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REPORT

Hamid Bayati
Tehran Times journalist

Beijing does not surrender to Washington

The U.S.-China economic struggle continues. The conflict is aggravated by the fact that US President Trump's policies over the past few years have not yielded Washington's interest. The economic challenge of the United States and China has entered a new phase. While, until about a month ago, American and Western media spoke of the Washington-Beijing economic agreement in the near future, we are now seeing a sharpening of trade disputes between the two US and China. Many analysts believe that as long as the trump at the head of the US political and economic equation, this trend will continue.

As FocBusiness reported, China Opens a New Window. is promising to "fight to the end" if the U.S. escalates tensions in their ongoing trade war Opens a New Window. as President Trump edges closer to deciding whether to impose tariffs on another \$300 billion worth of Chinese goods. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said China is willing to negotiate with the U.S. if both sides are willing to come to a fair agreement but said it was "not afraid of fighting a trade war," Reuters Opens a New Window. reported Tuesday. "China does not want to fight a trade war, but we are not afraid of fighting a trade war," Geng said. "If the United States only wants to escalate trade frictions, we will resolutely respond and fight to the end."

Geng stopped short of confirming whether Chinese President Xi Jinping will meet with Trump when both leaders head to Osaka, Japan for the G-20 summit in late June. He said information about a possible meeting would be released when it was available.

"We note that for some time, the U.S. has made multiple public statements that it looks forward to a meeting between the two heads of state during the G-20 Osaka Summit," Geng told reporters in Beijing. "We will release information on this when we have it." →6

U.S. envoy's annexation remarks encourage violation of Palestinians' rights: Hamas

TEHRAN — The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas has lashed at U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman after he said the Tel Aviv regime has the right to annex "some" of the West Bank, arguing such comments amount to "legitimization of settlement expansion activities" in the occupied territories.

The movement, in a statement published on Monday, announced that the remarks which equal "an attack on Palestinians' rights and are in violation of UN resolutions and international law" come on the 52nd anniversary of Naksa Day, during which the Israeli army occupied the city of al-Quds, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as well as other Arab land in the 1967 Six-Day War, noting that "the United States will complete its hostility toward our nation through such

comments, and strip it of the remaining rights."

"The American administration carries full responsibility for any repercussions of these snide remarks, which encourage the Israeli occupation to commit further violations against our people, their rights and their land. The Palestinian nation will continue to resist the occupation and defend its rights," the statement pointed out.

Hamas then called upon Arab and Muslim nations besides all freedom-loving people worldwide to stand by the Palestinian nation, strengthen its steadfastness, protect its rights and defend human values ??in the face of injustice and arrogance led by the U.S. administration.

Meanwhile, Palestinian Foreign Minister

Riyad al-Maliki said on Monday that Friedman's remarks were intended to help Israel advance its annexation of the West Bank.

"It seems that Friedman with his statement is trying to help [Israeli Prime Minister] Benjamin have the courage to take such a decision. This is really something that the international community has to stand up, has to respond," Maliki said during a visit to Warsaw.

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry, in a statement released on Sunday, said it will consider filing a complaint at the International Criminal Court against the U.S. envoy for backing Israeli annexation, Press TV reported.

The statement said Friedman's remarks reflected the policy of U.S. President Donald Trump's administration toward Israeli settlements.

Saudi-backed mercenaries kill 3 children in western Yemen

TEHRAN — Mercenaries on a Saudi-led coalition's payroll have slain at least three children in two separate attacks in western Yemen.

Reporting on Monday, Yemen's al-Masirah television network said two youngsters had been killed and a third wounded when the militants bombed their home in a village in the southwestern province of Dhale.

It added that another child had died after the mercenaries opened fire throughout residential areas in the al-Hali District of the coastal province of al-Hudaydah.

Tens of thousands have lost their lives during a 2015-present invasion launched by the coalition to restore Yemen's former

Riyadh-friendly officials.

The country has also turned into the scene of the world's worst humanitarian crisis, where, according to the United Nations, a child dies of preventable causes every 10 minutes.

