



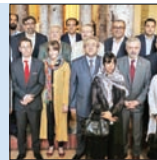
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Non-oil exports hit \$8.4b in 2 months, up nearly 9% yr/yr

TEHRAN — The value of Iran's non-oil exports reached \$8.4 billion in the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-May 21), up 8.9 percent compared to the last year's same period, IRNA reported on Sunday quoting the acting head of TPO.

Meanwhile, the country's imports stood

at \$6.7 billion, registering an eight percent fall compared to the last year's same time span, according to Mohammadreza Modoudi.

The official also put the country's services exports at \$1.6 billion, 17 percent more than the last year's two-month figure. **→4**

Rouhani, Erdogan highlight importance of ties

TEHRAN — In a phone conversation on Saturday evening, the presidents of Iran and Turkey put an emphasis on the need to develop ties between the two great neighbors and making joint efforts to settle problems facing the region and the wider Islamic world.

President Hassan Rouhani of Iran and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan also emphasized the need to develop economic cooperation and using national

currencies in trade ties.

The two presidents also expressed congratulations to each other's nation over Eid al-Fitr.

■ 'Trend of relation is positive and growing'

Rouhani described the trend of relations between Iran and Turkey in different fields as "positive" and "growing", stressing the resolve of both sides to further deepen relations, the president.ir reported. **→2**

Yemen conducts drone attacks on Saudi Arabia's Jizan airport

TEHRAN — Yemeni armed forces have launched fresh drone attacks on the airport in Saudi Arabia's southwestern Jizan region.

Yemen's al-Masirah TV channel reported on Sunday that Qasif-2K combat drones had targeted drone bunkers and stations at the Jizan airport after collecting intelligence on the sites.

It quoted a military source as saying that Saudi Arabia had converted the Jizan airport into a military base.

Over the past few weeks, the Yemeni Army and allied Popular Committees have carried out several drone attacks on the Jizan and Najran airports in retaliation for the war that Saudi Arabia has been leading on Yemen since March 2015. **→13**

Tehran should not have high expectation from Abe's visit: prof.

By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN — Professor of University of South Alabama in U.S. believes that Tehran should not have high expectations from the Japanese Prime Minister's visit to Iran.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe plans to travel to Iran on June 12, the first visit by a Japanese prime minister in the past four decades as Tokyo hopes to mediate between Washington and Tehran. Tensions between the U.S. and Iran have worsened since Washington withdrew last year from Joint Comprehensive plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and several world powers, and re-imposed sanctions on Tehran.

In this regard, some experts believe that Japan did not play much role in the diplomatic arena after World War II, and their political relations with other countries were just limited to bilateral relations. Iran should not take Shinzo Abe's visit

to Tehran so seriously on the tensions between Iran and the U.S. because there are doubts about Japan's capability to be able to act independently as a mediator after 74 years of having dependent foreign policy on the U.S.

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to Nader Entessar; a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice at the University of South Alabama. Here is the full text of our interview with him:

■ While President Trump repeatedly asks for talks with Iran, on Friday again in a hostile and trust killing act his administration slapped new sanctions against Iran's petrochemical section. How do you interpret his contradictory measures?

A: According to Trump's decision-making calculus, there is no contradiction between taking hostile actions against Iran while simultaneously asking for face-to-face negotiations. In fact, Trump

sees his policy of "maximum pressure" as a tool to enhance his negotiating position with Iran. In other words, Trump wants a weak Iran at the negotiating table so that he can extract maximum concessions from Tehran in any future negotiations.

■ What reasons have motivated Japan to try to mediate between Iran and the USA?

A: Japan imports a significant part of its energy needs from the Persian Gulf region and does not want to damage its economy because of conflict in the region. Also, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has apparently established friendly ties with Trump and Trump believes that given Japan's good relations with Iran, Prime Minister Abe is in a good position to act as an intermediary between Washington and Tehran. Trump's modus operandi relies heavily on personal relationships he establishes with individuals, both in domestic and foreign affairs. **→13**

Abe sought to become Trump's primary ally in Asia: Prof. Zonis

By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN — Professor of international political economy in the University of Chicago believes that Shinzo Abe has sought to become Trump's primary ally in Asia and if the Prime Minister could facilitate some kind of breakthrough with Iran, it would further cement the relationship between Japan and the U.S.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe plans to travel to Iran on June 12, the first visit by a Japanese prime minister in the past four decades as Tokyo hopes to mediate between Washington and Tehran. Tensions between the U.S. and Iran have worsened since Washington withdrew last year from Joint Comprehensive plan of Action (JCPOA) between

Iran and several world powers, and re-imposed sanctions on Tehran.

In this regard, some experts believe that Japan did not play much role in the diplomatic arena after World War II, and their political relations with other countries were just limited to bilateral relations. Iran should not take Shinzo Abe's visit to Tehran so seriously on the tensions between Iran and the U.S. because there are doubts about Japan's capability to be able to act independently as a mediator after 74 years of having dependent foreign policy on the U.S.

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to Marvin Zonis, Professor of international

political economy and leadership in the University of Chicago.

Here is the full text of our interview with him:

■ While President Trump repeatedly asks for talks with Iran, on Friday again in a hostile and trust killing act his administration slapped new sanctions against Iran's petrochemical section. How do you interpret his contradictory measures?

A: The Trump administration is notoriously disorganized. Policies are not coherent and, in many cases in addition to Iran, contradictory policies are common. Iran policy is largely driven by Iran "hawks" National Security Adviser Bolton and Secretary of State Pompeo. **→13**



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Iran ease past Japan at 2019 Volleyball National League

TEHRAN — Iran eased past Japan 3-0 (25-22, 25-21, 25-19) at the second competition week of the men's 2019 FIVB Volleyball Nations League on Sunday.

Milad Ebadipour scored 14 points for Team Melli, and Mayu Ishikawa also scored 14 points for Japan in Pool 7 at the Musashino Forest Sport Plaza in Tokyo, Japan.

Team Melli started the Week 2 with a 3-2 loss to Brazil 3-2 and defeated Argentina 3-1 in the next match. **→15**



EDITORIAL

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U.S. illusions: From a pretended crisis to a pretended victory

The top U.S. military commander in the Middle East General Frank McKenzie said on Thursday that Iran drew back from an apparent attack against U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf region, while it does not precisely mean that the threat is diminished.

This is while, British Army Maj. Gen. Christopher Ghika, a deputy commander with the Operation Inherent Resolve coalition, the US-led coalition fighting Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, said before that there has been no increased threat from Iranian-backed forces in Iraq and Syria.

The top British general comment was at cross purposes with the White House and the Pentagon's assertions used to justify that Iran is building up a military in the region, yet it is noteworthy that the comment was too harsh for the U.S that reprimanded him.

To put it more precisely, U.S. which directs military presence in the Middle East to Iran's aggression, is only a plan against the Islamic Republic of Iran pretending that there will be a crisis or dispute, however, it publicly contradicts their plea to negotiate. This is while, Trump had repeatedly claimed to be ready to obliterate Iran.

Therefore, the top U.S. military commander claims can be interpreted as a psychological warfare without any real military mobility.

Indeed, the U.S. claims to deploy 120,000 troops to the Persian Gulf, highlighting the presence of USS Abraham Lincoln in the region, military built-up in Iraq, and responding to threats from Iran, are only dimensions of the psychological warfare, and any of which have not actually been enforced.

But on the other hand, the U.S. is pretending to achieve victory with a policy of threat and pressure. The whole evidences suggest that the U.S. did not dare to take military action if had, certainly would have started so far, and on the other hand, Iran had not taken any steps toward disturbing the Middle East security, along with its preparedness to respond to the threats.

The United States also seeks to extort money from the Arab countries under the pretext of confronting Iran. **→13**



ARTICLE

Chris Cook
Senior Research Fellow at ISRS,
University College London

Molecules of Freedom

"With the U.S. in another year of record-setting natural gas production, I am pleased that the Department of Energy is doing what it can to promote an efficient regulatory system that allows for molecules of U.S. freedom to be exported to the world."

This expression *molecules of freedom* used by US Assistant Secretary for Fossil Energy Steven Winberg to describe the wave of US Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) exports has spread rapidly via social media to become the object of humour and derision by comedians and politicians around the world. As is often the case, this expression has taken on an ironic meaning and significance far beyond the speaker's intentions.

It has been said that the only human impulse stronger than the Will to Power (freedom to dominate others) is the Will to Freedom (freedom from domination) and some would argue that the Will to Freedom is (under God) central to Iran's Islamic constitution.

In this article, I explain the zero sum US physical and financial market strategies which creates molecules of US freedom, and in a second article I shall outline smart market strategies to address this US challenge.

■ Energy Dominance

President Trump announced on 29th June 2017 a new US energy strategy of "Energy Dominance". It is now clear that the aim of this US energy strategy is to dominate and control global physical energy markets through an export wave of US natural gas molecules of freedom and their close cousins, shale oil molecules of freedom. But while this new wave of US physical energy supply is clearly visible, the innovative financial market strategy for funding investment in US shale oil and gas has been less than transparent.

In my analysis, while President Trump and his White House team were convinced to pursue the Energy Dominance physical energy strategy of flooding the world with molecules of freedom, they are probably unaware of precisely how it is that the extremely energy intensive production of US shale oil, and its associated natural gas could be afforded. **→3**

Leader grants clemency to 691 prisoners

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has pardoned or commuted prison terms of 691 convicts found guilty by various courts.

The pardon was granted at the request of Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, one of the most important Islamic festivals.

Some sources have said Nizar Zakka, a Lebanese-American national who has been imprisoned in Iran since 2015 on charge of working with the U.S. intelligence service, can be one of the most prominent prisoners released on this occasion.

A source familiar with the case told the Lebanese-based Daily Star on Saturday that he will arrive in Beirut within 48 hours.

The Lebanese Foreign Ministry announced earlier this week that Iran had agreed to free Zakka after President Michel Aoun and Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil requested for his release as a good-will gesture in the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Zakka was arrested during a trip to Iran in 2015 on charge of having "deep links" to U.S. intelligence services.

Article 110 of the Constitution grants the Leader the right to pardon or reduce the sentences of convicts upon a recommendation from the head of the Judiciary.

Princeton researcher says Abe visit shows Iran's diplomatic skill

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Hossein Mousavian, a Middle East expert who now works as a researcher at Princeton University, has described a planned visit by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Tehran as "positive" and said it shows effectiveness of Iran's diplomacy.

In an interview with IRNA published on Sunday, Mousavian said that Japan's intention to mediate between Iran and the United States is in line with the interests of the international community.

"Among the global powers, Japan is the closest international ally to the U.S. It has also relations with Iran based on mutual respect and interests and constructive cooperation. So, (Japan) is appropriate for this mission," he pointed out.

However, the former diplomat said, Abe's success depends on "seven factors".



One is to convince Washington to follow principles of non-interference, mutual respect and also respect national sovereignty and territorial integrity, Mousavian stated.

"Multi-dimensional solutions have a higher chance of success. For example, security in the Persian Gulf as well as secure passage of energy from there is very vital for Japan. The Japanese prime minister can propose a long list of cooperation between the Persian Gulf states to the U.S., Iran, regional

countries, world powers and the United Nations Security Council. "Such an initiative will be within the framework of the Article 8 of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 598 that can help ease tensions between Iran and the U.S., stop the Saudi-Iranian animosity, alleviate concerns about an imminent conflict, and pave the way for regional cooperation that would be aimed at resolving current crises in the Middle East.

"Also, such an initiative will be welcomed by world powers such as China, the European Union, Russia and India," he explained as the second factor.

As the third factor, Mousavian said, Trump should be able to take distance from radical war-mongering figures in the U.S. who are influential on his policies on Iran.

"Otherwise they will block his efforts," he noted. Mousavian said that the fourth factor is preventing Israeli-Arab front, heading by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, from interfering in the White House's decision-making process.

The fifth factor is that the U.S. should stop tightening sanctions and obstructing Iran's economic relations with other countries and also return to the 2015 nuclear deal, said Mousavian who acted as a nuclear negotiator during the Khatami administration from 2003-2005.

Mousavian said that if the above mentioned factors are implemented, Tehran should also be prepared to "contain" heightened animosity with the U.S. and enter a "conciliatory" path.

"The final solution should bring about a win-win situation both for Trump and Tehran because it's impossible that either of the sides give up to the other," he said.

Abe will visit Tehran on June 12-14. The visit will be the first by an incumbent Japanese prime minister to Iran since 1978.

According to Bloomberg, Abe plans to meet with President Hassan Rouhani on June 12 and Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on June 13, the Mainichi reported.

The visit is aimed at helping encourage dialogue with the U.S. and ease tensions, according to the Mainichi.

During his talks with U.S. President Donald Trump in Tokyo on May 27, Abe reiterated his intention to act as an intermediary between the U.S. and Iran.

At a joint press conference with Trump, Abe said Japan "would like to do whatever it can. Japan and the U.S. should collaborate closely so that tensions surrounding Iran are lessened and do not result in armed conflict."

Tensions have been rising between Tehran and Washington since the U.S. withdrew from the UN-endorsed nuclear agreement in May last year and ordered sanctions on Iran.

Tensions entered a new stage since April when the U.S. designated the IRGC (part of the Iranian military) as a terrorist organization, announced that it does not renew waivers for the eight major buyers of the Iranian oil, and started beefing up its military presence in the region, particularly in the Persian Gulf.

Japan was a major buyer of Iranian oil for decades before the sanctions.

Taking departure from warmongering figures in the U.S. by Trump and preventing Arab-Israeli influence on the White House's decisions are two of the conditions that Mousavian says can help make the visit of Abe to Tehran successful.

U.S. pressure on Iran out of frustration: Zarif

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Sunday that the United States is exerting pressure on Iran out of "frustration" and "weakness".

"The U.S. puts pressure on Iran out of weakness and frustration. However, we will weather this pressure," he said during a ceremony held at Allameh Helli High School in Tehran.

He noted, "Today, we are not in the position of weakness. We are in the position of power. The U.S. has made serious mistakes. It [the U.S.] and its regional allies have felt weakness."

The chief diplomat said that the Iranian people should be proud of their resistance.

Elsewhere, he said that the U.S. economic power will be reduced if countries eliminate dollars from their economic system.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, the Chinese president, issued a statement on Friday voicing concern about "inequalities" in the global economic system, a reference to the U.S. dominion. Putin specifically called for the elimination of the U.S. dollar from international trade.

The Russian and Chinese officials also denounced the unilateral sanctions imposed by the U.S. against Iran.

■ Zarif urges Europeans to normalize economic ties with Iran

On the sidelines of the ceremony, Zarif told reporters that the Europeans and other remaining signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal should normalize economic ties with Iran.

He also noted that the Europeans are not in the position to criticize Iran for things that



are not related to the JCPOA, the official name for the nuclear deal.

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

Under the JCPOA, Iran agreed to put caps on its nuclear work in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. However, Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the nuclear deal in May 2018 and ordered

reimposition of sanctions against Iran. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran's oil exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4.

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

■ "We will see"

Commenting on remarks by U.S. Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook who has claimed Iran's missile capabilities are just the result of Photoshop and deceitful camera work, Zarif said, "We will see".

Deal of century backfired after Quds day, Larijani says

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — The speaker of Iran's Parliament lauded the country's people for their massive presence in the pro-Palestine demonstrations on the International Quds Day that turned the so-called deal of the century into a declaration of Israel's lack of identity.

Addressing an open session of the Parliament on Sunday, Ali Larijani praised the Iranian nation for their "strong and smart" presence in the Quds Day rallies and

standing against the "evil sedition" that the U.S. and the Zionist regime have masterminded to decide the fate of the Palestinian nation.

He said the widespread voices of support for Palestinians in the Quds Day demonstrations turned the "fake great deal of century" into an evidence that the Zionist regime of Israel has no identity.

Larijani reiterated Iran's proposed solution to the

conflicts in Palestine, stressing the need for a referendum including all Muslim, Christian and Jewish Palestinians, and the return of displaced Palestinian people to their homeland.

The parliament speaker also emphasized that a Palestinian government formed by majority vote should make a decision about the Jewish people settling in the Palestinian territories.

Iran unveils new air defense missile system



TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Iran's Defense Ministry on Sunday unveiled a sophisticated air defense system capable of hitting several targets with homegrown "Sayyad-3" missiles.

In a ceremony in Tehran, Defense Minister Amir Hatami unveiled the homegrown air defense system, dubbed "Khordad 15th".

Developed by the Defense Ministry's experts, it was formally delivered to the Air Defense Force of the Army.

In comments at the event, General Hatami said the new air defense system has been paired with the Sayyad-3 long-range missiles and is capable of detecting various targets, including warplanes and intruding drones, within a range of 150 kilometers and tracking them at a range of 120 kilometers.

According to the minister, the system can also detect stealth targets within a range of 85 kilometers and hit them in a range of 45 kilometers.

It is capable of intercepting 6 targets

simultaneously, the minister said, adding that its ease of mobility would allow servicemen to prepare the air defense system for engagement in less than 5 minutes.

The general said that the air defense system is equipped with a phased array radar and independent launch pads and can effectively take action against various aerial targets, such as reconnaissance aircraft, bombers and tactical warplanes.

The minister went on to say that the Khordad 15th can be operated for shooting down targets at a maximum height of 27 kilometers and within a range of 75 kilometers.

Iranian military experts and technicians have in recent years made great headways in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient in the defense sphere.

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

Iran, Japan need to fix oil trade, banking ties: ambassador



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Tehran's ambassador to Tokyo has said Iran and Japan need to revitalize their oil trade and banking relations as they have been affected by U.S. sanctions on Iran.

Speaking to Noornews in anticipation of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's upcoming trip to Tehran, Morteza Rahmani Movahed said while Japanese firms traditionally seek to establish ties with Iranian partners, the effects of the sanctions have to be fought against to improve the situation.

According to the interview published on Sunday, the ambassador said a fear of U.S. punishment is making Japanese firms and their potential Iranian partners pass up chances of lucrative business.

He said Japanese firms are ready for all sorts of cooperation with Iranians, but what is needed to be done is to create the grounds for cooperation, stressing

in particular efforts to build trust with the Japanese who demonstrate degrees of "conservatism".

Abe is scheduled to travel to Iran on June 12, according to Japanese media.

According to Japan Times, he is expected to stress the importance of the international nuclear deal reached in 2015 between Iran and the P5+1, even as the United States has withdrawn from it and Tehran said last month it would suspend some of its commitments under the accord.

The Japanese prime minister last met Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on the sidelines of United Nations General Assembly meeting in 2013.

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono will also travel to Iran for talks with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif prior to Abe's arrival, according to a Japanese government source.

Rouhani, Erdogan highlight importance of ties Iran and Turkey push for greater cooperation to help establish regional security

1 → "Development of relations and cooperation between Iran and Turkey, as two powerful influential countries in the world of Islam, is important for stability and security of the region," Rouhani remarked.

Rouhani went on to express regret over the continued bloodshed in countries such as Sudan, Libya, Yemen and Afghanistan, saying, "Together, Iran and Turkey can cooperate with other friendly and brotherly countries to put an end to this regretful process and resolve the issues of the region and the world of Islam."

■ 'Strong Iran-Turkey ties will benefit the region'

Erdogan also said, "As two brotherly and friendly countries, the cementing of relations between Iran and Turkey can be beneficial for both nations and the region".

The Turkish president also stressed the importance of working harder to develop relations and cooperation between Tehran and Ankara in different fields, especially trade and economy.

Erdogan added, "Iran and Turkey can play a greater role in combatting terrorism and help establish regional stability and security by deepening their interaction



and cooperation."

The Turkish leader also deplored the unilateral and unjust U.S. sanctions against the Iranian nation, saying, "We will never accept these cruel sanctions, and we are looking for development of our friendship and cooperation with Iran."

At a meeting on the sidelines of the general assembly of Asian parliaments on November 29, 218, the speakers of the parliaments of Iran and Turkey stressed the need to increase trade ties to \$30 billion.

During that meeting, Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani noted that the U.S. approach to using dollar as a cold weapon against regional countries has made them think about using their national currencies in their transactions.

By the end of 2017, the trade turnover between the two countries amounted to \$10.8 billion. Turkish exports to Iran in that year amounted to \$ 3.3 billion, imports - \$ 7.5 billion. However, in January 2019, bilateral trade fell by 21 percent year on year to hit 2.866 million dollars.

Turkey mainly exports boilers, cars, tractors, bicycles, motorcycles, as well as synthetic and artificial staple fibers to Iran. Turkish imports from Iran mainly includes fuel, mineral oils, bituminous materials, mineral wax, plastic products, tin and products from it.

Turkey and Iran reached an agreement on switching to settlements in national currencies in 2018.

Any act against Iran will set the region on fire, Rezaee warns

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Americans are well aware that any act of aggression against Iran will set the entire region aflame, Mohsen Rezaee, secretary of the Expediency Council, said on Saturday.

“They know that Iran’s military power has reached a level that if they wished to conduct the slightest act [against Iran], the entire region would catch fire and there would be nothing left for America’s friends and Israel and their interests in the region,” Rezaee said in an interview on state TV.

He further said the Trump administration has announced it has waged an “economic war” on Iran and is not seeking a war against Iran, “because they are not able to.”

“If they were able to, they would have done this already,” added Rezaee, the former commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps.

Rezaee further denounced the United States for imposing fresh sanctions on Iran’s petrochemical industry, asserting that the U.S. policy of maximum pressure, which has repeatedly been tested by former presidents,



“There would be nothing left for America’s friends and Israel and their interests in the region (if Iran comes under attack).”

is a failure.

On Friday, the United States imposed new sanctions on Iran that target the Islamic Republic’s petrochemical industry, including its largest petrochemical holding group, the Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company.

Tensions between Washington and Tehran have been rising since President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear pact and imposed unilateral economic sanctions against Iran, mainly targeting its energy dealings on the global market.

In early May, the Trump administration beefed up the U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf, citing alleged and unspecified threats posed by the Islamic Republic to American troops and interests.

The U.S. recent deployment of an aircraft carrier, B-52 bombers and Patriot missiles to the Middle East has raised fears that the Trump administration was contemplating military aggression against Iran.

Iran has insisted that it will not initiate any conflict, but will firmly defend the country against any act of aggression.

Rouhani to attend CICA summit in Tajikistan

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani will travel to Dushanbe, Tajikistan, next week to attend the 5th summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), according to Mehr news agency.

Rouhani’s trip will come after the official invitation of his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rahmon to participate in the CICA which will be held on 14-15 June 2019 in Dushanbe.

The CICA summit is a platform for enhancing

cooperation toward promoting peace, security and stability in Asia. It is expected that the summit will bring together high-level delegations to adopt an ambitious declaration covering all issues of cooperation within the CICA.

Molecules of Freedom

1 → It is increasingly clear that since the beginning of 2019 there has been a fundamental change in the relationship between the US dollar and other currencies, and between financial and oil markets. In order to understand this, it is necessary to understand the previous US energy strategy and how it has changed.

Transition through Gas

President Obama was a Wall Street Democrat President, and followed a smart Wall Street energy strategy. Immediately after taking office in 2009, the Brent/BFOE benchmark price was inflated by fund capital and US Quantitative Easing (QE) liquidity. The oil price was maintained between \$80 and \$120/barrel for five years to mid-2014 which led to a US shale oil production increase of 5m barrels/day and a fall in US product consumption of 2m bpd. The oil market became over-supplied, and as I predicted it would be in Tehran in late 2011, the oil price collapsed to \$45/\$50 per barrel in 2014 when the US Federal Reserve Bank ceased QE.

This new shale oil capacity fulfilled Obama’s strategic objective to rid the US of reliance on Saudi oil, and to control natural gas through a dominant US presence in Qatar, along with opening up the Southern Corridor to Europe from the Caspian region and the normalisation of relations with Iran.

PetroEuro

Once the Saudis realised they had been fooled by President Obama, they ceased the long standing petrodollar policy, whereby financial surpluses from oil sales ironically funded US investment in shale oil which ended US reliance on Saudi oil. In early 2015, the European Central Bank, which since the beginning of the Euro had coveted PetroEuro status, began the process of Euro Quantitative Easing (QE). While the public reason given for this Euro QE was economic stimulus, the real reason was the need for new Euros to enable Saudi Arabia (and possibly GCC countries) to purchase € denominated sovereign debt, from Germany and others.

This US Transition through Gas strategy would have continued under a Clinton Democrat presidency but it ground to halt upon the unexpected election of President Trump in November 2016.

