abe’s visit, in addition to conferring legitimacy on the Iranian government, can highlight U.S. diplomatic isolation on the nuclear issue, particularly in light of the repeated International Atomic Energy Agency



Given Japan’s heavy reliance on Middle East oil—which accounts for 80 percent of Japan’s oil imports—Tokyo has a vested interest in Persian Gulf stability, which has been rocked by the recent escalation of tensions between Iran and the United States.

confirmation that Iran has faithfully observed its obligations under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). However, Abe’s intervention in this complicated diplomatic quagmire might backfire, fueling criticism at home that he has jeopardized U.S.-Japan relations at a time of rising tensions in the Pacific and around the Korean Peninsula. This mission offers both opportunities and risks for Abe, who may wish to play a more prominent conflict-management role beyond Iran if successful in this Iran trip. Given Japan’s heavy reliance on Middle East oil—which accounts for 80 percent of Japan’s oil imports—Tokyo has a vested interest in Persian Gulf stability, which has been rocked by the recent escalation of tensions between Iran and the United States.

On the positive side, Abe’s Iran visit may create an off-ramp alternative for the current U.S.-Iran standoff through deft and imaginative diplomacy that elicits compromises from both sides. This would bode well for Iran-Japan economic relations as well, which surged in the post-JCPOA environment with an investment treaty in 2016 before experiencing a decline due to U.S. sanctions. That investment treaty, which laid the groundwork for possible Japanese investment in Iran’s energy and non-energy sectors, could be implemented given a breakthrough in the U.S.-Iran dispute.

Yet, on the negative side, Abe’s initiative could bolster Washington’s tactic of playing the peace card without relinquishing any essential element of its coercive diplomacy. Iran’s concern is that the Trump administration might be bluffing with its recent olive branches and could use a “failed” Abe’s mission to its advantage by painting Iran, reeling under U.S. sanctions, as rigid and inflexible. For some headline Tehran politicians and pundits, such as the editors of the conservative daily Kayhan, the United States is on the war path with Iran, similar to the run-up to the Iraq War, and

wants to claim that it exhausted all the diplomatic chances of a peaceful resolution of tensions with Iran’s theocratic rulers.

Indeed, the Trump administration has shown no sign of stepping back from its strategy of maximum pressure, which has resulted in a substantial loss of Iran’s oil export market, much of which has been picked up by Saudi Arabia, which has increased production to stabilize the oil market. Unless Abe succeeds in convincing the Trump administration to ease U.S. sanctions—for instance, by renewing the oil exemptions for countries such as Japan, South Korea, and India—Tehran will not likely take Trump’s offer of dialogue seriously. Brian Hook, the State Department’s point man on Iran, has been sending contradictory signals on the issue of oil exemptions, which suggests that the administration is unclear about its next Iran steps.

If Washington is serious about giving Abe a chance with his Iran initiative, it must not only shift from sticks to carrots but move more fundamentally away from a confrontation strategy, centered on a regime change in Iran, to one of peaceful coexistence and détente. Iran has been offering a “non-aggression pact” to Saudi Arabia and other GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) states, which could be extended as well to the American patron state of these oil sheikdoms. An important prerequisite for such a paradigm shift is a more nuanced U.S. policy toward Saudi Arabia, which enjoys unprecedented Washington backing for an aggressive regional policy that has alienated some of its Arab neighbors, including Qatar. A more balanced U.S. Persian Gulf policy is a sine qua non for de-confliction and a return of stability to a volatile region on the precipice of yet another calamitous war. Abe’s intervention could prove pivotal in tilting the United States toward just such a balanced relationship with the Persian Gulf states including Iran.

Europe trying hard to de-escalate Iran-U.S. tensions: Germany



POLITICAL **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said on Saturday that the European countries are doing their best to de-escalate tensions between Iran and the United States.

Addressing a meeting in Baghdad, Maas highlighted the importance of defusing tensions and inviting all parties to maintain peace and exercise self-restraint, IRNA reported.

He warned that miscalculations, misunderstandings and provocative acts will lead to unpredictable ramifications.

Escalation of tensions over the past few weeks has made European countries to take action in order to clear up misunderstandings and defuse tensions, he stated.

He went on to say that the Iran nuclear deal is worth attempting to be preserved.

Maas was scheduled to hold meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi and President Barham Salih to find ways out of the current critical conditions.

According to Germany’s Foreign Ministry, Maas and his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif, are slated to hold a meeting in Tehran on Monday.

Maas’s visit is an indication of the decision made by Berlin, Paris and London for preserving the nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Earlier, in an interview with IRNA, Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said, “The German foreign minister will meet with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif and President Hassan Rouhani, during his one-day tour to Iran.”

The spokesman also said that bilateral relations between Iran and Germany, regional and international developments and the nuclear agreement, are among the topics to be discussed during his trip to Iran.

Brazilian VP and Iranian ambassador hold talks, discuss ways for close co-op

POLITICAL **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Ambassador to Brasilia Seyyed Ali Saghaiyan met with Brazilian Vice President Hamilton Mourao on Friday to discuss a host of issues, including bilateral ties.

During the meeting, the two sides expressed satisfaction with the status of relations between the two countries and explored the available venues for expanding the cooperation between the two nations in various economic and cultural fields, the Mehr news agency reported.

Referring to 116-year-old relations between Iran and Brazil, Mourao described Iran as a country that enjoys thousands of years of civilization and the main player in the West Asia region.

He also highlighted the Brazilian government’s strong will for preserving bilateral ties with Iran.

Brazil has been one of the supporters of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, backing the Islamic Republic in the face of the U.S. hostile policies and reimposition of sanctions.

The two countries enjoy a fair share of trade in different economic sectors. The volume of trade between Iran and Brazil stood at \$2.5 billion in 2018.

Former Qatari PM urges normal ties with Iran



➔ “Qatar had a very different position on Syria than Iran, which supported President Assad. When the Saudi embassy in Tehran was attacked by the demonstrators in 2016, Qatar withdrew its ambassador from Iran in solidarity with Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.”

“If you go to the UAE, the official figure is a few billion dollars, but informally, 10 or 20 billion dollars are exchanged between Iran and the UAE in terms of oil,” he said. “This is not done by Qatar, but by the UAE, which accuses us of terrorism with Iran.”

He also criticized Saudi Arabia for its accusations of terrorism and the kingdom’s share of responsibility for the Syrian crisis.

“This wound is deep, meaning the [Persian] Gulf province of his country, harming both sides. There are families that have been divided between the two countries, and there are brothers who cannot see each other, mothers who cannot see children, and children who cannot see the parents.”

On June 5, 2017, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt severed ties with Qatar and imposed a blockade on it, claiming Doha supports terrorism. Doha denies this and accuses the quartet of seeking to impose its guardianship over its national decision.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	226888.3
IFX	28960.03

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,628 rials
GBP	53,508 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$63.29/b
WTI	\$53.99/b
OPEC Basket	\$60.88/b
Gold	\$1,342.00/oz
Silver	\$15.07oz
Platinum	\$809.65/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Monthly loading, unloading rises 5% at Imam Khomeini Port yr/yr



ECONOMY **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Loading and unloading of commodities at Iran's Imam Khomeini Port, in southwestern Khuzestan Province, rose five percent during the second month of the current Iranian calendar year (April 21-May 21) compared to the same month of the past year. Tasnim news agency reported.

As reported, some 3.944 million tons of goods were loaded or unloaded at this port in the mentioned month, while the figure was 3.75 million tons in the same month of the previous year.

Of the mentioned amount of goods loaded or unloaded at Imam Khomeini Port in the second month of this year, 1.77 million tons were basic commodities, 187,776 tons were metal products, 456,483 tons were constructional materials, 232,000 tons were machineries, 458.98 tons were fertilizers and chemical materials, 46,869 tons were garments, leather products, paper and wood products and 937,643 tons were oil products.

South Africa: Economic contraction a serious threat

The “shocking contraction of the country’s economic growth of -3,2% for the first quarter of this year is much worse than the general expectations and it is the first clear indication that the economy will fall into a deep recession this year from which it will not easily recover again,” says Fanie Brink, an independent agricultural economist.

As freshplaza.com stated, according to Statistics SA, the economic growth rate has been the weakest since the first quarter of 2009, when the country’s economic growth has weakened by 6,1% mainly due to the pressure of the global financial crisis and poses a very serious threat to the development and prosperity for all the people and the country.

The “chances that growth for the first quarter of this year is likely to be the smallest quarterly contraction still to come should not be underestimated because the ANC government is still clinging to its socialist and communist policies which will finally destroy the economy and the country within the next 5 years,” according to Brink.

■ **The biggest single problem**

The biggest single problem with the economy in South Africa is the fact that the ANC government totally rejected capitalism after 1994 and embraced a mixed socialist and communist ideology that can only destroy economic growth. This was the starting point for the destruction of economic growth as clearly demonstrated over the past couple of years and the main reason why the government will not be able to rescue the weakening economy. In contrast, a market-oriented capitalist economic system is still the most successful economic system around the world today.

The redistribution of the country’s assets, potential economic growth and prosperity will not solve the problems of inequality, poverty and unemployment, as it will only be a short-term solution until everything is consumed and digested, which will only increase these problems further.

The “general appeal to the Reserve Bank now to lower its lending rate to stimulate economic growth will make no difference to the economy because it is, together with the claims that its monetary policy can keep the inflation rate contained and protect the exchange rate, the single biggest delusion in economic science.

Hopefully, the president, Cyril Ramaphosa, will now also begin to understand that the agricultural industry, which performed the worst of all industries with a growth rate of -13.2% in the first quarter, cannot be the industry with the highest economic growth and higher employment expectations. There is also no possibility that the agricultural industry can create a million new jobs as suggested by the National Development Plan.

The “possibility that land expropriation without compensation will totally destroy the agricultural industry and the economy with a huge loss of employment is a very serious threat to the development and prosperity of the country and its people,” Brink said.

‘Iran to maintain metal exports despite U.S. sanction’

I → “We won’t also have any problems regarding the supply for the domestic consumption in the current year,” he added.

Asked about foreign investment in the industry, the official noted that currently near \$1 billion of investment is required for equipping new mines and overhauling some equipment in old ones and over \$400 million is also required in exploration and research sectors.

“We hope that both foreign and domestic investors take the chance to enter this lucrative industry,” he added.

Mentioning some of the ministry’s incentive programs for encouraging exports, Sarqini stated, “In close cooperation with the customs administration, the industry ministry has significantly moderated the base-prices for metals and minerals in order to ensure the exporters.”

■ **Mining industry productive and lively**

The official further noted that the ministry also plans to revive over 500 of the country’s small mines which have been dormant due



to financial or technical issues.

“Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) has been selected as the operator of this program and the organization is following the plans closely,” he said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Sarqini mentioned the positive and upward trend of the mining industry’s production, saying, “The mining sector has witnessed a constant rise

in production levels in the past few years and we intend to keep this trend in the years to come.”

The official put the mining industry’s production level at 460 million tons for the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) and expressed hope that the output for the industry will reach 500 million tons by the end of the current year.

“Based on our studies and new explorations’ data, it is expected that the country’s iron ore and copper resources would double in the upcoming years,” the official said.

■ **Mining sector to inject \$2 billion to NIMA**

Asked about the re-injection of exports revenues into the country’s financial cycle, Sarqini noted that in the past Iranian calendar year, the mining sector injected \$1.5 billion of foreign currencies into the country’s Forex Management Integrated System (locally known as NIMA).

“This year we expect the mining sector to, at least, bring back \$2 billion to NIMA,” he added.

Tax income up 22% in 2 months on year

Omid-Ali Parsa appointed new head of INTA

ECONOMY **d e s k** **TEHRAN**— Iran’s tax revenues increased 22 percent in the first two-month of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-May 21) from the same period of time in the previous year, Mehr news agency reported quoting an official with Iran’s National Tax Administration (INTA).

Speaking in a Saturday ceremony to introduce Omid-Ali Parsa, as the new head of INTA, Mohammad-Qasem Panahi, who acted as the acting head of INTA before Parsa appointed to his new post, said the country collected 150 trillion rials (about \$3.571 billion) of taxes during the two-month period of this year.

He said if this trend continues, the annual target of collecting 1.4 quadrillion rials (about \$33.333 billion) of tax in the current year will be materialized.

Iran managed to collect 1.09 quadrillion rials (about \$25.952 billion) of tax revenues during the past Iranian calendar year of 1397 (ended on March 20, 2019), showing that the country’s annual tax income plan has come true by 97 percent, Panahi has previously announced.

He said the country had planned to earn 1.13 quadrillion rials (about \$26.904 billion) of tax incomes in the past year, IRNA reported.

The official further put direct taxes collected in the past year at 640 trillion rials (about \$15.238 billion), showing that the planned figure has come true by 101 percent and



Omid-Ali Parsa, the new head of Iran's National Tax Administration

also showing 15 percent growth year on year.

He also put the revenues earned from taxes on the goods and services at 450 trillion rials (about \$10.714 billion), indicating that the planned figure has been materialized

by 91 percent and also showing 11 percent rise year on year.

As announced by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), Iran’s tax income rose 14.1 percent during Iranian calendar year of 1396 (ended on March 20, 2018) to reach 1.15 quadrillion rials (about \$27.38 billion).

The Iranian government earns budget from various sources including the revenues and offering capital assets and divesting financial assets to the private sector.

President Hassan Rouhani’s economic strategy is to significantly reduce the government’s dependency on oil and instead collect tax more systematically.

Speaking in the inaugural ceremony of the 12th edition of Iran’s Conference of Tax and Fiscal Policies, which was held at Shahid Beheshti University’s conference center in Tehran on late February, the event’s Secretary Yadollah Dadgar mentioned the small share of taxes in Iran’s annual budget saying that according to the latest statistics, the share of taxes in the country’s budget is only nine percent while in most other countries this share is more than 17 percent.

In the 17.03 quadrillion rials (about \$405 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) budget bill for Iran’s current Iranian year, oil income is estimated at 1.425 quadrillion rials (about \$34 billion) with 410 trillion rials (about \$9.7 billion) rise year on year and tax income is projected to be 1.53 quadrillion rials (about \$36.5 billion).

“Redundant” sanctions vs. “resilient” economy

I → “For oil the ways of selling and the costumers are specific and limited but that is not the case with petrochemicals. There are hundreds of holdings which are eager for buying our diverse petrochemical products”, Behzad Mohammadi noted.

It is also worth mentioning that Iran had predicted this new sanctions and NPC was already exploring new ways of keeping its petrochemical exports in flow.

“We are holding meetings with our customers to explore various aspects of possible impacts of the U.S. sanctions on our trade”, Mohammadi had told the Tehran Times in a press conference on the sidelines of the 24th Iran International, Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition (Iran Oil Show 2019).

In late April, General Secretary of Iran’s Association of Petrochemical Industry Corporation (APIC) Ahmad Mahdavi Abhari said that U.S. sanctions were not going to

have any significant impact on Iran’s petrochemical industry.

■ **U.S. propaganda, Iranian petchem investments and exports**

For long, Iran’s petrochemical industry has been one of the most attractive areas for foreign investors and despite all U.S. efforts, foreign companies are already trying to get a share in the country’s petrochemical projects.

In late May, NPC’s Director for Investment Hossein Alimorad said “Despite all the current negative propaganda since the withdrawal of the United States from the nuclear deal, foreign companies, especially Asians, are still willing to cooperate with us considering advantages of the Iranian petrochemical industry.”

The official noted that currently a consortium comprising foreign partners is in talks with NPC for investment in some significant projects.

“The government is also taking all the necessary measures to facilitate the process of such investments and the companies which are going to invest in Iran surely have their own mechanisms for countering U.S. sanctions,” he said.

Iran is also offering a variety of petrochemical products at the country’s Energy Stock Market (IRENEX), as a new strategy to counter U.S. efforts to boost the pressure on the country’s economy.

Tehran has also reputedly stated that it is fully prepared to sell its oil in a “gray market”, and that could be also applicable to the petrochemical industry as well.

Petrochemical industry is one of the most important pillars of Iran’s economy and one of the main suppliers of foreign currency especially euro for the country.

Iran is currently producing near 63 million tons of petrochemical products annually



and with several new projects underway, the number is expected to jump over 65 million tons, further cementing the Islamic Republic’s stance as a major petrochemical supplier to the world markets.

Weak U.S. employment report raises red flag on economy

U.S. job growth slowed sharply in May and wages rose less than expected, raising fears that a loss of momentum in economic activity could be spreading to the labor market, which could put pressure on the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates this year.

According to japantimes.co.jp, the broad cool-off in hiring reported by the Labor Department on Friday was before a recent escalation in trade tensions between the United States and two of its major trading partners, China and Mexico. Analysts have warned the trade fights could undermine the economy, which will celebrate 10 years of expansion next month, the longest on record.

Adding a sting to the closely watched employment report, far fewer jobs were created in March and April than previously reported, indicating that hiring had shifted into a lower gear. The labor market thus far has been largely resilient to the trade war with China.

“Today’s report makes a cut more likely, and supports our view that the trade tensions will ultimately slow growth enough for the Fed to respond in September and December with cuts,” said Joseph Song, an economist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch in New York.

■ **Job gains dropped**

Nonfarm payrolls increased by 75,000 jobs last month, the government said. It was the second time this year that job gains dropped below 100,000. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast payrolls rising by 185,000 jobs last month. Job growth in March and April was revised down by 75,000.

U.S. President Donald Trump in early May slapped additional tariffs of up to 25 percent on \$200 billion of Chinese goods, which prompted retaliation by Beijing. Last week, Trump said he would impose a tariff on all goods from Mexico to force authorities in that country to stop immigrants from Central America from crossing the border into the United States.

Talks to prevent the duties from kicking in at 5 percent on June 10 continue. Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said on Tuesday the U.S. central bank was closely monitoring the implications of the trade tensions on the economy and would “act as appropriate to sustain the expansion.”

Trump, who has routinely tweeted about the strong labor market, made no comment about May’s weak hiring, but defended duties on Chinese goods. White House economic adviser Kevin Hassett told Fox Business Network that bad weather in the Midwest was to blame and described the meager job gains as a “little bit of a blip down.”

Economists, however, said there was nothing to suggest the weather was the culprit.

The “weakness in job growth was broadly experienced across industry groups and not obviously driven by distortions such as weather or strikes,” said Michael Feroli, an economist at JPMorgan in New York.

U.S. House of Representative Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat, said the employment report was a “disturbing sign that the administration’s disastrous special interest agenda is hollowing out our economy.”

Following the report financial markets priced in a rate

cut as early as July and two more later this year. Economists, however, believe the Fed will probably wait for more signs of labor market weakness and clarity on the trade issues before easing monetary policy. Fed officials are due to meet on June 18-19.

“Fed officials are likely to remain cautious at the June meeting and keep all their options open,” said Michael Hanson, head of global macro strategy at TD Securities in New York.

The dollar fell to a 2½-month low against a basket of currencies, while U.S. Treasury prices rose. Stocks on Wall Street were trading higher.

Last month’s slowdown in job gains, however, probably understates the labor market’s health as layoffs remain low.

Employment gains over the last three months have averaged 151,000, above the roughly 100,000 needed per month to keep up with growth in the working-age population. In the four months since the first hiccup in hiring appeared in February, however, monthly payrolls gains have averaged just 127,000, the slowest pace over a comparable stretch in nearly seven years.

Some of the weakness in hiring could be because of worker shortages, especially in the construction, transportation and manufacturing sectors. But the worker shortage argument is somewhat undercut by moderate wage growth.

Average hourly earnings grew just 3.1 percent year-over-year, the slowest annual increase since September. Just three months earlier, wages had been rising at their fastest rate in a decade but gains have moderated since.

NIOC sells 1.085m barrels of oil, condensate in 17 offerings at IRENEX

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — National Iranian Oil Company could sell 1.085 million barrels of crude oil, both light and heavy, and also gas condensate through 17 offerings at Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) during the past seven months since offering these products kicked off at Iranian stock market, Shana reported.

Since the U.S.'s withdrawal 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 the 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 country's stock market.

NIOC offered light 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.

NIOC has so far offered light oil through 10 offerings at the IRENEX.

Offering gas condensate at IRENEX came after the successful offering of crude oil at this market. The product has been already offered at the IRENEX in five rounds. The first offering was done on February 13, which failed to attract customers.

And then the turn came to heavy crude. Offering heavy crude at IRENEX came after NIOC offered light crude at this stock market in eight round.