Separately, the network reported that the Yemeni army and its allied Popular Committees had launched several retaliatory strikes against the King Khaled Military base in the city of Khamis Mushait of the southwestern Saudi border region of Asir. Press TV reported.

The attacks used Qasef-2K combat drones, it added.

The official Saudi Press Agency (SPA), meanwhile, cited the coalition forces as al-

leging that the kingdom's missile systems had intercepted two drones targeting the city.

The SPA claimed that the aircraft belonged to Yemen's popular Ansarullah movement, which has been defending the impoverished country alongside the army and other popular forces.

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.

© Tehran Times/Hamid Vatili



Permanent Iranian toys fair opens in Tehran

The first permanent Iranian toys fair opened in Tehran on Monday with the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization (IIDO) director, Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Qomi, in attendance.

Toys are an important part of every child's life. The best toys engage a child's senses, spark their imaginations and encourage them to interact with others. Toys boost children's creativity and they help them express their emotions.

PBO publishes general outlines on budget bill amendment

TEHRAN — Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) has published a report titled "Budget Amendment Outline" including 23 major policies with cutting budget's direct dependence on oil income as the major approach, IRIB reported on Monday.

The organization has published the report on its website and it is due to be

investigated in the High Council for Economic Coordination.

The outline has been prepared with the aim of supplying reliable source of budget for the country and promoting the government's performance in this due, supporting production and employment, setting stability in macro economy and elevating the people's livelihood status. →4

Abe's visit to Iran falls within historic ties: government

TEHRAN — Ali Rabiei, the government spokesman, said on Tuesday that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to Iran is within the framework of historic relations between the two countries.

He said that Abe will be in Tehran on June 12 and 13 and plans to meet President Hassan Rouhani and Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The visit will be the first by an incumbent Japanese prime minister to Iran since 1978. The Japanese media outlets had said the visit was aimed at helping ease tensions between Iran and the United States.

According to a Japanese government source, Abe also plans to hold talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. →2

Lavrov: Preserving JCPOA largely dependent on Europe

By staff and agency
Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Tuesday that some Western partners want Iran to make a mistake and declare steps which will be in breach of the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

"I'm not ruling out that some our partners want Iran to make a mistake and declare certain steps that are not in

line with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, then someone in the West would breathe easily and shun the responsibility with a clean conscience," TASS quoted him as saying during a speech at the Primakov Readings forum.

"This will be very regrettable," Lavrov said, noting that he expects that Europe will be committed to the UN Security Council's resolutions. →2

ARTICLE

Chris Cook
Senior Research Fellow at ISRS,
University College London

Low Carbon Enlightenment

In the first of two articles on energy strategy (Tehran Times 10th June 2019) I observed how the U.S. implemented a physical energy strategy of Energy Dominance in the 18 months to 1st January 2019. The strategic U.S. aim is to control global oil and gas markets by exporting almost unlimited molecules of U.S. Freedom of shale oil and associated natural gas.

I explained how Wall Street and Big Oil (oil majors) have pegged the dollar against oil at between \$60 and \$75 per barrel through market support of the oil price, and direct investment in U.S. reserves of high cost shale oil and gas funded by petrodollar capital, with infinite liquidity provided by the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank. In parallel to this Energy Dominance we see financial Dollar Dominance through the U.S. Treasury's ability to exclude competing producers of freedom molecules from the market via financial sanctions.

The Price of Oil

Market dominance by producers or consumers alone can never be permanent, as commodity markets suffer from cycles of boom & bust. However, the oil market generally, and OPEC in particular, have become accustomed to believe that dominance by producers is the natural state of the oil market. Moreover, the fact that the oil price in 2008 was as high as \$140/barrel, and then for five years was maintained between \$80 and \$120, has conditioned producers into believing that \$60 or so is a generally affordable and sustainable price level.

Global demand for oil molecules is now around 100 million barrels per day so an increase of \$1.00 per barrel leads to increased global energy costs approaching \$37 billion per year. So the increase from \$45 to \$75/barrel in the first six months of Energy Dominance to the end of 2017 represented an additional cost and a transfer of wealth from consumers to producers, of some \$1.1 trillion per year. Note that this omits gas molecules of freedom, which have historically been priced against oil.