A Double Act

The architects of the Energy Dominance strategy were both surprising Trump appointments: Gary Cohn was the former Goldman Sachs COO/President and Democrat while Rex Tillerson was former CEO of Exxon. Between them they possessed a strategic understanding of financial and physical oil markets while Gary Cohn was a co-founder in 2001 of the Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) global oil market platform.

President Trump’s Energy Dominance speech came a week after the appointment of Prince Mohammed bin Salman as the powerful First Deputy Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia. Just two days later, on 1st July 2017, Saudi Arabia announced that their oil would after 16 years no longer be priced against the Brent Weighted Average (BWAWE) formula of electronically traded ICE Brent/BFOE futures contracts but would instead be based on reported trading of forward physical Brent/BFOE contracts.

In the second half of 2017 the oil price recovered dramatically from \$45 to \$75/barrel as 1.4 million oil and products futures contracts representing some 1.4 billion barrels were purchased by unidentified managed funds. Almost exactly nine months after the Energy Dominance announcement, at the end of March 2018, both Gary Cohn and Rex Tillerson left office within days of each other.

During the following nine months to the end of 2018, the US Energy Dominance strategy continued to be rolled out. So existing Petroeuro energy, foreign exchange and financial positions were wound down, while new Petrodollar market positions were put into place.

Macro Market Manipulation

One of the basic rules of commodity markets is that whenever commodity producers can support prices by funding stockpiles of surplus production, then they will. Moreover, such macro market manipulation may persist for decades: examples include International Tin Council 30 year support of the tin market until the 1985 Tin Crisis overnight price collapse, and the ten year copper market manipulation by Japan’s Sumitomo.

From 2001 to 2017, Wall Street and a couple of major oil companies have been able to routinely support the global oil market Brent/BFOE benchmark price. They have done so whenever sufficient capital has been made available by market participants willing and able to fund oil inventory. This has been achieved by using the same opaque tripartite prepay funding method, facilitated by major US investment



President Trump has no time for ideology, whether between Socialism and Capitalism or an imaginary religious Clash of Civilisations. President Trump is throwing away the international institutional rule-book and is now quite shamelessly using sanctions as a commercial weapon to destroy competition for US LNG.

banks, through which Enron was able to defraud investors and lenders for a decade.

The Oil Standard

So at the end of 2018 a new Petrodollar era began as the brief flowering of the Petroeuro came to an end along with the European Central Bank’s QE programme accommodating it. The relationship between those funding macro manipulation and the market is now direct, rather than via investment banks. Through the use of option strategies the global oil Brent/BFOE market price appears now to be pegged between a cap of around \$75/barrel and a price support collar at \$60/barrel.

Historically, US shale oil development has been financed by a combination of equity ownership and enormous amounts of cheap debt funding, which had in turn been made possible by Saudi petrodollar funding of the US financial system. We now see the oil majors, led by Exxon entering the US shale oil industry in a big way, through the acquisition of smaller and indebted shale oil businesses.

The oil majors are able to sell shale oil forward in US futures markets, where these future oil sales are purchased by unidentified funds with both an interest in maintaining a high oil price and \$ billions of US Treasury Bill collateral. The outcome is that oil prices have been maintained at prices high enough to finance production and export of the shale molecules of US freedom which we now observe. Production of this extremely light US crude oil quality has now created a global glut of light oil products such as gasoline and to an increasing shortage of heavier products such as diesel fuel.

Another effect of macro market manipulation and support of the Brent/BFOE contract has been that the price has increasingly become detached from the US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) benchmark price. So the WTI price has suffered from a glut of light US shale oil, and has sometimes been more than \$10 per barrel under the Brent price. This has even led to the crazy situation that it has been economic for US crude oil to be shipped half way round the world to China to be refined with gasoline then making the return journey.

The Art of the Deal

Even a brief read of President Trump’s book, the “Art of the Deal” reveals that he is at heart a developer who loves nothing more than transacting deals from a position of market power. The Energy Dominance strategy is not a political strategy following an ideology: it is a market strategy conducted as a zero sum game with winners and losers – and President Trump likes to be a winner.

President Trump has no time for ideology, whether between Socialism and Capitalism or an imaginary religious Clash of Civilisations. President Trump is throwing away the international institutional rule-book and is now quite shamelessly using sanctions as a commercial weapon to destroy competition for US LNG.

So in Europe we see that it is now dawning upon the EU that US sanctions related to Russia’s Nordstream supply of gas to Germany (an existing customer) are simply a means of coercing Germany to buy US gas molecules instead of Russian gas molecules which, as Rosneft CEO Igor Sechin pointed out only recently, are 30% cheaper than US molecules. Meanwhile in Iraq, sanction waivers for Iranian energy supplies are being traded for concessions to US Big Oil in major Iraqi oil fields.

As for alleged concerns of security of supply, anyone who believes that a second pipeline reduces security, or that Russia, who reliably supplied natural gas to Germany throughout the Cold War, is a less reliable supplier than the US under President Trump is deluding themselves.

Molecules of US Freedom

Let us conclude where we began, with molecules of US freedom. President Trump’s transactional approach to energy strategy is based on a zero sum transactional market in molecules of energy traded as a commodity.

This transactional energy commodity market is coming to an end, as easy to extract oil and gas runs out and expensive and energy intensive ‘hard’ oil is all that is left, and the more expensive this hard oil becomes, the more profitable it is to substitute renewable energy and to invest in energy efficiency.

The reality is that molecules of raw energy must be converted to useful energy delivered to end-user consumers. We now see a new smart market emerging in efficient delivery of energy as a service; heat/cooling, power, mobility and electromagnetic energy. This is driven financially firstly by the fact that savings of energy services give rise to a multiple of savings of molecules produced at the well. Secondly, we see the displacement of finance capital by ‘smart’ intellectual capital, the Fifth Fuel, in which Iran is rich not only in raw human material but in university refineries!

This emerging smart market in services requires relationships, not transactions; competition for quality and cooperation on costs; and sharing of risk, cost and surplus to achieve mutual positive sum benefit. In other words, Iran may use molecules of freedom to generate electrons of enlightenment and in my next article I shall focus on how that may be achieved.

Police seize 400kg of narcotics in Yazd Province

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Police forces have seized 395 kilograms of narcotics in a single operation in the central province of Yazd, a provincial police commander said on Saturday, Mehr reported.

According to Mohammadreza Mir-Heidari, after thorough intelligence activities, the police traced the narcotics shipment, including 322 kilograms of opium and 73 kilograms of hashish in two trucks, which were destined for the central and northern parts of Iran.

Two offenders were also arrested during the operation, Mir-Heidari said.

The provincial police official said the illegal cargo had entered Yazd from Iran’s eastern provinces, which border Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Earlier this month, Yazd Province’s anti-narcotics forces seized a 326kg consignment of hashish which was being transported toward Tehran.

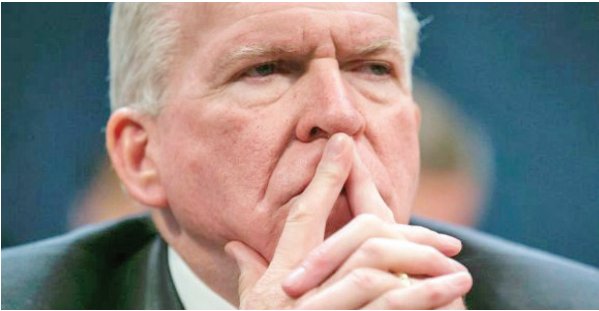
Iran, which has a 900-kilometer-long border with Afghanistan, has been used as the main conduit for smuggling Afghan drugs to narcotics kingpins in Europe.

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

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

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

Ex-CIA chief: Iran won’t change owing to ‘culture of resistance’



POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Former CIA director John Brennan has criticized the Trump administration’s policies toward Tehran, saying the Iranians will not change their behavior because of their “culture of resistance”.

In an interview with The Irish Times newspaper published on Saturday, Brennan said the threat of war between Washington and Tehran has appeared to increase in recent weeks amid signs of increased U.S. activity in the region.

“The United States has gone down this cul de sac with Iran, by putting pressure on the regime, in the false belief that they will change. It’s a culture of resistance in Iran,” he said, describing U.S. national security adviser John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo as “Iran zealots”.

“By reneging on the Iran nuclear deal, by designating the IRGC (Islamic Revolution Guards Corps) as a terrorist organization, by tightening sanctions on Iran and forcing European parties to the agreement to renege on their obligations, the perception in Iran is that the Trump administration ultimately wants to overthrow the regime.”

Tensions between Tehran and Washington have risen following the Trump administration’s decision to withdraw from the 2015 nuclear agreement that was meant to provide Iran with sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. The U.S. has also doubled down on its “maximum pressure” campaign, which has seen tougher sanctions on Tehran introduced in recent months.

Iranian navy forces act professionally: U.S. admiral



Rear Adm. John F. G. Wade, commander of the Lincoln strike group, says Iran’s naval forces have adhered to international standards of interaction with ships in his group. The Associated Press reported on Saturday.

“Since we’ve been operating in the region, we’ve had several interactions with Iranians,” he said. “To this point all have been safe and professional — meaning, the Iranians have done nothing to impede our maneuverability or acted in a way which required us to take defensive measures.”

Amid escalating tensions between Tehran and Washington, the U.S. announced on May 5 that it was sending military reinforcements, including the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group, a squadron of B-52 bombers, and a battery of patriot missiles, to the Middle East, citing alleged unspecified “threats” from Iran.

One month after its arrival in the region, the Lincoln has not entered the Persian Gulf, and it’s not apparent that it will. The USS Gonzalez, a destroyer that is part of the Lincoln strike group, is operating in the Persian Gulf.

Last week, the Lincoln was some 320 kilometers (200 miles) off the eastern coast of Oman in the Arabian Sea. It would still need to pass through the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz before reaching the Persian Gulf.

STOCK MARKET

| | |
|--------|----------|
| TEDPIX | 229808.9 |
| IFX | 2927.79 |

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

India’s infra push: Advisor for asset monetization, lucrative plans for PVT players, says Nitin Gadkari

To further give a push to the country’s infrastructure, big plans are lined up that include roping in an advisor for asset monetization and offering attractive schemes to private players, including identified 3,000 kms of projects, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said.

As moneycontrol.com stated, plans are also afoot to make the vehicle scrapping policy more attractive, besides expediting the land acquisition process to create a network of expressways and highways.

“We are planning to rope in an Indian expert with experience in global economy for advising NHAI on asset monetization,” Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari told PTI in an interview.



The advisor, apart from asset monetization, will guide the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on innovative ways to meet funding requirements, he said.

■ Nine highway projects

After the huge success of the maiden bundle of nine highway projects under TOT (toll, operate and transfer) totalling 681 kms of roads in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat in 2018 that fetched NHAI Rs 9,681 crore, the second tranche of 586 kms was cancelled in February 2019 due to lukewarm response.

TOT is a model for monetizing operational national highway projects. The investor makes a lump-sum payment in return for long-term toll collection rights backed by a sound tolling system. The concession period is 30 years.

Up to 49 percent divestment is allowed till two years of the concession period while up to 10 percent change in ownership is allowed after two years.

Apart from asset monetization, Gadkari said the government will attract private players into highways building and has already identified 3,000 kms to be bid out under the build operate and transfer (BOT) mode.

“For private sector revival in highways building, we have identified 3,000 kms of highways that have 17,000 pcu (passenger car unit) traffic. We plan to bid this out under BOT mode,” the minister said.

Ratings agency Crisil in a recent report said to reinvigorate private sector interest, the government has resorted to HAM (hybrid annuity mode) and BOT which will ensure putting public-private partnership (PPP) projects in the roads and highways sector back on track.

On the vehicle scrapping policy, the minister said it would be made more attractive with suggestions from the Finance Ministry and the PMO.

The policy aims to pave the way for mandatory scrapping of old vehicles from April 1, 2020.

In May 2016, the government had floated a draft Voluntary Vehicle Fleet Modernization Program (V-VMP) that proposed to take 28 million decade-old vehicles off the road.

■ Redesigning of schemes

A committee of secretaries (CoS) had recommended to the ministry redesigning of the scheme for greater participation of states with partial support from the center.

The CoS suggested that the “scheme may dovetail a calibrated and phased regulatory approach for capping the life of vehicles together with stricter implementation of emission norms” and accordingly a revised consultation paper got in-principle nod from the PMO.

About other plans, the minister said the land acquisition process has been expedited and it has seen a three-fold jump.

“This will facilitate our plans of fast-tracking projects besides building 22 green expressways,” he said.

There are also plans to create a highways grid on par with the power grid, he said.

He said the Delhi-Meerut Expressway is likely to be completed in the next two months.

The minister has said there are plans to take up work worth Rs 15 lakh crore in the highways sector over the next five years.

Non-oil exports up nearly 9% in 2 months yr/yr

1 → According to the data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the value of Iran’s non-oil trade stood at \$4.87 billion during the first Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 20, 2019).

The value of non-oil trade during the first month of this Iranian calendar year fell 17 percent compared to that of the same month of the past year.

■ Exporters re-inject \$4b into NIMA

Speaking in a press conference in Tehran, Modoudi further mentioned the revenue which the exporters re-inject into the country’s economy, saying, “Since the beginning

of the current year, nearly \$4 billion has been re-injected into the country’s Forex Management Integrated System (locally known as NIMA).

The official praised the Central Bank of Iran’s (CBI) efforts for managing the foreign currency market and noted that since CBI’s foreign currency reform, over \$18 billion of foreign currency has been re-injected into NIMA by exporters.

In late May, CBI unveiled a directive package which provided the country’s exporters with guidelines about how they should re-inject their foreign currency incomes into the country’s economy.



In the same month, the CBI Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati said the country’s exporters have re-injected 60 percent of their total exports revenues in the form of foreign currency into the country’s financial system.

The Iranian government provides the country’s exporters with foreign currency at a low exchange rate in order to encourage foreign trade, however the exporters are expected to return part of their revenues in form of foreign currency.

‘Iran among 8 advanced countries in railway signaling technology’

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The head of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) announced that Iran is currently among top eight countries regarding the technology of railway signaling systems, IRIB reported.

“Currently, two advanced railway signaling systems have been created inside the country, which marks Iran as one of the eight advanced countries with this technology,” Saied Rasouli said.



The official made the remarks in the opening ceremony of the 7th International Exhibition of Rail Transportation, Related Industries & Equipment of Iran (Iran Rail Expo 2019) which kicked off on Sunday at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.

He also mentioned the production of rail segments in the country (in a project called National Rail) saying the production of national rail is also underway.

Attended by domestic and foreign exhibitors from various countries, Iran Rail Expo is one of the region’s main events in the rail industry.

The four-day exhibition covers various areas in the industry including passenger and freight trains and wagons, generator wagons, electric locomotives and diesel engines, rail transport companies, after-sales service providers, repair and insurance services and etc.

G20 frets over global economy amid U.S.-China trade war

The world’s top finance policymakers Sunday weighed the impact of ballooning trade tensions on the global economy amid differences over the extent to which they are dragging on growth.

As per en.rfi.fr, finance ministers and central bank chiefs from the G20 group of the world’s top economies are expected to note the “downside risks” to the global economy from trade battles, notably between the top economic superpowers China and the U.S.

Japanese Finance Minister Taro Aso, who is hosting the talks, told reporters as the first day of talks wrapped up on Saturday that the world economy should “firm” in the second half of the year but “downside risks still remain.”

Aso said “market confidence could be eroded” if there were no rapid resolution to the ongoing trade war between Beijing and Washington, which has seen the world’s top two economies impose billions of dollars of tit-for-tat tariffs and threaten even tougher action.

■ Major headwinds

IMF chief Christine Lagarde singled out trade tensions as the “major” headwind facing the global economy, adding that it was a “significant risk on the horizon,” in an interview with Japan’s Nikkei daily on Sunday.

Lagarde has previously described the trade wars as a “self-inflicted wound” and warned that U.S.-China tariffs so far imposed and threatened could trim 0.5 percentage points off global GDP growth next year -- an amount \$455

billion larger than the entire South African economy.

Meanwhile, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said there was a “real risk” that “this global economic slowdown could turn into a global economic crisis due to trade tensions.”

A “worsening of the international climate and a real trade war would lead to an even more marked slowdown in global growth, with a direct impact on our jobs, companies, factories and sectors,” Le Maire told AFP in an interview on the sidelines of the meeting.

A Japanese official who declined to be named briefed reporters that “very many countries voiced concerns that escalation of the trade friction is a very significant downside risk to the world economy. That is a fact.”

However, the treasury secretary from the U.S., which continues to threaten more tariffs on China if there is no trade deal, played down the risk of a global economic conflagration.

“Clearly there is a slowdown in Europe, there’s a slowdown in China, there’s a slowdown in other parts. I don’t believe that’s as a result of trade tensions. That slowdown has gone on for the last year,” Steven Mnuchin told reporters on Saturday.

■ A prolonged trade war

He acknowledged that other policymakers had voiced concerns over the economic impact of a prolonged trade war but pointed to a potential boon for other countries.



As companies move out of China in order to avoid U.S. tariffs, “there’s going to be a big economic opportunity for a lot of other countries,” he said.

“There will be winners and losers,” he predicted.

Nevertheless, Mnuchin also pointed to the positive boost to the world economy that could result from a breakthrough in trade talks, likely to be the main focus of a meeting between the U.S. and Chinese leaders at a G20 summit later this month.

“I think if we get a deal, it’s a very positive thing for economic growth, for us, for China, for Europe, for the rest of the world. The opening of these economies tends to lead, in my mind, to more growth on both sides,” said Mnuchin.

Michael Gove pledges to scrap VAT in bid to boost post-Brexit economy

By John Johnston

The environment secretary said he would replace VAT with a “lower, simpler” alternative if he is elected Prime Minister in a bid to counter Jeremy Corbyn’s “Marxist” economic message.

Writing for the Sunday Telegraph, Mr. Gove unveiled his “pro-business economic plan”, including a pledge to cut business rates and halt construction on the controversial High Speed Rail 2 project.

He said: “My economic plan is driven by the need to increase investment, productivity and wages across the country, with a special focus on helping those areas and regions where productivity is lower.

“It would mean reducing the regulations which hold business back, cutting

and reforming taxes - such as business rates - which put pressure on small businesses and undermine our high streets, using the opportunity of life outside the EU to look to replace VAT with a lower, simpler, sales tax.”

Gove, who said his “business know-how” had helped secure positive changes while working in government, also backed plans for an Australian-style, points based immigration system.

■ the new economic manifesto

The new economic manifesto comes as Gove battles accusations of hypocrisy after he admitted to taking cocaine on several occasions while working as a journalist.

The former Justice Secretary said he “deeply regretted” taking the drug more

than 20 years ago, but was branded a “hypocrite” after a Times article he had written about “London liberals” use of the drug was unearthed.

In the article, Gove said plans to repeal drug laws should be resisted, writing: “The knowledge that millennial demand for illegal drugs may lead to the potentially lethal adulteration of some substances hasn’t been used to explain to citizens that the law is there for a purpose.”

He added: “There is a greater sin than hypocrisy. It is the refusal to uphold values because one may oneself have fallen short of them.”

The revelation came after fellow Conservative leadership candidates admitted to prior drug use. International Develop-

ECB policymakers open to cut rates if growth weakens, say sources

By Francesco Canepa and Balazs Koranyi

European Central Bank policymakers are open to cutting the ECB’s policy rate again if economic growth weakens in the remainder of the year and a strong euro hurts a bloc already bearing the brunt of a global trade war, two sources said.

The ECB said on Thursday that its interest rates would stay “at their present levels” until mid-2020 but President Mario Draghi added rate setters had started a discussion about a possible cut or fresh bond purchases to stimulate inflation.

The apparently mixed message failed to convince some investors, who saw it as too tenuous a commitment to more stimulus. This sent the euro rallying to a 2-1/2 month high of \$1.1347 against the U.S. dollar.

But two sources familiar to the ECB’s policy discussions said a rate cut was firmly in play if the bloc’s economy was to stagnate again after expanding by 0.4% in the first quarter of the year.

■ The ECB’s deliberations

“If inflation and growth slow, then a rate cut is warranted,” said one of the sources, who requested anonymity because the ECB’s deliberations are confidential.

An ECB spokesman declined to comment.



The ECB’s deposit rate is already 40 basis points below zero and the bloc’s top-rated governments, such as Germany’s, can borrow at negative rates for up to a decade.

In this context, countering the euro’s strength, rather than lowering already rock-bottom borrowing costs, would be the main reason for a further cut to that deposit rate, one of the sources said.

“I’ll give you five reasons for a rate cut,” the source said before repeating “exchange rate” five times.

The ECB doesn’t formally target an exchange rate but

Draghi noted the euro’s appreciation in his news conference on Thursday and has long highlighted the currency as a crucial determinant of financing conditions.

The source said a euro at \$1.15 would still be tolerable for some but \$1.20 would be a critical level to watch.

The single currency has risen by 2% against the dollar in just over a week as the Federal Reserve signaled its willingness to cut its interest rates if needed.

■ Keeping dollar weak

This was seen by some analysts as a sign the U.S. central bank was bowing to pressure from the White House to keep the dollar weak and strengthen the administration’s hand in its trade negotiations.

The argument for more quantitative easing (QE) from the ECB was less clear to some policymakers, however, the sources said.

One of the sources said more QE could help soothe stock markets if these were spooked by an escalation in the trade war, although there would be a risk for the ECB in appearing to kowtow to equity investors.

The other said the main benefit of QE was compressing the difference between short- and long-term borrowing costs, making access to finance easier for companies and households, but this so-called term premium was already low.

(Source: euronews.com)

Iran doesn't intend to leave OPEC despite tensions: Zanganeh

ENERGY

TEHRAN — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said the country doesn't have any plans to leave OPEC despite the tensions that some fellow-members are creating in the organization, Shana reported on Saturday. "Iran has no plans to leave OPEC...and regrets that some members of OPEC have turned this organization into a political forum for confronting two founding members of OPEC, meaning Iran and Venezuela," Zanganeh said in an interview with Icana news agency.

"And two regional countries are showing enmity toward us in this organization. We are not their enemy but they are showing enmity toward us...and (they) use oil as a weapon against us in the global market and world," Zanganeh added without naming the two countries.

Zanganeh further noted that the United States had made it increasingly difficult for Iran to sidestep sanctions but it had come up with new ways to circumvent them.

"We have thought about confronting America's actions and constantly have found and will find new ways and anyway this is a war



where we are standing strong and will not retreat," he said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the official noted that no country can replace Iran in the oil market.

"The market is fragile and turbulent and the U.S. and its allies are trying to prevent the prices going up by false pretenses," he said.

"Oil should be left out of politics. Oil is a necessary commodity for the growth of global

economy, it is not a weapon. U.S. should leave oil out of its political games," he added.

Earlier this month, in a letter Zanganeh opposed an OPEC proposal to reschedule the meeting which is set to take place on June 25-26 to early July.

The United States reimposed sanctions on Tehran last year, and as a result, Iranian oil exports have decreased from their normal levels.

U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly demanded that Saudi Arabia compensate for the drop in Iranian supplies by increasing its own production, a move that Iran has said undermines the proper functioning of OPEC.

OPEC is currently scheduled to meet on June 25, followed by talks with its allies led by Russia on June 26. However, Russia suggested moving the meeting to July 3-4 and Riyadh supports the request, sources within the organization told Reuters.

"I disagree with the proposed changes of the dates. I have already tight commitment in that period and, moreover, no reason was provided on the urgency of giving consideration to this date change," Zanganeh wrote.

NIOC to offer 2m barrels of light crude oil at IRENEX on Tuesday

ENERGY

TEHRAN — National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) will offer two million barrels of light crude oil at Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) on Tuesday, Shana reported.

The base price for this round of offering, which is the third round, in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21, 2019), is \$67.32 per barrel.

The second round, held on May 21, ended with no sales. NIOC 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 withdrew from Iran's nuclear pact in May 2018, vowing to drive Iran's oil exports down to zero, the Islamic Republic has been taking various measures to counter 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.

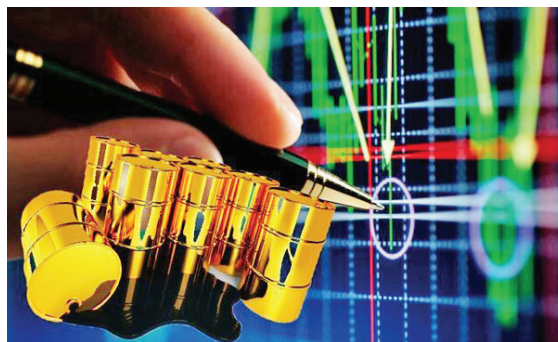
NIOC offered light crude oil at IRENEX first on October 28, 2018 just few days before new U.S. sanctions on Iran's petroleum sector took effect (November 4). In the first round, NIOC could sell some 280,000 barrels of crude oil at \$74.85 per barrel. With the daily supply amount of one million barrels, 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.