Iranian National Oil Company sold 70,000 barrels of heavy crude oil at IRENEX for the first time on April 30. In the first round one million barrels of heavy crude was offered at a base price of \$60.68.

Heavy crude offering has been held two times at IRENEX so far.

OPEC close to extending output cut deal

OPEC is close to reaching an agreement to extend the production cut deal beyond its current expiry date at the end of June, Khalid al-Falih, the energy minister of OPEC's largest producer and de facto leader, Saudi Arabia, said on Friday.

According to oilprice.com, "on the OPEC side, a rollover is almost in the bag. The question is to calibrate with non-OPEC," Reuters quoted al-Falih as saying at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in Russia on Friday.

"I'm hoping it will be an easy decision and that we'll roll over, but if it's not, we will be flexible in terms of our position in the kingdom," al-Falih said.

OPEC and its Russia-led non-OPEC allies are withholding a total of 1.2 million bpd of oil supply from the market until the end of June and are set to meet in coming weeks to discuss how to proceed with their oil supply management



policies in place since the start of 2017.

The oil price slide of the past two weeks leaves OPEC and its partners little choice but to roll over the cuts, analysts say.

After a meeting with Russia's Energy Minister Alexander Novak, Saudi Arabia's al-Falih said on Friday that he

was sure that the larger OPEC+ group would roll over the production cuts through the end of this year.

There won't be a need to deepen the cuts, while the situation with oil supply in Iran, Venezuela, and other countries will show if OPEC and allies need to scale back the cuts a "little bit," al-Falih said, as carried by Bloomberg.

Earlier this week, al-Falih sought to assure the oil market that the Saudis and the larger OPEC+ group would do whatever it takes to bring supply and demand to balance.

Saudi Arabia and Russia, the respective leaders of the OPEC and non-OPEC groups part of the production cut deal, have been allies in oil market management for more than two years now, although the Saudis need oil prices at \$85 to balance their budget, while Russia claims that it's fine with the current price of oil at \$60-65.

European oil majors brave sanctions risk to sign new energy-cooperation deals with Russia

By Rosemary Griffin

European oil majors including Shell and OMV signed new cooperation deals with Russian energy companies during the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum this week, in a sign that they were willing to make new investments despite risks of potential new sanctions.

Since 2014 when the U.S. and other Western countries introduced sanctions against Russia, Russian energy companies have operated with limited access to Western financing and some type of oil production technology.

This had made Western majors more cautious about signing up to new investments, with some companies winding down cooperation that could be in breach of sanctions.

Cooperation on conventional hydrocarbons projects continues to grow, however. Deals signed this week included Shell, Gazprom Neft and Spain's Repsol agreeing to jointly

develop hydrocarbons projects in the Russian Arctic. This followed an agreement Thursday between Shell and Gazprom Neft to set up a West Siberian oil joint venture to develop fields with combined estimated reserves of more than 8 billion barrels.

Other deals included Austria's OMV agreeing to purchase terms for a stake in a gas project in northern Russia, as well as a preliminary LNG deal with Russian gas giant Gazprom.

Shell projects

There are also signs that Russian and Western companies are considering to increase cooperation in other countries.

Gazprom Neft CEO Alexander Dyukov said the company may work with Shell on projects abroad. Meanwhile, Total and Siemens agreed to cooperate on an LNG project in Vietnam with Russia's Novatek and Zarubezhneft.

The CEOs of ExxonMobil and BP also took

part in the forum, meeting with Russian officials and discussing cooperation with existing partners. The deals come at a time when some analysts believe that the risk of new sanctions being introduced against Russia has receded.

"Targeted U.S. sanctions against Russia remain possible, from issues ranging from Sergei Skripal, to Ukraine, to U.S. election interference. However, the lack of major new revelations regarding Russia in the Mueller report reduces the odds of major sectoral sanctions targeting Russia's upstream energy production," Platts Analytics' Paul Sheldon said.

In the past, Russia's close relationship with Iran and Venezuela sparked speculation that the U.S. administration's sanctions targeting those two countries could include secondary sanctions against Russian energy projects.

Russian upstream oil

"Secondary sanctions related to Russian

dealings with PDVSA or Iran, if announced or implemented, would be unlikely to target Russian upstream oil production at this point," Sheldon said.

Russian officials also used the forum as a platform to warn of the impact of sanctions. Energy minister Alexander Novak said that sanctions are leading to increased interest in establishing alternative payment systems and switching to trading in national currency.

A key concern among Russian officials is that future U.S. sanctions against the country could restrict Russian companies' access to the U.S. dollar. Since they first started testing the viability of using alternative currencies in the wake of sanctions in 2014, rising global trade tensions, most notably between the U.S. and China, have made some of its major partners more receptive to non-dollar trade.

(Source: spglobal.com)

OMV to pay Gazprom \$1 billion for stake in Siberian gas field

OMV agreed on Friday to pay 905 million euros (\$1 billion) to Russia's Gazprom for a stake in a Siberian gas field, as part of the Austrian firm's strategy to boost its gas business.

As per energyeconomictimes.indiatimes.com, OMV Chief Executive Rainer Seele is banking on a sharp rise in demand for natural gas as a low-emission alternative to oil in power generation and heavy transport including trucks.

OMV's planned purchase of 24.98% of the Achimov IV and V phase developments at the Urengoy gas field is also part in OMV's strategy to focus production in low-cost countries.

The Austrian firm also said Gazprom would supply it with 1.2 billion cubic meters of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in 2020.

The companies plan to work together on conventional and small-scale LNG cargo projects and have agreed to "explore options for the joint development of small-scale LNG infrastructure projects," OMV said.



Reliable gas supplies

"We have been receiving reliable gas supplies from Russia for more than 50 years, now we are extending our cooperation to LNG," said Seele. "This will contribute to the diversification of sources of supply and help us safeguard security of supply in Europe."

OMV has a stake at the LNG terminal in Rotterdam, but that has not been a key focus for the company so far.

Production at the Achimov blocks is forecast to start next year. In 2026, the fields are expected to generate more than 80,000 barrels of oil

equivalent per day (boe/d).

OMV's other Russian gas asset, a stake in the Yuzhno Russkoye field, currently delivers around 100,000 boe/d, but that is expected to decrease in coming years.

OMV produced 474,000 boe/d in the first quarter, more than 20 percent of it in Russia. It has a production target of 600,000 boe/d by 2025.

OMV said its total investment in the Achimov blocks is expected to amount to 950 million euros up to the end of 2044.

Seele started negotiating access to the giant Urengoy gas field in 2015.

A year later, he signed an agreement to swap some of OMV's Norwegian assets for the Achimov stake, but the plan fell through last year amid resistance from Norway and OMV decided to buy the stake.

The transaction still requires approval from OMV's supervisory board, an agreement with Gazprom on the final documents, and regulatory approvals, OMV said. The deal is expected to be finalized by the end of this year.

The Conseil d'Etat approves the Saint-Nazaire offshore wind farm operating permit

EDF Renewables, a subsidiary of the EDF Group, and Enbridge, a North American energy infrastructure company, are delighted with the ruling by the Conseil d'Etat, France's supreme administrative court. It brings to a close the appeal against the Saint-Nazaire offshore wind farm project's operating permit.

According to ewwind.es, this ruling is a further endorsement of the robustness of the project led by the Eolien Maritime France company (EMF) jointly controlled by EDF Renewables and Enbridge.

All the administrative permits required for the construction and operational phases of the project are now secured.

EMF has won the competitive bidding for the three offshore wind farm projects at Courseulles-sur-Mer, Fécamp and Saint-Nazaire in 2012 when the French government launched its first call for tenders in the sector. The future 480 MW



offshore wind farm will generate the equivalent of 20% of Loire-Atlantique department demand for electricity. It will make a significant contribution towards the French government's objective of generating 32% of the electricity it consumes from renewable sources by 2030.

The project was developed with highly extensive environmental studies and wide-ranging consultation over more than 10 years by EDF Renewables and its partners in the area – local authorities, the region's population, sea users and chiefly fishing professionals, environmental organizations, and local economic and social development agencies.

The Conseil d'Etat ruling will enable EDF Renewables and Enbridge to make progress with the project financing process before the investment is given its final go-ahead.

Bruno Bensasson, EDF Group's Senior Executive Vice President, Renewable Energies

and Chairman & CEO of EDF Renewables, commented: "The 'Conseil d'Etat's decision is a ringing endorsement of the robust groundwork undertaken by EDF Renewables' and Enbridge's teams which have been working for 10 years with professionalism, openness and dedication on bringing the Saint-Nazaire offshore wind project through to fruition. I also wish to salute the backing for the project we received from the local parties. It allowed us to be ready to open the way for marine renewable energies to take shape in France. It will deliver a boost to the local economy. This landmark project fits perfectly with the EDF Group's Cap 2030 strategy of doubling its worldwide renewable energy capacity in operation by 2030. We hope that it will be the first step towards an accelerated growth trajectory for offshore wind energy in France in the framework of the PPE (multianual energy program)."

Second Announcement											
 N.I.O.C 1398.1500		 National Iranian Drilling Company									
Call for public tender (First/Second publish) Two Stages (semi compressed) tender Subject of Tender: (CASING & TUBING PIPES)											
Tender descriptions:											
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>The Tender holder</th> <th>Registration No. through national electronic tendering system</th> <th>Tender No. /Indent No.</th> <th>Estimated value (Rial/Euro)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>National Iranian Drilling Company</td> <td>3,203,273</td> <td>TenderNo. PFP/NAFT.SH/98/001 Indent No: 48-22-9822005</td> <td>43,522,000,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)	National Iranian Drilling Company	3,203,273	TenderNo. PFP/NAFT.SH/98/001 Indent No: 48-22-9822005	43,522,000,000	Qualitative evaluation of tenderers		
The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)								
National Iranian Drilling Company	3,203,273	TenderNo. PFP/NAFT.SH/98/001 Indent No: 48-22-9822005	43,522,000,000								
Method Based on minimum scoring (60) made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers' pre-qualification forms.											
1. The tenderers who have more than four (4) active contracts with NIDC are not allowed to attend in this tender. 2. The tenderers who have more than two (2) active contracts with same subject (exactly compliance with this subject) with NIDC are not allowed to attend in this tender.											
Purchasing & Submitting											
TenderDocumentDistribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof.										
Distribution Place	A) Hall No. 316, 3th floor, Foreign Procurement Dept. (DRILLING PROJECTS), National Iranian Drilling Company, After Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. 06134148329 B) jomhuri street , yaghma alley nioc 8th building floor no : 04 room no 428 -tehran -iran. 02166700249										
Submitting Method	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount ofIranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. Of Iran Central Bank. Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.										
DocumentsReceivingMethod	Closing date	14 Days after the last time of Purchasing.									
	Address	H Hall NO 107,1st floor,Tender committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569									
Tender Guarantee											
Value of guarantee	2,792,000,000 Rial/ 59,594 Euro										
Type of guarantee	• ✓ Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. • ✓ Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636(Shaba No. IR350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran. • "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.										
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for onetime in initial validity duration.										
(Name of department) More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir http://sapp.ir/nidc-pr تهران تایمز نوبت اول ۱۸/۳/۹۸ نوبت دوم ۱۹/۳/۹۸											

Biden analyzes American polls

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — Joe Biden is still determined to be present at the final stage of the 2020 presidential election. Undoubtedly, former US Vice President Joe Biden is one of the famous Democrat candidates in the 2020 presidential election. After the Biden official announcement of the 2020 presidential election, many Democrat voters prefer to vote for Biden from him and other party candidates. That's what Biden has made clear to his victory in the Democratic primaries. He is now focusing on the final competition with President Donald Trump of the United States.

As The Hill reported, Former Vice President Joe Biden holds an 11-point lead over the rest of the Democratic presidential primary field as he continues to outpace his opponents, according to a new survey released Thursday. Roughly 27 percent of those surveyed who say they will vote in their states Democratic presidential primary or caucus said Biden is their first choice, according to the Economist-YouGov poll. Another 16 percent said Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) is their first choice and 11 percent preferred Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.).

No other candidate breaks double digits in the survey. The poll did show New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio (D), who announced his presidential bid last month, receiving 2 percent of respondents votes as their first choice, a notable rise from previous polling. Biden emerged as the top choice among male and female Democratic primary and caucus voters, as well as those who identified as white, black and Hispanic. He topped his competition among older voters above the age of 45, though he was beaten by Sanders among younger voters aged 18-44 as the Vermont senator continues to energize the party's young progressive flank.

Biden holds a 12-point lead over the rest of the field when the voters are asked which contenders they would consider supporting and were allowed to pick more than one candidate. About 53 percent of voters would consider backing Biden with 41 percent saying they would weigh backing Warren. Another 40 percent would consider supporting Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) and 39 percent would mull voting for Sanders. Biden and Sanders had consistently finished first and second in national and state polls prior to Thursday's survey. The polling comes as the former vice president faces a string of recent criticisms from some Democrats.

Biden drew the ire of several of his 2020 opponents and abortion rights groups after his campaign



After the Biden official announcement of the 2020 presidential election, many Democrat voters prefer to vote for Biden from him and other party candidates. That's what Biden has made clear to his victory in the Democratic primaries. He is now focusing on the final competition with President Donald Trump of the United States.

confirmed his support for the Hyde amendment, which prevents government health care programs like Medicaid from paying for abortions except in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the woman. Biden was also criticized after it was revealed his camp lifted passages from other sources for his education and climate platforms. The Economist-YouGov poll surveyed 1195 registered voters from June 2-4 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. This report was updated to clarify who voters first choice in the survey.

The latest poll of Texas voters shows US president Donald Trump trailing Democratic challenger Joe Biden, and even with the progressive Massachusetts senator, Elizabeth Warren.

Texas voters have backed Republican candidates

for more than 40 years of presidential elections, since Jimmy Carter's 1976 victory. Texas's 38 electoral seats, the second-largest after California, make it a crucial state for Republicans. A Quinnipiac University poll released today shows that Biden leads Trump 48% to 44% among the 1,200 Texans contacted. Biden's support is strong among women, independents, and non-whites.

The poll also showed that Warren, who has typically trailed Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders in national polls, is the second-strongest candidate in Texas, and she is nearly even with Trump. If the election were held today, and Warren was the Democratic candidate, 45% of Texans would vote for her, versus 46% for Trump, according to the poll. In that matchup, 5% of voters said they "don't

know" which of the two they'd choose.

Sanders does not fare quite as well, with 44% of Texans saying they'd choose him vs. 47% who would go for Trump. Pete Buttigieg, the Indiana mayor, would lose to Trump 44 to 46%, and California Sen. Kamala Harris would lose 43 to 47%.

Beto O'Rourke, the charismatic former Texas senatorial hopeful, appears to have fallen from favor in his home state. Just 45% of Texans said they'd choose him over 48% for Trump, and 60% of Texas Democrats polled say O'Rourke should campaign for Sen. John Cornyn's seat instead in 2020. Responders in the poll lean heavily Republican, the university notes, and included just 407 Democrats and "Democrat-leaners."

Also Politico reported that The previously unreleased surveys show the former vice president with huge leads in one-on-one matchups with the other top-tier candidates. Joe Biden is dominating the entire field of Democratic opponents in two key early states, according to new polls that show his lead is even bigger in targeted head-to-head matchups against other high-ranking candidates.

The two polls of likely Democratic primary voters, completed last week by Tel Opinion Research, a Florida-based firm, show the former vice president with a 21-percentage point lead over the second-place candidate, Sen. Bernie Sanders, in New Hampshire and an even bigger Biden lead over him of 27 points in South Carolina.

Most other candidates polled in the single digits or didn't register at all. Unlike most public polls, respondents were asked an open-ended question about which candidate they preferred, and were not read a full list of the roughly two-dozen Democrats running for the nomination.

But that doesn't mean Biden's big lead is solely a function of name recognition. In head-to-head matchups between the top two vote-getters, Biden's lead grew to 55 points over Sanders in South Carolina and 44 points in New Hampshire — a state that the neighboring Vermont senator won in his insurgent 2016 bid against Hillary Clinton.

The surveys also showed that Biden's name ID of nearly 100 percent among likely voters in both states was nearly as high as that of the other candidates, who were recognized by at 8 in 10 voters or more. Biden, however, was better-liked by voters in both state polls.

Taken together, the results could indicate that Biden might have more staying power in the Democratic primary, even though the race is in its early stages. "What this shows is Joe Biden has a lot more strength behind his candidacy than just name ID because voters know who the other candidates are, too," said Ryan Tyson, a Florida-based pollster who

typically surveys for Republicans and conducted the poll on behalf of a nonprofit business group called Let's Preserve the American Dream.

"Biden's current lead in these surveys is not just because there are so many people in the race," Tyson said. "He's not just winning in the open-ballot test with a crowded field of candidates. He's crushing the others in the head-to-heads."

In the New Hampshire head-to-head matchups, Biden's 66 percent to 22 percent lead over Sanders was larger than his 58 percent to 29 percent advantage over Elizabeth Warren, who represents neighboring Massachusetts as a senator. Biden led Pete Buttigieg, mayor of South Bend, Indiana, 63 percent to 21 percent. In the South Carolina head-to-heads, Biden leads all three of his main rivals by 52 points or more: 70 percent to 15 percent lead over Sanders, 71 percent to 10 percent advantage over Buttigieg and 67 percent to 15 percent over Warren.

The results of Tel Opinion polls resemble other surveys in the two primary states, but the polling method differs in some cases. Tel Opinion had larger samples than many — 600 in South Carolina and New Hampshire each, with a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points — and respondents were randomly called off a list of voters who had cast ballots in one of three previous primaries in each state. They were then asked if they said they were likely to vote in next year's primary.

The New Hampshire poll was conducted May 20-22, and the South Carolina poll was conducted May 22-24.

In the open-ended ballot test in South Carolina, Biden received 37 percent support to Sanders' 10 percent, followed by Warren (8 percent), California Sen. Kamala Harris (7 percent), Buttigieg (3 percent) and New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker (2 percent), with 32 percent unsure. In New Hampshire, Biden led the field with 33 percent support, to Sanders' 12 percent and Warren's 11 percent, followed by Buttigieg (7 percent) and Harris (7 percent) with 28 percent unsure.

These are the first early state primary polls by Tel Opinion, which has polled extensively and successfully in Florida in recent years. Before polling South Carolina and New Hampshire, Tel Opinion surveyed Florida — which has a later primary, on March 17 — and found that Biden had a gargantuan lead in the nation's largest swing state as well, pulling 39 percent of the vote in the crowded field with Sanders in a distant second at 16 percent. In all the polls, Biden leads the others in every category of voter: young, middle-aged, old, white, black, male, female, well-educated and less-educated.

Failed plans to spread Iranophobia: Saudi and UAE frustrated

By Fatemeh Salehi

TEHRAN — Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), U.S. and the Zionist regime once again have failed in their attempt to spread Iranophobia; this time they accused Iran of being involved in Fujairah explosions, but their lies were soon exposed as it was revealed that they have no kind of proof or evidence for their claims.

Saudi Arabia, UAE and Norway handed a report to UN Security Council about explosions in UAE territorial waters, off the port of Fujairah. However, the claims about Iran being responsible for the attack were so unfounded and unsubstantiated that they were unable to mention Iran's name in the report.

Saudi Arabia, supported by U.S. and the Zionist regime and specially Mossad, is trying to spread fabricated information to develop Iranophobia amid the rising tensions in the region with U.S. officials constantly firing words of condemnation and threat against Iran. These countries immediately pointed their fingers at Iran for the explosions without having any kind of reason or proof for their claims, but once again they failed in convincing the international communities.

In the report presented to UN Security Council by the two countries, it says

that the attack on four oil tankers off the Emirati coast on May 12 was a calculated and sophisticated operation carried out by 'a state actor'.

The report doesn't indicate the name of the 'state' that has been involved in sabotage in Fujairah. According to the report, four commercial vessels were damaged by the attack; namely, Amjad crude carrier tanker, Al Marzoqah crude tanker, A Michel ship and Andrea Victory ship.

The statement added that there were no victims or oil leaks from tankers.

In response to the meeting, Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted, "The B-Team boys who cry wolf are crying once again. This time, Mossad is fabricating intelligence about Iran's involvement in sabotage in Fujairah. I've warned of 'accidents' and false flags — we know what happens when you believe their lies. We've been here before, haven't we?"

While Saudi Arabia and UAE are trying to pretend that their accusing Iran for Fujairah explosion is a conclusion that they themselves have arrived at, many reports in Israeli media have revealed that Mossad was the main agency who tried to convince U.S. that Iran was involved in the attacks and should be blamed for it.

Anyway, all such reports and accusations are only propaganda and are solely devised to influence public opinion.



Such attempts to ruin the name of Iran are surely not a new thing. Arab countries surrounding the Persian Gulf, as well as U.S. and the Zionist regime officials have constantly come up with claims that Iran is trying to threaten their interests or attack their bases in Iraq or other countries, but none of these claims have ever been supported with any kind of solid or credible evidence.

However, when certain media constantly repeat the name of a country, even though without any solid proof, as the one who is responsible for any kind of attack or sabotage in the region or even the world, people unconsciously start to blame that country for all attacks and incidents, without even looking for any proof or evidence.

This is exactly the goal of U.S., the

Zionist regime, Saudi Arabia and UAE for mentioning the name of Iran next to every incident and attack in the region, even though they were never able to prove any of these accusations and occasionally they even indirectly took their claims back, but they succeeded at making the right impression on people.

After Fujairah explosion, these states immediately blamed Iran and announced that Tehran should receive a response for it, but now they are incapable of proving their claims. U.S. blamed Iran for the incident just two days after the attack.

Despite all international laws and customs, U.S. officials, such as Mike Pompeo, Brian Hook and even Donald Trump openly blamed Iran and tried to create an anti-Iran atmosphere.

In a meeting with Donald Trump and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in White House, Trump said if anything happens, Iran will be in big trouble.

In Tweeter, some pro-Saudi users posted a video, trying to show that Iran was involved in explosions in Fujairah; while it was later revealed that the video was in fact of a Greek ship in some place other than Persian Gulf.

In this video, which has no clear date or location, it is showed that two people are dangerously tampering with the helm of a Greek oil tanker to change the ship's

direction. After showing this video, they claimed that it proves that Iran could have been involved in Fujairah sabotage!

It seems that after failing to bring any credible proof, Saudi Arabia is now resorted to publishing such videos in social media; while German Federal Minister of Defense had previously announced that there are no signs of Iran's involvement in explosions in Fujairah port.

Some military experts believe that the Israeli or Saudi intelligence agencies have planned the explosions to lead U.S. into a war with Iran; nevertheless, after seeing the resistance of Iranian people and officials, U.S. has now retreated from its war-mongering policies and is talking about having negotiations with Iran; naturally, Saudi and UAE who blindly follow U.S. policies are expected to adopt the same policy; especially now that they haven't found any convincing proof to support their claims and spread Iranophobia.

Saudi Arabia and UAE have constantly proven to be the main states who create tension and conflict in the region. As long as they don't change their policies in Middle East, and specially their policies toward Iran, the tension will continue, as Iran has repeatedly announced that it devises its policies based on mutual respect and peaceful interaction with countries in the region.

China-Russia relations transcend geopolitics

GLOBAL TIMES — Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Russia Wednesday for a state visit. China and Russia agreed to upgrade their relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era. This is a major event in China-Russia relations. During Xi's trip, the two countries are expected to reach achievements in expanding mutual cooperation.

China-Russia relations have long been a hot topic in Western public opinion. Certain Western media analyzed this visit in the context of the China-US trade war, claiming that Beijing and Moscow intend to join forces against the U.S.

However, not long ago when US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met Russian President Vladimir Putin in

Sochi, Western media outlets were suggesting a marked improvement in US-Russia relations and the possibility of it driving a wedge between China and Russia.

Such perspectives on China-Russia relations are somewhat biased. The reality is that internal motivations for improving China-Russia relations are increasingly strong, and already far exceed any influences from the external situation.

Objectively, China-Russia ties have gone far beyond the impact of the triangle effect in the conventional sense. In other words, regardless of the state of China-US relations or US-Russia relations, China-Russia relations will continue to grow closer.

The improving strategic partnership between China and Russia has already brought comprehensive benefits to both countries and has become a common strategic asset. China and Russia are two huge neighboring nations. Close cooperation has replaced tensions over defense and is of essential importance to both countries, becoming a strategic benefit shared by both sides.

This relationship also strengthens their respective status on the international stage and provides basic support for the diplomacy of both countries. These are not short-term diplomatic conditions, but have already been normalized for the two countries.

With growing China-Russia eco-



nom cooperation and personnel exchanges, the chances of disputes at the grassroots level are increasing simultaneously. For example,

there has been controversy over a Chinese-funded bottling plant near Lake Baikal, China's agricultural companies renting land in Russia's

Far East, and Russia's management of Chinese vendors.

However, due to the strong strategic relationship between China and Russia, these disputes were based on specific cases, and did not ignite fierce nationalist sentiment.

China and Russia have a similar strategic understanding of the world, share many common interests and are complementary to each other. Thus there is much room to expand cooperation. In 2018, China-Russia trade volume surpassed \$100 billion. Crude oil and natural gas pipelines connect the two countries, and the cross-border China-Russia railway bridge across the Heilongjiang River, known as the Amur River in Russia, links them both. These provide new starting points for their expanded

cooperation and exchanges.

Redefined soon after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, China-Russia relations today are strong. The two large neighboring countries can resolve border disputes peacefully, consolidate strategic mutual trust, maintain the stable development of bilateral relations and forge a "partnership rather than alliance." This is praiseworthy in the current world.

Western opinion should not always regard China-Russia relations geopolitically and ignore the most precious thing in their ties. Starting from the two leaders' firm political will, the stable China-Russia strategic relationship today is deeply rooted in the two countries' national interests

In remembrance of Imam Khomeini (QS)

➔ To know the extent of his works, one must study Iran before and after the success of Islamic revolution. In other words, when it was subservient to Israel, America and Western powers. The marvelous success of Islamic revolution is a pride to Iranian nation and indeed Muslim-Ummah, with the persistent conspiracies and rhetoric of the arrogant powers and their stooges. Its multidimensional achievements owe lots to sincere, faithful, audacious, and insightful leadership which tremendously benefit the Islamic republic and the Ummah at large. Some of its apparent achievements include:

1. The revolution, based on the mission of man as vicegerent of Allah on earth, established Islamic government on Islamic ideals and values apparently impacting Muslims and international community. Despite similarities with French, Russian, Chinese, Cuban and Nicaragua, the Islamic revolution stands erect as faith-based. It is an undisputed fact that Europe's RENAISSANCE after DARK AGES was achieved in the light of Islamic civilization.

2. Well established institutions with direct touch on the Ummah like the international Quds day, unity week, international Qur'anic exhibition and periodic educational conferences among others. Obviously, these are of significant relevance to the republic in particular and Muslim world at large.

3. Unrelenting multidimensional support to the world oppressed irrespective of race, religion and geography especially Muslims. This is evident in Palestine, Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Myanmar among others. An apparent aspect is provision of educational scholarships to children of martyrs, and hitherto empowerment.

4. Active participation in all matters having to do with culture and education of Muslim world such as Musabaqat, multilateral trade and co-operation for the benefit of stakeholders in particular and humanity in general. The Imam had many scholarly works. He authored numerous books in different fields of enormous importance.



The institute for the compilation and publication of his works -international affairs division-, translates his teachings in nearly 30 different languages.

5. Promoting the original message of Islam intelligently on the principle of unity and justice to Muslims and non-Muslims leading to tangible result. The impact of such move was very obvious on famous individuals such as Sheikh Mahmud Shaltut and Professor Dasuqi of Muslim Arab world affecting Umma in turn. It has equally influenced non-Muslims like late Mandela, Hugo Chavez and presently, Putin, Nicolas Maduro and many others. The Imam's historic delegation to former leader of the defunct USSR -Mikhail Gorbachev- is still in the light "the basic problem of your country is not the issue of ownership, economics or liberty. Your problem is lack of true faith in God; the same problem that has driven or will drive the West to worthlessness and dead end". This could also remind the world of his audacious response on the passage of bill allowing Israeli spies

into the Iranian soil "the Muslim nation and Ulama of Islam are alive and lasting. They shall sever any hand that betrays the foundation of Islam and trespasses on the chastity and virtues of the Muslims". In the end, the Shah was defeated and the approval annulled.

6. Despite unabated sanctions of four decades, the Islamic republic had wonderful results in security, healthcare delivery, agriculture, economy, defense, education, science, technology, aviation, oil and solid minerals, communication, transport, diplomacy, space technology, social welfare and private sector among others. A very unique achievement is its prominent role in regional security.

7. Exporting the Islamic revolutionary ideas through the country's cultural offices and other possible avenues to help the Muslim world actualize Islamic ideals, self-reliance and socio-economic stability. This also affect international community.

To elaborate few points, some statistics are relevant. According to World Bank, Iran

was 7th in 2016 in the area of patent as against 38th in 1970. With great strides in science and technology, it is considered the fastest growing in the field. The education sector has witnessed significant improvement raising from 16 universities before the revolution to 267 now. The student's enrolment also rose from 154,315 to 4.5 million respectively. The literacy index has greatly rose to 93%. The country was ranked 5th in citable scientific articles' publication in the West Asian region in 1996.

On health care delivery, life expectancy has generally rose to 75 years as against 50 before the Islamic revolution, with child mortality rate from 185 in 1000 to 14.9 respectively. It has also rose from 5890 medical specialists before the revolution to 36000 with female as very significant part. The World Bank reports in 2009 ranked Iran, 21st in terms of quality and number of hospitals just as UNICEF recognized it as the second country world over in the control of contagious diseases. Other fields with tremendous achievements are agriculture, Nano-technology, aerospace and nuclear technology. However, an insignificant portion of Iranians does not appreciate the monumental development. And this is not unconnected with lack of pre-revolution experience and comparative knowledge of socio-economic indices of most countries. To bridge the gap, government has intensify efforts in public enlightenment campaign. Today's Iran on concept of Willayat al-faqih -governance of the jurist- is a symbol of peace, security, social justice, moral values and scientific and technological advancement, as they no doubt, owe their roots to original teachings of Islam.

While praying for Allah's mercy to the late Imam (QS) - the founder of the Islamic republic, we implore His absolute guidance and protection to the indefatigable leader of Islamic revolution, Sayyid Khamene'i. At this juncture, I emphasize the urgent need for the unconditional release of the oppressed leader of Islamic Movement, Sheikh Ibraheem el-Zakzaky (H) and his disciples.

With U.S. President Trump, money trumps all

➔ Consider that it was just a few weeks ago that Pompeo, swelled up with hubris and a sense of invincibility and even perhaps Christian evangelical zealotry, announced 12 demands on Iran during a speech at the Heritage Foundation in Washington. The 12 demands were so extreme that, if met, Iran would have literally castrated itself in every possible way -- far beyond what has been expected of any other country by the U.S., including North Korea. But then...

But then, just this past week, Trump and Pompeo apparently did an astounding about face: they decided they wanted to talk to Iran without pre-conditions. (Those 12 pompous demands of a few weeks ago seem to have vanished, although no doubt they will, in part anyway, resurface if Iran does ever talk to the U.S. again.) This sudden change was allegedly THE question at the secretive, annual Bilderberg Conference of Western "elites" in Switzerland.

The question apparently has to do with the Straits of Hormuz, which, if ever blocked in a war on Iran, would immediately cut off or delay 20 percent of world petroleum supplies reaching markets, and this in turn would result in

oil prices spiking at least to \$200 a barrel, and that in turn would crush the world economy and destroy the notably corrupted financial and monetary systems of the world under U.S. tutelage primarily and bring on a worldwide economic Depression.

Is Trump now suddenly saying essentially that Iran has little strategic value to the U.S., recognizing that Bolton and Pompeo over the past 14 months or so created a huge heretofore unrecognized problem for Trump who seems to be looking for a way out. Iran, after all, is not asking for meetings with the U.S. It's the U.S. doing the asking -- given the apparent fears of Western "elites".

And given these new circumstances, if one can believe them, what's Iran to do? Exactly what it has been doing over a very rough year past. Demand politely that the U.S. rejoin the JCPOA before there are ANY discussions about possible modifications to it. Demand politely that the U.S. lift the onerous sanctions on Iran, too. But perhaps at the same time express an openness to renegotiation in an environment of mutual respect. This does not constitute



"pre-conditions" for Iran to consider changes. It is merely a return to what was fairly and deliberately and carefully negotiated by the world's leading countries before Trump became POTUS.

Punishing reporters of war crimes in Afghanistan

TEHRAN (FNA)— In a shocking new development, Australian police have stormed a building belonging to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), as part of an ongoing investigation against stories related to Australian forces involved in possible war crimes in Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison tried to downplay the matter, though this was actually the second day of such raids against the reporter involved, while insisting that his government is "committed to press freedom." He sought to avoid responsibility, however, saying that probe was actually started before he became premier. He also pointed out that ABC is a state-run outlet.

The articles in question are specifically related to the use of "unlawful killings" by Australian special forces. The warrant demanded drafts of the stories, access to reporter emails, and handwritten notes. Over 100 pages of documents were taken, and two USB drives.

In 2017, ABC revealed a myriad of killings by Australian special forces, with attempts to cover them up by avoiding reporting the extent of their killings up the chain of command. The killings included young children, and were the subject of a secret military inquiry.

The special forces appeared to hope no one would find out about the killings at all by just not reporting them, but local villagers found the slain civilians and they reported them, leading to inquiries.

The leaked documents showed not only that the Australian forces killed civilians without reason, but that some routinely carried "drop weapons" to leave on the bodies of people they killed so they could chalk them up as legitimate battlefield kills.

Despite both Morrison and ABC avoiding making this a huge deal, other Australian media outlets are deeply critical, condemn-



ing it as a troubling move against freedom of the press and aiming to punish journalists for leaking things the government is trying to keep secret.

This kind of deliberate cover-up should stun no one. Secret files released by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden have already revealed that Australian intelligence agency supports US's covert strikes outside of war zones in operation codenamed 'Overhead'.

The documents include details about how terrorism suspects are targeted in drone strikes and how strikes could go wrong at times, killing civilians instead. The documents also show how closely the National Security Agency has worked in Pakistan and Yemen with its British counterpart, Government Communications Headquarters.

Britain claims it has carried out drone strikes only in war zones in Afghanistan, Iraq

and Libya. But the documents say British intelligence has also helped guide American strikes outside conventional war zones.

Unsurprisingly, representatives from American and Western intelligence agencies have declined to comment on the information covered in the Australian media. So don't expect any renewed debate on the so-called 'kill list' or assassination campaign in Afghanistan to break into the mainstream anytime soon.

This is because analysis of thousands of other available information has led the international community to judge with high confidence that the US-led drone and air strikes have indeed killed thousands of innocent civilians in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Libya and Somalia.

The international community has been criticizing for years the US-led drone war and the existence of a presidential 'kill

list'. They have been issuing objections over the legality of the program and the number of innocent people who have been killed, maimed or left traumatized by these bombings.

Washington and the mere extras might claim otherwise, that their drone war has had a stellar record of accuracy, but watching the news coverage of so many tragic deaths in the war-torn countries and the way Australian government is trying to silence its own reporters, the impression is totally different. In fact, killing innocent people has been a central part of the US-led wars and drone programs from the beginning, and has grown in many ways into an inescapable outcome.

What's clear and troubling is that many of these innocent victims have died amid media silence too. They have never ended up meriting a special press conference and investigation into what went wrong -- let alone a formal apology from the US and its Western allies.

Under their doctrine, apology and redress is not available for Muslim civilians killed in wars. Thanks to the United Nations silence and complicity, the US government and its British and Australian cohorts have never been transparent about the thousands of deadly drone strikes they have conducted in Afghanistan either.

This is while human rights organizations have long called for the US and allies to cease their covert drone campaigns. Their target-killing programs in Afghanistan and Yemen not only fail to conform to international protocols, but also further destabilize the region.

They continue to kill civilians jointly overseas without trial and accountability and do everything to bury the mess behind, even if that requires raiding their TV news stations and punishing reporters

China won't wilt under U.S. pressure

By Wei Jianguo

GLOBAL TIMES — China on June 2 issued a white paper titled China's Position on the China-US Economic and Trade Consultations, reverberating throughout international media and foreign entrepreneurs.

The paper has clarified the harm caused by the US-initiated trade war to the two countries and to the global economy as well, also revealed how the US poured cold water on attempts at consensus and went back on its commitments. More importantly, China has reiterated its solemn position. Many of my US friends also voiced support for China to obtain a fair and equitable consultation outcome in future trade negotiations.

The US has constantly imposed maximum pressure on China since it started the trade war. The paper listed three times when the US backtracked on trade deals, also a manifestation of US pressure. The US mistakenly anticipated that China would compromise under pressure, however, China has firmly adhered to the principle and bottom line, making such pressure in vain.

Drawing from recent statements made by organs of the Chinese government, including the China Securities Regulatory Commission, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, and the Ministry of Commerce, China's export-oriented enterprises and service industries are well-prepared for the trade war with the US.

China is able to withstand US maximum pressure, due to the country's economic resilience, and Chinese people's resolute determination. Suffering from a century of humiliation, the Chinese nation has been accustomed to such pressure, as shown in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, as well as the Korean War or the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea. The unity of Chinese people is a vital reason for the country's fundamental victory in history.

Surpassing India in terms of GDP growth in the first quarter of 2019, China has regained the position of fastest-growing economy. China's foreign trade volume reached 7.01 trillion yuan (\$1.01 trillion), an increase of 3.7 percent year-on-year. Economic stabilization and the rapid advance of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative indicate that China has prepared well for its future development.

Trade wars, coups, mass migration go hand in hand

TEHRAN (FNA) — President Donald Trump claims since Mexico is not prepared to take measures to reduce illegal immigration towards the United States, he will be placing a tariff of 5 percent on all imports from the country which, in his words, will "increase over time".

Again, Trump has made misleading promises that the measures would hurt their Southern neighbor and, in turn, bring jobs and manufacturing back to the United States. Mexico City pledged to respond reciprocally to any levies implemented.

The announcement has been widely interpreted as a reaction to increased political pressure placed upon Trump following the concluding remarks from Robert Mueller, which appeared to recommend impeachment as a course of action.

This may well be accurate. In light of this, as well as his failure to convince the Congress to fund his signature wall across the US border, Trump has opted to rally his base by unleashing a trade conflict against Mexico, unleashing nationalist sentiment by being tough against the country.

However, such maneuvers will not save Trump politically. It's a short term reactionary move dictated on impulse, which owing to the vastly more integrated economies between the two nations, will cause serious damage to the US with nothing to gain from it.

Fighting trade wars on multiple fronts will, in fact, isolate Washington and also weaken his ability to negotiate with China. Such a bizarre and unreasoned move is a display of desperation and weakness from the White House.

Although Trump's decisions in practice make no sense whatsoever, the symbolism of antagonism towards America's Southern neighbor has a political appeal to it. In 2015, his initial comments against Mexicans were the tipping point which saw him sour in Republican primary polls. Consequentially, he hopes to get tough on the country through tariffs.

Unsurprisingly, Trump's decision to suddenly slap tariffs on imports from Mexico is, at best, a reactionary, panic-induced and impulsive move which has no strategic, economic, or political benefit from it whatsoever.

Owing to geography, the economies of the two countries are much more integrated than that of the US and China. This means the impact will prove to be catastrophic. The domestic political costs enormously outweigh anything he can gain from it.

Any economic decline in Mexico will additionally, of course, only increase than decrease immigration to the United States. Furthermore, as Trump wages trade wars on multiple fronts, his ability to negotiate with China will also be reduced.

Indeed, Trump's decision to pursue tariffs against Mexico is a sign of sure political weakness. Feeling that the walls are closing in on him, he is opting for escalation, confrontation, and nationalist sentiment to attempt to make up for lost ground and rally his support.

At any rate, Mexico cannot reduce the number of unauthorized immigrants into the US without breaking the human rights law. The border is 1,954 miles long, and even if Trump builds his beloved wall, it would only cover some 670 miles of it. Which means, Central American migrants will still continue to travel through the Mexican territory to the US.

Worse still, the proposed tariffs would lower growth and force the Mexican government to devalue the peso to absorb their impacts. This would push up prices, especially if Mexico decides to retaliate, throw the Mexican economy under the bus, and end up producing more immigrants and refugees.

As such, Trump's gamble on tariffs and his cruelty toward immigrants in pursuit of political scores is not good for the US economy and its international human rights record. The arbitrary use of import tariffs is crazy and undeniably self-destructive.

There are no puzzles here. Tariffs are a bizarre way to deal with the problem of illegal immigrants and refugees, as Mexico, the US and Canada operate like a single, integrated economy. Trump cannot solve the problem of illegal immigration with tariff and coercion.