Russia and China in major arctic LNG shipping venture

More Russian arctic LNG will be heading to China. Russia's Novatek and Sovcomflot and China's Silk Road Fund and COSCO Shipping have signed an agreement to establish a joint venture called Maritime Arctic Transport LLC.

As marinelog.com stated, the natural gas giant Novatek is publicly traded. The other three parties are state controlled.

The agreement was signed June 7 during the St Petersburg Economic Forum. In a separate deal on the same day, Novatek signed an agreement to sell Chinese energy company CNOOC a 10% participation interest in its Arctic LNG 2 project.

The focus of the Maritime Arctic Transport joint venture is to manage an icebreaking tanker fleet of Arctic ice-class vessels, both existing



and new, engaged in the transportation of LNG for current and planned Novatek projects, namely: Yamal LNG, Arctic LNG 2 and others.

The agreement is described as a key step taken by Chinese and Russian enterprises

to actively participate in the commercialized operation of the Northern Sea Route (NSR). It will inject new opportunities and impetus for the joint development and exploitation of NSR by enterprises from the two countries.

The four parties intend to establish a long-term partnership providing for the joint development, financing and implementing year-round logistics arrangements for shipping from the arctic zone of Russia to the Asia-Pacific region, as well as organizing transit cargo traffic along the NSR between Asia and Western Europe.

It was also agreed among the parties that this move can help push forward the development of NSR into an international commercial transport corridor between the Pacific and

Atlantic basins.

The "sheer scale and level of technical complexity of the new international project to provide safe, year-round, transportation for LNG across the Northern Sea Route have required the combination of a whole range of intellectual, technological, human and financial resources, from leading Russian and Chinese organizations and businesses," said Sovcomflot President and CEO Sergey Frank.

The agreement was signed by: Sergey Frank, President and CEO of Sovcomflot; Leonid Mikhelson, Chairman of the Management Board of NOVATEK; Xui Lizhong, Chairman of the Board of Directors of COSCO Shipping Corporation; Wang Yanzhi, President of the Silk Road Fund.

Papua New Guinea looks to double LNG production

On April 9 PNG's government signed an agreement with Total, ExxonMobil and the Australian Securities Exchange-listed Oil Search, setting out the terms and conditions for the development of the \$13b Papua LNG project.

According to oilprice.com, the project will use gas supplied from the Elk-Antelope fields located in the Gulf Province, which were first drilled in 2006 and are estimated to contain reserves of 1bn barrels of oil equivalent. The gas will be liquefied and purified at two facilities to be built at ExxonMobil's PNG LNG plant in Port Moresby, each with a capacity of 2.7m tons.

According to Total, the project will have the capacity to produce 5.4m tons of LNG per year. An important part of the agreement was ensuring that a share of this capacity will be allocated to domestic supply, with the aim of helping PNG achieve its goal of expanding electricity coverage to 70% of the country by 2030.

Total will operate the two fields and hold a 31.1% stake in the venture, while partners ExxonMobil and Oil Search will have a 28.7% and 17.7% interest, respectively. The remaining 22.5% will belong to the PNG government, allowing the state to buy into the project at a later date.

The finalization of the agreement, which was delayed in the wake of last year's major earthquake, allows for the start of the front-end engineering design phase, when plans are drawn up to estimate the technical requirements and estimated costs before construction begins.

Given Prime Minister Peter O'Neill's recent resignation, it remains unclear if the next steps for Papua LNG will also be delayed under the leadership of new Prime Minister James Marape.

However, according to the current timeline,



construction work is set to start in 2021 and production expected to commence as early as 2024.

ExxonMobil developing new gas field

At the same time, ExxonMobil is also planning to develop a new gas field, P'nyang, in the country's Western Province, with the help of Oil Search, Japan's JX Nippon and Australia's Santos. The gas field will be used to feed a third facility at the PNG LNG plant, which is yet to be built.

According to international media, PNG's LNG capacity will double to around 16m tons per year once the Papua LNG and P'nyang developments are at full production level.

Peter Botten, CEO of Oil Search, the largest locally based oil and gas company, says these two developments will be a significant benefit to the economy: "Papua LNG, together with the upgrade of the ExxonMobil project, will spread out over a long period of time, resulting in more investment and employment. Service companies and skilled labor may be required for up to 15 years."

The pre-production investments needed

to bring the Papua LNG facilities on-line, and develop the capacity to transport gas from the Elk-Antelope fields to export hubs or downstream processes, will also have a significant effect on the domestic economy.

Although the full construction phase for these projects is still some time away, preliminary work is already in the pipeline, with several tenders for construction projects already issued and survey work begun.

According to the Total-ExxonMobil agreement, some of the LNG produced will be directed towards the downstream segment in order to increase domestic energy supply.

The new capacity will be a boost to the utilities sector, allowing for state-owned generation and distribution company PNG Power and independent producers to source feedstock and invest in generation capacity.

The increase in domestic supply will be measured, however, depending on the producers' ability to boost their transmission capabilities and build relative infrastructure. To this end, the government has partnered with the U.S., Australia and others to expand the percentage of the population with reliable

electricity from the current level of 13% to 70% by 2030.

The LNG project

The Papua LNG project will also aid downstream activity through a new methanol facility, backed by Sojitz Australia Limited, a subsidiary of Japan's Sojitz Corporation.

Together with its partner Kumul Petroleum, Sojitz plans to build an \$800m methanol plant, fed by the take from the LNG facility near Port Moresby.

Although the agreement has pledged to support the regional economy by working with communities and involving local businesses, some have argued that this is not enough.

For example, when he was the minister for finance, James Marape tendered his resignation on April 11, two days after the Total and ExxonMobil contracts were signed.

In his letter of resignation Marape cited differences between himself and O'Neill over the gas deal, including the need for more community participation and benefits for local landowners. After Marape was voted in as the new prime minister by lawmakers on May 30, stakeholders were waiting to see if he would follow through on his pledge to review the deal.

Landowners in areas where the Elk-Antelope fields lie have also raised the prospect of launching legal action against the agreement in its present form.

On April 24 representatives of communities in the region announced they intended to challenge the deal in court over the perceived failure to identify traditional owners and commit to compensating them.

While the Papua LNG project is still planned to go ahead, legal challenges and political uncertainty could potentially slow the final development and production stages.

Over 18,000 smart electricity meters installed across Tehran

ENERGY

TEHRAN — Some 18,650 smart electricity meters have been installed across Tehran for large-scale electricity consumers, IRIB reported citing the portal of Iranian Energy Ministry (known as PAVEN).

According to the Head of Tehran Power Distribution Company, Reza Teimouri, of the mentioned number, 3,242 meters have been installed for the agricultural sector.

Last month, Mohammad-Ali Validad, the deputy director of the Energy Ministry's national smart metering program (known as FAHAM), announced that 56,000 agricultural wells had been equipped with smart electricity meters.

The program is aiming to monitor the electricity consumption across the country, especially among the large-scale subscribers.

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

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

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

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

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

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



More wind, solar power needed if EU is to meet renewables targets

The EU needs to take significant action to generate more electricity from wind and solar power and meet its targets on renewables, according to a report by the European Court of Auditors, out Thursday.

As per maltawinds.com, although both wind and solar power have recorded strong growth since 2005, there has been a slowdown since 2014, say the auditors.

Wind and solar power generation in the EU rose by 400% and 8,000% respectively between 2005 and 2017.

The Commission should urge Member States to support further deployment – by organizing auctions to allocate additional renewables capacity, promoting citizen participation and improving conditions for deployment. At the same time, the auditors warn that half of the Member States will face a significant challenge in trying to meet their 2020 renewables targets.



EU to generate energy

The EU aims to generate a fifth of its energy from renewables for electricity, heating and cooling and transport use by the end of 2020. Indeed, between 2005 and 2017, the generation of electricity from renewables in the EU doubled from around 15 % to almost 31 %. The wind and solar photovoltaic power sectors currently make up the largest share of renewable electricity, and falling costs make them an increasingly competitive alternative to burning fossil fuels.

The auditors assessed the progress made by the EU and Member States towards the renewables targets. They went to Germany, Greece, Spain and Poland to examine whether financial support for electricity generation from wind and solar power had been effective.

The auditors found that initial support schemes had been over-subsidized in a number of cases, resulting in higher electricity prices or increased state deficits. After 2014, when Member States eventually reduced support to lighten the burden on consumers and national budgets, investor confidence was dampened and the market slowed down.

"Member States incentivized investment in wind and solar power, but the way they reduced support deterred potential investors and slowed deployment," said George Pufan, the Member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the report. The "slowdown in shifting towards renewable electricity implies that we might not meet the EU 2020 target."

Organizing auctions to allocate additional renewables capacity, to determine the bidding price and promote citizens' participation in the green economy, is crucial for increasing investment, say the auditors.

Renewables market

Also, additional improvements are required to improve conditions for participation in the renewables market, including overcoming restrictive spatial planning rules, lengthy administrative procedures and grid insufficiencies.

The auditors also found that half of the Member States were already closing in on their national 2020 renewables targets by 2017, but warn that the remaining half will require much further effort if 2020 targets are to be met. The auditors express concerns as to whether the efforts of the high-achievers in renewables will be enough to compensate for the renewables' under-achievers in order to meet the overall EU target.

The current rules do not ensure timely reporting on progress on renewables, and the Commission does not have a mandate to address slower deployment by the Member States, say the auditors. They point to the EU's 2030 renewables target of at least 32 % and say that, in the absence of binding national targets, this may be hard to achieve. They also warn that meeting this target will require a significant amount of public and private national funding in addition to the EU funding the report focuses on.

Int'l lawyer calls upcoming Israeli conference in Bahrain 'A Sham'

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — A senior Canadian international attorney highlighted Israel's continued human rights violations against Palestinians and said the so-called "peace conference" due to be held in Bahrain later this month is nothing but "a sham and an attempt to rehabilitate Israel's image".

"This so-called 'Peace Conference' is a sham and an attempt to rehabilitate Israel's image in the West and to try to get the conservative and feudal Arab regimes to work with Israel and to take steps moving towards these autocratic Arab regimes to officially recognize Israel," Edward Corrigan from Ontario said in an interview with the Tasnim News Agency.

"US President Donald Trump, Jared Kushner and a handful of Arab dictators and feudal leaders are delusional if they think they can sell this so-called "Deal of the Century" to the Palestinians and the Arab and Muslim World," he noted.

Edward C. Corrigan is certified as a specialist by the Law Society of Ontario, Canada in Citizenship, Immigration and Immigration and Refugee Law. He is also an analyst and commentator for a number of media outlets around the world.

The following is the full text of the interview:

■ Israeli soldiers last Friday shot and wounded at least 16 unarmed Palestinian protesters, including a volunteer and medic, according to Gaza Health Ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra. As you know, Palestinians have staged the weekly anti-Israeli protests dubbed the "Great March of Return" along the Gaza border for more than a year. According to media reports, more than 270 people, including 52 children, have been killed since the demonstrations began in March 2018. Most of the dead and the thousands wounded were unarmed civilians against whom Israel was using excessive force. What do you think about the Israeli regime's crimes?

A: First, I admire the heroism and perseverance of the Palestinians in Gaza. They live in the world's largest prison under deplorable conditions and yet they struggle on. According to human rights organizations, the Palestinians are close to running out of food. To quote an American Jewish friend, Israel is using the Palestinians for "target practice." Palestinians are peacefully protesting and Israel is trying to crush all signs of Palestinian resistance to their imprisonment and deplorable human rights situation. As a result, many Palestinians are being injured and maimed, including clearly marked medical personnel.

■ Khalil al-Hayya, a Hamas leader, recently said Palestinians have united to reject the so-called "deal of the century" plan initiated by the US government, saying there is a consensus among them to restore the Palestinians' rights. He also said the Palestinian people are unified to boycott an upcoming US-Israeli conference in Bahrain. What is your opinion about the remarks and the upcoming conference in Manama? How do you predict future developments?

A: I agree that there is almost unanimous opposition from all Palestinian political groups and the Palestinians themselves. The Palestinians are correct to boycott the US-Israeli conference in Bahrain. This so-called "Peace Conference" is a sham and an attempt to rehabilitate Israel's image in the West and to try to get the conservative and feudal Arab regimes to work with Israel and to take steps moving towards these autocratic Arab regimes to officially recognize Israel. As it is, there are presently many military and security contacts between Israel and some of the American-supported feudal regimes or autocratic regimes. Jordan, Egypt, and Yemen have stated that they will not support a deal with Israel that does not have the support of the Palestinians. The international consensus is a viable Palestinian State based on the 1967 armistice lines and with Jerusalem, or Al Quds, as its capital. The Arab on the street will not support a sellout of Palestinian rights in exchange for a few dollars and some sort of Bantustan or reservations for the Palestinians. US President Donald Trump, Jared Kushner and a handful of Arab dictators and feudal leaders are delusional if they think they can sell this so-called "Deal of the Century" to the Palestinians and the Arab and Muslim World.

■ As you know, on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan each year, Muslims and anti-Israeli activists hold worldwide demonstrations to express their solidarity with the Palestinian people and condemn the Israeli regime's continued inhumane acts against the defenseless people. This year, Muslims around the world marked the International Quds Day on May 31. What do you think about the importance of the day? Why has the international community, particularly the Western mainstream media, made a muted response to the Tel Aviv regime's human rights violations against Palestinians so far?

A: The reason for the International community and the Western mainstream media are largely silent on Israel's crimes against the Palestinians is in part due to the guilt the Western powers feel over the past treatment of the Jews in Europe and their failure to act against the persecution of Jews by the Nazis. Unfortunately, there is a long history of discrimination and persecution of Jews in Western societies. There is nothing similar in the Arab and Islamic World. Many European Jews fled persecution in Europe and found sanctuary in the Arab and Islamic World. Unfortunately, this past persecution of the Jews in Europe is the primary focus of the West who want to atone for their sins against the Jews but are blind to the massacres, ethnic cleansing and violence inflicted upon the Palestinians in 1948 and continuing to this day. Also, a big part of the problem is the propaganda campaign launched by Zionist Jews and their Christian Zionist allies which has resulted in most of the West accepting the Israeli Zionist narrative and which blinds them to the plight of the Palestinians. This factor is, however, changing as many Western academics and informed elites are shifting their support from Israel to the Palestinians. We see this in the United States where a large number of supporters of the Democratic Party are shifting their position to being more sympathetic to the Palestinians.

Another part of the problem is the Arab World, the Islamic World and much of the Third World, as well as China and Russia, have to do more than spout platitudes in support of the Palestinians. Concrete action must take place in support of Palestinian human rights and to force a return of the Golan Heights to Syria, the eastern part of Jerusalem to the Palestinians and to dismantle all of Israel's illegal "Jewish only" settlements in the West Bank. The pro-Palestinian side needs to have a much more effective information campaign to explain the Palestinians story. The Arab World and their friends in the Islamic World must learn how to use their economic and political power in a much more effective way if there is to be a peaceful and fair resolution of the Palestinian problem.

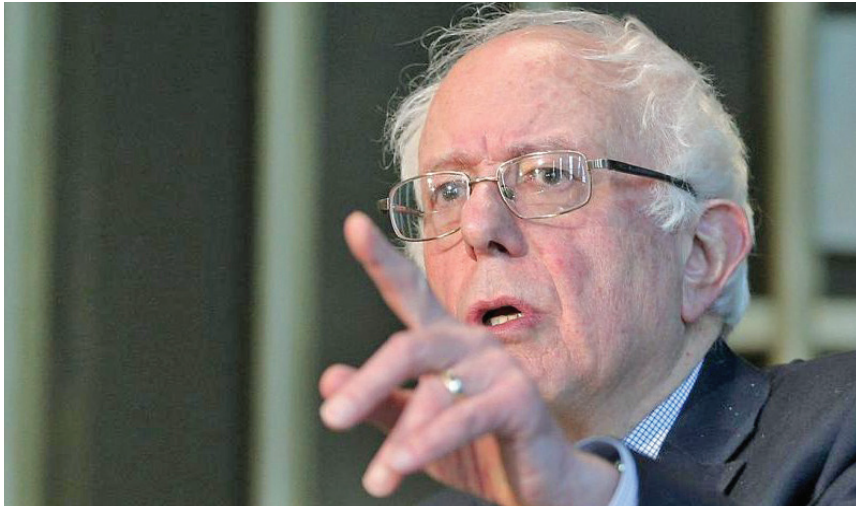
Biden is leading the polls Sanders has a hard way ahead

By Ali Azimi

TEHRAN — No doubt, Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont is the main rival of Joe Biden. It remains about Democrat Democrats' candidates for about 7 months before the official election race. Sanders did not have much in the way of Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election, but achieving good results in two states of Iowa and New Hampshire has increased Sanders' hopes. Eventually, Democrat leaders, with their full support from Hillary Clinton, led to the defeat of Bernie Sanders. We are currently in 2019! Bernie Sanders has a hard time struggling with Joe Biden this time!

As Politico reported, Former Vice President Joe Biden is leading the crowded Democratic presidential field in Iowa, with Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders in a tight secondary grouping alongside South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg in the third poll of the first-in-the-nation presidential nominating state. The new Des Moines Register/CNN/Mediacom survey of likely Iowa caucusgoers released Saturday shows that although Biden's support registered at 24 percent — a fall of 3 percentage points from the last poll — he has stretched his lead to 8 percentage points over Sanders, from 2 percentage points in March.

Sanders and Warren registered at 16 percent and 15 percent respectively, with Sanders' support decreasing by 9 percentage points. Sanders narrowly lost the 2016 Iowa caucuses to Hillary Clinton. Buttigieg made a strong debut at 14 percent, or 1 percentage



point behind Warren. Sen. Kamala Harris remains steady at 7 percent compared with the last Iowa poll. Former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke dropped 3 percentage points and is now at 2 percent. Sen. Amy Klobuchar registered at 2 percent, with Sen. Cory Booker at 1 percent.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio was not listed by a single poll respondent as either first or second choice for president. About two-thirds of likely Iowan caucusgoers, regardless of how they plan to participate, say they prefer that the winner in Iowa be a candidate with a strong chance of beating President Donald Trump over someone who shares their views of major issues. Biden's

supporters are less willing than others to say they are "extremely enthusiastic" about the former vice president, with only 29 percent versus the 39 percent for the supporters of all the other candidates. Biden also has the most name recognition in the field.

The Iowa Poll, headed by pollster Ann Selzer, is a closely watched barometer of the state's politics. Conducted June 2 through June 5, the poll surveyed 600 Iowa Democrats likely to take part in the Iowa's 2020 caucuses who their choice for president would be. The poll had a 4.0 (overall) percent margin of error. Selzer & Co., an Iowa polling firm, conducts the Iowa Poll. Selzer told the Des Moines Register that the polling shows

a higher than usual early commitment to caucusing in the state.

"We're starting to see the people who are planning to caucus start to solidify. There's a lot more commitment than we normally see this early. And some of these candidates who've been under the radar start to surface and compete with Joe Biden," Selzer said.

Iowa's caucuses are scheduled for Feb. 3, 2020. For the first time, the Iowa poll accounts for new rules proposed this year by the Iowa Democratic Party that will allow Iowans to participate in a virtual caucus online or over the phone. Of the virtual caucusgoers, the top-five first picks were Biden at 33 percent, Warren at 14 percent, Sanders and Harris at 10 percent, and Buttigieg at 9 percent. Just 3 percent surveyed picked "none of these" and 5 percent picked "not sure."

Of the potential in-person caucusgoers in Iowa, the top-five first choices were Biden at 23 percent, Sanders at 16 percent, Warren and Buttigieg at 15 percent, and Harris at 6 percent. Seven percent picked "None of these" and 6 percent were "not sure." The second top-five picks were the same candidates.

This poll is the first Des Moines Register survey since Biden and 8 other Democratic presidential candidates have entered the 2020 race, bringing the total number of candidates to 23. Tomorrow marks the Iowa cattle call in the Democratic cycle, where 17 Democratic candidates will speak at the Iowa Democratic Party Hall of Fame Celebration in Cedar Rapids. Biden will not be in attendance, citing family reasons.

Syed Mohsin Abbas: March of return highlighting Israeli injustice and oppression

TEHRAN (FNA) — Journalist and political analyst Syed Mohsin Abbas says that the continuation of the "March of Return" rallies is bringing the world's attention to the injustice and oppression of Israeli regime against the Palestinians.

Syed Mohsin Abbas, in an exclusive interview with FNA, said that the March of Return rallies "revived the pride of all the Palestinian people and sent a clear message to the world that Palestinians will not concede the right to their homeland".

Commenting on the so-called Nation-State Law, the analyst said that the promulgation of the legislation has left no doubt that Israel is an apartheid regime since the law asserts that only Jews have the right of self-determination in Israel.

Syed Mohsin Abbas is an activist, journalist and political analyst who has been interviewed by international media outlets for his commentary.

FNA has conducted an interview with Mr. Abbas about Israel's brutal crackdown on Palestinian protesters, the Israeli legislation known as the Nation State Law and also Trump's so-called "deal of the century".

Below you will find the full text of the interview.

■ It seems that killing scores of people and maiming thousands more over the past several months aren't an indication of what Israel thinks is enough to keep Gaza in check. Do you think Israel's deadly clamp down on Palestinian protesters is going to end anytime soon?

A: The policies of shoot to maim and kill unarmed demonstrators, the inhumane economic blockade, aggressive settlement expansion, the further undermining of the rights of non Jewish citizens all indicate the Israeli regime has no intention of tempering its barbaric trajectory against Palestinians. Add to these draconian policies the current closure of the Al Aqsa compounds Rahma Gate, the declaration of Israel's Jewish Statehood and Jerusalem as its Capital. It is clear that the Zionist entity is committed to a path of belligerent disregard for all international and humanitarian norms and laws. Israel is a rogue nation more than ever before and has been spurred on by successive US administrations to such an extent that overt apartheid, fascism, torture, child abuse, indiscriminate bombing, food and water deprivation is all sanctioned on the back of the Israeli lobby's control of the US and other Western governments. Whilst many of these policies were initiated by Benjamin Netanyahu with successive US Presidents, it's the carte blanche endorsement of Israeli ultra right wingers by Donald Trump, egged on by the likes of the hawkish John Bolton, Christian Zionist Mike Pence and other Zionist friendly politicians that has emboldened the Israeli Regime to such an extent that it gives no cause for any optimism presently. When we add the efforts by the Palestinian Authority's Mahmoud Abbas to undermine Hamas and the overt public fraternizing of Arab monarchists with Netanyahu at the recent anti-Iran summit convened in Poland at the behest of the US (and no doubt Israel too) it is beyond any shadow of a doubt that Israel is in the mood for expansion as per its Yinon Plan for the establishment of Greater Israel.

■ It has been a year since the start of the protests known as the 'Great March of Return.' What do you think the march has accomplished so far?

A: The Great March of Return has brought Palestine back onto the international agenda, having been subsumed by the so-called Arab Spring, and the never ending Zio-American imperialist wars of terror carried out largely on justice-oriented Muslims. It has revived the pride of all the Palestinian people and sent a clear message to the world that Palestinians will not concede the right to their homeland as well as signaling how strong the resistance to Israeli atrocities and oppressions is even after seventy years of struggle. The March of Return is, vitally, also a successful rejection of the 'Two State Solution' which was essentially going to forfeit ninety percent of Palestinian land to the usurping occupier Zionist regime. It has also served to expose the alleged covert efforts of the Palestinian Authority to sell their people short with a planned acceptance of whatever the Zio-imperialists unjust terms of settlement for Palestinians might be and has



further unified the Resistance movement including Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic jihad - a unity that the Israelis had been working desperately to break during the Syrian war. It has also made it clear who truly stands by Palestine no matter what; and this includes the members of the Resistance axis principle amongst which is the Islamic Republic of Iran alongside Syria and Hezbollah. Keeping the March of Return alive is focusing the world's attention on the injustice and oppression of Israel and this, in turn, is driving Israel to take ever more desperate and unjust measures to suppress the rights of Palestinians further incriminating them on the international stage whilst strengthening the Resistance Axis.

■ How do you think the US and some Arab states are complicit in crimes against the Palestinians, specially in light of the discreet links between Israel, Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states?