The US should help its Southern neighbor and other Central American countries by not interfering in their internal affairs and not affecting regime change that we all know are the root causes of illegal immigration into the US. A recent example could be the US-backed coup attempt and sanctions that have created mass migration from Venezuela into the neighbouring courtiers all the way to the United States.

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NASA to open International Space Station to private astronauts

At a press conference on Friday, NASA announced new opportunities for the private sector on the International Space Station and in low-Earth orbit.

“We’re here because the International Space Station is now open for business,” Stephanie Schierholz, NASA spokesperson, said during opening remarks at the Nasdaq stock exchange.

In addition to making the facilities on the International Space Station available to private companies for research, marketing and other potential revenue-generating activities, NASA will allow private astronauts to travel to and stay aboard ISS.

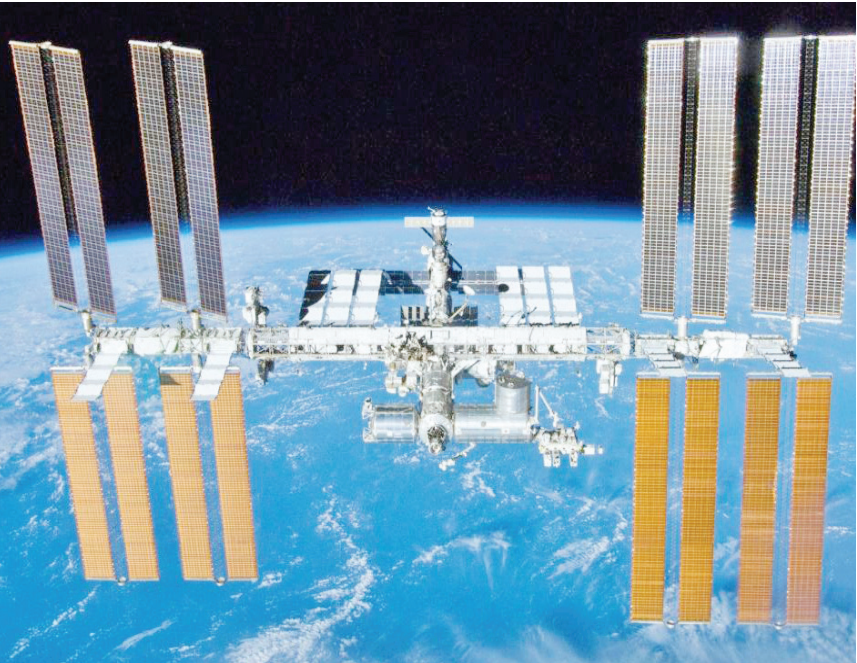
NASA anticipates making the space station available to two private missions per year, which means ISS could host as many as a dozen private astronauts per year.

Though NASA estimates the Commercial Crew Program and the development of new crew-carrying spacecraft by Boeing and SpaceX will bring down the cost of travel. Getting private astronauts to and from the space station will remain a large financial hurdle.

Once on the space station, whoever is paying the bills for the private mission will have to pay NASA for food, water, shelter and safety.

“The costs average out to about \$35,000 per night,” said Jeff DeWit, NASA’s chief financial officer.

Unfortunately, the stay won’t come with any Hilton or Marriott points, DeWit joked.



According to NASA, the first private astronaut missions could blast-off as early as 2020.

During Friday’s press conference, NASA said it would also dedicate 5 percent of its resources to host the activities of private companies, including the research into and testing of new products. As part of its

new policy directive, NASA will also open up the space station to possible marketing and advertising activities.

None of the changes or new commercial opportunities announced Friday required legislative changes, according to Robyn Gatens, deputy director of International Space Station.

Gatens detailed a five part plan for encouraging commercial activities and expanding the private marketplace in low-Earth orbit. The plan is part of NASA’s oft-stated goal to become one of many users, or customers, in the low-Earth orbit economy.

“We’re reaching out to the private sector to see if you can push the economic frontier into space,” said Bill Gerstenmaier, associate administrator of NASA’s Human Exploration and Operations Mission Directorate.

In addition to opening up ISS and its resources to private companies and astronauts -- the first two parts of the five-part plan -- NASA will open up the space station’s Node 2 Harmony module to commercial activities, the first step in the development of a commercial destination.

NASA’s plan also calls for the space agency to continue studying the potential for commercial activities related to space manufacturing and regenerative medicine. The fifth part of the plan calls for NASA to lay out what exactly needs to happen to enable long-term commercial operations in long-term orbit.

Eventually, NASA wants to see ISS replaced by a privately run space station. In other words, in the future, NASA wants to be the buyer of low-Earth orbit services, not the seller.

In addition to maintaining a sustainable commercial presence in low-Earth orbit, the agency expects commercial entities to play a central role in establishing a sustainable human presence on the moon.

(Source: UPI)

Ancient Siberia was home to previously unknown humans, say scientists

It was cold, remote and involved picking fights with woolly mammoths – but it seems ancient Siberia 30,000 years ago was home to a hardy and previously unknown group of humans. Scientists say the discovery could help solve longstanding mysteries about the ancestors of native North Americans.

While it is commonly believed the ancestors of native North Americans arrived from Eurasia via a now submerged land bridge called Beringia, exactly which groups crossed and gave rise to native North American populations has been difficult to unpick.

Now scientists say they might have found some answers to the conundrums.

Writing in the journal Nature, Eske Willerslev and colleagues reveal how they drew on existing data from modern populations as well as analyzing ancient DNA from the remains of 34 individuals obtained from sites around north-eastern Siberia, dating from more than 31,000 years ago up to 600 years ago.

The key remains were fragments of two tiny human milk teeth, shed by males, found at a place in Russia called Yana Rhinoceros Horn Site. First excavated in 2001, the site offers the earliest direct evidence of humans in north-eastern Siberia, with finds also including bone items and stone tools. Indirect evidence of human populations in north-eastern Siberia goes back to more than 40,000 years ago.

While it had previously been thought that these remains might be from the ancestors of native North Americans, the DNA data suggests otherwise.

“What we see here is a much more complex story than what we believed was the case,” said Willerslev, director of the Lundbeck Foundation Centre for Geogenetics at the University of Copenhagen.

The results reveal these individuals were part of a previously



unknown yet widespread group, dubbed the Ancient North Siberians by the team, who were genetically distinct from both Western Eurasians and East Asians. The researchers say they split off from the former 38,000 years ago – in other words, very shortly after Western Eurasians and East Asians themselves became genetically distinct. “They were living as big game hunters of woolly mammoth and woolly rhinoceros,” said Willerslev.

But, crucially, this population does not appear to be the direct ancestor of Native Americans.

Instead, analysis of the collection of genomes suggests the population that became the ancestors of native North Americans was the result of liaisons about 20,000 years ago between East Asians, who travelled north, and a group distantly related to the Ancient Northern Siberians. The East Asians also mixed with other descendants of Ancient Northern Siberians to give rise to another group, who the team dub the Ancient Paleo Siberians, who went on to supplant

the existing group.

“[Ancestors of] Native Americans are not the first people in north-eastern Siberia as most people, if not everybody thought,” said Willerslev, adding that DNA recovered in north-eastern Siberia from what is believed to be an Ancient Paleo Siberian was crucial to the work. “This is the first evidence we have, real evidence, of something very close genetically to Native Americans,” he said.

The team add that one possibility is that the mixing involving the East Asians occurred in southern Beringia – one of the areas that could have offered respite from harshening conditions at the time.

They Ancient Paleo Siberians were themselves supplanted by another band of East Asians heading north about 10,000 years ago that gave rise to a group dubbed the “Neo-Siberians”. “The vast majority of the genetic makeup of present day Siberians comes from this last push,” said Willerslev. “This is also the reason you don’t have any very close connection between contemporary Siberians and Native Americans.”

John Hoffecker from the University of Colorado Boulder, who was not involved in the study, welcomed the research, saying a striking feature of the study is that humans were faring well in north-eastern Siberia, even in very difficult conditions. 30,000 years ago – with the genetic data from the teeth suggesting the males belonged to a population of about 500 people.

“That’s a pretty healthy population,” he said. “We had no idea 30 years ago that we had this robust healthy hunter-gatherer population thriving up in the high Arctic 30,000 years ago – it is amazing.”

Hoffecker added the presence of the group suggests it was the ice sheets in North America, not hostile conditions in Beringia, that kept people from reaching the Americas sooner.

(Source: The Guardian)

Physicists create stable, strongly magnetized plasma jet in laboratory

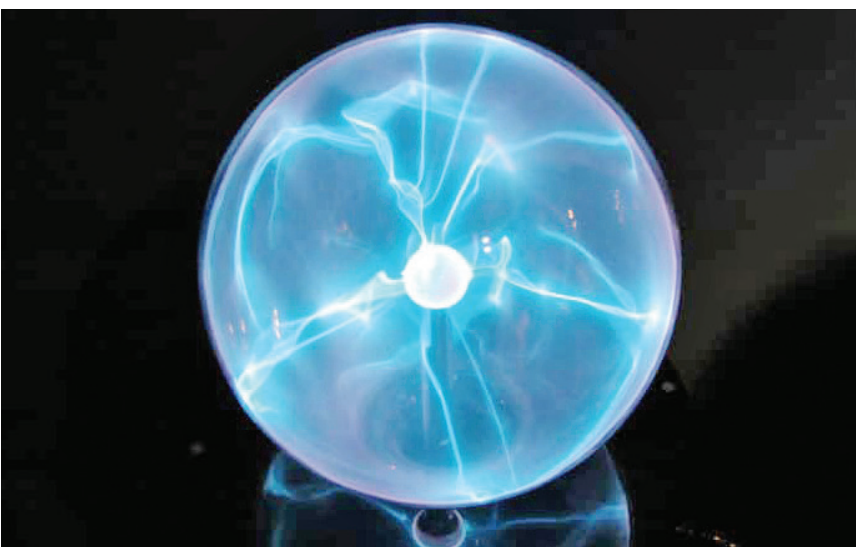
When you peer into the night sky, much of what you see is plasma, a soupy amalgam of ultra-hot atomic particles. Studying plasma in the stars and various forms in outer space requires a telescope, but scientists can recreate it in the laboratory to examine it more closely.

Now, a team of scientists led by physicists Lan Gao of the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory (PPPL) and Edison Liang of Rice University, has for the first time created a particular form of coherent and magnetized plasma jet that could deepen the understanding of the workings of much larger jets that stream from newborn stars and possibly black holes -- stellar objects so massive that they trap light and warp both space and time.

“We are now creating stable, supersonic, and strongly magnetized plasma jets in a laboratory that might allow us to study astrophysical objects light years away,” said astrophysicist Liang, co-author of the paper reporting the results in the Astrophysical Journal Letters.

The team created the jets using the OMEGA Laser Facility at the University of Rochester’s Laboratory for Laser Energetics (LLE). The researchers aimed 20 of OMEGA’s individual laser beams into a ring-shaped area on a plastic target. Each laser created a tiny puff of plasma; as the puffs expanded, they put pressure on the inner region of the ring. That pressure then squeezed out a plasma jet reaching over four millimeters in length and created a magnetic field that had a strength of over 100 tesla.

“This is the first step in studying plasma



A team of scientists has for the first time created a particular form of coherent and magnetized plasma jet that could deepen the understanding of the workings of much larger jets that stream from newborn stars and possibly black holes.

jets in a laboratory,” said Gao, who was the primary author of the paper. “I’m excited because we not only created a jet. We also successfully used advanced diagnostics on OMEGA to confirm the jet’s formation and characterize its properties.”

The diagnostic tools, developed with teams from LLE and the Massachusetts

Institute of Technology (MIT), measured the jet’s density, temperature, length, how well it stayed together as it grew through space, and the shape of the magnetic field around it. The measurements help scientists determine how the laboratory phenomena compare to jets in outer space. They also provide a baseline that scientists can tinker

with to observe how the plasma behaves under different conditions.

“This is groundbreaking research because no other team has successfully launched a supersonic, narrowly beamed jet that carries such a strong magnetic field, extending to significant distances,” said Liang. “This is the first time that scientists have demonstrated that the magnetic field does not just wrap around the jet, but also extends parallel to the jet’s axis,” he said.

The researchers hope to expand their research with larger laser facilities and investigate other types of phenomena. “The next step involves seeing whether an external magnetic field could make the jet longer and more collimated,” Gao said.

“We would also like to replicate the experiment using the National Ignition Facility at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, which has 192 laser beams, half of which could be used to create our plasma ring. It would have a larger radius and thus produce a longer jet than that produced using OMEGA. This process would help us figure out under which conditions the plasma jet is strongest.”

The team included scientists from PPPL, Rice, LLE, MIT, and the University of Chicago. The research was supported by the DOE’s National Nuclear Security Administration, the National Science Foundation, and Los Alamos National Laboratory. Computer simulations were performed on the Extreme Science and Engineering Discovery Environment (XSEDE), a collaborative partnership of 19 institutions, and the Argonne Leadership Computing Facility, a DOE Office of Science user facility.

(Source: Science Daily)

SpaceX Falcon Heavy launch of 24 satellites now targeting June 24



A SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket is scheduled to launch June 24 from Florida with 24 satellites aboard -- the first time the U.S. government has used the big rocket for such a mission.

“The choice to use this rocket was actually part of the bigger strategy to get away from a sole source environment and into a competitive environment,” said Col. Robert P. Bongiovi, director of the Air Force’s Launch Systems Enterprise.

Heavy military launches in recent years have used United Launch Alliance, a joint venture between longtime defense contractors Boeing and Lockheed Martin.

Labeled the Space Test Program-2, the upcoming launch will be the third for a Falcon Heavy rocket, the largest rocket in use today, deploying satellites at four different orbital altitudes. SpaceX says it is among the “most challenging” launches it has ever tackled.

The launch had been planned for 11:30 p.m. on June 22, but Air Force officials said Friday it would be June 24 at the earliest. Liftoff is to be from Launch Complex 39A at Kennedy Space Center.

The rocket’s second stage will have four separate burns over six hours to get all satellites into the correct orbits. The maneuvers are why the launch required such a large rocket -- not the weight or the size of the satellites, according to the Air Force.

Among the satellites on board will be a government experiment to test a less toxic, more efficient spacecraft fuel that could replace highly toxic hydrazine. It is called the Green Propellant Infusion Mission.

The Air Force says the new fuel uses hydroxyl ammonium nitrate. It will be tested on a platform provided by Ball Aerospace.

“This could give future satellites longer mission durations, more maneuverability, increased payload space and easier launch processing,” according to Ball.

The launch will reuse side boosters that flew back to Cape Canaveral after the Arabsat-6A Falcon Heavy launch in April.

Other satellites are for NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, various Defense Department research laboratories, and university research projects.

The missions include an advanced atomic clock for navigation improvements; weather research; instruments to detect how weather and radiation in space impact spacecraft electronics; and CubeSat missions, including two that will work with the weather satellites to measure radio signal distortions when passing through the upper atmosphere.

(Source: UPI)

Jupiter is about to come so close to earth you can see its moons with binoculars: how and when to watch

Skywatchers are in for a treat this month, because the largest planet in the solar system, Jupiter, will be at its biggest and brightest, according to NASA.

The space agency says that the gas giant will rise at dusk and remain visible all night with the naked eye. However, for an enhanced viewing experience, NASA recommends using binoculars or a small telescope, in which case you may just be able to catch a glimpse of one of the planet’s four largest moons, or perhaps its characteristic cloud bands.

Next week will be the best time of the month to view Jupiter. On June 10, the planet reaches “opposition.” This refers to the annual occurrence when Jupiter, the Earth and the sun are all arranged in a straight line, with our planet in the middle.

And on June 12, Jupiter will come closer to our planet than at any other point in 2019, according to EarthSky. In fact, at its closest approach, it will come within 398 million miles of the Earth.

Jupiter is by far the biggest planet in the solar system, being more than twice as large as all of the other planets combined.

A gas giant, it is known for its spectacular stripes and swirls, which actually represent cold, windy clouds of ammonia and water, suspended in an atmosphere of hydrogen and helium.

Within this turbulent atmosphere lies the iconic Great Red Spot—a violent storm larger than our entire planet which has been continuously observed since 1830.

Jupiter is the fifth planet from the sun, orbiting at a distance of around 484 million miles from our star. It rotates once about every 10 hours meaning its day is less than half of that of Earth’s. However, it takes about 12 Earth years to complete one orbit of the sun.

Scientists have identified at least 79 moons orbiting the planet, of which 26 are yet to be officially named. The four largest are Io, Europa Ganymede and Callisto in order of biggest to smallest. All of these were spotted by the astronomer Galileo Galilei in 1609 and 1610.

Like the other gas giants in the solar system, Jupiter has a set of rings, although they are faint in comparison to those of Saturn, for example.

In total, nine spacecraft have visited Jupiter, with the most recent—Juno—arriving at the planet in 2016. Its main goals are to understand more about the planet’s formation and evolution. Scientists are particularly interested in finding out whether or not Jupiter has a solid core, and how its magnetic field is generated.

(Source: Newsweek)

Azadi Tower to host crafts exhibit

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — A sales exhibition of hand-icrafts will open today at Tehran’s Azadi Tower (Borj-e Azadi), featuring works by several crafts students and their trainers, Mehr reported.



A view of Azadi Tower

The exhibit will be running through June 11 in the inverted-Y-shaped tower, which is one of visual icons of the metropolis.

Iran’s handicrafts exports reached \$190 million in the first nine months of the past Iranian calendar year (ended March 20), showing 11 percent growth year on year. Dozens of Iranian handicrafts have gained the UNESCO Seal of Excellence during the past couple of years.

2,000-year-old secret room in Rome’s Domus Aurea is a treasure trove of ancient frescoes

Archaeologists have found a secret, underground room inside Emperor Nero’s palace in Rome.

The archaeologists happened upon a secret chamber “decorated with panthers, centaurs and a delightful sphinx” inside of Nero’s famous Domus Aurea (Golden House) while they were doing restoration work on an adjacent room in the complex, according to the Italian news publication ANSA.

The secret room, which has been buried for an estimated 2,000 years, is nicknamed the “Sphinx Room,” according to ANSA. It’s just one of many rooms in the massive Domus Aurea, which is part of the archaeological park that also encompasses the Colosseum.

Alessandro D’Alessio, the official for the Domus Aurea, told ANSA that restorers immediately went to work excavating the room, which was covered in frescoes set against white backgrounds with red and gold borders, including one depicting the figure of the god Pan and another with a panther attacking a swordsman. There are also depictions of aquatic creatures “both real and stylized,” leafy garlands, tree branches, flowers, and birds.

(Source: [travelandleisure.com](#))



ROUND THE GLOBE

Blue and John Crow Mountains

A World Heritage, the Blue and John Crow Mountains comprises 26,252 ha of tropical, montane rainforest within the larger Blue Mountain and John Crow Mountain ranges, located in the eastern part of Jamaica in the Caribbean.

The rugged and extensively forested mountainous region provided refuge first for the indigenous Tainos fleeing slavery and then for Maroons (former enslaved peoples).



They resisted the European colonial system in this isolated region by establishing a network of trails, hiding places and settlements, which form the Nanny Town Heritage Route.

The forests offered the Maroons everything they needed for their survival. They developed strong spiritual connections with the mountains, still manifest through the intangible cultural legacy of, for example, religious rites, traditional medicine and dances.

The site is also a biodiversity hotspot for the Caribbean Islands with a high proportion of endemic plant species, especially lichens, mosses and certain flowering plants.

The Blue and John Crow Mountains property lies within the Jamaican Moist Forests Global 200 priority eco-region, and is part of one of the 78 most irreplaceable protected areas for the conservation of the world’s amphibian, bird and mammal species.

Furthermore it coincides with a Centre of Plant Diversity; an Endemic Bird Area and contains two of Jamaica’s five Alliance for Zero Extinction sites. There is an exceptionally high proportion of endemic plant and animal species found in the property, Jamaica having evolved separately from other landmasses. In addition, the property hosts a number of globally endangered species, including several frog and bird species.

(Source: [UNESCO](#))

Ardebil to host chamomile harvesting festival

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran’s popular holiday destination, Fandoqlu Forest, known for flower farming and cool weather, will host its 5th National Festival of Chamomile Flowers this month.

Head of the city of Namin’s Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Department, Manouchehr Norouzzadeh, has said that the ‘National Festival of Chamomile Flowers’ will be held in Fandoqlu Forest tourism hub, northwestern Ardebil province, Mehr

reported.