A: The United States' greatest crime is its veto in favor of Israeli injustice in the United Nations which blocks any possibility of a just solution for Palestinians through the International institutional apparatus in spite of UN resolutions that recognize the Palestinian right of return. It is the US regime which has signed off a staggering Thirty Eight Billion Dollar aid package for Israel which effectively bank rolls the Israeli military complex and props up the whole Israeli economy whilst large swathes of its own poverty stricken population struggle to survive due to inadequate healthcare, poor education services and high unemployment. The recent termination of US Aid to Gaza is also just another shameless policy that has targeted children women and the infirm as a way of crushing the Great March of Return and the Resistance movement as a whole.

The US also ensures that its puppet regimes in the Arab Monarchies such as the Al Saud, Emirati's or Al Khalifa in Bahrain do not come to the aid of the Palestinians with their petro dollars, and it is US influence which ensures that Egypt's General Sisi shamefully maintains the economic blockade of Gaza on his border too; in what is the only non-Israeli controlled lifeline that Gazans have. Saudi Crown Prince has gone as far as to telling the heads of US-based Jewish groups that the Palestinian leadership must accept conditions for peace put forward by the administration of US President Donald Trump.

"In the last several decades the Palestinian leadership has missed one opportunity after the other and rejected all the peace proposals it was given," bin Salman reportedly said in a report published on Axios website by Barak Ravid, Channel 10's senior diplomatic correspondent. "It is about time the Palestinians take the proposals and agree to come to the negotiations table or shut up and stop complaining." This is a bit rich coming from a man who has a penchant for bone sawing political opponents, financing takfiri terrorism and has also, since 2015, incessantly bombed Yemen and killed over fifty thousand civilians - creating the worst famine in history, whilst triggering a biblical scale cholera epidemic. Add to this his betrayal of the Palestinian people and one can only hope the Arab world wakes up to finally

challenge their own Zio-American and takfiri enslavement.

■ In July 2018, the so-called nation state law was adopted by Israeli Knesset. What do you think the legislation shows about the nature of the regime in Tel Aviv?

A: There can no longer be any doubt that Israel is an apartheid regime after Israel passed this controversial law declaring that only Jews have the right of self-determination in the country. The legislation destroyed whatever hope the Palestinian Authority and the West had for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the EU joined Israeli Arab political leaders, Israeli opposition politicians and liberal Jewish groups in the US in flagging up concern, with some affirming that the law amounted to "apartheid." This legislation stipulates that "Israel is the historic homeland of the Jewish people and they have an exclusive right to national self-determination in it". It also strips Arabic of its designation as an official language alongside Hebrew, downgrading it to a "special status" that enables its continued use within Israeli institutions.

■ Many believe that the continuing illegal Israeli settlement activities have hammered nail after nail into the coffin of a diplomatic solution. What do you think about that?

A: They have indeed destroyed any possibility of diplomacy hence the increased violent crackdowns by the Israeli military. Israel's building of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is illegal under international law. The Israeli regime is encouraging the development of these settlements as another method of implementing its Yinon Plan for Greater Israel and lays bare their actual intention not to leave any land for Palestinians.

The UN has condemned settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in multiple resolutions and votes, also declaring them to be illegal under international law. The number of settlers living in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank has grown to over 600,000. Settlements in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank are connected to each other and to Israel through bypass roads that circumvent Palestinian areas. Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank are allowed to carry weapons, and often attack Palestinians and their buildings and farmland. Israel continues to expand existing settlements, as well as annexing more Palestinian land to build new settlements.

The cumulative effect of this has been to deny Palestinians the ability to create a viable State in even a small part of historic Palestine. These illegal settlements have, however, exposed the Israeli intentions to the Palestinians and have in many ways provided the impetus for the March of Return which at its heart sees a One Nation solution as the only just and acceptable option. As the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Grand Ayatollah Khamenei, has incisively suggested - the most just solution now is for all individuals with roots in Palestine to be given an equal democratic vote; a suggestion which exposes both Israel's sham commitment to democracy and its Western allies' double standards too.

■ The current administration in the US has been boasting about their new plan for Palestine and even calling it the deal of the century. What do you think would be in the new deal for Palestinians?

A: It is still unclear what the 'Deal of the Century' is, but Trump has already said he "took Jerusalem off the table" by formally recognizing the city as Israel's capital. This is not going to sound like the deal of the century to Palestinians.

Eradicating the Palestinian refugees' right of return is the other allegedly nefarious US proposition in this dirty deal. The White House appears to be sidelining the question of Palestinian refugees. The US newsmagazine Foreign Policy reported that the US Government "want to terminate the role of UNRWA by proposing direct aid to the countries hosting the Palestinian refugees and sideline the UN agency." Saeb Erekat, the secretary-general of the Palestine Liberation Organization's executive committee says "All this is actually aimed at liquidating the issue of the Palestinian refugees," and he added that most Palestinians agree that the status of millions of refugees registered with UNRWA can only be settled by a peace process that takes into account the "right of return".

The fall of the SPD and CDU in polls German Green party on the path to victory

By Saeed Sobhani

Chancellor of Germany will have difficult days! The Christian Democrats have gained very poor results in the European Parliamentary elections. On the other hand, small German parties like the Green Party and Liberal Democratic Party are becoming powerful and decisive parties. This is despite the fact that the increasing popularity of the two traditional German parties, the Christian Democrat and the Social-Democratic Party, has risen more than ever.

An overview of the latest polls in Germany shows that the Green Party has become more popular with the German public after winning the European parliamentary election. As Deutsche Welle reported, the opposition Greens have hit a record high in a new opinion poll, pulling ahead of Angela Merkel's conservatives. The center-left SPD have dropped even further, slipping behind the far-right Alternative for Germany.

A Deutschlandtrend poll by Infratest dimap has put the environmentalist Greens up 6 percentage points at a record 26%, one point ahead of Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative Christian Democrats (CDU) and sister party Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU), reflecting a similar sampling last week. In last month's European Parliament elections, the Greens came second among German voters with 20.5%, behind Merkel's bloc, with a mandate focused on issues such as climate change and a renewables-based economy. In another boon for the Greens, the party's dual leadership of Robert Habeck and Annalena Baerbock polled at 36% and 26% respectively, placing them fourth and sixth as preferred national politicians in Thursday's findings published by Germany's ARD public broadcaster.

Merkel maintained her top placing at 53%, only 2% down from her Deutschlandtrend rating in May. Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, who in December took over from Merkel as conservative CDU party leader, slumped 12 percentage points to 24% in the poll, which asked 1,500 Germans how they would vote if an election were to be held on Sunday. The poor result for Kramp-Karrenbauer, also known as AKK, was her lowest rating



yet in a Deutschlandtrend survey. Only 27% thought she would make a good chancellor.

For party preferences, respondents put the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) at 13%, just ahead of the center-left Social Democrats (SPD), which is searching for a new leader after this week's resignation of Andrea Nahles, on 12%. For the Social Democrats and Merkel's conservatives, the Deutschlandtrend results are their worst ever. The business-friendly Free Democrats (FDP) remained at 8% Thursday, while the socialist Left party slipped to 7%, down 2% on last month. In a separate sampling on Thursday, the Forschungsgruppe Wahlen polling agency put Merkel's conservatives at 27%, with the Greens close behind at 26%.

In another Infratest sampling of 1,000 voters, 72% responded that they were somewhat or completely dissatisfied with the work of Merkel's coalition government of her conservatives and the SPD, a 10% rise in dissatisfaction since last month. Those who were satisfied or very satisfied with the coalition's work made up only 28%. In a separate YouGov survey, a majority of 52% wanted a fresh federal election. Only 27% called for a continuation of Merkel's coalition government.

The most preferred future coalition for 25% of respondents was an alliance of the Greens, the SPD and Left party. A so-called "Jamaica" alliance between Merkel's conservatives, the Greens and FDP came next at 15%, with a conservative-Greens scenario relegated to 14%. Among Green party voters, 54% hoped their party would enter into an alliance with the SPD and Left party. Only 25% wanted a Greens-conservative model, along the lines of the governments in the regional states of Hesse and in Baden-Württemberg.

Merkel's ruling coalition — forged after months of wrangling in the wake of Germany's 2017 general election — is nominally due to stay in office until 2021. The next election test for the conservatives comes in September and October, when regional assembly elections take place in Saxony, Brandenburg and Thuringia, three eastern German states where the far-right AfD is polling strongly.

Also Independent reported that it is not clear whether the Greens' surge in Germany will last: the party has had bounces in polls before, but it has previously tended to fade away. However, the country could be facing an early general election if the SPD's new leader decides to pull the plug on the grand coalition with Ms Merkel, and she is unable

to form another government with the support of other parties.

The SPD's historically very weak polling could encourage the party to resist another elections, however — despite calls for it to head into opposition to lick its wounds and rebuild. Angela Merkel has already said she would step down as chancellor rather than contest another federal election. She has already given up her party leadership to Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, her favoured protege and the likely next chancellor of Germany.

The fact is that the traditional German parties, especially the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats, have become closer to their political deadlock. On the other hand, these days, few people mention the German Chancellor as a powerful politician in the world. In his recent trip to Jordan, Angela Merkel also failed to analyze the realities of the world as an independent and powerful politician. The German Chancellor has given many concessions to his rival party in the formation of a coalition government with the Social Democratic Party. Undoubtedly, now no one else will remember Merkel as a powerful politician in Germany and Europe.

German political future is ambiguous! Can the traditional party again be at the head of the political and administrative equations of Berlin, or will power come to the next parties in the near future? Angela Merkel has announced that she will step down of power in 2021, but the polls conducted in Germany have intensively worried her. The results of these polls indicate that the total popularity of the two traditional German parties, the coalition of the Christian and Social Democrats, have fallen below 50%. This suggests the unpopularity of the coalition government among the German citizens. Merkel now has to run the weak coalition government until 2021!

Many analysts of Europe's affairs believe that Merkel's power is actually over. The Chancellor of Germany is no longer the symbol of power in United Europe. She has lost the power of managing the power equations in her country. In other words, Merkel has become a "passive player" in Berlin, the European Union, and the Eurozone.

Washington's lethal weapons trade in Taiwan strait

TEHRAN (FNA) — Chinese officials are warning the US against approving large weapons deals to Taiwan, warning the US actions are threatening regional stability and that China might have no choice but to act to defend their claims on Taiwan.

Legally speaking, the Taiwan Relation Act obliges the US to provide arms and material to support the Taiwanese military. At the same time, the US has a "One China" policy, and recognizes China, not Taiwan, as that one. Moreover, Taiwan does not legally consider itself independent from China, and China certainly doesn't see it that way either, viewing a reunification as an inevitability down the road. Such large US sales, however, risk shifting the balance of power.

At any rate, Washington needs to stop selling arms to the island and labeling it as a "close defense partner in US-Indo Pacific strategy." The latest salvo is not just about stirring the waters and Taiwan loading up on American military equipment, or the US meddling in China's internal affairs and breaking from earlier commitments to Beijing; it's also about double opportunity. The official Washington and Pentagon generals want to project power, police the region, and as a consequence, exert upon China the full impact of their influence in every domain.

In order to drive the waterway to the edge of instability, Washington further sends warships and guided-missile destroyers to needle and goad China on the pretext of "freedom of navigation operations." Less publicized in Taiwan, these provocative moves and other multi-domain engagements on the peripheries of China are intended to serve America's long-term strategic interests and future war-scape. They are not there to protect Taiwan.

Lest we forget, America's deadly arms business is a major cause of conflicts and tensions in other parts of the world, where many countries spend more on military expenditure and war than on regional stability and dialogue combined. As they proceed down this path, the growing availability of US arms, military support, naval presence and other provocative moves are similarly a major factor in the increase in the level of tensions in Chinese maritime areas. They provide no security for Taiwan but record profits for well-positioned American arms manufacturers.

It is precisely for these geopolitical calculations that US government officials and Pentagon accountants brag, outrageously, about their "strong Taipei ties" and "export success" in weapons sales to Taiwan. Here, enough simply isn't an option. They will try and find major boosts to future arms sales above and beyond what's already been sent, or would be sent, to the clueless Chinese island.

Taiwan's reported purchase of 108 M1A2 Abrams tanks, 1,240 TOW anti-armor missiles, 409 Javelin anti-tank missiles, 250 Stinger man-portable air defense systems and 66 additional F-16 fighter jets falls into this line of policy. The aim is to keep the destabilization campaign moving forward, reorder the region to Washington's advantage, and weaken any efforts toward reunification and amity.

The confirmation on June 6 by Taipei came after reports said the US could soon give the green light to sales of tanks and weapons to Taiwan worth more than 2 billion US dollars. It also came after senior military officials from Taiwan and the US held their first meeting last month — after four decades — to strengthen military ties. In this environment, expect no attempts to limit US arms exports to Taiwan, as the arms sales under the US Taiwan Relations Act are not based on an assessment of the island's defense needs.

U.S. to blame for its own unpopularity

GLOBALTIMES — The Chinese government on Tuesday issued a travel alert for Chinese tourists traveling to the US. The day before, authorities warned of the risks of applying to study in the US.

Travel and study are the most common reasons for ordinary Chinese to go to the US. The security warning and alert issued by the Chinese government on two consecutive days show the adverse changes around the security situation of Chinese nationals to the US.

In addition to security threats including mass shootings, US law enforcement agency personnel have also conducted exit and entry interrogations and other harassment against Chinese citizens. Such acts have greatly soured Chinese people's desire to travel to the US. The Chinese government is behaving responsibly to its people by issuing the travel alerts.

US society has left the impression that it is becoming unfriendly to the Chinese people. The US views China as its biggest threat and believes all Chinese people going to the US are gathering intelligence for the government and stealing US technologies. Washington attaches no value to the advancements that the Chinese people bring to the different sectors of the US or the consumption promoted by Chinese. It just wants to decouple from China.

Whether Chinese travelers or students, they should be treated as guests and enjoy high-quality services. But Chinese people find it difficult to accept the fact that they are being taken as thieves.

The US boasts too much superiority and has been indulged by the world. Due to its short history, it lacks understanding of and respect for the rules of countries and laws of the market. The Americans of the early generations accumulated prosperity and prestige for the US, while the current US administration behaves like a wastrel generation by ruining the world's respect for the US.

Since the West's monopoly of modernization was broken, all good resources have had to be redistributed. Popularity is the lifeline of how each country and major cities retain their positions at the center of the world.

However, at this juncture, the US has adopted discriminatory approaches against the Chinese people and sees them as a collective threat to its national interests, which actually adds competitiveness to other Western countries and cities.

Of course, as a superpower, the US will not be much affected by losing one or two pillar industries. But undoubtedly, the so-called national security it pursues is far from offsetting the damage the US has done by losing the interest of Chinese tourists and students.

Since ancient times, it has been easier for open-minded countries to gather high-quality regional or global resources. While China fights against the hegemonic and bullying acts of the US, it should learn its lesson. The longer the trade war goes on, the more open China will be.

China will not act rashly by closing its doors to US travel and study. Opening-up is China's persistent policy. The destination of Chinese travelers is decided by the market, and the government's alerts do not contradict this rule.

It is expected that Western countries will sense some opportunities from China's warnings and the US will feel the pressure. It is Washington's own business if it chooses to face the pressure apathetically.

Whitewashing war crimes has become the American way

By Maj. Danny Sjursen

ANTIWAR — Just after dawn on March 16, 1968, a company of U.S. Army infantrymen, led by Capt. Ernest Medina and spearheaded by Lt. William Calley, entered the small hamlet of My Lai in Quang Ngai province, South Vietnam. The villagers, mostly women and children, had no idea what was coming that day. If they had, they'd have fled.

Despite facing zero resistance and finding only a few weapons, Calley ordered his men to execute the entire population. In all, some 500 Vietnamese civilians were executed, including more than 350 women, children and babies. Other senior leaders in the chain of command had advised the soldiers of Charlie Company that all people in the village should be considered either Viet Cong or VC supporters. Medina and Calley were ordered to destroy the village. They did so with brutal precision and savagery.

The Army covered up the massacre for more than a year, until journalist Seymour Hersh broke the story in November 1969. Now obliged to conduct a public investigation into what was no doubt a major war crime, the Army's investigating officer recommended that no fewer than 28 officers be charged in the killings and subsequent cover-up. Medina, Calley and most other participants in the slaughter chose to plead — just as Nazi soldiers had — that they were only following orders.

That may well have been true. Still, military regulations — then and now — oblige a soldier or officer not to follow illegal or immoral orders. Nonetheless, in subsequent trials, all but one of the defendants were acquitted by sympathetic juries. Only Calley, the ringleader, received a life sentence. On appeal, that sentence was reduced to 20 years; later, President Richard Nixon ordered Calley transferred to house arrest at his quarters in Fort Benning, Ga., until finally, the lieutenant was paroled in 1974.

More than 500 innocent Vietnamese lives were apparently worth naught but three years and a stint of cushy house arrest for a single Army lieutenant. No colonels or generals were held seriously accountable. This is typical; the burden of responsibility generally flows downhill, and junior leaders are left holding the proverbial bag. A staggering 77% of Americans polled felt that Calley was scapegoated; a popular song supportive of the defendant, titled "The Battle Hymn of Lt. Calley," was even released. It included such absurd lyrics as:

My name is William Calley, I'm a soldier of this land
I've tried to do my duty and to gain the upper hand
But they've made me out a villain, they have stamped me with a brand.

I got to thinking about this, the worst (reported) American massacre in the criminal Vietnam War, when California Rep. Duncan Hunter recently defended a Navy SEAL, Special Operations Chief Edward Gallagher, who was accused of committing murder and other horrific crimes during a 2004 tour in Afghanistan. According to reports, President Donald Trump is considering a pardon for Gallagher and other convicted war criminals from the so-called war on terror. This would be, to say the least, a morally reprehensible act, one likely to encourage more American servicemen to abuse their power and break internationally recognized

rules of war. That the story has garnered so little attention is a tragedy of the first order.

Still, Hunter's comments and Trump's consideration should come as little surprise. The US military and the government in Washington have rarely held accused American war criminals accountable. And with a sympathetic populace here at home — one that trusts primarily the military among public institutions — expect current and future US war criminals to get a pass (or what Hunter called "a break"). This is not only ethically repugnant, it further sullies what's left of America's reputation abroad and will only increase terrorist recruitment and endanger the US homeland.

In the case of Gallagher, the Navy chief stands accused of shooting civilians and murdering a teenage Islamic State captive with his knife. Afterward, Gallagher allegedly posed for photos with the corpse, texted the images to friends and even held a re-enlistment ceremony over the body. Rep. Hunter, himself facing federal corruption charges, brushed off Gallagher's actions, admitting that as an artillery officer in Fallujah, Iraq, he'd "killed probably hundreds of civilians" and had "[p]robably killed women and children." Hunter wondered aloud, "So do I get judged too?" He should — but he undoubtedly won't.

Hunter went even further, stating that "I frankly don't care if [the captive] was killed, I just don't care," and adding, "Even if everything that the prosecutors say is true in this case, then, you know, Eddie Gallagher should still be given a break, I think." Such a despicable statement, and Hunter's admission of his own criminal acts in Iraq, should stagger us all. But again, it won't have that effect. Here's the kicker: Gallagher wasn't railroaded by a dovish press or "liberal" legal system — his fellow SEALs turned him in. Apparently, many American soldiers don't agree with Gallagher, Hunter or Trump; they actually possess an independent moral compass.

War crimes of this magnitude, while rare, do occur in the "war on terror." In some cases, the perpetrators have been held accountable, but they've just as often been let off. Few were punished for rampant prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib in Iraq, and essentially no high-ranking military or government officials were held accountable. Nor was any senior official charged with torture for the post-9/11 CIA practice of waterboarding — a crime for which Japanese military leaders were executed after World War II. Generals hardly ever go to jail here in the "land of the free."

Neither — or not for long — do war criminal mercenary contractors, apparently. Trump is also reportedly considering a pardon for Blackwater employee Nick Slatten, who was twice convicted of shooting to death dozens of Baghdad civilians in 2007. I was in that chaotic city when Slatten opened fire on a crowded square, and my unit had to deal with the consequences. Understandably, Iraqis didn't distinguish between US soldiers and the similarly clad contractors, over whom we had no control. To the Iraqi populace, Americans were Americans, and it is highly likely that support for the insurgency and the killing of US troops increased after the Blackwater shooting and Abu Ghraib scandal. I was told as much by many Iraqis in the ensuing months.

In terms of Hunter, Trump and Gallagher, let us be clear:



The logical extension of a pardon would be that there becomes essentially no such thing as an American war crime. That would overturn everything I learned regarding the laws of war in my 18-year military career. Hunter may claim that photographing corpses was commonplace and that "a lot of us have done the exact same thing," but that's patently false. Most of my fellow officers did follow the rules of war, didn't parade enemy or civilian corpses, and did everything they could to avoid noncombatant casualties. We were ethically and legally obliged to do so.

Admittedly, the ill-advised, illegal and immoral American invasion of Iraq resulted in hundreds of thousands of civilians' deaths — killed by all sides, including our own. I'm not excusing that loathsomeness and unnecessary war; not by a long shot. I remain haunted by my own participation in the conflict and the likelihood that my unit accidentally killed civilians during various and confusing firefights. Still, there must be some standard of conduct for America's "warriors," my own included. What sort of society would America be if its soldiers were free to rape, pillage and plunder in current and future wars? A venal empire, that's what — which this country resembles more and more.

That Trump would consider pardons for Gallagher, Slatten and other accused or convicted murders also reflects the nepotism that informs his administration. Gallagher's defense attorney also represents the Trump organization, and Slatten's former boss at Blackwater, Erik Prince, is the brother of Trump's education secretary, Betsy DeVos. A Trump pardon, moreover, would relieve the enormous US war machine of any responsibility to wage war morally or legally. It would set a dangerous precedent, encourage other potential murderers in uniform and champion the notion that the US military has the right to do as it pleases the world over.

Hunter's reprehensible verbal nonsense and Trump's potential pardons reflect a military chauvinism that infuses the American vernacular in the 21st century. The dangerous doctrine of American exceptionalism applies, apparently, to this country's so-called exceptional right to commit war crimes with impunity. Thinking back to My Lai, though, it seems that whitewashing, excusing and apologizing for criminal military behavior is as American as apple pie. Hunter and Trump just say as much out loud.

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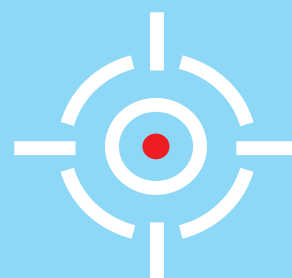
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Temperature maps from space would “boost crop production”

Scientists are developing a satellite system to record the temperatures of individual fields of crops.

The aim is to survey land temperatures to estimate water-use by plants and to show how they transfer that water back to the atmosphere.

The data will also help monitor how much water is available to grow crops and how they are responding to drought.

The new system is being considered for inclusion in the EU's Earth observation program, Copernicus.

It would be an addition to the Union's ever-growing number of satellites it calls the Sentinels.

A team led by Prof Martin Wooster at King's College London, UK, is exploring options for the next phase of the EU and European Space Agency-coordinated program.

“The main science goal is to benefit agriculture and increase crop production,” he told BBC News.

“Examining our planet and its environment for the ultimate benefit of people is so important with the ever-pressing global challenges we face, and remote-sensing from satellites is a key way to provide a consistent, global view that we can use to track and respond to both short and long-term change.”

Prof Wooster's research is part of the development of a satellite concept called



the Land Surface Temperature Monitoring (LSTM) mission.

The system would be able to identify the temperatures of individual fields of about 40 square meters, 10 times more detailed than is currently possible.

The increased precision would make land temperature much more useful for agriculture.

LSTM would enable researchers to calculate in real time how much water different plants required in different areas, and how often those plants needed to be irrigated.

It could also be used to help computer models predict drought conditions.

As a first step, Prof Wooster is to collect aerial heat maps over London, and

various agricultural areas in the rest of the UK, Italy and Germany.

He will be using one of the most sensitive airborne thermal imagers ever built - the Hyperspectral Thermal Emission Spectrometer (HyTES) - which will be flown on a Twin Otter aircraft.

These will be “gold-standard” images where details of ground conditions and the response of crops to drought are carefully recorded.

The data will then be used to design and calibrate the imaging system intended for LSTM.

The hope is that LSTM can become an operational spacecraft sometime in the next decade.