The event is aimed to introduce Namin’s investment opportunities, traditions, local rituals and handicrafts, the official said.

Presenting tourism capacities of the region especially Fandoqlu Forest tourism hub, developing tourism facilities in Namin resort areas, showcasing high capability of this province in the field of medicinal-pharmaceutical herbs have been cited as the other aims behind launching this festival, he emphasized.



Fandoqlu is located 10 kilometers from Namin. The forest is sprawled in Ardebil and Gilan provinces and it attracts many domestic and foreign visitors every year. Adjacent to the forest are expansive mayweed fields, which host a mayweed festival every spring.

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, Ardebil is well-known for having lush natural beauties, hospitable people and its silk and carpet trade tradition, it is also home to the UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and Shrine Ensemble.



A view of Bagh-e Fin (Fin Garden) in Kashan

Over 31,000 visit Kashan in a day

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Over 31,000 visited Iran’s historical city of Kashan on Wednesday, a public holiday celebrating Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of the holy fasting month of Ramadan.

A total of 30,958 domestic travelers and 141 foreign holidaymakers visited historical attractions in Kashan concurrent with the Eid al-Fitr, of whom 26,436 toured Bagh-e Fin (Fin Garden), IRNA quoted a local tourism official as saying on Thursday.

The richly manicured and historical garden together with

eight other counterparts have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list under the title of “The Persian Garden.”

Many travelers opt to pass Kashan on their journeys between Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz and Yazd, because this delightful oasis city on the edge of the Dasht-e Kavir, is one of Iran’s most alluring destinations.

Kashan not only boasts a cluster of architectural wonders, an atmospheric covered bazaar and a UNESCO-recognized garden, but it also offers some of central Iran’s best traditional hotels.

Greece, England and Malaysia to attend ECO health tourism conference in Iran

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Several countries including Greece, England and Malaysia have announced readiness to attend the 2nd International Health Tourism Conference of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), which will be held in Iran’s Ardebil from June 18 to 20, IRIB reported.

The inaugural ceremony of event will bring together representatives, ambassadors, envoys and foreign guests from 10 ECO member states and some other countries.



On this v-shaped airliner, passengers sit in the wings

In an effort “to make aviation more sustainable,” KLM Airlines has revealed the design for the aerodynamic ‘Flying-V’ plane that takes the shape of, you guessed it, the letter V. The radical new plane design would put the passenger cabins in the wings of plane along with the cargo and fuel tanks as well for better fuel efficiency.

Pieter Elbers, the President and CEO of Dutch airline KLMm will be working with Henri Werij, a Dean of Aerospace Engineering at Delft University of Technology (TU Delft), to work on developing the Flying-V which will reportedly have features comparable to an Airbus A350 but using only 20 percent less fuel. But the Flying-V is the brainchild of Justus Benad, who was a student working on his thesis at TU Berlin when he came up with the concept for the plane.

One of the features the Flying-V will share with the A350

is an identical wingspan. This way, the Flying-V will be able to fit into already existing airports, gates, and runways. Additionally, this futuristic plane will be able to do many of the same things as an A350 like hold the same amount of passengers and cargo, but it’s smaller design makes it easier to fly through the air with less resistance. The Flying-V will ultimately be propelled by turbofan engines but is currently designed to fly on kerosene fuel.

Although we’ll have to wait a while to see the Flying-V in its full glory, KLM announced that a “flying scale model and a full-size section of the interior of the Flying-V will be officially presented at the KLM Experience Days at Amsterdam Airport Schiphol in October on the occasion of KLM’s 100th anniversary.”

During this demonstration, the prototype will be “flown at low speeds—during take-off and landing” to test its stability



and reliability according to TU Delft.

(Source: [popularmechanics.com](#))

This is why America’s travel business is worried

By Chris Isidore

New York (CNN Business) — Foreign travelers to the United States bring billions of dollars into the economy each year. But that flow of people and money now appears to be at risk.

Last year set a record for tourism: 78.6 million foreign travelers came to the United States in 2018. But following that banner year, tourism is now in a slump. Travel in early 2019 is in decline, particularly from Canada, Mexico, China and South Korea. That slowdown started taking place in the second half of last year.

The travel industry is worried about how severe, and long lasting, that decline could be.

Tourism is a serious economic driver for the American economy. The United States enjoyed a \$69 billion surplus on international travel last year, reducing the country’s overall trade deficit by 11%, according to Tori Barnes, executive vice president of the U.S. Travel Association, the industry trade group. On average, foreign travelers spend \$4,000 each on visits to the United States. Chinese tourists spend about \$7,000.

“It’s a really significant economic impact,” said Barnes.

Companies that rely on foreign tourism are starting to feel the decline in travel: For example, Tiffany’s reported disappointing sales this week, in part because of a drop in purchases by foreign tourists at its U.S. stores.



■ Why travel to the United States is down

Experts point to a number of factors working against travelers coming to the United States.

“It’s a relatively strong U.S. dollar. It’s a slowing global economy. And it’s politics. It’s a trifecta of factors all reducing travel to the U.S.,” said Adam Sacks, president of Tourism Economics, a part of Oxford Economics.

The strong dollar makes it more expensive for foreign travelers to spend money in the United States. The dollar has been strong compared to global currencies as the U.S. economy remains robust and other countries are in slowdowns.

Slowing economic activity abroad is a pressing problem for travel, particularly from China, the fifth-largest source of travelers to the United States after Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom and Japan.

Chinese travel to the United States had been growing rapidly every year since the end of the recession, with the number of visitors more than doubling between 2012 and 2017. But travel from China turned negative in April of 2018, resulting in an overall 6% decline for Chinese travel to the United States last year.

The trade dispute between the United States and China is a major factor in the travel fall-off. Trade has declined, cutting into business travel between the countries. It also has slowed economic activity, resulting in a sharp drop in discretionary purchases by the Chinese.

The Chinese government has issued numerous warnings to its citizens about travel to the United States. Just this week it issued a warning about the threat of gun violence in the United States, and another warning college students that it could become more difficult to get the student

visas they’ll need to study at U.S. colleges and universities.

“We’re seeing a significant shift in Chinese attitudes about U.S. travel,” said Sacks. “Recent posting of travel advisories is only one part of it. State run media in China has turned very negative toward the U.S.”

Meanwhile, the disputes between Mexico and the United States appear to be slowing travel between the two countries. Mexico is the second-largest source of tourists to the United States.

Mexican travel to the United States fell 6% in 2017, President Donald Trump’s first year in office. Although travel bounced back in the beginning of 2018, it was down in the final five months of last year and the first quarter of this year, according to U.S. and Mexican travel data.

Part of that is because of concerns about crossing the border by land. Air travel by Mexicans is up slightly, but that makes up only about 15% of total Mexican travel to the United States.

“We recognize there’s an issue at the southern border. We know folks able to fly here are still coming,” said Barnes, the U.S. Travel Association executive.

Worsening relations between the United States and many other countries is feeding into the slowdown in foreign travelers, Barnes fears.

“We do think we need to have a more welcoming message,” she said. Foreign travel to the United States “is really an economic boon. We should be welcoming all legitimate visitors.”

First Iranian platform for smart waste management launched

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The first Iranian smart waste management platform was established in Tehran’s district 22, Tasnim reported on Friday.

Bazmand is the first smart platform for waste management in Iran, which covers six integrated applications. It establishes a connection between citizens and urban managers.

The platform provides a smart, fast and simple way for collection and delivery of recyclable waste.

“In its initial version, the application provide services for delivery of recycling waste at the location, buying internet packages from cellphone operators and paying the bills for the user,” said the mayor of district 22, Ali Nozarpour.

In February, Interior Ministry announced that comprehensive plans for waste management in 640 cities nationwide have been drawn up.

Tehran Waste Management Organiza-



tion affiliated to Tehran Municipality has announced that there are 62,000 villages and 1,280 cities in the country producing 58,000 tons of waste on a daily basis and Tehran’s

share of waste generation is 15 percent of the total number.

It was announced that generation of waste in metropolis of Tehran has dropped by 1,000

tons per day in the current year (started March 21) compared to a year earlier. Decreased by 1,000 tons, T ehraners now produce some 8,400 tons of waste daily.

Currently per capita waste production is 500 grams in rural areas and 800 grams in urban areas. The amount is about one kilograms for T ehraners.

Waste management in metropolises especially northern cities of the country has become a serious issue for the past few years. Unfortunately waste segregation at source is not being fully practiced in the country.

Effective segregation of wastes means that less waste goes to landfill which makes it cheaper and better for people and the environment. It is also important to segregate for public health. In particular, hazardous wastes can cause long term health problems, so it is very important that they are disposed of correctly and safely and not mixed in with the normal waste coming out of home or office.

Iran, Kazakhstan discuss ways to boost scientific ties

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Iranian ambassador to Kazakhstan, Majid Saber, met with Kazakh Minister of Education and Science, Kulyash Shamshidinova, on Friday, discussing ways to boost scientific and academic cooperation between the two sides, IRNA reported on Friday.

The two countries enjoy good cooperation in different fields and their scientific and academic cooperation should be developed as well, Saber said during the meeting.

“Iran has great experience in different fields of science and research and has a great number of students, university students and professors. This issue paves the way for more academic exchange,” he said.

Iran is ready to hold joint courses and scientific conferences with Kazakhstan, he announced.

He pointed to the agreement between Iran’s Shahid Beheshti University and Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Education and Science Center for International Programs, Bolashak Presidential scholarship, as a successful cooperation between the two sides.

Iran is ready to sign an academic agreement in future trip of Iranian Science Minister Mansour Gholami to Kazakhstan, he announced.

Eurasia International University in Kazakhstan and Iran’s Allameh Tabatabaei University as well as Iran’s Shahid Beheshti University and Al-Farabi Kazakh National University have expanded cooperation in different fields, he added.

At the meeting, Shamshidinova also stressed the need for development of scientific cooperation between the two neighboring countries.

Many universities in Kazakhstan have good international rankings, she said.

“We are ready to cooperate for exchange of professors and university students as well as carry out joint projects by academic and research centers,” she proposed.

She also highlighted the knowledge-based technology cooperation between the two countries.

At the end of the meeting, the two sides discussed the participation of Kazakhstan in the Asia-Pacific In-



novation Forum 2019, which takes place in Tehran from June 10 to 12.

The Forum is jointly organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Iran’s vice presidency for science and technology.

When AI becomes an everyday technology

The evolution of AI has been a rich tale of exploration since its origins in the 1950’s, with the last decade providing an especially dramatic chapter of breakthrough innovations. But I believe the real story is what comes next — when the disruption stabilizes and machine learning transitions from a staple of Silicon Valley headlines to an everyday technology. It’ll be a far longer chapter — perhaps decades — in which developers all over the world use a mature set of tools to transform their industries.

In 2019, we find ourselves at the start of this new chapter. AI has undergone a remarkable refinement in recent years, as barriers to entry have fallen and a wide range of products, services, resources, and best practices have emerged. As our focus shifts — finally — from AI itself to the impact that AI can have on your business, the question is no longer how this technology works, but what it can do for you.

In other words, we’re entering the age of deployed AI. Deployed AI is about more than engineering — it’s about a shared vision. Engineering expertise will always play a role in AI. But in the age of deployed AI, our most important asset will be the vision that guides that expertise. What problems can AI solve, and what kind of data might the solution require? By what metrics will success be measured? And how can the result be integrated most effectively with the people and processes already in place in any given business? These are broad, organizational questions, and their answers won’t come from any single stakeholder. Every voice can contribute to deployed AI — technical and non-technical alike — and it’s vital that businesses establish workflows that empower everyone to play a role.

One of my favorite recent examples of this shift in possibilities comes from Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), where I formerly served as dean of the computer science department. While I was there, a student was considering her options for an upcoming artificial intelligence project, and thought of her sister, who happens to be deaf. She wanted to make it easier for her friends to learn the basics of American Sign Language, so she developed an AI-powered tool that tracked their movements and provided automatic



feedback as they learned new signs. And here’s the best part: she wasn’t a computer science postdoc or even a grad student — she was a history major, taking an introductory class for fun.

It’s hard to imagine a better example of how accessible and powerful deployed AI can be — or a better indication that this technology is ready to solve problems for every business, in every industry, today.

How does deployed AI actually work? The primary characteristic is a measurable, practical impact. Simply put, a deployed AI project brings dramatic automation to a major part of your business, solving real problems for customers or employees — sometimes both — in new ways. Over the course of my career, I’ve seen countless AI projects that begin by looking for something clever to do with the data or algorithms that happen to be lying around, hoping to justify their existence in the process. In contrast, a deployed AI solution works backwards from the existing needs of the people who will use it.

So how should your own company get started identifying projects that could benefit from deployed AI? Ask yourself these questions:

How can I attract or develop the expertise needed to build the solution?

It’s vital that the members of an AI deployment team share a respect for a range of different skills. For example, imagine you’re building an AI-powered voice assistant. The project will include researchers, dialogue designers and acoustic speech modelers —

among many other groups — all of whom must trust each other to solve distinct challenges intelligently. If any group feels left out, the results will range from inconsistent to downright inhumane.

■ **How can I avoid ending up with a stranded proof-of-concept?**

It’s easy to get lost in the rush of innovating, especially in a space moving as fast as AI, but it’s vital to focus on change management at the same time. This means utilizing all the traditional practices that would benefit a non-AI project: a clear north star, consistent metrics, high-quality, reliable data sets, and agility. Expect weekly reviews — at a minimum — with a continued emphasis on the end user’s experience.

Who is ultimately responsible for the decisions the AI is making?

At its core, AI is about automating judgments that have previously been the exclusive domains of humans. This is a significant challenge unto itself, of course, but it brings with it significant risk as well. Increasing effort, for instance, is required to make the decisions of AI systems more transparent and understandable in human terms. Additionally, best practices are emerging on how to use data sets and testing to ensure each sub-population of users is treated with fairness and consistency. There are also adversarial examples — deliberately misleading input intended to cause an AI system to misbehave — as well as deepfakes — realistically modified video — among many other emerging challenges. As leaders in AI, it’s our responsibility to face all of these complexities, and

provide the expertise our customers and their users need to steer this technology in the right direction.

■ **Deployed AI in action**

It’s exciting to think about where deployed AI might take us as more businesses incorporate AI in their products and services. Consider some of these examples of Google Cloud AI customers that are getting creative with AI:

Global energy company AES is using drones and AutoML Vision to more safely and efficiently inspect thousands of wind turbines.

Real Estate firm Keller Williams is empowering individual realtors to work more efficiently and effectively on their own by allowing home buyers to automatically search listing photos for specific features like “granite countertops.”

The New York Times is preserving a priceless archive of millions of photos covering more than 100 years of its history. The media publication is using AI to scan and analyze images and words on thousands of archived photos.

Financial Services firm HSBC is using AI to detect fraud at the speed and scale of global commerce by screening vast amounts of customer data against publicly available data in the search for suspicious activity.

Within each of these stories, three fundamental characteristics of deployed AI can be seen in action. First, they identify a long-unsolved problem or unrealized opportunity. Next, they’re solved in a way that simply wouldn’t be possible without AI. Finally, they demonstrate that AI has a role to play in just about every industry, whether tech-focused or not.

Sooner or later, every technology transitions from an elite niche to a mainstream tool. AI is now undergoing a similar transformation. After years of hype around mysterious neural networks and the PhD researchers who design them, we’re entering an age in which just about anyone can leverage the power of intelligent algorithms to solve the problems that matter to them. Ironically, although breakthroughs get the headlines, it’s accessibility that really changes the world. That’s why, after such an eventful decade, a lack of hype around machine learning may be the most exciting development yet.

(Source: hbr.org)

Civilians will soon be greenlit to rocket to the International Space Station

Right now, if you want to go to space, for the most part, your only option is to become an astronaut. That’s easier said than done, though, which anyone who’s seen The Right Stuff will attest to.

But soon, you’ll have a simpler way to leave Earth’s atmosphere, as long as you’re filthy rich. According to a report Friday by the Washington Post, NASA will soon let civilians travel to the International Space Station for a projected cost of \$50 million. That’s not an all-expenses-included fee, either.

Once there, you’ll be able to stay for up to 30 Earth-equivalent nights, but at a rate of \$35,000 a night, which would cover food, communication and storage. For those of you too lazy to do the math, a month’s stay at the station would cost you another million bucks and change. Travel to and from the space station would be handled by private companies like Boeing and SpaceX. NASA estimates that it could handle two amateur astronauts per year, based on current estimates.

In addition to opening the space station to tourism, the

Washington Post also reports that NASA is looking to “open up the orbiting laboratory to more commercial interests, including filming advertisements in an attempt to help fund its crash plan to return astronauts to the moon by 2024.”

ISS tourism may seem like an opportunity that’s far in the future, but it’s actually just around the corner, it seems, with the first NASA-backed tourist mission potentially happening as early as 2020.

(Source: cnet.com)

National Center for Cyberspace compiling digital development document

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The National Center for Cyberspace is compiling a document on digital services development, Mehr reported on Saturday.

The document will be submitted to the Supreme Cyberspace Council for approval, said Abbas Asusheh, the deputy director of the National Center for Cyberspace.



A document is prepared for digital services development based on the National Information Network, he said.

The document will be sent to all organizations working in the field of digital services after approval, he added.

According to the document, all the organizations should fulfill tasks based on digital services they provide, he explained.

The services should be based on the National Information Network, including all online services provided for e-government, e-health and e-commerce, he added.

“Unfortunately there was no regulation before for organizations to provide their online services based on the National Information Network,” he said.

But the document provides the framework for all organizations, he concluded.

■ **E-government in Iran**

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.

According to the latest report by the United Nations E-Government Development Index (EGDI 2018), released in July 2018, Iran moved 20 notches up to rank 86 among 193 countries in the in comparison with EGDI 2017.

Issued by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, EGDI evaluates the scope and quality of online services, the status of telecommunication infrastructure and existing human capacity.

Iran was amongst 17 countries that transitioned from Middle-to High-EGDI level group.

Iranian university holding workshops on genetics, biotechnology

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Iran’s University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences is holding national workshops on different fields of genetics and biotechnology from June 8 to 12, Mehr reported on Friday.

The workshops are free of charge for M.S. and Ph.D students. Linkage analysis, Array CGH, Fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH) techniques and applications, Whole Exome Sequencing data analysis, CRISPR–Cas technologies and applications and Drosophila Melanogaster are the issues which will be discussed during the workshops.

Genetics is a branch of biology concerned with the study of genes, genetic variation, and heredity in organisms. Though heredity had been observed for millennia, Gregor Mendel, a scientist and Augustinian friar working in the 19th century, was the first to study genetics scientifically. Mendel studied “trait inheritance”, patterns in the way traits are handed down from parents to offspring.

Amazon drone deliveries to start ‘within months’

The company says its drones can fly up to 15 miles and are as “robust and stable as a commercial aircraft”.

Amazon has claimed its drone delivery service will be ready to launch within months.

The drones can fly up to 15 miles and deliver packages under five pounds (2.2kg) in less than 30 minutes - but only during the day and in clear weather.

They have wings and a rotor so they can fly like both a quadcopter and an aeroplane, allowing them to take off and land vertically and also glide horizontally.

Amazon says they will be piloted by artificial intelligence (AI) technologies so they can detect static objects like chimneys, as well as moving objects.

Speaking at the company’s conference in Las Vegas, its worldwide consumer executive, Jeff Wilke, said the safety features were as “robust and stable as a commercial aircraft”.

He did not say which areas would get drone delivery first, or how many customers would be able to use the service.

Despite claims of how sophisticated the technology is, Amazon’s main challenge is going to be receiving regulatory approval.

Mr. Wilke told Bloomberg the drone had been designed to get the green light from America’s Federal Aviation Authority, but this does not mean that approval will necessarily be given.

The first ever drone delivery took place in Cambridge in the UK back in December 2016, but this was a test delivery for which the company had special permission.

Getting regulatory approval for ongoing deliveries will be more difficult due to safety and noise concerns.

(Source: skynews.com)

Charity foundation to create 2,000 job plans in Golestan province

1 → Socio-economic empowerment of the communities by encouraging entrepreneurship prioritizing breadwinner women, developing infrastructure such as water supply schemes, power grid, and road building, constructing schools and increasing educational spaces, promoting health for all, granting non-repayable loans and insurance especially in less developed areas and regions most affected by 1980s war and natural disasters are of the priorities of the charity foundation.

Foreign national arrested with counterfeit money

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — A foreign national, trying to exchange \$600 counterfeit money at an exchange in northern Tehran got arrested, ISNA news agency reported on Thursday.

On Wednesday, a national of an Asian country referred to an exchange and was reported to the police for trying to exchange the fake money, police officer Ali-Aqa Karkhaneh explained.

The foreign national who works for a private company in Tehran was arrested and transferred to the police station right away, he added.

Karkhaneh warned citizens as well as foreign nationals to purchase currency from stores rather than vendors to avoid such incidents.

World Oceans Day: oceans are lungs of our planet

We celebrate World Oceans Day to remind everyone of the major role the oceans have in everyday life. They are the lungs of our planet, providing most of the oxygen we breathe. The purpose of the Day is to inform the public of the impact of human actions on the ocean, develop a worldwide movement of citizens for the ocean, and mobilize and unite the world's population on a project for the sustainable management of the world's oceans. They are a major source of food and medicines and a critical part of the biosphere. In the end, it is a day to celebrate together the beauty, the wealth and the promise of the ocean.

■ Focus for 2019: Gender and the ocean

We have an opportunity to explore the gender dimension of humankind's relationship with the ocean.

This year, we strive to build greater ocean and gender literacy, and to discover possible ways to promote gender equality in ocean-related activities such as marine scientific research, fisheries, labor at sea, migration by sea and human trafficking, as well as policy-making and management.

The importance of gender equality — in particular for the effective conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources — is increasingly recognized. However, there is very little data and research on these issues, and a concerted action towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is still needed in all ocean-related sectors to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5.

■ The battle against plastic pollution

This year, the President of the General Assembly launched 'Play It Out', a global campaign against plastic pollution. Decades of overuse and a surge in single-use plastics has led to a global environmental catastrophe. Today, 13,000,000 tons of plastic leak into the ocean every year, what among other damage, kill 100,000 marine animals annually. While most plastics are expected to remain intact for decades or centuries after use, those that do erode end up as micro-plastics, consumed by fish and other marine wildlife, quickly making their way into the global food chain.

From plastic straws to plastic bags, we all are at the frontline of efforts to #BeatPlasticPollution.

Coordinated by the UN Office of Legal Affairs, the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, the 2019 finalists of the UN WOD Photo Competition will be announced at the UN celebration on Friday, June 7th.

(Source: un.org)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Martial law in Fiji

(June 1, 2000)

On May 19th a group of rebels led by George Speight, an ethnic Fijian, took about 30 people hostage in Suva, the capital of the Pacific island of Fiji. The hostages included the Prime Minister, who comes from the Indian minority. The army then declared martial law.

A day after **martial law** was introduced, the new regime has satisfied one of the rebels' key demands. It has **revoked** the 1997 **multi-racial constitution** which allowed for an **ethnic** Indian to become Prime Minister. The rebel leader, George Speight, wants **indigenous** people to **have a monopoly** of political power **here**. The military is now **charged with** finding a way to sort out this mess - a challenge which proved too much for the Great Council of Chiefs, Fiji's powerful tribal leaders.

New Zealand's Foreign Minister, Phil Goff, has said: I think the **international community** has to work together to continue to put as much pressure as possible to keep Fiji as a democratic country to prevent the slide back into a **racist constitution** and a country in which ethnicity **determines** your vote rather than your equality as a citizen of Fiji.

■ WORDS

martial law: under martial law, an area is controlled by soldiers rather than by civilians

revoked: cancelled

multi-racial constitution: a system of laws stating people's rights and duties applying equally to people of all races. (A <race> is one of the major groups which humans can be divided into)

ethnic: belonging to that particular race

indigenous: the original population

to have a monopoly: to be the only people to have political power

charged with: soldiers have been given the job of solving the problem

international community: a group of countries

to...work...continue...put...keep...prevent: the infinitive form of the verb is used, stressing which actions are necessary to resolve the situation, and in which order

racist constitution: a constitution which favors one ethnic group over others

determines: decides

(Source: BBC)

DOE opposes production of diesel cars

ENVIRONMENT

d e s k

TEHRAN — While an Iranian automaker has undertaken a study on manufacturing diesel cars, the Department of Environment (DOE) voiced objection toward production of diesel engines owing to the amount of toxic emissions they produce.

Diesel fuel contains slightly more carbon than petrol, however, it involves toxic emissions which threaten public health, during fuel combustion in an engine nitrogen is released and combines with oxygen atoms to create nitric oxide (NO), which is further combined with oxygen and create nitrogen dioxide (NO2), both are referred to together as oxides of nitrogen (NOx).

Deputy environment chief, Masoud Tajrishi said that NOx gases react to form smog and acid rain as well as being central to the formation of particulate matter (PM) and ground level ozone, both of which are associated with adverse health effects.

He went on to say that long-term exposure to nitric oxide and PM can significantly increase the risk of respiratory problems along with cancer.

So, we completely oppose the production of diesel cars, and sent the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade a letter of objection in this regard, he added.

Pointing to an investment of €500 million on designing diesel vehicles, he said that each product needs assessment studies to determine whether the project is worth implementation or not, therefore, spending money should not necessarily lead to production.

Although, the DOE is adamantly opposing



the project, the government might issue the permit, he lamented, implying that "we must consider whether the project benefits the public in the long run."

Car manufacturing companies claim that diesel cars are not allowed to enter urban areas, but it is impossible to ban these cars from the cities due to their exact similarity to petrol vehicles, he lamented, adding, recognizing these cars is not easy.

He further expressed hope that the government rejects the production project, as well.

■ Say goodbye to clear skies

Navab Hosseini-Manesh, an official with Tehran Vehicle Inspection Company affiliated to Tehran Municipality said that diesel cars have been banned in other countries due to emitting toxic pollutants since past 15 years, while we are investing on a project which has proved to be unsuccessful long before.

Currently, over 100,000 diesel vehicles are plying the capital's roads which means that smoke amounting to 87 cubic kilometers is choking in the capital per day, he lamented. According to the plans since the Iranian

18 densely populated provinces threatened by land subsidence, study reveals

ENVIRONMENT

d e s k

TEHRAN — According to a study carried out by the Transport, Housing and Urban Development Research Center, some 18 densely populated provinces are vastly subsiding and consequently become increasingly vulnerable to flooding and natural incidents as well as bearing huge infrastructure damage.

Provinces with a population of over 1 million have reported annual subsidence rates up to several centimeters, while vast areas of plains across the country are highly prone to land subsidence, Ali Beitollahi, secretary of the national working group on natural disasters has said.

Provinces of Isfahan, Tehran, Kerman, Khorasan Razavi, Alborz, Fars, Yazd, Hamedan, Markazi, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, East Azarbaijan, Zanjan, Qom, Ardabil, Kordestan, West Azarbaijan, North Khorasan and Kermanshah reported the highest rates of subsidence, respectively, he noted.

"Excessive groundwater withdrawal is known as the main driver, as groundwater levels drop, subsidence is induced through aquifer compaction," he also added, ISNA reported on Saturday.

Over the past decades, groundwater exploitation has increased dramatically due to permanent droughts, leading to aquifer depletion, he said, lamenting, some of the aquifers levels dropped by 100 centimeters.

"Yet contribution of groundwater withdrawal to subsidence in Iran is outpacing the world," he further noted.

On top of that, groundwater drawdowns result in filling of vacant cavities between soil particles and highly compressible soils which diminishes the aquifers capacity and increase subsidence probability, he added.

He went on to say that, groundwater overexploitation will affect the plains, as rainwater will not penetrate into the subsurface reservoirs and cause high rates of soil erosion along with permanent inundation.

"Inefficient irrigation methods in addition to digging illegal wells are the other main causes of groundwater extraction-induced subsidence, as out of 50,000 wells pumping underground water resources in the capital, 30,000 are illegal not having a permit, therefore, the country's ground water condition is worrisome," he explained.

There is no supervision on of groundwater withdrawal in the aforesaid wells even on those legal ones, so this will greatly increase sinking rates and requires urgent



measures, he regretted.

Beitollahi further suggested that installation of smart meter systems on water pump and wells is an efficient measure in this regard.

Referring to the land subsidence risks, namely damages to agriculture, environment and natural resources, infrastructure and settlements, he added that subsidence creates curvature in the water and wastewater, and gas pipelines and leads to the instability of power towers and in the long run, will break them down.

He further added that this phenomenon will adversely affect the city's infrastructure while bringing huge losses.

Insisting on urgently needed policies in subsiding areas, he highlighted that Ministry of Energy must take steps toward reducing groundwater exploitation, in addition to banning well construction as well as shutting down the illegal wells in the sinking provinces.

The Ministry should also control agricultural products and prohibit cultivation of water consuming products in those provinces, and instead, introducing agricultural products which require low amount of water, he also explained.

"Modern irrigation techniques must be taught to the farmers by providing the facilities to change the ways they used to water the farms," he suggested, adding, Ministry of Agriculture also must cooperate to implement watershed management projects in order to increase the aquifers storage capacity.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ↔ چ

Water drenches 18,000 ha of Hamoun-e Sabori wetland

Hamoun-e Sabori wetland on the Iran-Afghanistan border has been saturated, as rainwater flowed over 18,000 hectares of the wetland, Mohammad Reza Alimoradi, head of marine affairs at the Sistan-Baluchestan provincial department of environment has announced.

Water entered 18,000 hectares of the wetland in the country, after the afghan part has been soaked in water, Alimoradi said, IRNA reported on Saturday.

He further expressed hope that water completely fill the wetland in the coming months along with increased precipitation rate in Afghanistan.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-esque”

■ **Meaning:** a word ending that indicates resembling

■ **For example:** At its best, **burlesque** was a rich source of music and comedy.

PHRASAL VERB

Have (got) somebody in

■ **Meaning:** if you have someone in, they are doing some work in your home, for example building work

■ **For example:** We've had the builders in all week, so everything's in a mess.

IDIOM

Kick the bucket

■ **Explanation:** to kick the bucket is a lighthearted way of talking about death

■ **For example:** He will inherit when his grandfather kicks the bucket!

calendar year 1401 (March 2022), all the vehicles must meet Euro 6 standards to reduce levels of harmful car exhaust emissions, however, currently cars manufactured in Iran do not even meet Euro 2 emission standards.

He further regretted that there are 4 million cars moving across the metropolis of Tehran contributing to numerous days of unhealthy air quality, warning that once pollutant diesel cars join the capital's fleet the pollution will soar.

■ Tehraners to breathe foul air by diesel-produced PM2.5

Mohsen Pourseyyed Aqaei, deputy mayor for traffic and transport affairs at Tehran Municipality also said that diesel engines produce PM2.5, which is the major contributor to the capital's pollution.

PM2.5 is particulate matter 2.5 micrometers or less in diameter. Particles in this size range make up a large proportion of dust that can be drawn deep into the lungs. Larger particles tend to be trapped in the nose, mouth or throat and cause respiratory, lung and even heart conditions.

Production of these engines will speed the pollution in Tehran, so it is unwise to issue licenses in this regard, he added.

Some countries are using diesel engine vehicles, where the PM 2.5 is not the major pollutant, he noted, adding, in countries with high PM concentration diesel cars must be banned.

He further called on the DOE and Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran to precisely assess the project and make a conscious decision.

The Department of Environment is another responsible organization which must take more serious steps toward environmental assessment of land subsidence and its prevention techniques, Beitollahi concluded.

■ Groundwater condition worrisome

Mohammad Reza Goldansaz, a researcher in the field of water resources said that an annual amount of 50 billion cubic meters of groundwater resources are withdrawn to supply agricultural, industrial as well as drinking water in Iran.

Comparing aquifers level in past 10 years, he said, have indicated that water level reduction in most aquifers amount to less than 50 centimeters annually, however, water level in some of the major ones reduced over 50 centimeters.

Environmental official Mohammad Mojabi said in July 2018 that renewable water resources have drastically decreased to less than 100 billion cubic meters from 132 billion cubic meters over the past 50 years, demonstrating 25 percent decline.

Out of 609 aquifers in the country 309 are depleted and water withdrawal is not allowed anymore in these aquifers, he added.

■ Land subsidence rates

In September 2018, geologist Mohammad Javad Bolorchi said that over 300 plains in Iran are at high risk of experiencing land subsidence, and as long as there is virtually no reduction in illegal overuse of groundwater resources, curbing subsidence will coincide with depletion of aquifers.

For instance, studies indicated that the plains in Varamin county, southern Tehran are subsiding by an average of one millimeter a day (36 centimeters a year), he noted, lamenting that many aquifers in central part of the country are reported salty, which needs huge water desalination systems.

In the Iranian calendar year 1384 (March 2005-March 2006), the subsidence rate in Tehran plain has been measured at 17 centimeters a year, it has been measured 12 centimeters in Varamin county, in southern Tehran.

This is while the run-down in plains of Mashhad or Rafsanjan, which has set the record high for this phenomenon since the Iranian calendar year 1345 (March 1966-March 1967), is certainly higher, regarding the reduction in precipitation rate.

‘Yemeni forces advance near Saudi Arabia’s Najran’

TEHRAN — The Yemeni Defense Minister says the country’s armed forces have managed to advance near Saudi Arabia’s southern city of Najran, calling the battlefield gains a major victory over the aggressors.

Speaking during a visit to Yemen’s border regions with Saudi Arabia on Friday, Mohammed Nasser al-Atifi said that the Yemeni Army and allied Popular Committees were “a few kilometers away” from Najran city and its airport.

He stressed that Yemeni fighters would never abandon defending their homeland as they were very close to victory over the Saudi aggressors.

Speaking to Yemen’s SABA news agency on Wednesday, Yemeni Army spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Sare’e said that the armed forces had captured 20 military positions belonging to Riyadh and its mercenaries in Najran since the weekend.

“The forces overwhelmed the positions in an attack carried out along three separate military axes,” he said.

More than 200 Saudi mercenaries were killed or wounded during the retaliatory operation, and many others captured along



with large quantities of military equipment, he added.

A new footage released on Friday showed Yemeni forces using Kornet man-portable anti-tank missiles to target Saudi armored vehicles across the Najran region.

According to Press TV, Houthi fighter Abu Hashem told the Middle East Eye news portal that the Yemeni force have recently stepped up their retaliatory attacks against the Saudis.

“Ansarallah spent the whole year fighting

the mercenaries at several fronts, including fronts inside Saudi Arabia, and for Eid [al-Fitr] they doubled their efforts to achieve new advances,” he said.

Yemeni fighters regularly target positions inside Saudi Arabia in retaliation for the Saudi war, which began in March 2015 in an attempt to reinstall the country’s Riyadh-allied former regime and crush the Houthi Ansarullah movement.

On May 14, a Yemeni drone targeted a major oil pumping station deep inside Saudi Arabia, forcing state crude giant Aramco to temporarily shut down the pipeline.

Ansarullah warned that the attack ushered in a new phase of large-scale retaliatory attacks against vital targets in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Since the Saudi war began, there have been tens of thousands of civilian casualties. Millions of Yemenis now subsist beneath the poverty line and hundreds of thousands of children are suffering and dying from malnutrition. The Western-backed military aggression, coupled with a naval blockade, has also destroyed Yemen’s infrastructure and led to a massive humanitarian crisis.

Sudan’s military arrest protest leaders after meeting with Ethiopia PM

TEHRAN — Sudanese military forces have detained leading opposition members after they met with visiting Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who was in the capital Khartoum to help end the ongoing political impasse in the country.

Ahmed met representatives of both sides on Friday in a bid to revive talks between Sudan’s Transitional Military Council (TMC) and protest groups.

Among those who attended the meeting were opposition leader Mohamed Esmat and a leader of the rebel Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), Ismail Jalab. Security forces arrested both men later on without giving any reason, their aides said Saturday.

“A group of armed men came in vehicles at 3:00 am (1:00 GMT) and took away

Ismail Jalab .. without giving any reason,” said Jalab’s aide Rashid Anwar, adding that SPLM-N spokesman Mubarak Ardol was also detained.

“We don’t know where they are being held,” he added.

The meeting came days after the military raided a sit-in protest outside the army headquarters in central Khartoum, killing at least 30 people.

The protesters have been calling on the military rulers to hand over power to a civilian government.

The Sudanese military announced last month that it had unseated President Omar al-Bashir and later imprisoned him. It then set up the TMC to rule the country and promised to hand over after elections.

Venezuela, Cuba leaders meet in show of unity against ‘enemy’

TEHRAN — Vice President of Venezuela’s ruling party Diosdado Cabello has met with Cuba’s Communist Party leader Raul Castro in a show of unity against the United States’ constant pressure on the governments of Caracas and Havana.

Cabello, a key figure in the government Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, arrived in the capital Havana on Friday, where he said the two sides “need to be united because we have a very powerful enemy in common.”

According to Cuban media, Castro “reiterated Cuba’s firm support to the Venezuelan people and government” during the meeting, Press TV reported.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said he also held a “fraternal and useful meeting” with Cabello in which he

expressed his country’s “solidarity.”

He said in a Twitter message that they had touched on matters of international interest as well.

The meeting came as the U.S. continues to undermine Maduro in a bid to replace him with opposition figure Juan Guaido.

Guaido, who headed the defunct National Assembly, pushed the country into a political crisis in January, when he suddenly declared himself as “interim president” of Venezuela, disputing the outcome of last year’s election, in which President Maduro emerged victorious.

US President Donald Trump as well as some of his Latin American and European allies immediately recognized Guaido and pledged to help him oust Maduro, even if it requires military action.

ICC prosecutor pushes probe into Afghanistan war crimes

TEHRAN — The International Criminal Court’s (ICC) chief prosecutor has filed an appeal challenging the court’s rejection of a probe into war crimes in Afghanistan by invading U.S. forces, local Afghan troops as well as Taliban and other militant groups.

The 17-page appeal document filed on Friday by the court’s lead prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, which will be heard by a trial court, was the first step in the legal process to appeal ICC’s ruling in April to block the investigation based on difficulties of gathering evidence and budgetary issues.

Bensouda argued that the court’s decision to block an investigation “affects not only the outcome of any trial but also the very possibility of a trial occurring,” according to the document.

On April 12, a panel of pre-trial judges rejected the proposed probe into war crimes committed in Afghanistan, arguing that it would not serve justice because an investigation and prosecution were unlikely to be successful as those targeted -- including American forces, Afghan authorities and Taliban militants -- were not expected to cooperate.

According to Press TV, Bensouda insisted in her appeal,

however, that such an argument is contrary to the reason the court was established -- to prosecute grave crimes when national authorities are unwilling or unable to do so.

“While the Prosecution is very mindful of the challenges in pursuing investigations or prosecutions in circumstances when cooperation is limited ... it remains the case that these challenges are part of its statutory responsibility,” wrote the ICC prosecutor.

Rights groups also censured ICC judges’ decision in April to reject the war-crimes probe in Afghanistan as a blow to Afghan victims seeking justice.

Patrick Baudouin, President of the International Federation for Human Rights, called the rejection a “dark day for justice” and a “shocking decision, which is based on a deeply flawed reasoning”.

According to press reports, among issues Bensouda intends to challenge in the appeal is whether the pre-trial judges even have the power to reject her request based on what they determined to be “the interests of justice.”

Bensouda wrote that her request for an appeal is not



simply disagreeing with the rejection, “but rather represents a legal issue of constitutional importance for the continued practice of the Court as a whole.”

ICC prosecutors had identified the Taliban and its affiliates, members of the U.S. armed forces and its CIA spy agency as well as local Afghan authorities as potential perpetrators of crimes under the court’s statute.

Saudi teenager faces death penalty as crackdown widens in kingdom

TEHRAN — Saudi authorities are likely to execute a teenager who has been held in pre-trial detention for almost four years, as a brutal crackdown led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman against pro-democracy campaigners, Muslim preachers and intellectuals widens in the kingdom.

Murtaja Qureiris is currently being tried at a terror court, where the prosecution has accused him of belonging to “an extremist terror group,” CNN television news network reported on Friday.

He faces other trumped-up charges

running from violence allegedly committed during anti-regime protests, including helping to construct Molotov cocktails, to shooting at security forces and marching at his brother’s 2011 funeral.

According to press TV, Qureiris has denied the charges, and said that the confessions, which the prosecution has largely relied on, were obtained under duress.

Qureiris was 10 years old when he was filmed taking part in a bike protest in Saudi Arabia’s Eastern Province. He lifts a megaphone and presses it against

his lips. “The people demand human rights!” he shouts.

He was shortly afterwards charged with accompanying his activist brother, Ali Queris, on a motor-cycle ride to a police station in the eastern Saudi city of Awamiya, located some 390 kilometers northeast of the capital, Riyadh. Ali allegedly threw Molotov cocktails at the police station there.