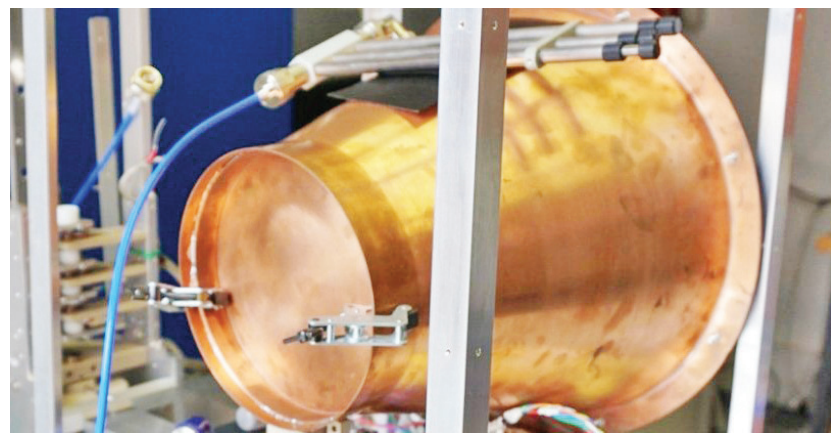
The UK has some of the best Earth observation scientists and engineers in the world. But Britain's continued involvement in the EU-funded Copernicus program is far from certain after the UK leaves the Union.

The UK government has said repeatedly that it wishes to associate to Copernicus when it becomes a “third country”. However, this will have to be negotiated.

“We believe it's really important that the UK's continued participation in Copernicus is negotiated as part of our future relationship with the EU and its member states,” Prof Wooster told BBC News.

(Source: BBC)

Physicists say they've built a test sensitive enough to test the 'impossible' EM Drive



For nearly 20 years, scientists have debated the viability of an EM Drive, a hypothetical type of engine that could propel a spacecraft without the need for any fuel.

If that sounds too good to be true, that's because it probably is - a working EM Drive would literally break one of the foundational laws of physics - but that hasn't stopped scientists from top research organizations including NASA and DARPA from pursuing the tech, because the payoff would be so extraordinary.

Now, a team of German physicists is conducting a new EM Drive experiment - and this one is reportedly sensitive enough to end the debate surrounding the controversial concept once and for all.

In 2001, British scientist Roger Shawyer proposed the idea of generating thrust by pumping microwaves into a conical chamber. They'd then bounce off the cone's walls, exerting enough force to power spacecraft.

The problem is that this would essentially be creating force out of nothing, which isn't possible according to the law

of conservation of momentum.

Still, a handful of researchers claim they've managed to generate some thrust in their EM Drive experiments - though the amount is so low that it's thus far been hard to say whether the device was in fact generating the thrust or whether it was caused by some outside influence, such as the Earth's magnetism or seismic vibrations.

To clear up the controversy, the team from Technische Universität Dresden has built a super-sensitive instrument for measuring thrust that they believe to be immune to the outside interference plaguing other studies.

They plan to publish the latest results of their EM Drive experiments in the journal Acta Astronautica in August, according to a new Wired profile of their work, and lead research Martin Tajmar told the publication he thinks we might be just a few months away from finally putting the EM Drive debate to bed.

(Source: Science Alert)

Solar eclipse frenzy fuels astronomical tourism in Chile



The total solar eclipse expected in northern Chile early next month is already drawing flocks of visitors eager to glimpse a rare view of the phenomenon through the region's clear skies.

In Coquimbo, a region spanning the Pacific coast and the Andes, tourism demand has already eclipsed offerings of some services, forcing hotels there to put up signs warning they have no rooms left by the July 2 event.

Flights to Coquimbo offered by Chile's LATAM Airlines as well as budget carriers Sky and JETSMART are being snapped up, as a clock in the coastal town of La Serena in Coquimbo counts down to the big day. “People have gone mad. They want the day to come as soon as possible,” local resident Patricia said about the frenzy.

Together with parts of Argentina and New Zealand, northern Chile is one of the few places in the world that will be directly facing the sun when the moon passes in front of the earth, blocking its light completely and darkening skies for several minutes.

Total solar eclipses occur at any specific location on average every 360 years, according to the European Southern Observatory.

Chile prides itself on being an astronomer's paradise, home to dozens of telescopes and ambitious studies at its observatories. The eclipse is expected to draw some 400,000 visitors to Coquimbo, according to the government.

“It's a unique occasion,” Chilean astronomer Ivo Saviane told Reuters from the La Silla Observatory that he manages. “For everyone, whether from Chile or abroad, it's exciting.”

Chilean President Sebastian Pinera is one of 150 “VIPs” with tickets to watch the eclipse at La Silla. Pinera has touted the eclipse as among the most important events in Chile this year, among with major international summits that will bring world leaders to the South American country.

“You have to be here to see it, even if it is just a couple of minutes,” said Luis Calderon, an engineer in La Serena.

(Source: Reuters)

Why do yellow pigments darken over time?

If you are lucky enough to have seen Leonardo da Vinci's “The Last Supper” in person, you may be disappointed to learn that only about 20% of it is original. Most of the mural is actually the work of restorers whose efforts spanned hundreds of years.

Paintings deteriorate over time in many ways. Varnishes age, dirt and grime collect on the surface, and light takes its toll on the pigments. A new paper published in Science Advances on June 7 reveals the physics behind the darkening of yellow pigments that have been exposed to light.

Chrome yellow was used extensively by painters of the 1800s, including Manet, Cézanne and Monet, and perhaps most famously by Van Gogh in his paintings of wheat fields, sunflowers and starlight. The yellow from these paintings is believed to have appeared much brighter back then than it does today.

To understand the way chrome yellow ages, researchers used lasers to artificially “age” samples of the pigment, simulating decades of exposure to sunlight. Then, they examined the samples using multiple techniques, in-



cluding older methods like chemical analysis and a relatively new technique known as in-air plasma induced luminescence.

The researchers discovered that the exposure to light did not trigger any chemical process, such as oxidation, that changed the pigment's color. Instead, they noticed changes

in the physical structure of the small crystals that make up the pigments. The exposure to light made the crystals grow larger but at the same time decreased their crystallinity, which means more variations among the individual crystals' physical structures. The decreased crystallinity causes more light to be absorbed by the pigments, darkening them over time.

Besides chrome yellow, the researchers also investigated four other yellow pigments: Naples yellow (predominantly used in paintings between 1700-1850), cadmium yellow (discovered in the 1800s and still popular among painters to this day), litharge (a lead-based pigment used since ancient times), and orpiment (highly toxic arsenic sulfide minerals used since ancient times). The effect of light on each pigment is similar, only varying in degrees.

The researchers think that the new plasma-based technique can add to the arsenal of tools for analyzing historic paintings and help develop new conservation approaches, such as putting the paintings behind glass panels that can filter out light of certain wavelengths.

(Source: Inside Science)

Trump criticizes NASA moon mission after promoting it earlier

U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday criticized NASA for aiming to put astronauts back on the moon by 2024 and urged the space agency to focus instead on “much bigger” initiatives like going to Mars, undercutting his previous support for the lunar initiative.

“For all of the money we are spending, NASA should NOT be talking about going to the Moon - We did that 50 years ago,” the president wrote on Twitter. “They should be focused on the much bigger things we are doing, including Mars (of which the Moon is a part), Defense and Science!”

Trump's statement, tweeted from Air Force

One as he returned from Europe, appeared at odds with his administration's recent push to return humans to the lunar surface by 2024 “by any means necessary,” five years sooner than the previous goal of 2028.

NASA plans to build a space outpost in lunar orbit that can relay astronauts to the lunar surface by 2024, part of a broader initiative to use the moon as a staging ground for eventual missions to Mars. NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine said Trump was only reaffirming NASA's space plan.

“As @POTUS said, @NASA is using the Moon to send humans to Mars!,” he said on

Friday in a tweet referring to the President of the United States. The accelerated timetable to land humans on the moon by 2024 ran into early trouble when the Trump administration asked a skeptical Congress in May to increase NASA's 2020 budget proposal by \$1.6 billion as a “down payment” to accommodate the accelerated goal.

The accelerated timetable for going to the moon was a key recommendation in March of the new National Space Council led by Vice President Mike Pence.

NASA's website on Friday said the Artemis program would send “the first woman

and the next man to the Moon by 2024 and develop a sustainable human presence on the Moon by 2028.” The program takes its name from the twin sister of Apollo and the goddess of the moon in Greek mythology.

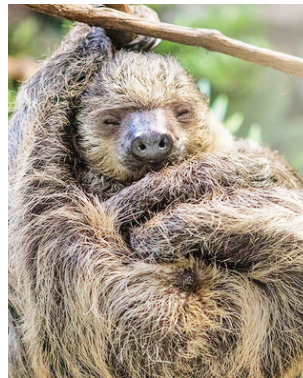
NASA's Apollo program landed the first men on the moon 50 years ago on July 20.

The NASA website also provided details on the space agency's plans for making the moon a jumping off point for future missions to Mars and a place to test equipment and technology for other forays out into the solar system.

(Source: Reuters)

Ancient molecules reveal surprising details on origins of “bizarre” sloths

From elephant-size animals that browsed North American grasslands to moose-size swimmers that plied the Pacific coast of South America, sloths have roamed Earth for more than 50 million years. Yet scientists know little about how the dozens of known species are related to each other. Now, two new analyses of ancient sloth DNA and proteins—some of which are more than 100,000 years old—are rewriting the sloth family tree. The studies even suggest a land bridge connected the West Indies with South America 30 million years ago, allowing the slow-moving animals to reach the islands.



“It's a remarkable achievement,” says Timothy Gaudin, a paleontologist at the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga, who was not involved in the work.

Of the more than 100 sloth species identified, all but six are extinct. So scientists have had to compare the shapes of fossil bones to piece together how the animals evolved. Such comparisons are not clear-cut, however, and new techniques for isolating DNA and proteins from fossils have made it possible to compare the genetics of long-extinct animals. Ancient DNA allows scientists to compare genes directly, but proteins last longer. So although they provide less precise information, paleontologists are increasingly using them to study even older fossils.

In one of the new studies, paleoprotein expert Samantha Presslee of the University of York in the United Kingdom and her colleagues sampled more than 100 sloth fossils from across North and South America for traces of collagen. This protein is prevalent in bones, and can stick around for more than 1 million years. In 17 samples the researchers analyzed, the collagen was preserved well enough that they were able to piece together the amino acid sequences that form the building blocks of proteins. That allowed them to compare the various collagens—one of which was more than 130,000 years old—and build likely family trees, which they describe today in Nature Ecology & Evolution.

Working independently, evolutionary biologist Frédéric Delsuc of the University of Montpellier in France and colleagues analyzed nearly full mitochondrial DNA sequences—the genetic material found in a cell's energy-producing machinery—from 10 sloth fossils, ranging in age from 10,000 to 45,000 years old. They, too, used the data to draw likely sloth family trees, which the group describes today in Current Biology.

The two teams came to strikingly similar conclusions: Today's three-toed sloths don't form their own branch on the tree as previously thought, but are related to the giant ground sloth, Megalonyx, which lived in North America until about 15,000 years ago. And today's two-toed sloths are distant cousins of the giant South American Mylodon, believed to be the last ground sloth to go extinct, less than 10,000 years ago.

Perhaps most surprising, the wide variety of now-extinct sloths that lived on the islands of the West Indies until about 5000 years ago all seem to have evolved from a common ancestor that lived about 30 million years ago. “Nobody had ever suggested that,” Gaudin says. That means a single population of sloths likely reached the islands just once. That fits with a theory that, instead of swimming or drifting, many animals reached the islands by walking over a land bridge that appeared about 30 million years ago and later was submerged.

“The fact that the [two studies] agree with one another is really interesting,” Gaudin says. But, he cautions, the analysis only includes a fraction of the known species. “There are loads of different extinct sloths that we could add to the tree,” Presslee says. “That's the next step.”

Combining data from fossil shapes with the genetic data could produce even better trees, says Gerardo De Iuliis, a paleontologist at the University of Toronto in Canada. That might reveal how certain sloth traits—like the long, powerful forearms that allow today's sloths to move while hanging from branches—arose independently multiple times. “They are bizarre animals that are bizarre in similar ways,” Gaudin says.

(Source: sciencemag.org)

Richard Branson takes satellite launch business to Japan with airline ANA

Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Orbit said last week it plans to bring its satellite launch system to Japan in partnership with airline operator ANA Holdings Inc, which will provide maintenance and possibly aircraft.

Virgin Orbit's LauncherOne system is undergoing testing with the aim of launching rockets bearing small satellites into space from a modified jumbo jet. The company said it will conduct its first orbital test flight later this year.

Branson's space ventures, however, have a history of delays, with his space tourism company Virgin Galactic running more than a decade behind the schedule originally promised by the British billionaire.

Virgin Orbit and ANA Holdings, parent of All Nippon Airways (ANA), in a joint statement said they will identify a launch site together with Space Port Japan, an industry-backed body which aims to turn Japan into a space business hub.

The space venture has already announced launch sites in the United States, Guam, Britain and Italy.

Japan's space industry spans large scale government-backed rocket launches by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd - which launched the Michibiki satellite navigation system - to Interstellar Technologies, a startup backed by internet entrepreneur Takafumi Horie that last month launched its first rocket to reach space.

(Source: Reuters)



Tehran gastronomy festival to focus on healthy food

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Tehran will be hosting a gastronomy festival on June 15, which aims to bring healthy food and diet into sharp focus.

The festival intends to pursue a perspective of shaping a healthy and vibrant society through improving food industry [standards] and encouraging the use of healthy food intakes, CHTN reported.



The event will be organized by the Ministry of Health under the auspices of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization.

Experts say that food is not merely an organic product with biochemical compositions. However, for members of each community, food is defined as a cultural element.

The Iranian cuisine, usually dominated with fragrant herbs, varies from region to region. It principally accentuates freshness, deliciousness, and colorfulness.

CHHTO showcasing Baluchi needlework

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — A collection of needlework embroideries, handcrafted by Baluchi artisans, has been put on show at the headquarters of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization in Tehran.



A pair of earrings richly ornamented with needlework

Handcrafted by females who are native of Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan, the collection contains sets of personal ornamentation, women's wear, household furniture amongst others, CHTN reported.

Needlework (Souzan-douzi in Persian) is a very common occupation among people of the southeastern province. It is the art of drawing images on plain fabrics by sewing delicate stitches using needle and colorful yarns.

They are mainly used to embellish women's clothes, however, such works are applied to decorate bracelets, necklace, bags and scarfs.

The Baluch are the majority ethnic inhabitants of the region of Baluchestan.

ROUND THE GLOBE

Historic City of Meknes

The Historic City of Meknes, which is a World Heritage, has exerted a considerable influence on the development of the civil and military architecture (the kasbah) and works of art. Founded in 1061 CE by the Almoravids as a military stronghold, its name originates from the great Berber tribe Meknassa who dominated eastern Morocco as far back as the Tafilaleet in the 8th century.



Geographically, it is remarkably located in the Saiss Plain between the Middle Atlas and the pre-rifan massif of Zerhoun. It contains the vestiges of the Medina that bears witness to ancient socio-economic fabric and the imperial city created by the Sultan Moulay Ismail (1672-1727).

It is the presence today of this historic city containing the rare remains and important monuments located within a rapidly changing urban environment that gives this urban heritage its universal value. The two ensembles are surrounded by a series of ramparts that separate them from one another.

In addition to its architectural interest of being built in the Hispano-Moorish style, Meknes is of particular interest as it represents the first great work of the Alaouite dynasty, reflecting the grandeur of its creator. It also provides a remarkable approach of urban design, integrating elements of both Islamic and European architecture and town planning. (Source: UNESCO)

Beat the summer heat in Sarein, the city of magical springs

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — For many

Iranians, summer vacations are to be started as schools close. Some look to beat the heat at the beach, inside of an air-conditioned hotel or museum or at a water park, while others look to go to a cool rural destination to escape the rising temperatures and humidity altogether.

There are many countryside places across Iran where scorching heat disappears with Sarein in Ardebil province, amongst the most popular ones.

With pristine nature and cool climate, Sarein lies at the foot of Sabalan Mountains. It is a natural spa region with numerous hot mineral springs well-known for their therapeutic values, Mehr reported.

The spectacular northwest province, bordering the Republic of Azerbaijan, boasts vibrant nature, green plains, hot mineral spas and historical monuments. The province is divided into 10 counties: Ardebil, Bilasavar, Germi, Khalkhal, Kowsar, Meshginshahr, Namin, Sarein, Nir, and Parsabad.

Sarein or Sareyn is a small city in the west of Ardebil, the capital city, with an area of more than 1.28 square km. The city is famous for its numerous spa springs and one of the tourist areas in Ardebil province.

Sarein attracts more than five million tourists annually who travel to this region from different parts of Iran and the world because of climate and hot springs. It has nine hot springs which are very different in terms of composition and properties.

■ Tourist attractions

Hot springs physical therapy draws many to Sarein every year in summer. 'Gavmesh Goli' hot spring; one of the popular hot springs in Sarein is very useful for the treatment of general, women and



With pristine nature and cool climate, Sarein lies at the foot of Sabalan Mountains. It is a natural spa region with numerous hot mineral springs well-known for their therapeutic values.

heart diseases, as well as general strengthening of the body.

Sarein hot springs are: Qarah Soo (A'saab) Thermal Spring; Sari Soo Thermal Spring; Gavmesh Goli Thermal Spring; General Thermal Spring; Besh Bajilar Thermal Spring; Qahveh Sui Thermal Spring; and Pehenlu Thermal Spring.

Another attraction of the city is 'Goor-goor Waterfall' which is located 10 to 15 kilometer from Sarein. It is 12m high and it is located in the northern slopes of Sabalan Mountain. It attracts many nature lovers to the Ardebil province.

'Kanzag' is a historic village in the

Central District of Sarein. It has historic caves related to the Parthian period which have been registered in Iran's National Heritage.

'Alvares' is a ski resort located 24 kilometers away from the city of Sarein. Many tourists travel to this area to ski and also enjoy winter sports every year.

'Anahita Hill' in Sarein was once called Water Goddess, it has been discovered on the basis of excavated earthenware and historical documentation.

'Gulistan Valley' is one of the widest and most beautiful valleys in Ardebil province. It is Sabalan's east vally and

Try out New York Times recipe for Persian Sheveed Polo

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — Sheveed (Shivid) Polo is a traditional Persian food which may simply surprise your taste buds. In Iran, it is usually consumed with meat products such as chicken, fish, tuna fish, etc.

According to Naz Deravian, the author of "Bottom of the Pot: Persian Recipes and Stories" (Flatiron Books, 2018), this dish is a simple way to make use of a whole bunch of dill and transform an ordinary pot of plain rice, the New York Times reported.

For this recipe Deravian uses a mix of fresh and dried dill here.

The dried dill enhances the fragrance and also draws out the humidity from the fresh dill so the rice doesn't turn mushy when steaming. The recipe uses a traditional Persian technique for cooking rice in which you boil the rice for several minutes over high heat, wrap the lid in a kitchen towel to catch the condensation, then steam the rice over low heat for several minutes more.

"Don't worry; it won't be overcooked. It will be fluffy perfection. Serve it with chicken or seafood, like this roasted dill salmon."



■ Ingredients

One large bunch dill, trimmed and finely chopped
Three tablespoons dried dill
Two cups white basmati rice, rinsed
Two tablespoons unsalted butter or olive oil
Two teaspoons kosher salt

■ Preparation

Set aside 1/4 cup of the chopped fresh dill. In a bowl,

combine the rest of the fresh dill with the dried dill.

Place the rice, butter and salt in a medium pot. Add 3 1/2 cups water and bring to a boil over high heat. Give it a stir, reduce the heat to low, cover and cook until the water has been absorbed, about 12 minutes. (It's O.K. to lift the lid to check.)

Fold the dill mixture into the rice. Wrap the lid in a kitchen towel to catch the condensation, ensuring that the kitchen towel is secured up top so it doesn't catch fire. Firmly place the lid back on the pot.

Cook until the rice is cooked through and fluffy, about 15 minutes. Gently fluff with a spoon, then transfer to a serving platter, scattering the reserved 1/4 cup fresh dill in between spoonfuls of rice.

■ Tips

Prep ahead: The dill can be washed and chopped up to 1 day in advance, and stored in a container lined and covered on top with a paper towel to absorb any moisture.

Plan ahead: Leftovers can be stored in the fridge (up to 3 days) or in the freezer (up to 3 months). Add a little water when reheating to bring the rice back to life.

Daily lives of ancient Greeks revealed in Acropolis museum's huge archaeological dig

The pride – and purpose – of the Acropolis Museum has always been the Parthenon gallery. With its 360-degree panoramic view from the top floor, the museum has always been on a mission: to let the world know that this is the most appropriate place to exhibit the marbles that once adorned the Periclean masterpiece.

But a decade after it opened, the four-storey edifice at the foot of the Acropolis is now focusing on the lives of ancient Greeks. As the museum prepares to celebrate its 10th birthday on 20 June, it has announced the opening of a new exhibition space: an entire excavated neighbourhood of ancient villas, streets, workshops and bathhouses that lies below the museum building.

On Friday, as archaeologists put the finishing touches to the site, Dimitrios Pandermalis, the museum's director, told how finds once considered a curse had become a blessing. "For the first time we are able to see how people lived in the shadow of the Acropolis," he enthused, singling out an

ornate ancient courtyard and a chamber where aristocrats had held symposiums.

"And through the display of discoveries such as plates and toys, visitors will have a glimpse into the daily lives of ancient Greeks. There are a lot of marble masterpieces on display around the museum but life is not only about the glory days of yesteryear; it is about little things that make each and every day."

The building of a €130m museum so close to the Acropolis, and on a site so rich in archaeology, was not without controversy. The discovery of ruins dating from the late classical era – in the fifth century BC – to the early Byzantine period in the 12th century AD delayed building work.

But the 13 years of digging paid off. One of the biggest excavations within the walls of ancient Athens helped archaeologists learn more than any previous dig had about the birthplace of democracy. "It was complex because there were so many layers,



The excavation site, of villas and streets beneath the Acropolis Museum, is to open this month. (Photograph: Alexandros Vlachos/EPA)

so many dwellings, one on top of the other, all telling the history of Athens," said Stamatia Eleftheratou, who headed the excavation work.

The ancient settlement covers 4,000 square meters, accessed by steel walkways. But Eleftheratou and her team worked over an area three times that size, discovering

habitat of partridge, goat and mouflon. 'Varghesaran waterfall' is one of the most spectacular spots of Sabalan's green slopes.

■ Best season to visit

The best season to visit Sarein is late spring and summer. It is not a favorite destination in autumn and winter since it gets so cold. The minimum temperature is -8° C and the maximum 25° C in Sarein.

■ Etymology

The word Sarein in the Persian dictionary means "cool place" and "headwater".

■ Culture

To study the culture of Sarein's people, we have to study the culture of the Azerbaijani culture. These people are the creator of one of the richest treasures of oral literature of the nations in the Middle East and Iran. The foundation of the Azerbaijani literature is based on folklore.

■ Language

The main language of Sarein is the Azari, however Persian is the official national language.

■ Traditional dishes

'Ashe Doogh', also known as 'yogurt soup' is one of the traditional soups in Sarein. It is a soup usually made from yogurt or doogh, as well as chickpeas and vegetables.

Local 'Kebabs' in this area are also very popular and delicious for tourists.

'Doogh' or aryan; a classic Iranian drink, is a combination of water, yogurt, mint and salt.

■ Souvenir

"Honey" which is produced locally by the bee keepers of the region is one of the famous things in Sarein. It is produced on the hyacinths, basil and vetches slops of Sabalan Mountains. It is renowned for its quality.

Uber is not the first to bring this service to NYC, however — and it's not the cheapest.

Starting this summer, some NYC Uber riders will be able to call a helicopter to John F. Kennedy International Airport via the ride-share app.

According to Bloomberg, the average ride will cost between \$200 and \$250 per person depending on demand and will take about eight minutes.

But this isn't like UberPOOL — not everybody will be able to experience the new service. Uber Copter will only be available to top-tier Uber users.

The drive from downtown Manhattan to the airport can take about an hour, sometimes closer to two, depending on traffic conditions. According to Uber, the service should cut travel time down to a half-hour, including ground transfers.

"This is a trip that so many travelers make a day, and we see an opportunity to save them a huge amount of time on

it," Eric Allison, head of Uber Elevate (the company's aerial division), told The New York Times.