Murtaja was 11 when his brother died taking part in protests, which Saudi officials described as violent.

He was 13 years old, when Saudi au-

thorities arrested him as he was traveling with his family to Bahrain. He was detained by Saudi border authorities on the King Fahd causeway that connects the two countries.

At the time, Qureris was considered by lawyers and activists to be the youngest known political prisoner in Saudi Arabia.

A charge sheet recommending the death penalty was presented to Qureiris just months before his 18th birthday. Another one of his brothers has also been jailed, and his father was detained last year, according to activists.



“Obviously it will be for my colleagues in Parliament and members of the Conservatives Party to decide now if I should be leader.”

May stepped down as Conservative leader on Friday and formally triggered the race for a successor -- currently being contested by Gove and 10 other MPs -- but will remain prime minister until a new leader is chosen.

The leader of the party, which won the most seats at the last general election in 2017, automatically becomes prime minister.

The battle is expected to conclude by the end of next month, with former foreign secretary Boris Johnson the bookmakers’ favorite to emerge victorious.

Johnson, an ex-London mayor, has previously suggested he may also have tried to use cocaine, but later denied he had actually taken the drug.

Several other candidates, including current foreign minister Jeremy Hunt and ex-Brexit Secretary Dominic Raab, have owned up to using cannabis in their younger days.

The odds of success for Japanese PM’s visit to Iran

I→ Second we have to wait to see that how the Japanese PM will be able to affect the U.S.’ decisions. Iran’s Keivan Khosravi spokesman for the Supreme National Security Council said efforts to remove U.S. extraterritorial sanctions against Iran could guarantee the success of Japanese PM’s visit to the Islamic Republic.

German foreign minister kicks off Middle East tour

TEHRAN — German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas started his four-day tour of Iraq, Jordan, United Arab Emirates and Iran.

He was in Iraq on Saturday.

In a statement Saturday, Maas’s office said European nations must engage with the region at a time of heightened concern following recent U.S. naval movements in the Persian Gulf.

Suu Kyi, Hungary PM lament Muslim population rise

TEHRAN — Myanmar’s de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi and Hungary’s far-right nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban have lamented the “continuously growing Muslim populations” in their countries.

Suu Kyi, who has been internationally condemned for the persecution of Rohingya Muslim refugees in Myanmar’s northwestern state of Rakhine, held talks with the Hungarian leader in Budapest this week as part of a rare trip to Europe.

Reports suggested that the two leaders had found common ground on the subject of immigration and Islam, Press TV reported.

“The two leaders highlighted that one of the greatest challenges at present for both countries and their respective regions -- south-east Asia and Europe -- is migration,” read a statement released after their meeting.

“They noted that both regions have seen the emergence of the issue of co-existence with continuously growing Muslim populations,” the statement added.

The meeting comes as Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize winner who was once hailed as a champion in the fight for democracy, has been stripped of a series of international honors over the Rohingya exodus that began in August 2017.

Pentagon gives Turkey a deadline to cancel S-400 deal or lose F-35

TEHRAN — The Pentagon has started the process of removing Turkey from the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program, and has drawn up plans to shift the NATO ally’s manufacturing roles to American and allied manufacturers, U.S. defense officials said Friday.

Washington has given Ankara a deadline: by July 31, Turkey must cancel its order of Russian S-400 missile interceptors -- or lose its right to buy 100 F-35s and make parts for even more of the high-tech jets, Pentagon acquisition chief Ellen Lord told reporters on Friday.

“As we have very clearly communicated at all levels, Turkey will not receive the F-35 if Turkey takes delivery of the S-400 system,” Lord said. “Thus we need to begin unwinding Turkey’s participation in the F-35 program.”

According to Defence One, U.S. officials worry that the S-400 radar would gather technical details about F-35s, then pass them back to Russia, which will use the information to improve the S-400’s ability to down the jet.

The F-35 is the centerpiece of U.S., NATO, and allied force war plans for the coming decades.

In a June 6 letter to Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, acting U.S. Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan said American officials were “disappointed” that Turkish military officials were in Russia learning how to use the S-400.

That prompted the Defense Department to announce it would kick out Turkish pilots learning to fly the F-35 at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona by July 31. Turkey has four F-35s at Luke. Later this year, F-35-maker Lockheed Martin was supposed to deliver the first jet to be based in Turkey.

Canada says Cuba will have a role to play in Venezuela’s return to democracy

TEHRAN — Cuba will have a role to play in Venezuela’s return to democracy, Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland said, even though Ottawa and Havana disagree on whether President Nicolas Maduro should stay in office.

Freeland made her remarks in a televised Toronto news conference after meeting Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez. Cuba is a strong ally of Maduro, whom most western nations want to step down in favor of opposition leader Juan Guaido, Reuters reported.

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence last week called on Canada to do more to engage directly with Cuba over what Pence called its “malign influence” on the Venezuelan crisis.

“I think we are seeing an international convergence around the need for a peaceful transition in Venezuela resulting in free and fair elections and the return to democracy. Cuba will have a role to play in this,” Freeland said.

When pressed to be more specific about what Cuba could do, she declined to answer.

Freeland’s meeting with Rodriguez was the second in less than a month. The two ministers met in Havana on May 16 for talks that centered on Venezuela.

France take first step towards possible World Cup glory

France head coach Corinne Diacre said her side had taken their first step towards women's World Cup success but warned they must stay grounded after they started with a 4-0 victory against South Korea on Friday. Les Bleues were rarely troubled by a limited South Korea side and took only nine minutes to open the scoring, with Eugenie Le Sommer firing the ball into the roof of the net from close range.

Wendie Renard doubled the tally with a downward header in the 35th minute, and the towering defender added another with her head on the stroke of halftime.

France's intensity dropped after the break but the stadium was sent into raptures again five minutes from fulltime when captain Amandine Henry curled a superb shot into the far corner of the net. "We worked a lot, they suffered a lot during the preparation period. I've had time to prepare things, it's a luxury. We won tonight but it's just the first step," Diacre told a news conference at the Parc des Princes.

"We need six more (steps) to reach our goal, we must keep our feet on the ground and keep working."

France played the perfect game, reaching the interval with a three-goal lead that all but extinguished South Korea's hopes of victory. "We started well, it was the way to go we made it easy for ourselves. It was important to score a second goal before the break, we did even better," said Diacre.

Woman of the match Wendie Renard told reporters: "We knew there would be a lot of emotions tonight, we dealt with it perfectly."

(Source: France 24)

Neymar, sponsors suspend some ad campaigns after rape allegation

Brazilian soccer star Neymar's agents said on Friday that he and some of his sponsors had agreed to suspend some advertising campaigns following an allegation that he raped a woman in Paris last month.

NR Sports, which holds the rights to Neymar's name and image, said in a statement that no sponsorship contract had been cancelled and it did not provide details on what ad campaigns had been suspended. "All the partners, for obvious reasons, are alert and aware of the unfolding events," the NR Sports statement said in part. A Brazilian woman accused Neymar, 27, of raping her at a Paris hotel last month. Sao Paulo police are investigating the accusation against Neymar, who plays his club soccer with French champions Paris Saint-Germain.

The woman told investigators that she met Neymar on Instagram. Neymar suggested they meet in person in Paris and he paid for her flight and her hotel room.

After media reports on the allegation, Neymar posted a video on Instagram, in which he denied the accusations, said he was a victim of extortion and shared messages he exchanged with the woman, including racy photos he had received.

On Thursday, Nike Inc said it was "very concerned" about the rape accusation, raising questions about its sponsorship of one of the sport's most famous players.

A press representative for Mastercard in Brazil confirmed to Reuters that the company had planned an advertising campaign to coincide with this month's Copa America tournament but she did not confirm reports in Brazil's three biggest newspapers that Mastercard had decided to suspend Neymar's featuring in it.

U.S. press representatives for Mastercard did not reply to requests for comment.

(Source: Reuters)

Montenegro fire Serbian coach over Kosovo qualifier boycott



Montenegro have fired their Serbian coach Ljubisa Tumbakovic after he pulled out of Friday's Euro 2020 qualifier against Kosovo, the country's football association (FSCG) said on Saturday. "The FSCG executive board made an unanimous decision to relieve Tumbakovic of his duties after he decided not to be in charge of the national team for the match," the FSCG said on its official website.

"Apart from being an unpleasant surprise, Tumbakovic's move also constitutes a breach of his professional duties stipulated by his contract. "The executive board also regrets that pressure from certain circles resulted in players Filip Stojkovic and Mirko Ivanic also pulling out of the fixture.

"Things which have nothing to do with sports have defeated sports and football on this occasion."

Podgorica daily Vijesti suggested that pressure from fan groups from Serbia prompted Tumbakovic as well as Stojkovic and Ivanic, who are both Serbian-born, to skip the match against Kosovo.

None of the three were immediately available for comment. Kosovo, whose population is more than 90 percent ethnic Albanian, declared independence from Serbia in 2008 and has since been recognised as a sovereign nation by more than 110 countries. A group of nations, including Serbia, China, five EU members and Russia, have refused to recognise it.

The Group A match, played behind closed doors at Buducnost stadium after Montenegro were given a crowd ban for racist incidents in their 5-1 defeat by England at the same venue in March, ended in a 1-1 draw.

(Source: Goal)

New Madrid hope Hazard needs Real as much as they need him

After five years without a 'Galactico' signing, Real Madrid have recruited Eden Hazard to return the dishevelled Spaniards to their perch as the best side in Europe, while the Belgian hopes his new team can elevate him to a higher level too.

The 28-year-old agreed a five-year deal with Real on Friday in a reported 100 million euros (£89 million) transfer from Chelsea, making him the club's joint-record signing with Gareth Bale, who joined from Tottenham Hotspur in 2013.

He is also Madrid's first marquee signing since forward James Rodriguez moved to the Bernabeu for 80 million euros after finishing as top scorer at the 2014 World Cup.

But while the Colombian arrived at the then newly crowned Champions League winners, Hazard is joining a Real side in disarray after they ended the season without a trophy and having finished 19 points adrift of La Liga champions Barcelona.

Even though Madrid have craved Hazard for years, the Belgian's arrival is just one step in a huge rebuilding process being overseen by coach Zinedine Zidane, who has already signed Serbian striker Luka Jovic and Brazilian defender Eder Militao.

Zidane is a known admirer of the former Lille winger and will hope Hazard's silky play and dynamic dribbling can add excitement to Madrid's attack and boost their waning goal threat since all-time top scorer Cristiano



Ronaldo left last year.

Madrid have struggled for goals since Ronaldo's departure for Juventus, as Welshman Bale and Marco Asensio failed to successfully step up, and Hazard has come to fill that void, poised to operate from the left flank with licence to roam.

The Belgium forward's goalscoring tallies for Chelsea have been erratic over the past few years but under the London club's

Italian coach Maurizio Sarri this season he has been lethal.

Hazard scored 16 Premier League goals and provided 15 assists as Chelsea finished third in the standings, then providing a fitting swansong with two goals and an assist in the 4-1 win over Arsenal in the Europa League final.

■ Top honors

With Chelsea having fallen way behind

Russia again in spotlight as IAAF wrestles with Semenya case



Doping-tainted Russia will learn on Sunday whether it has met the criteria set by athletics' governing body the IAAF to be reintegrated in world track and field.

Banned in November 2015 because of evidence of mass state-sponsored doping, Russia has failed to have its ban overturned 10 times. Dozens of Russian athletes cleared by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), however, have competed as neutrals. While US-based long jumper Darya Klishina was the sole Russian athlete cleared to participate at the 2016 Rio Olympics, 74 Russian athletes competed as neutrals last year and 68 have been cleared since the start of 2019.

The IAAF, led by two-time Olympic 1500m gold medallist Sebastian Coe, has been the stand-out sporting body to put its foot down in the wake of the doping scandal, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) having both reintegrated Russia. Rumour has it that Russia, a giant in the track and field world, is now closer than ever to getting the green light from the IAAF for its reintegration.

The body's Task Force, charged with investigating the scandal, wants 2.8 millions euros repaid by the Russians for its work as well as access to the Moscow laboratory at the heart of the doping scandal between 2011-15.

The two are close to being resolved.

On April 30, WADA announced that analysis of data taken from the Moscow

lab in January was "almost finished" before being sent to the Athletics Integrity unit (AIU), a watchdog founded by the IAAF to combat doping in the sport.

And Russian athletics federation chief Dmitry Shlyakhtin said on June 2 that the Task Force costs had been met.

"We should be heading towards accepting them back in," said Frenchman Bernard Amsalem, a member of the 27-strong IAAF council that will vote on Sunday.

"We've come to the end of the procedure. Things must now return to normal."

Things, however, were complicated by a Sunday Times story on June 2 alleging that Russian athletics federation (RUSAF) officials fabricated documents to show that Danil Lysenko, the 2017 world silver high jump medallist was too ill to provide his whereabouts after failing to make himself available for out-of-competition drug testing. Russia authorities came out blazing, saying they were victims of an "information war" and questioning the timing of the story ahead of the IAAF Council meeting in Monaco.

Lysenko was provisionally suspended last August on the eve of the European Championships in Berlin, after making himself unavailable for testing.

According to the Sunday Times, RUSAF officials used documents from fake doctors working at a bogus clinic in Moscow to cover for Lysenko.

(Source: Eurosport)

Messi scores twice as Argentina routs Nicaragua 5-1



Lionel Messi scored a first-half double as Argentina warmed up for the Copa America with a comprehensive 5-1 win over Nicaragua on Friday in San Juan.

The Central Americans, who will participate in this month's Gold Cup tournament while Argentina battle it out in Brazil, frustrated the home side initially.

But it was left to captain Messi to spark his side into action in their only warm-up match ahead of the tournament, expertly opening the scoring on 37 minutes before grabbing another just 96 seconds later.

Lautaro Martinez, the Inter Milan forward, also scored twice, coming off the substitutes bench at half-time to give coach Lionel Scaloni food for thought ahead of the opening match with Colombia on June 15. Scaloni, brought in after Jorge Sampaoli was sacked following a disastrous showing at the World Cup last summer, is aiming to build a younger team and end Argentina's 26-year wait for a trophy.

Indeed, in Scaloni's Copa America squad only Messi, Sergio Aguero and Angel Di Maria remain from the one that was beaten by Germany in the World Cup final in Rio five years ago.

An on-song Messi, however, is needed for the South Americans to prosper over the next few weeks.

Messi has lost three Copa finals -- 2007, 2015 and 2016 -- and the last time Argentina won an international title was in the

Manchester City and Liverpool in the Premier League, Hazard leaves Stamford Bridge hungry to compete again for the top honors in the game, particularly the Champions League which he has never won.

Despite Madrid's awful last campaign, he could hardly be joining a team better versed in landing Europe's elite competition, which they have won a record 13 times.

"He's in the top few players in the world," Hazard's former Chelsea team mate Frank Lampard told talkSPORT radio last month.

"Of course it will be disappointing to lose him for the Premier League, but particularly Chelsea. You don't replace Eden Hazard, you have to find ways around it."

Hazard's ability to ghost past defenders and link up with team mates should see him forge a great partnership with Real striker Karim Benzema, who has enjoyed one of his best seasons despite the Madrid side's collective failures.

Benzema spent years toiling on behalf of Ronaldo, but Hazard scores and creates in equal measure and the French forward will enjoy collaborating with Madrid's new hope.

At Chelsea it seems Hazard often had to do it all himself, but if Zidane's rebuild is successful the highly talented forward will have plenty of support at the Santiago Bernabeu.

(Source: Reuters)

Leonard lifts Raptors within one victory of title dream

Kawhi Leonard hoisted the Toronto Raptors onto his back in the third quarter of Friday's NBA Finals game against Golden State and lifted them within one triumph of their first championship.

The 27-year-old playmaker with the cool-as-ice demeanor scored 36 points and grabbed 12 rebounds to power the Raptors over the defending champion Warriors 105-92 for a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven series.

With the game poised on a knife's edge, Leonard opened the third quarter with back-to-back 3-pointers to give the Raptors their first lead and finished with 17 points in the quarter while helping silence Golden State stars Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson.

"The key was pretty much playing defense," Leonard said. "That second half we started to make some shots and just pretty much stayed in the game."

Leonard, who was the 2014 NBA Finals Most Valuable Player in leading San Antonio to a title, was 11-of-22 from the floor, 5-of-9 from 3-point range, and 9-of-9 from the free throw line to secure the victory.

"He's playing great and he has lifted us a lot of times with big buckets or runs," Nurse said. "But more than anything, once we saw him early in the year... our team's sense of who they thought they could become went up."

Teammates realized they could become champions and



now the Warriors know it all too well, even if Leonard lacks the flamboyant moves of LeBron James or injured Warriors star Kevin Durant.

"You got to give him his credit. He imposed his will on the game and all the other guys followed him," Golden State's Draymond Green said. "I'm not sure if it will ever look like those other guys, but he gets the job done."

Curry was impressed at the way Leonard seized command. "He played amazing," Curry said. "He hit every big shot, momentum shot that in that third quarter, it gave them the lead. And then kept the separation."

Leonard's low-key attitude has kept the Raptors calm

when excitement beckons, such as being a game from the title.

"His demeanor has taken a big part of our team," Lowry said. "We have some guys that are fiery and feisty, but we all just stay level headed and never get too up, never get too down. Kawhi definitely brought a lot to that."

■ 'Two big-boy shots'

Raptors guard Fred VanVleet said there was nothing the Warriors could have done to stop Leonard from taking control early in the third quarter with his 3-pointers.

"There's no defense for that. There are no schemes for that," VanVleet said.

"That's two big-boy shots that he came out of the half with, two back-to-back threes. And that just kind of let you know how we were going to approach the third quarter and the rest of the half. It put us in good position."

When the Warriors did try to stop Leonard, it opened plays for Serge Ibaka, who came off the bench to score 20 points.

"We know they would try to take Kawhi away, double him, so I just tried to play in the space."

Ibaka had 12 points in the second half to keep Golden State at bay.

"He was great," Nurse said. "Once he starts blocking a couple shots, the offense comes and the rebounding comes and even his jump shot seems to come."

(Source: AFP)

Iran overpower Argentina at 2019 Volleyball National League

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran defeated Argentina 3-1 (25-19, 20-25, 25-22, 34-32) at the second competition week of the men's 2019 FIVB Volleyball Nations League on Saturday.

Amir Ghafour had 26 points for the Iranian team, while Bruno Lima scored 18 points for Argentina.

Team Melli, who lost to Brazil 3-2 in the first match, will face Japan on Sunday in Pool 7 at the Musashino Forest Sport Plaza in Tokyo.

Iran had a great start, dropping only one set total in the three games against Italy, China and Germany in Jiangmen last week.

The competition will be held between May and July 2019 and the final round will take place in the Credit Union 1 Arena, Chicago, United States.

This is the first edition of the World League or the Nations League to have the Final Round hosted in North America.

The 16 teams compete in a round-robin format with every core team hosting a pool at least once. The teams are divided into four pools of four teams at each week and compete five weeks long, for 120 matches. The top five teams after the preliminary round join the hosts of the final round to compete in the final round.

The relegation takes into consideration only the four challenger teams. The last ranked challenger team will be excluded from the 2020 Nations League. The winners of the Challenger Cup will qualify for the next edition as a challenger team.

The six qualified teams play in 2 pools of 3 teams in round-robin. The top two teams of each pool qualify for the semifinals. The pool winners play against the runners-up in this round. The semifinals winners advance to compete for the Nations League title. The losers face each other in the third place match.



Iran win 2019 IWF Junior World Championships



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran claimed the title of the 2019 International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) Junior World Championships.

The Championships took place in Suva, capital of the beautiful country of Fiji, 1-8 June and now it has been successfully concluded.

The Iranian team won the title in the Men's Team Classification with 622 points, followed by the U.S. (552), and Japan (521).

In the Women's Team Classification, the U.S. stood first with 615 and South Korea and Turkey finished in second and third place with 431 and 409, respectively.

Emphasizing the importance of this championship in the life of Fiji, the President of Fiji, Major-General (Ret'd) Jioji

Konusi Konrote attended the event and demonstrated the warmest hospitality to the weightlifting family. "Fiji is proud to host this important event and the Fijians are doing their best to make everybody feel at home. Never before have so many countries been represented at a sports event in Fiji."

The event was included in the "Voices of the Athletes" Schools Program, which meant students from 12 Fiji schools had the chance to witness an event of this size.