Uber is not the first to provide this service in NYC, however. Earlier this year, Blade launched helicopter rides from several Manhattan locations to all NYC area airports, including JFK, LaGuardia, and Newark.

"There is no greater validation of Blade's strategy and No. 1 market position than Uber's entering the Urban Air Mobility market in New York City," Rob Wiesenthal, CEO, Blade Urban Air Mobility, Inc., told Travel + Leisure.

Blade rides cost \$195 per person, and come with a pre-flight lounge experience that includes express check-in, snacks, and drinking Berne rosé from a helicopter-proof sippy cup. In addition to booking by the seat, Blade also offers private charters and crowdsource services.

Uber Copter rides will leave from a heliport near Wall Street and can be booked on demand or up to five days in

advance. Each helicopter will be capable of carrying five passengers and their belongings.

However this isn't an option for travelers with large suitcases: Each rider will be limited to one personal bag and one carry-on, weighing no more than 40 pounds.

Blade's luggage allowance is even more strict — capped at one personal bag and one small carry-on per person with a 25 lb. maximum for airport rides — though a ToteTaxi service is offered for an additional fee. The Blade ToteTaxi will deliver two oversized pieces of luggage to the airport for \$85, plus \$40 for each additional bag.

Allison said Uber plans to expand its Copter services to other cities following this New York City test run. Blade currently provides airport transports in Los Angeles and San Francisco as well. Only Platinum and Diamond members of Uber's loyalty program, Uber Rewards, will be able to book Uber Copter rides. (Source: travelandleisure.com)

Uber is launching helicopter rides in NYC

Wealth associated with less hypertension: official

HEALTH DESK **TEHRAN** — According to statistics, 21.9 percent of wealthy Iranians and 30.1 percent of poor ones suffer from high blood pressure, the deputy health minister Baqer Larijani announced, IRNA reported on Saturday.

The national campaign for controlling hypertension which began on May 17, World Hypertension Day, focuses on the issue as one of the most important causes of cardiovascular disease, which is the main reason for 40 percent of deaths in Iran.

The wealth of a family has a great impact on decreasing the number of people suffering from high blood pressure.

Affluent people receive better medical treatments on time, he explained.

Education also affects the blood pressure control among educated people.

About 53.2 percent of illiterate people suffer from hypertension while the figure is 18 percent among people with academic education, he said.

The ignorance of people about hypertension increases the risk of its consequences, he lamented.

About 25 percent of men in rural and urban areas in Iran are suffering from high blood pressure, while the figure is 26.5 percent among women in rural areas and 30 percent in urban areas, he added.



A total of 30 percent of people living in the cities and 27 percent of those who live in villages suffer from hypertension.

According to statistics, women living in Lorestan Province have the most high blood pressure amongst the Iranians above 18 years old and the women in Fars Province have the least number of people with hypertension, he added.

The men living in Kordestan Province are on the top list of patients suffering from

hypertension and the men of Zanjan Province are on the bottom list.

Last week, the Health Ministry announced that about three million and 300 thousand Iranians have registered their blood pressure information at the ministry's comprehensive network, entitled SIB, Persian acronym for 'Integrated Health System'.

A total of 55 thousand people also submitted their information online self-declaration form for blood pressure on the ministry's

website.

Over 40 million of Iran's population is older than 30 years old and is the target population in addition to pregnant women and those with kidney diseases, he explained.

The campaign is underway in 18,000 local health centers, 6,700 health service departments, 240 clinics and 1002 hospitals nationwide and it is predicted that at least 2461 stands in different parts of cities observe blood pressure of citizens during the campaign, he explained.

■ 100,000 Iranians die of high blood pressure annually

In mid-May, the Health Ministry's director for non-communicable diseases Afshin Ostovar announced that About 100,000 Iranians die of high blood pressure annually.

One third of Iranian population above 30 suffer from hypertension and during past 25 years, the number of Iranians suffering from hypertension has increased by three-fold in Iran.

Some 97,000 Iranians died of diseases caused by hypertension in 2017, according to Dr. Ramin Heshmat, who is an associate professor of epidemiology in Tehran University of Medical Sciences.

World Health Organization (WHO) has set a target for a 25% relative reduction in the prevalence of raised blood pressure by 2025.

'About 300 types of rare diseases diagnosed in Iran'

HEALTH DESK **TEHRAN** — A total of 300 types of rare diseases have been diagnosed in Iran, the Rare Diseases Foundation of Iran director said.

Hamidreza Adraki said that rare disease or disorder is defined as rare when it affects 2 in 10,000 people.

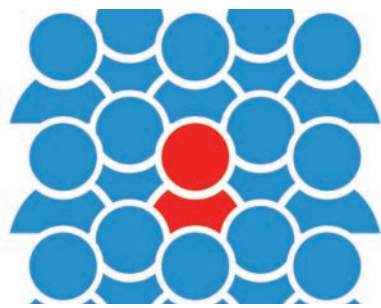
The foundation plans for screening programs according to the statistics, he said.

Genetic disorder is the most important reason for rare disease in Iran, which is caused by the cousin marriage, he said.

He pointed to fetal MRI at 4 months as a screening stage in rare diseases, although it can be done after birth, he explained.

Drafting and completing a national document on rare diseases started since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21) in a collaboration between Tehran University of Medical Sciences and Rare Diseases Foundation of Iran.

In early April it was announced that at numerous requests put in by patients suffering from rare diseases Health Minister Saeed Namaki has tasked Tehran University of Medical Sciences with devising a national document on rare diseases.



Rare diseases are often serious, chronic and life-threatening. At present, more than 6000 rare diseases are known; around 80% of them are genetic disorders and half of them occur during childhood.

Rare diseases are associated with a high psychological burden for the patient but they can also have a major impact on a patient's family. In addition to the health burden on patients, few of these diseases have an effective drug treatment available. This is because the drugs to treat rare diseases (called orphan drugs) are not commercially viable for pharmaceutical companies, due to the small number of patients per disease.

40 new hospitals to open by March 2020

HEALTH DESK **TEHRAN** — 40 new hospitals will be inaugurated over the current Iranian year (March 2019-March 2020), said an official with the Health Ministry.

More than 70% of the equipment and medical device used in these hospitals are produced inside the country, said Dr. Reza Rezaei, the director for budget at the Health Ministry's department of treatment.

The hospitals will include 5,500 new beds. Currently, there are around 100,000 hospital beds in the country, ISNA quoted Rezaei as saying on Saturday.

The hospitals are located all around the country, especially in deprived areas, said Rezaei.

A 96-bed hospital in Paveh, Kordestan province, a 300-bed women's hospital in Urmia, West Azarbaijan province, a burn center in Kermanshah, and a new substitute hospital in Behshahr, Mazandaran province, are some of the new facilities that are going to be built, he added.

"The budget for building these hospitals is up to 5 trillion rials (around \$119 million); fortunately, the fact that most equipment used in these hospitals are



homegrown, help us to save a large part of our foreign-exchange reserves."

According to Rezaei, the hospitals damaged by recent floods in the country are now mostly repaired and renovated and are ready to give service to the patients.

In December, the Deputy Health Minister for Nursing announced that there are 704 licensed home health care centers in Iran and 300 new centers will soon start working.

According to Maryam Hazrati, home health care centers will stop unnecessary occupation of hospital beds, and will also help patients save money and be protected from hospital-acquired infections.

MAHAK has supported 4,555 children with brain tumor during the past 28 years

HEALTH DESK **TEHRAN** — Brain tumors are one of the most common cancers in children. This disease has numerous symptoms and if it is diagnosed in primary stages it can be controlled and treated to a great extent.

In order to fulfill its mission of supporting cancer-stricken children and their families, MAHAK, a charity society dedicated to treating pediatric cancer in Iran, has supported 4,555 children with brain tumor by mid-March 2019.

In addition, MAHAK has strived to maintain the belief that "Cancer is not the end". Procuring the required medications is the first concern for the families of cancer-stricken children at the present time. We believe that it is just due to your care and patronage that we can support 17,000 cancer-stricken children.

The symptoms of brain tumors include severe headaches, convulsions, visual impairment, hearing impairment, lack of balance, difficulty in speaking, change in behavior and personal characteristics and lack of concentration and ability to manage daily activities.

According to the Mayo Clinic pediatric brain tumors are masses or growths of abnormal cells that occur in a child's brain or the tissue and structures that are near it. Many different types of pediatric brain tumors exist — some are noncancerous (benign) and some are cancerous (malignant).

Treatment and chance of recovery (prognosis) depend on the type of tumor, its location within the brain, whether it has spread, and your child's age and general health. Because new treatments and technologies are continually being developed, several options may be available at different

points in treatment.

Treatment for brain tumors in children is typically quite different from treatment for adult brain tumors, so it's very important to enlist the expertise and experience of pediatric specialists in neurology and cancer.

Signs and symptoms of a brain tumor in children vary greatly and depend on the brain tumor type, size, location and rate of growth. Some signs and symptoms may not be easy to detect because they're similar to symptoms of other conditions.

Some of the more common symptoms of a brain tumor in children include: headaches, which may become more frequent and more severe, feeling of increased pressure in the head, unexplained nausea or vomiting, and abrupt onset of vision problems, such as double vision.

Cancer: New compound boosts chemo, prevents treatment resistance

Researchers may have found a way to stop cancer cells from defending themselves against chemotherapy. In a new mouse study, blocking a DNA repair pathway prevented cancer cells from surviving or becoming resistant to treatment.

Graham Walker, the American Cancer Society Research Professor of Biology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, is one of the senior authors of the new paper.

In his previous research, Prof. Walker studied a DNA repair process that cancer cells rely on to avoid the damage of chemotherapy. This process is called translesion synthesis (TLS).

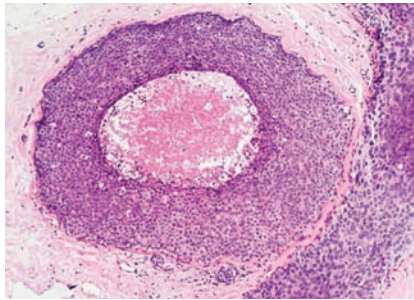
As the researchers explain, healthy cells can normally repair DNA by accurately removing DNA damage.

However, when cells become cancerous, they can no longer rely on this normal repair system. Instead, they use TLS, which is less accurate.

Specifically, TLS uses specialized TLS DNA polymerases. Polymerases are enzymes that can make copies of DNA. Normal DNA polymerases copy DNA accurately, but TLS DNA polymerases replicate damaged DNA in a less accurate fashion.

■ Why chemo drugs need a boost

This "imperfect" DNA replication process essentially leads to mutations that make can-



cer cells resistant to future DNA-damaging treatments.

"Because these TLS DNA polymerases are really error-prone, they are accountable for nearly all of the mutation that is induced by drugs like cisplatin," explains co-senior study author Michael Hemann, an associate professor of biology at MIT.

Cisplatin is a chemotherapy drug that doctors prescribe to treat various forms of cancer, including "bladder, head and neck, lung, ovarian, and testicular cancers."

It works by interfering with DNA repair, causing DNA damage, and eventually inducing cancer cell death.

However, cancer cells are often resistant to cisplatin. The drug also has numerous side

effects, such as "severe kidney problems, allergic reactions, decrease[d] immunity to infections, gastrointestinal disorders, hemorrhage, and hearing loss."

This is why, in the new study, the scientists set out to enhance the power of this drug. "It's very well established that with these frontline chemotherapies that we use, if they don't cure you, they make you worse," says Hemann.

"We're trying to make the therapy work better, and we also want to make the tumor recurrently sensitive to therapy upon repeated doses," he adds.

Pei Zhou, a professor of biochemistry at Duke University in Durham, NC, and Jiyong Hong, a professor of chemistry at Duke University, are also senior authors of the new study, which now appears in the journal Cell.

■ 1 drug out of 10,000 enhances cisplatin

Hemann, Prof. Walker, and their colleagues started out by turning to some previous research they carried out almost a decade ago.

At the time, they published two studies that broke down the mechanisms at play in TLS. They showed that, in order for cisplatin to work, TLS had to be disrupted.

Specifically, they found that reducing the

expression of TLS polymerase Rev1 using RNA interference made the drug cisplatin much more effective in fighting lymphoma and lung cancer in mouse models, preventing recurring tumors from becoming treatment-resistant.

In the new study, they screened approximately 10,000 drug compounds with the potential to disrupt the TLS process.

They finally found a drug that binds tightly to Rev1 and stops it from interacting with other polymerases and proteins that are necessary for TLS to occur.

The researchers tested this compound in combination with cisplatin in various types of human cancer cells and discovered that the combination destroyed many more cancer cells than the chemo drug alone.

Also, the cancer cells that did survive were less likely to form new mutations that would make them treatment-resistant.

"Because this novel [TLS] inhibitor targets the mutagenic ability of cancer cells to resist therapy," explains study co-author and MIT postdoctoral researcher Nimrat Chatterjee, "it can potentially address the issue of cancer relapse, where cancers continue to evolve from new mutations and together pose a major challenge in cancer treatment."

(Source: Medical News Today)

5 in 6 Iranians don't get joint surgery they need

HEALTH DESK **TEHRAN** — Five in 6 Iranians who need joint replacement surgery don't undergo the procedure, according to the director of Iranian Orthopedic Association (IOA).

Some 50,000 joint replacement surgeries are performed every year in the country; however, it is estimated that, annually, around 300,000 Iranians are likely to need such surgeries, said Mohammad-Javad Mortazavi.

According to Mortazavi, the people who don't get joint surgeries either can't afford it or prefer to live with their condition rather than having surgery, IRNA reported on Sunday.

Joint replacement is an extremely expensive surgery and incurs high costs on the country's health system, he said.

"Currently, the majority of orthopedic prosthesis are imported into the country and there is no shortage in our supplies, but the costs of such devices have increased substantially," said Mortazavi.



A few Iranian companies are trying to produce orthopedic implants, but their products don't have the satisfactory quality."

"Obviously, Natural joints have far better function than prosthetic ones, so our main focus is on preventing and treating the diseases and conditions that usually lead to joint dysfunction."

"Our priority is doing surgeries and treatments that can prevent joints from destruction and severe damage, so that the patients won't need a replacement. This topic will be the main focus of IOA's next congress," he added.

The 27th International Iranian Orthopedic Association Congress will be held from November 4 to 8.

Replacement arthroplasty, or joint replacement surgery, is a procedure of orthopedic surgery in which an arthritic or dysfunctional joint surface is replaced with an orthopedic prosthesis.

Joint replacement is considered as a treatment when severe joint pain or dysfunction is not alleviated by less-invasive therapies. It is a form of arthroplasty, and is often indicated from various joint diseases, including osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

According to OrthoInfo, Hip and knee replacements are the most commonly performed joint replacements, but replacement surgery can be performed on other joints, as well, including the ankle, wrist, shoulder, and elbow.

Plain packaging could be brought in for crisps and chocolate under anti-obesity drive

Crisps, sweets and fizzy drinks could be sold in plain packaging already required for cigarettes, under proposals for tackling soaring rates of childhood obesity being explored by England's chief medical officer.

Dame Sally Davies is leading a review of measures to tackle childhood obesity and said she would be considering whether lessons learned from tobacco control could be applied to tackle consumption of unhealthy foods.

Plain packaging would help challenge the power of corporate snack manufacturers and put unhealthy foods on a "level playing field" with unbranded fruits and vegetables, a report by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) think tank concluded.

"This new proposal from IPPR learns lessons from tobacco control," said Dame Davies, who has previously called for the soft drink 'sugar tax' to be extended to crisps and chocolate.

"It has potential to be part of the solution to the obesity crisis and will be explored in my formal review of childhood obesity."

It comes after campaign groups revealed the shocking amounts of sugar, fat and salt in foods which appeal to children by using cartoon mascots on their packaging.

Action on Sugar and Salt found that over half (51 per cent) of 526 products using animated characters on their packets were so unhealthy they would not be allowed to be advertised during children's TV.

The worst offenders involved highly popular TV shows, such as Peppa Pig Candy Bites, which are 99 per cent sugar, and Paw Patrol chocolate coins, which were 60 per cent sugar.

In its "Ending the Blame Game" report, the IPPR also called for a levy on large supermarkets to pay for community cooking classes and banning junk food adverts before the 9pm watershed.

The call for drastic action is a response to decades of progress in reducing preventable disease linked to obesity and smoking flatlining since 2012.

This collapse coincides with massive cuts to public health funding as part of the government's austerity drive.

The IPPR said the result was 130,000 more deaths than would have been predicted based on trends up until 2013.

"Following several decades of improvement, progress on tackling preventable illness and death has stalled," said Harry Quilter-Pinner, one of the report's co-authors.

"As a result, more than 100,000 people will have died or become chronically ill who otherwise might not have done.

"That comes at a cost to them, their families, the NHS and the country generally — yet it could have been avoided with a small increase in investment into disease prevention. We must never forget that the nation's health is also the nation's wealth."

Councils are responsible for funding public health interventions. But local authority leaders warn more than £700m has been cut from grant funding for obesity, smoking and sexual health services and budgets for parks and leisure centers are being squeezed.

"This report echoes recommendations that we have called for and highlights that prevention is the bedrock to a healthier, more equal and prosperous society," said Ian Hudspeth, chairman of the Local Government Association's Community Wellbeing Board.

(Source: The Independent)



Tehran sets record high for wildfires within 2 months

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — The highest number of wildfires occurred in the capital during the past two months, as some 15 wildfires were reported in southern part of the city, Jamshid Mohabbat Khani, head of the Department of Environment's protection unit has stated.



In the aforesaid period, some 218 hectares of the areas under the DOE's protection have been swept by wildfires, he added.

He went on to say that so far 56 cases of wildfires broke out in 12 provinces of Khuzestan, Qazvin, Fars, Kermanshah, Mazandaran, Hormozgan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, East Azarbaijan, Isfahan, Bushehr, Tehran and South Khorasan.

Mohabbat Khani also highlighted that 15 cases of wildfires caused 70 hectares of the lands in Tehran to turn into ashes since past two months, which led the capital to come in first among the provinces affected by wildfire.

7 of wildfires were caused by lightning and 18 were human-caused, he said, adding that some 25 of the fires ignited due to litter and waste left in the nature.

For one a glass bottle thrown on the side of the road magnifies a ray of sunlight, igniting grass around it, he explained.

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

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

Ali Abbas Nejad, commander of forest protection unit at Forest Rangelands and Watershed Management Organization (FRWO) also said that the incidence of wildfires decreased by 130% in the Iranian calendar months of Farvardin (March 21-April 20) compared to the same period last year.

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

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

WORDS IN THE NEWS

The illegal trade in diamonds

(June 8, 2000)

Diamonds provide a source of wealth for countries such as Sierra Leone. But illegal exports can also help fund rebel groups. Many diamonds are traded through Antwerp, in Belgium.

Diamond traders in Antwerp are sensitive about their **international image**. A United Nations report earlier this year criticized what it called extremely **lax** controls here and suggested that an existing UN embargo on diamonds from areas of Angola controlled by UNITA rebels was being widely **flouted**.

At the heart of the issue is the question of how sure a trader can be about where a stone is from. **Ownership certificates** show the country a diamond is imported from, but that might not be the country of origin. For example, Liberia has few diamonds of its own. Most of its exports probably come from the rebels in neighboring Sierra Leone. Traders here say it's impossible to tell apart what might be regarded as a «clean» Liberian diamond from a «dirty» Sierra Leonean one. The problem of so-called **conflict diamonds** should be addressed, they say, with controls in Africa. The rebels control most of the diamond mining areas and the gems are **smuggled out through** Liberia. A UN ban would make dealing in Sierra Leone diamonds a criminal activity and put brokers on notice; they would be asked to sign a declaration that their diamonds did not come from Sierra Leone. To indicate the **scale** of the problem, the official said the Sierra Leone diamond trade last year **was estimated to have been worth** seventy million dollars, only one and a half million of **that** was **legitimate**.

WORDS

international image: the way they appear to countries
lax: if a system is lax, rules are not obeyed, or standards are not maintained

flouted: if you flout a law, you deliberately disobey it
at the heart of the issue: Can a trader be sure where a diamond comes from? If so, how sure? That lies at the center of the problem
ownership certificates: documents which show who the owner is (i) «clean» and (ii) «dirty»
diamonds: diamonds which have been bought (i) according to the rules, or (ii) illegally
conflict diamonds: diamonds which may have come from an area of civil unrest

smuggled out through: the diamonds are taken illegally into Liberia, and then exported to other countries
scale: size or extent

was estimated to have been worth: it was estimated that it had a value of 70 million dollars

that: refers to the 70 million dollars

legitimate: only that part of the trade was according to the law - the diamonds had not been smuggled

(Source: BBC)



Every action has a reaction. We have one planet; one chance.

Dogs' overpopulation, a major threat to the wildlife

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Majid Kharazian-Moqaddam, director of the wildlife conservation and management at the Department of Environment, has warned that measures to control stray dogs' population must be employed, otherwise they will impose threats to the wildlife.

Stray dogs are unconfined dogs that live in cities. They may be pets which have strayed from or are allowed freedom by their owners, or may be feral animals that have never been owned. Street dog overpopulation can cause problems for the societies in which they live.

Dogs are generally tame except one subspecies called African wild dog, also known as the painted hunting dog, which is native to sub-Saharan Africa, he said.

"We classified dog in three categories of pets, herd dogs and feral ones which have never been owned," he noted, adding, feral dogs are the major cause of increased population of stray dogs.

Feral dogs in nature become rivals of wild carnivores such as leopards, cheetahs and wolves, and because their population is more than wild carnivores, they will eliminate the wild species pray, causing a deterioration in the ecological balance of habitats, he further explained.

They can also spread infectious diseases to people and other animals through bites, he lamented, adding that the main measure to prevent their population rise is birth control programs and sterilizing.

People offering them food, waste in the landfills also contribute significantly to the



Feral dogs in nature become rivals of wild carnivores such as leopards, cheetahs and wolves, and because their population is more than wild carnivores, they will eliminate the wild species pray, causing a deterioration in the ecological balance of habitats.

increase in the number of stray dogs that can bring damages to the environment and humans, he also noted.

He further called on the related organizations and municipalities to join hands and

implement stray dog population control plans, adding, people avoid feeding the stray dogs in suburban areas.

Behzad Amiri, head of zoonotic diseases department at the Ministry of Health Rabies

National environment week underway



ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — The national environment week is being observed in the country from June 9-15, a few days after World Environment Day held annually on June 5, Mehr news agency reported on Saturday.

This year, the environment week in Iran will center on the role of industries, media, laws and regulations, responsible officials and the public in reducing air pollution.

Tehran Municipality will launch a scheme aiming to familiarize the public more with environmental problems, Sadr-o-din Alipour, the director of environment and sustainable development department of the Municipality, has said.

The scheme will focus on providing training courses on environmental issues for citizens, creating environmental and educational videos, notifying the public about environmental photo contest, and setting up green booths for citizens to familiarize them with the nature are some of the objectives of the plan, Alipour explained.

World Environment Day was marked on June 5 with the theme of "Together we can Beat Air Pollution". It is the UN's most important day for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the protection of

our environment. Since it began in 1974, it has grown to become a global platform for public outreach that is widely celebrated in over 100 countries.

According to UN, nobody is safe from pollution, which comes from five main human sources namely, households, industries, transport, agriculture and waste. These sources spew out a range of substances including carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, nitrogen oxide, ground-level ozone, particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, hydrocarbons, and lead—all of which are harmful to human health.

Household air pollution, indoor burning of fossil fuels, wood and other biomass-based fuels to cook, heat and light homes, cause around 3.8 million premature deaths each year.

Power generation is a leading source of air pollution. Coal-burning power plants are a major contributor, while diesel generators are a growing concern in off-grid areas.

Moreover, air pollution emissions from transport have been linked to nearly 400,000 premature deaths.

Around 24 percent of all greenhouse gases emitted worldwide come agriculture, forestry and other land-use.

Iran well rid of 153 swarms of desert locusts



ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Some 153 swarms of desert locusts from Saudi Arabia which penetrated into the southeastern provinces have been controlled, Esmail Najjar, head of Iran's Crisis Management Organization has said.

Since the [Iranian calendar] month of Bahman (starting on January 21) we fought swarms of desert locust in approximately 532,000 hectares of farming lands, IRNA news agency quoted Najjar as saying on Saturday.

Provinces of Bushehr, Fars, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, Hormozgan, Kerman, Khuzestan, and Sistan-Baluchestan have been affected by the locusts which incurred major losses on farming lands and gardens.

Farm lands in the aforementioned provinces have undergone aerial spraying of chemical insecticides and ground pest control operations, he stated.