In total, 235 athletes participated, 105 women and 130 men from 41 countries. At the women, China won the medal tally (11,1,0), followed by KAZ (6,0,0) and VIE (3,3,0). At the men, Uzbekistan had the most medals (6,0,0) then EGY (3,0,0) and IRI (2,4,9).

FIVB: Kubiak must apologize to Iranians



S P O R T S The FIVB Disciplinary Panel Sub-Committee has ruled that Polish national team player, Michal Kubiak, committed violations of the FIVB Disciplinary Regulations based on his public statements made about Iran during an interview on 26 May 2019.

The FIVB Disciplinary Panel Sub-Committee accepted the sanction imposed on Kubiak by the Disciplinary Department of the Polish Volleyball Federation of a reprimand and six-match sanction, to be served during Week 3 and 4 of the VNL 2019, which it found to be in line with the FIVB Disciplinary Regulations.

Additionally, the FIVB Disciplinary Sub-Committee strongly recommended that the Polish Volleyball Federation require Kubiak to issue a written apology, which should be read by the announcer during the match between Poland and Iran during

Week 3 of the Volleyball Nations League.

The FIVB Disciplinary Panel Sub-Committee noted that the decision of the Disciplinary Department of the Polish Volleyball Federation was subject to appeal and reserved the right to re-open the proceedings if Kubiak files an appeal of that decision or failed to serve his sanction, fivb.org reported. Kubiak had launched a stinging attack on Iranian nation in #PrawdaSiatki YouTube program.

"They always insult us into the field and don't respect us but play innocent. The Iranians think they are great and the best and we are the worst. But I believe that they are fatal, malicious and damned people. For me, this nation doesn't exist, even though they proudly call themselves Persians, not Arabs. Sometimes we have to play with them, but for me, they don't exist," Kubiak had said.

Iran's Hosseini wins gold medal at World Taekwondo Grand Prix

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran's Asian Games champion Mirhashem Hosseini won a gold medal at the World Taekwondo Grand Prix Series opener in Rome.

He defeated South Korea's three-time world champion Lee Dae-hoon 13-11 in the final in the men's under-68kg.

Bronze medal went to Zhao Shuai of China alongside world champion Brady Sinden of Britain.

Also, Hosseini compatriot Sajad Mardani and Britain's Mahama Cho claimed a bronze medal in the men's over-80kg.

Russia's Vladislav Larin earned gold in the category after defeating Kazakhstan's Ruslan Zhaparov 9-7 in the final at Foro Italico Arena.



The competition is due to continue on Saturday with the women's under-57kg, men's under-58kg and women's over-67kg events.

In total, 255 of the highest-ranked taekwondo athletes from 53 countries are set to compete in four male and four female Olympic weight categories.

The World Taekwondo Poomsae Championships was launched in 2006 and has since become one of the most popular events on the taekwondo calendar.

Expanding the Grand Prix concept to include poomsae is part of the federation's commitment to innovating and evolving the sport for the benefit of its athletes and fans.

Korea Republic eye quick fix after defeat to France

Head coach Yoon Duk-yeo has declared that he is looking for Korea Republic to move on as quickly as possible from Friday's 4-0 defeat to France in the opening match of the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup.

Wendie Renard's brace as well as goals from Amandine Henry and Eugénie Le Sommer helped France to a comprehensive Group A victory as Korea Republic regularly struggled to contain the rampaging host nation at an atmospheric Parc de Princes in Paris.

The defeat, whilst far from extinguishing Korean hopes, has left Yoon's charges with plenty of work still to do if they are to reach the competition's knockout phase, a point not lost on the 58-year-old tactician.

"For us, the result against France was, of course, not a good one," he said.

"We now must do our very best in our next two matches, and especially ensure that we get the right result from our second group stage match against Nigeria."

"At the moment, the squad's mood is not good, and I have to work hard to improve that. We must forget the result of this game as soon as possible and begin to prepare for our next match."

"We still have two matches in the group to come, and we are of course hoping to do better. But we have to face the reality which is that we need to improve. Sometimes in the group stage there is the consideration of goal difference and the fact that we conceded so many goals was a worrying aspect of today's result."

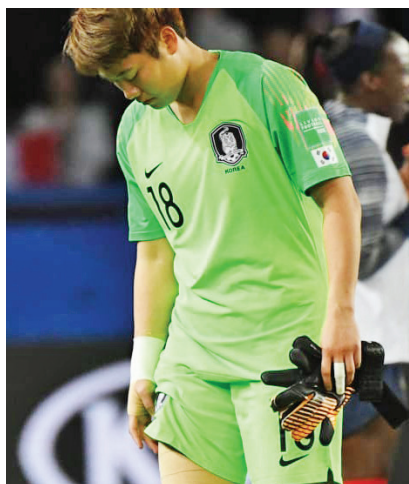
Whilst dismayed at the nature of the goals Korea Republic conceded, Yoon was

also adamant that facing a footballing powerhouse such as France had given his side some much needed experience.

"Today's game showed that France are a strong team, and many of their players put in very powerful performances. As hosts of this event, France are potential winners of this tournament," he declared.

"For us, having a match against such a strong team as France is a very difficult experience, but in order for us to improve our performance levels we need to have more matches against sides as strong as France."

Korea Republic will now look to return to winning ways when they play Nigeria in Grenoble on Wednesday, the same day France are scheduled to face Norway in Nice. (Source: the-afc)



Iran discover fate in FIBA Asia Cup qualifiers

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran are drawn in Group E along with Saudi Arabia, Syria and Qatar in the 2021 FIBA Asia Cup qualifiers.

The draw ceremony was held in Bangalore, India on Saturday. The new format of qualification for the FIBA Asia Cup is similar to that of the FIBA World Cup in which the 24 participating teams, who have been pooled into six groups, will play a home-and-away format to be played in November 2019, February 2020, and November 2020.



The top two teams in each group will automatically advance into the 2021 FIBA Asia Cup with the next four teams to be determined through a quarterfinal tournament in February 2021 among the third placers in all six groups.

Group A: India, the Philippines, Thailand, South Korea
Group B: China, Chinese Taipei, Japan, and Malaysia
Group C: Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, and Guam
Group D: Bahrain, Lebanon, India, and Iraq
Group E: Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Syria
Group F: Jordan, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka, and Palestine

Majidi, Taghavi shortlisted to coach Iran U23 team

TASNIM — Esteghlal coach Farhad Majidi and ex-Tractor Sazi trainer Mohammad Taghavi have been nominated to take charge of the Iran U23 football team.

Iranian media reports suggest that the former Esteghlal players are now candidates to replace Zlatko Kranjcar, the Croatian coach who left the job in early May after one year in charge.

The Iran U23 football team had also been linked with Yahya Golmohammadi, Mehdi Mahdavi, Abbas Chamanian and Amir Ghalanoei.

Under coaching of Kranjcar, Iran booked a place at the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 Final. However, the federation was not satisfied with the Croatian coach's performance. The AFC U23 Championship 2020 will be held in Thailand from Jan. 8 to 26.

It will act as the AFC qualifiers for the Olympic football tournament. The top three teams of the tournament will qualify for the 2020 Summer Olympics men's football tournament in Japan as the AFC representatives.

Iran has not qualified for the Olympics since the 1976 games in Munich.

Italian club Sassuolo eye Majid Hosseini

PLDC — Majid Hosseini from Iran has caught the eye of Italian Serie A club Sassuolo.

Sassuolo are going to sign the Iranian defender as a replacement for Merih Demiral.

Demiral will leave Sassuolo to join Italian giant Juventus. Hosseini joined Turkish club Trabzonspor after the 2018 World Cup and the European teams are interested in signing the 22-year-old player.

Spanish teams Valladolid, CD Leganes, Levante and Villarreal have also shown their interest in signing Hosseini.

Dutch Eredivisie side Vitesse Arnhem are also among the teams targeting the Iranian international defender.

Majid Hosseini was a member of Iran national football team in the 2018 World Cup and the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

Hosseini, who has one year left on his contract, can leave Trabzonspor if he will receive a good offer from the other teams.

Iran to participate at World Rafting Championship

MNA — Iran's Rafting team will participate at the World Rafting Championship 2019 in Tunceli, Turkey.

Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari's team will represent Iran at the World Rafting Championship 2019 which will be held on 8-13 June in Tunceli, Turkey.

26 teams from 20 countries including China, Brazil, France, India, Italy, Iran and Croatia, will take part at the Championship to be held in the Munzur Valley, known as the largest and most biodiverse national park in Turkey.

The competition will take place on a rafting course of 36 kilometers on Munzur River, according to Turkish media.

Iran beat Armenia at Granatkin International Tournament

TASNIM — Iran earned the first win at the 2019 Granatkin Memorial International Tournament underway in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Sirous Pourmousavi's boys beat Armenia 2-0 at the "Petrovsky" Stadium in St. Petersburg.

Ali Sobhani scored Iran's first goal in the 27th minute and Ahmad Jalali made it 2-0 in the 37th minute.

Iran U-19 football team had lost to Russia "B" in its first match and will face Argentina in Group B in the next match.

The tournament, which was introduced by then FIFA president Joao Havelange in the memory of FIFA's first vice-president Valentin Granatkin, is being held at the Petrovsky Stadium from June 4 to 14.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
» Printed at: Hamshahri No. 3(Rooztab) - ISSN: 1017-94



Tehrantimes79



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No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.o. Box: 14155-4843
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The faith of no one is true unless he is sure that his reward before God is worthier than the wealth he possesses.

Imam Ali (AS)

Comic strip on martyr Mohsen Hojaji published

➔ He also said that the book will help introduce different aspects of the martyr's life to the youth in Iran and the world. Hojaji's parents were also present at the ceremony.



An image of a page of the comic strip “Proof of God”. (Fars/Soheil Sahranavard)

In addition, Hojaji's biography was published last year by Shahid Kazemi Publications.

The martyr's friends and family have given an account of the 26-year-old soldier in the book titled “The Proud”, which has been authored by Mohammad-Ali Jafari.

Hojaji, whose name has become synonymous with bravery and struggle against savage terrorism, was captured by Daesh forces near Al-Tanf in southeast Syria on August 7, 2017, and was beheaded two days later.

“How to Survive a Horror Movie” at Iranian bookstores

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — American novelist and screenwriter Seth Grahame-Smith's book “How to Survive a Horror Movie: All the Skills to Dodge the Kills” has recently been published in Persian by Cheshmeh Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Hossein Yaqubi, the 2007 book, which is a parody of the horror genre in cinema, tries to show the ways to defeat every obstacle found in scary films including ghosts, vampires, zombies, serial killers, cannibalistic hillbillies and haunted Japanese videocassettes.

The book also has a foreword by American filmmaker Wes Craven, who was known for his pioneering work in the genre of horror films, particularly slasher films.

Iran's Khonyagaran Orchestra to perform at WOMEX

A R T **TEHRAN** — Khonyagaran, an all-female orchestra led by prominent Iranian composer Behzad Abdi, has been selected to perform a concert at the 25th edition of WOMEX – the World Music Expo in Tampere, Finland.



Khonyagaran Orchestra in an undated photo.

Kamancheh player Mehrnam Rastegari, tar player Targol Khaliqi, qanun player Seda Sodeifi, ney player Sheida Qazi and nine other musicians will accompany the orchestra during the performance, which will be a repertoire of Iranian folk and traditional music.

Music ensembles from India, Brazil, Korea, Argentina, the U.S., France and several other countries will give performances at the expo, which will run from October 23 to 27.

“Graveless” receives nominations in Shanghai film festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Mostafa Sayyari's movie “The Graveless” has been nominated for best film while Hamed Hosseini received a nomination for best cinematographer for his cooperation in the film at the 22nd Shanghai International Film Festival.

The film is competing in the Asian New Talent Award section of the festival, which will be held in the Chinese city from June 15 to 24.

“The Graveless” follows four siblings' journey to the south of Iran with their newly-deceased father's body to bury him in a village they have never heard of, to fulfil the last will of their father.

A lineup of eight Iranian films will also go on screen in various sections of the festival.

“Castle of Dreams” by Reza Mirkarimi will compete in the main section of the festival, while “Dissect” by Siavash Shahabi will be screened in the short film section of the event.

“The Dark Room” by Ruhollah Hejazi, “Sheeple” by Hooman Seyyedi and “My Second Year in College” by Rasul Sadrameli will go on screen at the Global Village section.

“Three Faces” by Jafar Panahi, “In the Fish” by Behzad Vaziri and “Cold Sweat” by Soheil Beiraghi are also among the films.



A scene from Iranian director Mostafa Sayyari's movie “The Graveless”.

“IRock” to compete in Italian theater festival



A scene from “IRock” by director Mohammad Niazi (IRNA).

A R T **TEHRAN** — “IRock”, the latest production of Mashhad Musical Theater, will be competing in the TACT Festival, the youth theater festival running in the Italian city of Trieste opening today.

The play by director Mohammad Niazi and producer Masud Hokmabadi will go on stage at the Slovenian Stable Theater on June 11, the organizers have announced.

“IRock” represents a new form of theater that combines theater and visual arts. It is the story of a radio reporter and a competition

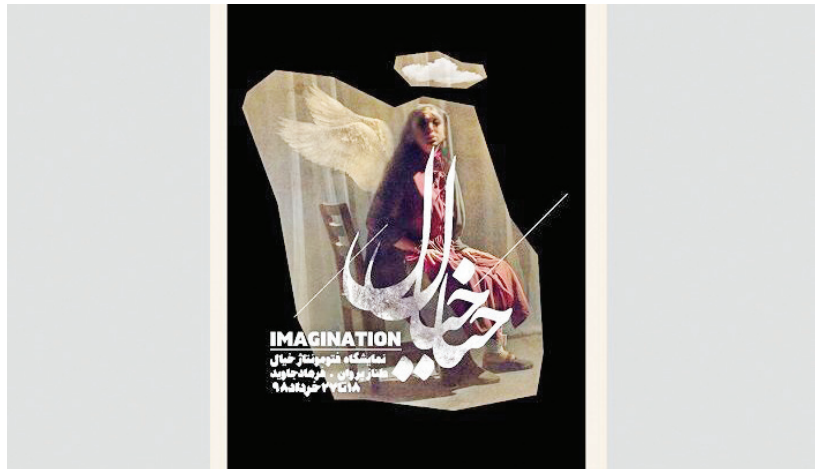
in a train station so that he can find his old lover. The play was staged in Tehran and Mashhad, two major cities of Iran, and has enjoyed considerable public success.

Sahand Kheirabadi has written the play and Maral Farjad, Mahmud Karimi, Puya Ghazi and Erfan Zaferanieh are among the main members of the troupe.

100 artists from 10 different countries will be performing on stage at the festival running until June 15.

Several workshops have also been arranged on the margins of the event.

Popular theater photo montages on show in Tehran gallery



A poster for the exhibition, “Imagination”.

A R T **TEHRAN** — An exhibition of photo montages of a number of Iranian plays has been put on view in the Mostaqel Gallery in Tehran under the title “Imagination”.

The photos have been taken by Farhad Javid and are montaged by Tannaz Parvaran, the gallery has announced in a press release published on Saturday.

“The House of Bernard Alba” by Ali Rafiei, “Les Misérables” by Hossein Parsai, “You Were Busy Dying” by

Mojgan Khaleqi and “Love Letters from the Middle East” by Kiumars Moradi are among the plays chosen for the exhibit.

Javid is a photographer who won the best photo award at the 35th Fajr International Theater Festival.

Parvaran is a graduate of graphic design and is active as a children's book illustrator.

The exhibit will be running until June 17 at the gallery located at No.50, Razi St., next to Daneshju Park.

Painting by Hossein Zenderudi sells for 150,000 EUR in Sotheby's in Paris

A R T **TEHRAN** — “Voute Azurée”, a painting by Iranian artist Hossein Zenderudi was sold for 150,000 EUR at Sotheby's Art Contemporain in Paris on June 5, the organizers have announced.

The highest-priced item sold at the auction was “La Chaise”, a painting by French painter Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985), which sold for 3,468,100 EUR.

After the exceptional success of recent contemporary

art sales setting many new world records, Sotheby's France contemporary art sale was undeniably a highlight of the season.

Throughout the sale, rare examples by the masters of the post-war and contemporary eras including a group of iconic Zao Wou-Ki paintings, unique Dubuffet compositions, an impressive 1950s Calder Mobile, a Hartung masterpiece and a sumptuous Soulages oil on canvas were offered for sale.



“Voute Azurée”, a painting by Iranian artist Hossein Zenderudi.

Ai-Da, the humanoid robot artist, gears up for first solo exhibition

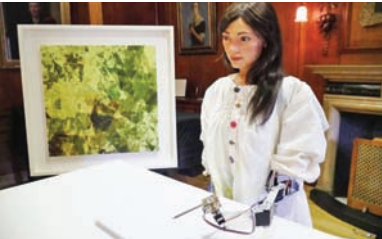
OXFORD, England (Reuters) — Wearing a white blouse and her dark hair hanging loose, Ai-Da looks like any artist at work as she studies her subject and puts pencil to paper. But the beeping from her bionic arm gives her away - Ai-Da is a robot.

Described as “the world's first ultra-realistic AI humanoid robot artist”, Ai-Da opens her first solo exhibition of eight drawings, 20 paintings, four sculptures and two video works next week, bringing “a new voice” to the art world, her British inventor and gallery owner Aidan Meller said.

“The technological voice is the important one to focus on because it affects everybody,” he told Reuters at a preview. “We've got a very clear message we want to explore: the uses and abuses of A.I. today, because this next decade is coming in dramatically and we're concerned about that and we want to have ethical considerations in all of that.”

Named after British mathematician and computer pioneer Ada Lovelace, Ai-Da can draw from sight thanks to cameras in her eyeballs and AI algorithms created by scientists at the University of Oxford that help produce co-ordinates for her arm to create art.

She uses a pencil or pen for sketches, but the plan is for Ai-Da to paint and create pottery. Her paint works now are printed onto canvas with a human painting over.



Robot artist Ai-Da sketches using a pencil attached to her robotic arm, while standing next to a painting based on her computer vision data when run through algorithms developed by computer scientists in Oxford, Britain June 4, 2019. (Reuters/Matthew Stock)

“From those coordinates from the drawing we've been able to take that into a algorithm that is then able to output it through a Cartesian graph that then produces a final image,” Meller said.

“It's a really exciting process never been done before in the way that we've done it...We don't know exactly how the drawings are going to turn out and that's really important.”

On show at the “Unsecured Futures” exhibition are drawings paying tribute to Lovelace and mathematician Alan Turing, abstract paintings of trees, sculptures based on Ai-Da's drawings of a bee and video works, one of which, “Privacy” pays homage to Yoko Ono's 1965 “Cut Piece”.

“Men in Black” Hemsworth and Thompson suit up for fourth installment

MOSCOW (Reuters) — The “Men in Black” are back - wearing the same suits and sunglasses but different faces.

Actors Chris Hemsworth and Tessa Thompson flew to Moscow to launch the fourth installment of the science fiction franchise originally starring Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones, which pits suited agents against aliens disguised as humans on Earth.

In “Men in Black: International”, the “Avengers” star and “Creed” actress play Agent H and Agent M, who have to find a mole in the organization. As in the other installments, cars and gadgets take center stage.

“We had this pretty cool souped-up Lexus that we got to drive which has all sorts of gadgets and the ability to fly across water and fly up walls and all sorts of things,” Hemsworth told reporters on Thursday.

“And then there was this old classic Jag (Jaguar) that just looked like a classic beautiful car but again, all the weapons come out of the exhaust pipe and the side-view mirror and so on, so that was pretty awesome.”

Thompson paid tribute to Smith. “The first (“Men in Black”) film marks his real entry into global stardom and I think now we can take it for granted because there are a lot of people of color in Hollywood but he was really one of the first.”



Chris Hemsworth poses for a picture during a photocall for the film “Men in Black: International” ahead of its Russian premiere, in Moscow, Russia June 6, 2019. (Reuters/Evgenia Novozhenina)

The agents try to keep Earth's alien population a secret from humans, and use neuralizer devices to wipe people's memories if they see too much.

Given a real neuralizer, “I'd probably attempt to forget all the wonderful films that I'd watched over the years that I grew up on, and erase them and experience that joy all over again,” Hemsworth said.

“Certain films I've seen 10, 15 times and still love them but wish I could have that very first impression and experience again.”

The movie, which hits cinemas from next week, also stars Liam Neeson and Emma Thompson, who featured in “Men in Black 3”.