He went on to say that a budget of 300 billion rials (around \$7 million) is required to completely eradicate the outbreak, while some 100 billion rials (nearly \$2.3 million) have so far been allocated, and another budget of 200 billion rials (nearly \$4.6 million) is planned to be allotted in this regard.

said in October 2018 that rabies, an infectious viral disease spread to people through animal bites, impose health economic burden amounting to 1.8 trillion rials (about \$42 million) on the country annually.

Threats imposed by dogs

According to a report published by The Independent in February 2019 dogs are said to threaten nearly 200 species worldwide, some of which are critically endangered.

Scientists say they have contributed to the extinction of nearly one dozen wild bird and animal species.

As such, they have become the third worst human-introduced predators after cats and rats.

The report highlights that International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) estimates of the 200 species at risk from free-ranging and feral dogs, 30 are critically endangered, 71 are endangered, and a further 81 are listed as vulnerable.

As well as being a direct threat to animals by hunting them, dogs are also carriers of disease, can have significant impacts on fragile ecosystems, can compete with other vulnerable animals for prey, and in the case of wolves, can interbreed with them, threatening the longevity and integrity of the wolf population.

There are an estimated one billion domestic dogs worldwide and their conditions range from feral and free-ranging to entirely dependent on humans.

There is no definitive figure for feral and free-ranging dogs, but conservationists say their number is definitely rising.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ↔ ب

\$4m budget allocated to promote non-motorized transport

A total budget of 170 billion rials (around \$4 million) has been allocated to promote bike lanes across the capital city of Tehran, encouraging the residents to ride bicycles, Sakineh Ashrafi, deputy mayor of Tehran for planning, urban development and council affairs has said.

One of the main issues taken into consideration through the next year's budget bill, was development of non-motorized transportation, which focuses on active transportation and human powered transportation including walking and bicycling, she explained.

According to Tehran third development plan, biking as a green transport has been taken into consideration in order to mitigate traffic congestion and air pollution, she further noted, ISNA reported on Sunday.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“intro-, intra-”

■ **Meaning**: inside or within

■ **For example**: Some medications, as well as blood transfusions, can only be given *intravenously*.

PHRASAL VERB

Have somebody up

■ **Meaning**: to make someone go to a court of law because you think they have committed a crime

■ **For example**: Last year he was had up for drunken driving.

IDIOM

Buckle down

■ **Explanation**: if you buckle down, you apply yourself with determination to hard work and give it your full attention

■ **For example**: If you want to pass your exams, you'll have to buckle down and do some serious work.

تصویب اعتبار ۱۷ میلیاردی برای توسعه دوچرخه‌سواری همگانی در پایتخت

سکینه اشرفی معاون برنامه‌ریزی، توسعه شهری و امور شورای شهردار تهران از تصویب حدود ۱۷۰ میلیارد ریال اعتبار برای توسعه دوچرخه‌سواری همگانی در پایتخت خبر داد.

وی اظهار کرد: یکی از موضوعاتی که در بودجه سنواتی سال آینده شهرداری تهران به آن توجه شده، موضوع توسعه حمل و نقل عمومی غیرموتوری از جمله دوچرخه‌سواری همگانی است.

به گزارش روز یکشنبه برگزارای ایسنا وی ادامه داد: در برنامه سوم توسعه شهر تهران، موضوع توجه به دوچرخه‌سواری به عنوان یک حمل و نقل پاک برای کاهش ترافیک و آلودگی هوا مورد توجه و تأکید قرار گرفته است.

Hamas slams U.S. envoy for condoning Israeli settlements

TEHRAN — The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas has condemned U.S. envoy for his remarks condoning Israel's expansionist policy on illegal settlements, saying they reflect Washington's extremist view on the issue.

Member of Hamas' International Relations Office Basem Naim said Saturday that remarks earlier in the day by David Friedman, who serves as the U.S. ambassador to the occupied Palestinian territories, represented "the destructive thinking of the extreme American leadership."

"The statements of the American ambassador are completely consistent with the view of the most extreme Israeli right-wing and a disregard of the U.S. government for all Arab positions," said Naim, whose Hamas government sits in the besieged Gaza Strip but is allied to the Palestinian Authority in the occupied West Bank.

The statement came after Friedman said Israel has a right to claim parts of the occupied West Bank as it seeks to annex the territory despite all international bans on the move.

"Under certain circumstances, I think

Israel has the right to retain some, but unlikely all, of the West Bank," Friedman said in an interview published by the New York Times on Saturday.

The remarks has caused an outrage both in the Middle East and around the world at a time when many believe Washington is violating international regulations by allowing Israel to expand its settlements into territories occupied after the 1967 Six-Day War.

Palestinian officials in the West Bank reiterated that Friedman's remarks represented a crime under international law.

Saeb Erekat, a top PA negotiator, said the remarks showed that U.S. government was heavily biased in favor of Israel despite pretending that it seeks peace in the occupied territories.

"Their vision is about annexation of occupied territory, a war crime under international law," Erekat said in a tweet.

According to Press TV, Usameh al-Ghawasimi, a spokesman for the West Bank-based Fatah party, said Friedman was trying to mislead the truth and violate international law.



"Friedman has become the mouthpiece for racism and the Israeli apartheid system, instead of being the U.S. ambassador," said Ghawasimi, adding, "Friedman's remarks

violate the foundations agreed upon for the creation of an independent Palestinian state and international and regional peace and stability."

Sudan military attacks protesters as civil disobedience begins

TEHRAN — Sudan's military forces have fired tear gas at protesters after they began a civil disobedience campaign, called in the wake of a deadly crackdown on demonstrators.

As the campaign took off, protesters gathered tires, tree trunks and rocks to build new roadblocks in Khartoum Sunday, witnesses said. Military forces swiftly moved in and fired tear gas at them, nearly a week after a deadly raid on a sit-in outside army headquarters which left scores of people dead, Press TV reported.

Earlier Sunday, an umbrella group representing Sudan's protest movement announced a nationwide "civil disobedience" campaign, saying it will continue until ruling generals transfer power to a civilian government.

"The civil disobedience movement will begin Sunday and end only when a civilian government announces itself in power on state television," the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA) said in a statement.

"Disobedience is a peaceful act capable of bringing to its knees the most powerful

weapons arsenal in the world," it added in the statement run by media outlets.

The statement came days after a bloody military crackdown on a sit-in outside the army complex - reportedly green-lighted by Saudi Arabia - left at least 113 people dead in the capital Khartoum.

Speaking to Qatar's Al Jazeera broadcaster, a witness identified as Abdulbaqi Badreddin Abu Hala has put the death toll at about 500, alleging that many bodies were dumped in the River Nile by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The Central Committee of Sudan Doctors (CCSD) said on Thursday that 40 bodies had been recovered from the Nile.

Witnesses say the assault was led by the RSF, which has its origins in the notorious Janjaweed militia, accused of abuses in the Darfur conflict between 2003 and 2004.

Middle East Eye quoted a Sudanese military expert as saying this week that the head of Sudan's ruling military council was given a "green light" by Saudi Arabia and its regional allies to crack down on protesters.

Saudi Arabia tightens grip on Palestinians, hampers remittances to Gaza

TEHRAN— Less than a week after Saudi authorities arrested more than 60 people, including Palestinian expatriates and Saudi nationals, on charges of supporting the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement, they have now blocked money transfers between the kingdom and the Gaza Strip.

The new step taken by the Riyadh regime against Palestinians involves official and non-official money transfers as the procedure has witnessed a marked decline over the past week and during the Eid al-Fitr holiday, which marks the end of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan, Arabic-language al-Khaleej Online news website reported.

The report described residents of the besieged and impoverished Gaza Strip as the main victims of the move. Most of the bank transfers that used to be carried out normally in the past, were frozen just a few days before the start of the holiday.

Remittance transactions are taking much longer time than usual - something that used to be done in a matter of few hours.

Many Palestinians have complained of the move, and termed it as "unprecedented." They argue that the process of transferring money between Saudi Arabia and the Gaza Strip has become extraordinarily difficult.

Abu Fuad, a resident of the Gaza Strip who refused to give his last name for fear that his family could be persecuted in the Saudi Arabian port city of Jeddah, said he has experienced difficulty receiving money from his family.

"It is three days since the remittance has been made, but I have not received anything. Financial transfers used to be done in a few hours and without any obstacles in the past. But since the week before the Eid, the procedures have become complex and most of the transfers are frozen without any obvious reason," he said.

Abu Fuad considered the measure as a "new crackdown on the Palestinian community living in Saudi Arabia," stressing that it would aggravate their sufferings as students rely heavily on money transferred from their families living outside the kingdom.

Yemen conducts drone attacks on Saudi Arabia's Jizan airport

TEHRAN — According to press TV, last month, a Yemeni drone targeted a major oil pumping station deep inside Saudi Arabia, forcing state crude giant Aramco to temporarily shut down pumping operations at the site.

Yemen's Defense Minister Mohammed Nasser al-Atifi said last week that the country had made great strides in its defense sector and would "surprise" Saudi Arabia and its allies that have been waging a war against Yemen.

Meanwhile, 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.



Saudi Arabia and the UAE belong on the UN 'list of shame'

TEHRAN — In the coming days, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will finalise his annual list of governments and armed groups that have committed grave violations against children in armed conflict.

A party can be listed for one or several violations, including rape, killing and maiming, and recruiting children as soldiers. The list is one of the UN's most effective tools for the protection of children in armed conflict, because it involves a consequence that perpetrators dread and seek to avoid: their public naming and shaming before the whole world.

The "list of shame" is a powerful mechanism, but its survival depends on its integrity. The decision whether to name and shame offenders must therefore be made on the merits, without fear or favor, and without making exceptions for the rich and influential. The decision about listing should be driven by the best interests of children themselves, in a process that draws on the best evidence available.

And that brings us to the Saudi and Emirati-led coalition and its actions in Yemen. Its brazen and callous attacks over the last four

years have resulted in the killing and maiming of large numbers of children and the destruction of hundreds of schools and dozens of hospitals in Yemen. Yet, since the war began in 2015, the coalition has successfully exerted political and financial pressure on the UN to escape being listed altogether, or to arrange an accommodation that would soften the blow.

In 2016, the international community was shocked when former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon put the coalition on the list and then quickly removed it after Saudi Arabiathreatened to drastically cut funding

to UN agencies. Hoping to avoid a similar incident in 2017, his successor Guterres effectively created a new intermediate category to accommodate the coalition.

He split the list into two sections, one for "parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children" and placed the coalition in this category, and the other for "parties that have not put in measures". For the past two years, this device has allowed him to "list" the coalition but without fully holding it accountable, Al Jazeera reported.

Kazakhstan interim President Tokayev poised for election victory

TEHRAN — Kazakhs went to the polls on Sunday to elect their first new leader in 30 years following the departure of ex-President Nursultan Nazarbayev with his handpicked successor set for victory.

Large protests were reported in the capital Nur-Sultan and largest city Almaty; about 100 people were reportedly detained.

The leader of a banned political opposition movement called the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan, Mukhtar Ablyazov, asked his supporters to take to the streets in a video posted on his Instagram page.

"Thousands of protesters have already gathered" in a main square of Almaty, Ablyazov said in the video. He warned there were police in the area, adding: "They are few; we are many."

He posted another video showing a crowd of protesters prying open the doors of a police vehicle to release some who had been arrested.



A career diplomat and interim president, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, 66, is running for the ruling party with backing from Nazarbayev, who stepped

down from the presidency in March.

The 78-year-old strongman's departure shocked Kazakhs who had lived under his rule since Soviet days, but he is still expected to call the shots in the oil-rich Central Asian state of 18 million people.

According to Al Jazeera, Tokayev has six rivals in the polls that opened at 01:00 GMT, including one low-key opposition figure, but none is well-known in Muslim-majority Kazakhstan.

Tokayev, by contrast, has won endorsements from pop stars and film actors, and appears to have the weight of the state machine behind him.

Both men voted early in the capital Nur-Sultan.

After voting at around 04:00 GMT at the lavish state opera house in Nur-Sultan, Tokayev spoke in English with reporters and acknowledged that Nazarbayev "was still in power in the capacity of chairman of the security council... and other capacities".

U.S. illusions: from a pretended crisis to a pretended victory

TEHRAN — In fact, the U.S. claiming that Iran's step back and recalculate after making preparations for an apparent attack, seeks to justify the re-imposed sanctions and threats against Iran, pretending to avoid military confrontation while the world acknowledges that the U.S. is not capable of military action.

The American general's claim is a trick to hide their military disability against Iran, as U.S. Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook said that Iran has photoshopped images of missile launches to try and show its increased missile capabilities.

So, McKenzie's claim is based on the three principles of pretended crisis, psychological warfare, and pretended victory, which has been designed so that to protect Trump from the internal protests and hide the failure of "threat and negotiation" policy.

Moreover, U.S. wants to wipe off global dissatisfaction, which was showed in Britain protests during his last trip to London.

The point is that the world being aware of the United States' inability to spark war against Iran, Iran's persistence in realizing its nuclear rights within the framework of implementation of Supreme National Security Council resolution, emphasis on maintaining missile power and playing an effective role in the region's security all will put an end to the U.S. dreams and unfair policies.

Tehran should not have high expectation from Abe's visit: prof.

TEHRAN — How successful can Abe's visit to Tehran be under such situation and Trump's contradictory acts?



A: I think Prime Minister Abe is carrying Trump's message to Iran as a favor to the American President. But Japan's diplomatic window of opportunity and Abe's diplomatic maneuverability is limited. I don't want to downgrade the importance of Shinzo Abe's visit to Iran, but Tehran should not have high expectations from the Japanese Prime Minister's visit to Iran.

■ Despite its powerful economy, after World War II Japan has been following the US foreign policy in all areas of foreign affairs. How will Japan be able to affect the US decisions as an independent mediator between Iran and U.S.?

A: Japan has been dutifully following Washington's line in almost all areas of foreign affairs since the end of the Second World War. Besides, Japan's role as an intermediary in major international disputes has been minimal relative to other major countries. Japan is not in a position to affect U.S. policies towards Iran. The best Japan can do is to act as an honest intermediary between Washington and Tehran. In other words, Tokyo does not have the capability to act as an independent mediator in resolving U.S.-Iran conflict.

Abe sought to become Trump's primary ally in Asia: Prof. Zonis

TEHRAN — I think the President would actually like talks with Iran because he fantasizes that he can "make a deal" and become (in his mind) even more of a genius than he already is. Of course, his utter failure in talks with North Korea does not suggest any positive outcome with Iran.

■ What reasons have motivated Japan to try to mediate between Iran and USA?

A: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has sought to become Trump's primary ally in Asia. This idea is compatible with American foreign policy that sees Japan in Asia as comparable with the United Kingdom in Europe — sort of permanent aircraft carriers off the coasts of the continents. A close relationship with the U.S. would also be good for the Japanese economy with its massive exports to the U.S. If the Prime Minister could facilitate some kind of breakthrough with Iran, it would further cement the relationship between Japan and the U.S.

■ How successful can Abe's visit to Tehran be under such situation and the Trump's contradictory acts?

A: It is highly doubtful that domestic Iranian politics would allow a breakthrough to occur. While President Trump would like talks, the U.S. has hardly treated Iran with the "respect," which Ayatollah Khamenei has demanded.

■ Despite its powerful economy Japan has been following the U.S. foreign policy in its foreign policy since the end of the World War II. How will Japan be able to affect the U.S. decisions as an independent mediator between Iran and U.S.?

A: Japan's close ties to the U.S. are meant to insure continued access for Japanese exports to the U.S. as well as to guarantee U.S. protection of Japan against any threats that may be forthcoming from China. It is well to remember that China has not in any way forgotten or excused Japanese behavior towards China during World War II as has occurred in Europe by Germany's former wartime enemies. In Tehran, Prime Minister Abe may be able to clarify more precisely what the United States needs to do to get talks with Iran. That would be welcome by President Trump but not by Bolton or Pompeo. If Abe can pull off a miracle and actually get talks approved between Trump and Iran, the President will jump at the chance. The chances of that seem non-existent to me. The unfortunate history of Iran-U.S. relations over the last 50 years or so with each country inflicting what each perceive as offenses against the other has made the relationship utterly poisonous.

Turkey upset world champion France with a 2-0 home win

World champion France was given a cold shower on Saturday in a Euro 2020 qualifier against Turkey, which kept up pressure throughout the game for a 2-0 home win and placed itself in the lead in Group H.

Turkey started the game strong, scoring their first goal in the 30th minute with a header from Kaan Ayhan following Cengiz Under's free kick into the penalty area.

Under then raised the difference in the 40th minute, slipping the ball past Hugo Lloris after a sprint down the right wing to the French goal. Les Bleus upped the pressure in the second half of the game, but missed several chances to score due to strong defence from their opponents and a solid performance from goalkeeper Mert Gunok. Burak Yilmaz missed the chance to put Turkey further ahead at the 85th minute, sending the ball narrowly past the right post after a one-on-one with Lloris.

In other games in the group on Saturday, Iceland earned a 1-0 home win against Albania, while Moldova beat Andorra 1-0 at home.

(Source: Reuters)

Man United release Herrera, Valencia, 12 others

Manchester United have released Ander Herreraand Antonio Valencia while Juan Mata has been offered a new contract, the Premier League has confirmed.

Club captain Valencia and Herrera are two of 14 players released this summer. Herrera is expected to join Paris Saint-Germain on a free transfer.

Mata is out of contract on June 30 but has not been officially released because he has an offer on the table. Sources have told ESPN FC that the Spain international is still in talks with the club.

As well as Herrera and Valencia, James Wilson, who scored twice on his senior debut as a teenager in 2014, will also leave Old Trafford this summer.

Millen Baars, Joshua Bohui, Zachary Dearnley, Callum Gribbin, DJ Buffonge, Regan Poole, Tom Sang, Tyrell Warren, Callum Whelan and Matty Willock have also been released along with United States international Matthew Olosunde.

Sources have told ESPN FC that Olosunde, who made his senior international debut last year, is hoping to extend his stay in Europe, preferably with another English club, rather than return to MLS.

(Source: Soccernet)

Giampaolo ready for Milan

Marco Giampaolo is already in Milan and ready to sign the two-year contract, with option for a third, once Sampdoria release him.

Sky Sport Italia report Giampaolo has already returned to Italy after his brief vacation in Croatia.

He is expected to meet with Sampdoria President Massimo Ferrero tomorrow and can then sign the contract with Milan.

It'll be a two-year deal with option for a third, worth approximately €2m per season.

As for Samp, they have set their sights on Stefano Pioli or Eusebio Di Francesco as their new tactician.

(Source: Football Italia)

Leonardo return at PSG could be added motive for Neymar exit

French outlet Telefoot claim that if Antero Henrique leaves the club, Neymar would lose his greatest supporter and ally at PSG.

The potential return of Leonardo Araujo to Paris Saint-Germain could provoke two results. Firstly, it could see the exit of current sporting director Antero Henrique and could also see a significant overhaul to the current squad.

One of the affected players could be Neymar with 'Telefoot' claiming that the replacement of Henrique (who was key in bringing Neymar from Barcelona to Paris) would be seen as a sign of backing Kylian Mbappé's continuity at the Parisian side. Neymar's time at the Ligue 1 has been underwhelming with two seasons hampered by injury, off field distractions and personal problems and the failure to mount a serious challenge for the much sought after Champions League title, all point to a extremely disappointing spell for the Brazilian striker and his club.

The French outlet claims that LaLiga giants Real Madrid or Barcelona would be likely destinations for the striker with speculation rife that a return to the Catalan capital could be on the cards. Real Madrid have too been linked with the Brazilian striker but his team-mate at PSG, Kylian Mbappé is regarded as a more desired acquisition.

(Source: AS)

Spain confirm joint 2030 World Cup bid with Portugal

The Spanish FA, the RFEF, has confirmed they are bidding to host the 2030 World Cup with Portugal.

The organisation confirmed in a statement this morning that following discussions with their Portuguese counterparts, they will be beginning analysis into the feasibility of a joint bid in the near future.

The official line continued that both organisations would now present their case to each government, in order to proceed to the next stage, as their decisions will be vital in confirming whether or not an official bid can be submitted to FIFA.

Currently there are only three confirmed bids for the tournament, two of them joint ventures, including Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay and Chile and a UEFA combined bid from Romania, Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, and a solo bid from Morocco.

There is also reported to be growing interest in a UK-Republic of Ireland bid, although that is yet to be made official.

(Source: Football Espana)

‘You bloody legend’: Aussies hail new clay queen Barty

Australia hailed “bloody legend” Ashleigh Barty on Sunday after she ended the country’s 46-year wait for a French Open singles title with a crushing victory in Paris.

Some of the nation’s top sportspeople took to social media to congratulate the 23-year-old in the wake of her 6-1, 6-3 whipping of Czech teenager Marketa Vondrousova which propelled her to number two in the world.

Evonne Goolagong Cawley led the way as Australia hailed their new Grand Slam tennis champion Ash Barty on Sunday after the proudly indigenous 23-year-old ended the country’s 46-year wait for a French Open women’s singles champion.

Margaret Court and Goolagong Cawley between them won four of the first six titles at Roland Garros after the dawn of the open era and the lack of Australian success since has reflected a wider decline of the women’s game Down Under. That Barty’s victory over Marketa Vondrousova on Saturday was only the second for an Australian in a Grand Slam women’s final in the 39 years since Goolagong Cawley won her seventh major at Wimbledon made the outpouring all the more understandable.

Goolagong Cawley, Australia’s first indigenous global sports star, was Barty’s role model as a child and the 67-year-old said she was delighted not only at the breakthrough but also the style of game the Queenslander displayed in her win.

“What a wonderful result for Australia



and how exciting that another Aboriginal has won at the French,” she said on Sunday.

“Tennis Australia and all lovers of tennis here and around the world will be delighted by the natural skills and flair Ash possesses.

“Now they have developed into a beautiful game full of artistry, movement and power. It was there for all to marvel at in Paris.”

The decline in the Australian men’s game from the dominant days of the 1950s, 1960s

End of an NBA era looms as Warriors on brink of defeat



Injured and weary, the Golden State Warriors are one loss from the end of their five-year NBA dynasty run at the hands of the upstart Toronto Raptors.

The Raptors own a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven NBA Finals entering Monday’s game five at Toronto and could become the first team from outside the United States to capture the championship.

“It’s difficult,” Raptors coach Nick Nurse said of the excitement. “Can’t let people take you someplace you aren’t yet.

“We know this is a great team and we know how hard we have to play to beat them. We have to just focus in on trying to be the hardest working team on the floor.”

The Warriors are in their fifth consecutive NBA Finals, seeking their third title in a row and fourth in five years.

Of 34 teams that seized a 3-1 NBA Finals lead, the only one that failed to win was Golden State in 2016, when LeBron James rallied the Cleveland Cavaliers to an historic title.

“We’ve been on the wrong side of 3-1 before, so why not make our own history?” Warriors forward Draymond Green said.

“We’ve won three in a row before. You’ve got to have faith you can get it done. Believe what we believe and give it what we got. And if we fail, you live with the results, but just leave it all out there.”

Kawhi Leonard, who won an NBA title with San Antonio in 2014, directs a quick-strike attack and smothering defensive system for the Raptors, who have outlasted the injury-hit Warriors.

Golden State playoff scoring leader Kevin Durant, the 2017 and 2018 NBA Finals Most Valuable Player, has been out for a month with a right calf injury.

“His body will tell him if he can get out there,” Green said. “If he can, great.

If not, still got to try to find a way to win the next game.”

The Warriors seek a third consecutive title and fourth in five seasons, but the toll of so many deep playoff runs is showing, guard Klay Thompson missing game three with a left hamstring strain and Andre Ig-uodala slowed by a leg injury.

Combined with Toronto’s solid play, the injuries might be too much for the Warriors to overcome.

“It’s not over,” Warriors guard Stephen Curry said. “We still have life and have an opportunity to win. It’s just a matter of can we get it done or not, and we’re going to leave it all out there starting on Monday.

“The only way we’re going to get back in this series is give everything we got for 48 minutes, everybody that sets foot on that floor in game five. In our locker room we’re talking about believing. Everybody believes we can get this done.”

The Warriors rallied from 3-1 down to beat Oklahoma City in the 2016 Western Conference finals, so they know it can be done.

“You just try to win one game,” Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. “We’re not thinking about winning three. Win one game. That’s the task.

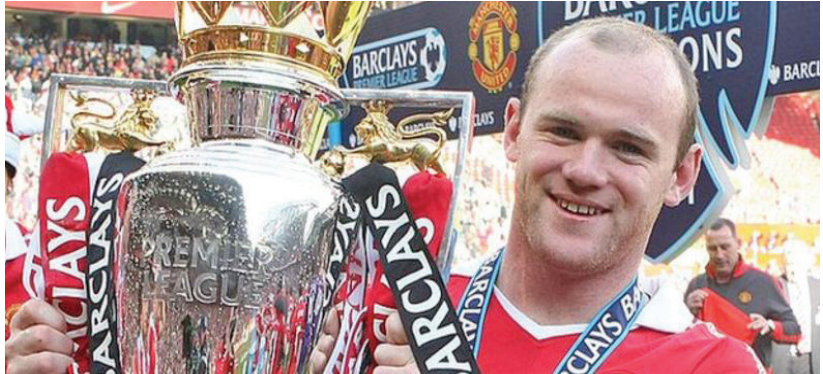
“I know we’re capable. We got a lot of talent and we got a lot of pride. These guys have been to the finals five straight years for a reason. They’re unbelievably competitive. And they’re going to fight the whole way.”

The Raptors expect nothing less.

“We didn’t do nothing yet,” Raptors guard Kyle Lowry said. “They’re the defending champs and they’re not going to go out easy. They’re going to come and fight and that’s how we’re preparing ourselves.”

(Source: AFP)

Messi, Ronaldo, Bale and Ramos would not solve Man Utd problems - Rooney



Signing global stars such as Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale and Sergio Ramos would not solve the problems at Manchester United, says former captain Wayne Rooney. Rooney, who now plays for MLS team DC United, does not think Ole Gunnar Solskjaer’s side will compete for the Premier League title next season.

“The first thing Ole has to do is build the squad and I don’t think bringing in one or two players for £100m is going to help the players already there”, said the former England skipper, 33. Speaking to BBC Radio 5 Live’s Sportsweek, he added: “Ole’s better spending £30-40m on players with potential and building the squad around those five or six players.

“You could bring in players in Ronaldo, Messi, Ramos or Bale but it’s going to cost you £350m and you’d get two years out of them and you’ve written that money off.”

Barcelona forward Messi, 31, and Juventus attacker Ronaldo, 34, have won a combined 10 Ballons D’Or while Real Madrid captain Ramos, 33, has won the World Cup, European Championship and four Champions League titles.

Ramos’ club-mate Bale, 29, has also lifted the European Cup four times - and has long been linked with a move to Old Trafford. Rooney expects a “tricky” summer of business for Solskjaer, who has been linked with several players - including Ajax’s teenage defender Matthijs de Ligt.

Solskjaer, who succeeded Jose Mourinho as United boss - initially on an interim basis - in December, has already begun to reshape his squad, with Swansea winger Daniel James, 21, heading to Old Trafford.

Rooney, United and England’s all-time top-scorer, said: “The club needs to rebuild with younger players but they need to be good enough and I think the fans will un-

derstand that they are probably not going to compete for the Premier League next year.

“Let Ole have that time to build a team for the next two or three years that are going to compete at Premier League and Champions League level.

“It’s down to teams like United, Chelsea, Arsenal and Tottenham and possibly Everton in the next two years to get to the level of Liverpool and Manchester City.”

England were beaten 3-1 by the Netherlands in the Nations League on Thursday, with extra-time errors from Ross Barkley and John Stones leading to goals.

Rooney believes the defeat will “help them in the long run” and hopes manager Gareth Southgate will continue to encourage his players to play out from the back.

“Everyone was disappointed not to go through but the team has got a lot of young players,” he said. “It would have been nice to lift the trophy but there were mistakes made on and off the pitch by the players and the manager.” Southgate opted to rest all six players - Liverpool trio Jordan Henderson, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Joe Gomez, and Tottenham’s Eric Dier, Harry Kane and Dele Alli - who played in the Champions League final five days previously.

Rooney said: “I’m sure if Gareth had his way and looked back he possibly would have started the players that started in the Champions League final. I certainly would have. Of the mistakes that ultimately cost England, he added: “I’m sure they won’t happen again and if they do and that’s the way the manager wants them to play, then he will take responsibility. “If I was in Gareth’s position I would encourage them to keep doing what they’re doing as if you throw the blueprint out of the window then you’re almost starting from scratch again.

(Source: BBC)

Real Madrid’s plan to sign Hazard started in 2017

Eden Hazard is Real Madrid’s latest Galactico and the Belgian will be unveiled at the Estadio Santiago Bernabeu on Thursday, as a signing that began in 2017 has finally been completed.

It has been a long-term project which got underway when Hazard was in his fifth season at Chelsea.

At the time, MARCA reported that he was being pursued, writing that Madridwere in the hunt for the player and that Jose Angel Sanchez had been to London to watch the player.

Conversations were had between Sanchez, Juni Calafat, Zinedine Zidane and others to set the wheels in motion on a transfer that the club were desperate to conclude sooner or later.

Calafat visited London secretly to develop something of a relationship, but always did his all to avoid illegal negotiations unfolding.

Madrid have been interested in Hazard since as far back as 2012 though, as MARCA wrote at the time and Zinedine



Zidane praised him as early as 2010, and the coach’s influence can’t be overstated.

Zidane didn’t need to intervene much in the discussions, as his adoration of the no.10 have never been held secret.

In these two and a half years, there were countless

visits to Stamford Bridge but now, finally, he’s a Real Madrid player.

Hazard was always destined to wear white. It’s said that he met Roberto Carlosduring a summer holiday in recent years and the Belgian reportedly said “tell your president that I’ll sign for Real”. The Brazilian followed his instructions, and now the deal is done.

■ The new strategy

Football has changed in recent years and there’s no doubt in the minds of those at big clubs that this approach is the best way to sign a player.

Predicting, foreseeing and working in advance are important, as is taking advantage of a player’s penultimate year of contract.

This will be seen again in the future, and not only at Madrid. For example, Kylian Mbappe’s contract is up in 2023, so the summer of 2022 could be interesting in Paris.

(Source: Marca)

Iran ease past Japan at 2019 Volleyball National League

1 -> Igor Kolakovic's men had already defeated Italy, China and Germany in Jangmen last week.

Iran will host Russia, Poland and Canada in Week 3.

The competition is being 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.



Ganjzadeh wins gold at Karate 1-Premier League

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Sajad Ganjzadeh claimed a gold medal at the WKF Karate 1-Premier League in Shanghai, China on Sunday.

Ganjzadeh defeated his countryman Saleh Abazari in the final match of Male Kumite +84kg by "Hantei" or decision.

In Male Kumite -67kg, Andres Madera of Venezuela defeated Seyed Ali Karimi of Iran by accumulation of sanctions.

Bahman Askari also won Iran's third silver after losing to Dastonbek Otabolaev from Uzbekistan 1-0 in the final match of the Male Kumite -75kg.

Majid Hassannia defeated Brazilian Douglas Brose in the Male Kumite -60 Kg to win a bronze medal.

In the Male Kumite -84kg, Mehdi Khodabakhshi defeated

his countryman Zabihollah Poorshab 5-0 and claimed a bronze medal.

Taravat Khaksar also seized a bronze medal in the Female Kumite -55kg, beating her Italian rival Lorena Busa 3-0.

And Hamideh Abbasali defeated Italian Clio Ferracuti 3-2 in the Female Kumite +68kg and won a bronze medal.

Iran claimed one gold, three silver and four bronze in the competition.

The competition brought 543 karate fighters from 76 countries together in Shanghai, China.

The Karate 1-Premier League travels now to Tokyo (Japan) where the fifth event of the season will take place from September 6 to 8.

Nagai double fires Japan past El Salvador



Forward Kensuke Nagai struck twice as a new-look Japan beat El Salvador 2-0 at home in their final Copa America tune-up on Sunday.

The FC Tokyo striker smashed home the opener after 19 minutes in Miyagi before adding his second just before half-time with a clinical finish to give the Samurai Blue a winning send-off.

Tournament guests Japan face Chile, Uruguay and Ecuador in Group C at the Copa America, which kicks off on June 14.

Teenage sensation Takefusa Kubo, who won his first senior Japan call-up last week, made his debut for Hajime Moriyasu's side as a 67th minute substitute after being over-

looked for the goalless midweek draw with Trinidad and Tobago.

Kubo, who also plays for FC Tokyo, was invited to Barcelona's youth academy as a scrawny nine-year-old where he earned the nickname the "Japanese Messi".

Moriyasu has named no fewer than 17 uncapped players to his Copa America squad as Japan look to build for next year's Tokyo Olympics.

The Japan boss also left behind big-name players such as Shinji Kagawa and Shinji Okazaki for the AFC Asian Cup in the UAE earlier this year where his side were beaten 3-1 in the final by Qatar.

(Source: AFP)

Al Wahda appoint Maurice Steijn as head coach



UAE Pro League side Al Wahda announced the appointment of Dutchman Maurice Steijn as their new head coach on Sunday.

The 45-year old replaces his countryman Henk ten Cate who resigned from the post last month citing "personal reasons".

Steijn, a former player, joins Al Wahda from Dutch clubside VVV-Venlo.

The Al Wahda board had immediately made an announcement that Ten Cate's successor would also be from the Netherlands, and following a swift recruitment process, the former VVV Venlo boss was installed at the hot seat

at Al Nahyan Stadium.

Steijn's first test in charge of the Abu Dhabi side will be a two-legged clash with Saudi Pro League champions Al Nassr at the 2019 AFC Champions League Round of 16. Al Wahda travel to Riyadh for the first leg on August 5, then play hosts to the return fixture a week later.

Under Ten Cate, Al Wahda had finished fourth in the UAE Pro League, booking a place at the 2020 AFC Champions League. They also finished top of their continental group ahead of Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad.

(Source: the-afc)

Stimac praises defenders as India give Croatia his first win

India head coach Igor Stimac attributed Saturday's 1-0 win over Thailand in the King's Cup third-place playoff to his defenders.

Admitting that the tie could have gone either way, Stimac said India's first victory under his reign was due to excellent defending by the South Asians.

"The result was a result of excellent defending. That was fantastic.

"I was a defender playing at the top level. I can show a few things to the boys, and that's what we have been doing in the last two weeks - explaining things to the players, and working on the pitch," said the Croatian, who assumed his post in May.

India faced Thailand in the playoff after losing 3-1 to Curacao, who eventually edged Vietnam on penalties to lift the title, in the semi-finals.

Thailand turned on the pressure after India took the lead through Anirudh Thapa's goal in the 17th minute.

The hosts, however, couldn't find the breakthrough



they needed and Stimac attributed this to tactical changes he made after India took the lead.

"I changed a few things after we scored the goal. I have many inexperienced players who can lose their head during the game. I wanted to let them play freely

at the back to pass, move and concentrate to close in the middle.

"If we want to keep the ball and pass it around, we could do that against better sides likes Curacao. We kept the possession, pushed them back inside their box and created chances in the second half."

Overall, Stimac said he was satisfied with how India's campaign had gone as they work towards the second round of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023 Joint Qualification which kicks off in September.

"I would like to thank all my players and staff for helping fulfil what we wanted to do in the last two weeks. Congratulations to everyone in AIFF too. I'm particularly happy because the people in India supported us after we lost the first game. I'm proud of the players. There are so many young players in the team," he said.

(Source: the-afc)

Iranian boy travels to Chile to meet his idol Arturo Vidal

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian boy Adrian Moghimbeid gloo made a dream come true, meeting his idol Arturo Vidal in Chile.

Adrian became famous after his video went viral showing off his ball control skills and his resemblance to the 'King Arthur'.

Adrian met his idol with a mohican haircut in Santiago.

The six-year Iranian boy also attended the friendly match between Chile and Haiti, where La Roja won the match 2-1 at Estadio La Portada de La Serena.

"A pleasure to know you. Thank you very much for your support. I love you very much and I hope we see you soon," king Arturo posted on his Instagram.



Iran defender Majid Hosseini sidelined for six weeks

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran international defender Majid Hosseini is expected to miss six weeks after injuring his hand in the friendly match against Syria.

On Thursday, Team Melli defeated Syria 5-0 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

The Trabzonspor defender was forced to leave the field in the 54th minute after sustaining a hand injury.

Hosseini will miss the friendly match with South Korea in Seoul on Tuesday.

He was a member of Iran national football team in the 2018 World Cup and 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

The 23-year-old defender has been linked with a move to Spanish football teams.

Iranian team win men's compound at 2019 World Archery Para C'ships

MNA — Iranian compound men's team defeated Turkey in the final match on Saturday and won the title of 2019 World Archery Para Championships in 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

The Iranian team, comprising Ali Sina Menshazadeh, Hadi Nouri and Ramazan Biabani, gained a 222-219 victory against Turkey in the final match.

The Iranian team had earlier overpowered Brazil and Malaysia before beating China in the semifinal.

The 2019 World Archery Para Championships kicked off on June 3 in 's-Hertogenbosch, the Netherlands and wrapped up on June 9.

Faraz Kamalvand named Pars Jonoubi coach

TASNIM — Faraz Kamalvand has been named new head coach of Iran's Pars Jonoubi Jam football team.

The 43-year-old coach replaced Mehdi Tartar, who bade farewell to the Iranian top flight football team after three years.

Kamalvand has penned a two-year contract with Pars Jonoubi for an undisclosed fee.

He has already coached Tractor Sazi, Sanat Naft and Gostaresh Foolad in the Iran Professional League (IPL).

"We will start the new IPL season with a mixture of young and experienced players. We're looking for a better place in the new season," Kamalvand said.

Under coaching of Tartar, Pars Jonoubi finished in 12th in IPL.

Rouhani hails Iranian junior lifters on winning world title

IRNA — President Hassan Rouhani in a message congratulated Iran's weightlifting team championship in World Junior Championships in Fiji and appreciated the valuable efforts of coaches and practitioners of the weightlifting team, especially weightlifters.

"Our brave young athletes, with their vigorous shining in the World Weightlifting Championship competition in Fiji, for the fourth consecutive year, ranked first in the world, hoisted the flag of our country before the eyes of the world and created another honor," President Rouhani underscored in his message.

"I am congratulating this valuable victory to the heroic people of Iran and I appreciate the valuable efforts of all coaches and practitioners of the national weightlifting team, especially athletes. I hope to witness the continuation of success of the dear youth in other global competitions."

Iran beach soccer drop two places in world ranking

The Iranian national beach soccer team dropped two spots to fourth in the world ranking.

Team Melli are still the best Asian team in the ranking with 2233 points.

Iran failed to book a place at the 2019 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup after losing to Japan 3-2 at the 2019 AFC Beach Soccer Championship quarters in Thailand in March.

Brazil, who won the 2017 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup, stayed atop of the ranking with 4243 points.

Portugal have moved up to second place in the rankings with 2414 points.

Russia sit third with 2315 points.

(Source: beachsoccer)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A fool's way is to go to both extremes.

Imam Ali (AS)

Leader's commendation for "Don't Feel Sad" published

CULTURE d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, has written a commendation for "Don't Feel Sad", a book containing the memoirs of Iranian soldier Ruhollah Qorbani who was martyred in Syria in 2015.



Combination photo shows a copy of "Don't Feel Sad" and the Leader's recommendation for the book.

"The greetings and the heaven of God are upon the dear martyr Ruhollah Qorbani. The wife of the martyr must be appreciated for her sending (us) the book and Ms. (Zeinab) Molai for compiling this book," the Leader wrote.

The book published by the Revayat Fath Publications last year contains parts of the biography and memories of the martyr as well as the interviews by the writer with the martyr's wife, Zeinab Abd Forutan, and the martyr's relatives.

The writer and the martyr's wife met the Leader on June 1, when the Leader praised the author and honored the martyr's wife. Qorbani was killed in the Syrian city of Aleppo on November 4, 2015.

Adaptation of "The Dead Dogs" on stage at Tehran theater

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — An Iranian troupe led by director Hamed Khosravi is performing a play based on Norwegian author Jon Fosse's book "The Dead Dogs" at Tehran's Mashayekhi Hall.

The play tells the story of a young man who lives with his mother and seems excessively attached to his dog. When the dog goes missing, just as the young man's sister and brother-in-law are paying a brief visit, the man needs to cope with his grief and fear.

Hamed Khosravi, Sarina Azad, Erfan Afshar and Amin Shalbaf are the main members of the cast for the play, which will be on stage until June 19.

"The Buffalo Hunt" seeks to show tribe in a new light

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — "The Buffalo Hunt," a new documentary on the homeland of the Oglala Lakota, attempts to shun clichés around the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota involving poverty and addiction and instead focus on traditions around the Native American tribe.

Directed by Philip Di Fiore, the film lets the Lakota Sioux people of today speak without narration as they work to save customs passed down by the elders through the buffalo hunt — a sacred act which extends to all aspects of life. There, in the hunt, elders share stories on how previous generations used the animal's gifts and prepared hunters for the world before them. Young members watch and participate.

The year-long project on Pine Ridge began after producer Phillip O'Leary took part in the 2016 protests at Standing Rock over the proposed Dakota Access Pipeline over concerns the local drinking water would be polluted. O'Leary originally wanted to dive into a documentary around the Standing Rock protests until he met Pine Ridge members, Di Fiore said. The Lakota Sioux men, like members of other Native American tribes from New Mexico to Oklahoma, had come to Standing Rock in solitary.

European film festival opens in Iranian Artists Forum

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — A festival of movies from European filmmakers opened in the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran on Saturday.

President of EUNIC European Union National Institutes for Culture in Iran Alexander Rieger made the opening speech and said that the event is considered to be a great European cultural project this year.

He added that the number of participating countries have increased this year compared to previous editions indicating the fact that the European countries pay considerable attention to increasing cultural relations with Iran.

Rieger, who is also the director of the Austrian Cultural Forum in Tehran, added that there needs to be more efforts to make cultural bridges with Iran since cultural exchange can help us understand each other deeply.

He also noted that several workshops will be set up during the week in several cities, and he hopes that they will lead to further mutual cooperation.

The Dutch Ambassador to Iran, Jacques Werner in his brief remarks said that a variety of films have been selected to be screened at the festival, each bearing a significant message.

He added that all the European embassies in Iran want to share these stories with Iranians, and nothing can act better than cultural exchange.

He hoped that the films would be interesting for the viewers.

The program next opened with "The Dark Valley", a 2014 Austrian-German western drama directed by Andreas Prochaska, and "The Silent Army", Dutch director Jean van de Velde's 2008 drama about the hardships of child soldiers in Africa.

Ambassadors and diplomats from different



Participating guests pose for a photo at the opening ceremony of the European film festival at the Iranian Artists Forum on June 8, 2019. (Honaronline/Saeid Rabiei)

ent countries including Denmark, Portugal, Spain, Slovakia and Italy were among the participating guests at the opening ceremony.

Kish Island and the cities of Shiraz, Babol, Isfahan, Kerman, Mashhad and Tabriz will be hosting the festival simultaneously until June 17.

Movies from Bulgaria, Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Slovenia, Finland, Denmark and England will be screened during the cultural event.

The program has been organized as a collaborative effort between Iran's Art and

Experience Cinema and the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC).

The two institutions have previously organized the festival in Iran in 2017 and 2018.

In addition, ten filmmakers from Europe and Iran are scheduled to hold several workshops during the festival.

Tehran hosts Shahnameh National Photo Festival



A poster for the photo exhibition of the 2nd Shahnameh National Photo Festival in Tehran's Eshraq Cultural Center.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — An exhibition of photos from the 2nd Shahnameh National Photo Festival is currently underway at Tehran's Eshraq Cultural Center.

Over 35 selected photos are on display in the exhibition with the motto of "Iran a Gallery for Shahnameh".

The exhibition was previously held in the Iranian cities of Mashhad, Gorgan, Qazvin and Rasht.

The festival, which is organized every two years by the Association of Shahnameh Reciters and the Association of Shahnameh Researchers, intends to focus on the representation of Persian poet Ferdowsi's Shahnameh in people's lives.

The exhibition which opened Saturday will run until June 14 at the center located opposite the Farhangsara subway station, Jashnvarah St.

Iranian musician Hamid Motebassem to perform at German festival



Iranian composer and tar player Hamid Motebassem acknowledges the audience after a performance at the Fajr International Music Festival in Tehran on January 17, 2018. (Mehr/ Behnam Tofigi)

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian composer and tar player Hamid Motebassem is scheduled to give a performance at the Rudolstadt Festival, which will be held in the German city from July 4 to 7.

Motebassem will present one of his orchestral works "Pardis" accompanied by Rudolstadt's Thuringian Symphony Orchestra. Iranian vocalist Mahdieh Mohammad-

khani will also accompany him during the concert.

Iranian ensembles Hamnava, Damahi and Sahel-e Makoran and tar virtuoso Ali Qamsari will also give concerts during the festival.

Over 300 concerts, workshops and discussions will be held during the festival, which is one of Germany's largest international music events.

Doc on life of Abbas Kiarostami to go on screen in Tehran

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — "Along with Wind", a documentary about the life of Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami and his artistic career, will go on screen on June 22, concurrent with the late director's birthday.

The film is directed by Mehdi Shadizadeh and will

go on screen at the Art and Experience Cinema halls.

The documentary features interviews with several artists and literary figures including Aidin Aghdashlu, Javad Mojabi, Leili Golestan and Kianush Ayyari.

Kiarostami died of cancer on July 5, 2016 at the age of 76.



Abbas Kiarostami in an undated photo.

Grammy-winning New Orleans musician Dr. John dead at 77

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Dr. John, a six-time Grammy winner who in his incarnation as the "Night Tripper" brought the New Orleans voodoo vibe to America's music scene and became one of the most venerated pianists in the city's rich musical history, died on Thursday at age 77.

The New Orleans native, born Malcolm John Rebennack into a family of amateur musicians, including an aunt who taught him to play piano, died "towards the break of day" from a heart attack, his family announced on his official Twitter account.

Immersed in music from a young age, he was an avid radio listener, and his father, who sold records in his appliance store, sometimes took his son along to nightclubs when he worked on their sound systems.

In grade school he began hanging around clubs, and by the time he was a teenager, Rebennack was playing in rough bars and strip clubs. Along the way, he

absorbed a blend of rhythm and blues, cowboy songs, gospel and jazz, as well as New Orleans' Mardi Gras music, boogie, barrelhouse piano and funk - or "fonk," as he pronounced it.

Early on he was principally a guitarist, but errant gunplay in 1961 led him to change course. One of his fingers was nearly blown off when he intervened to help the singer in his band, who was being pistol-whipped by another man.

The finger did not heal sufficiently for proper guitar playing right away, but was less troublesome on a piano, and eventually Dr. John would become an heir to the New Orleans keyboard tradition of Jelly Roll Morton, Professor Longhair, Huey "Piano" Smith and Fats Domino.

He also was a successful record producer, session player and songwriter in New Orleans before a lifestyle of hanging around addicts, hustlers and thieves.

Olivia Colman gets royal honor ahead of debut in "The Crown"

LONDON (AP) — Academy Award-winning actress Olivia Colman has been honored by Queen Elizabeth II - the monarch she is about to play on the Netflix royal family TV drama "The Crown."

Colman was named a Commander of the Order of the British Empire, or CBE, in the annual Queen's Birthday Honors list.

The performer won a best-actress Oscar this year for playing 18th-century monarch Queen Anne in "The Favorite." She plays Elizabeth in the upcoming third season of "The Crown," which is currently in production.

Colman said she was "totally thrilled, delighted and humbled" by the honor.

The queen also made singer-songwriter Elvis Costello, 64, an Officer of the Order of the British Empire, or OBE - an honor far from his roots in Britain's punk and new wave scene during the 1970s.

In a website post entitled "In Her Majesty's Secret Service", Costello said he spoke with his mother before deciding to put aside "old

doubts and enmities" about the crown and his country's past as the British Empire and "muster what little grace I possess" to accept the honor from the 93-year-old monarch Friday.

It was a task Costello made more palatable by dedicating the award to his grandfathers, who fought "for King and Country" during World War I, "and because my Mam told me to do it.

"To be honest, I'm pretty tickled to receive this acknowledgement for my 'Services To Music' as it confirms my long held suspicion nobody really listens to the words in songs or the outcome might have been somewhat different," Costello wrote.

Other recipients of this year's Queen's Birthday Honors include British-Sri Lankan rapper MIA, whose real name Mathangi Arulpragasam, 43, and Andrew Roachford, the singer-songwriter behind the band Roachford. Both were made a Member of the Order of the British Empire, or MBE, for services to music.