Moreover, the structural global shortage of dollars is due to the fact that the U.S. (like Japan 20 years before) suffered a vast property bubble, which exploded in 2008 leaving a colossal legacy of private dollar debt. →3

Zarif praises Maas for his honesty

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister has lauded his German counterpart Heiko Maas for admitting that it is essential to make sure that Iran benefit from "economic dividends" of the nuclear deal, officially called the JCPOA.

"Frank talks with @HeikoMaas. Welcome German recognition that practical measures to ensure Iran's economic dividends are essential to preserve #JCPOA," Zarif tweeted after his meeting with Maas.

Zarif himself had previously demanded that Germany, along with the UK and France as European parties to the JCPOA, take practical measures to ensure Iran's interests in the deal and give Tehran a reason to stay in the deal after the U.S. unilaterally quit it.

"We concurred that dialog among regional countries is crucial. But @realDonaldTrump's "economic war" is THE cause of all tensions," Zarif added in his tweet.

During a press conference with Maas in Tehran on Monday, Zarif said that the U.S. "economic war" against Iran should be stopped as the only way to reduce tension in the region.

"One cannot expect that those who have launched economic war and those who support it can be safe when there is an economic war against the Iranian ordinary people," Zarif pointed out.

Zarif added, "This war is very dangerous for the region and the world. The United States' actions after quitting the JCPOA have targeted the Iranian people who were supposed to enjoy the benefits of this deal more than anyone else."

For his part, Maas said that Germany supports the JCPOA and recognizes Iran's right to enjoy benefits of the deal.

But he acknowledged that the economic benefits Tehran hoped for from the deal were now "more difficult to obtain", but urged Iran to fully respect the agreement.

It is in Iran's "political and strategic interest to maintain this agreement and the dialogue with Europe", Maas said.

Maas said that the UK, France and Germany support the JCPOA. However, he said, "The position of our three European countries is that we support the JCPOA and we want to continue our commitments but we cannot expect miracles."

He also said, "We make efforts to make it possible to have economic cooperation with Iran. A financial mechanism called INSTEX has been devised in this respect."

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

On Sunday, Zarif had dismissed statements by the EU parties to the JCPOA in which they had been maintaining that their efforts to operationalize the INSTEX had failed.

"We can do the same, that is, make efforts and fail [regarding our commitments]" he told reporters, stressing that what is important to Iran is results rather than efforts.

Lavrov: Preserving JCPOA largely dependent on Europe

1 → Pointing to German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas's visit to Tehran on Monday, he said, "I will be waiting with interest for a briefing on the outcome of German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas's trip to Tehran."

"As far as the prospects of preserving the JCPOA are concerned, here a lot depends of the Europeans," he noted.

Maas met with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

During his meeting with Zarif, Maas said that Germany supports the JCPOA and recognizes Iran's right to enjoy benefits of the deal.

But he acknowledged that the economic benefits Tehran hoped for from the deal were now "more difficult to obtain", but urged Iran to fully respect the agreement.

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During his meeting with Rouhani, Maas said that the EU will spare no effort to reduce tension in the region.

"Germany opposes the U.S. policies against Iran and is making efforts to keep the JCPOA and fulfil its obligation," the German chief diplomat said.

Lavrov criticizes U.S. actions against Iran

Lavrov also said that the U.S. actions in relation to Iran constitute a clear attempt to make the international community ignore a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution to suffocate this country.

Lavrov was referring to the Resolution 2231 which endorsed the JCPOA.

"Lack of ability to reach an agreement is probably the nicest thing that one can say [about the United States' actions against Tehran], because there is clearly an attempt to force the whole world to not comply with a UN Security Council resolution in order to achieve the goal of strangling a single country," Sputnik quoted him as saying.

The U.S. quit the JCPOA in May 2018, re-imposed sanctions against Tehran and announced secondary sanctions against companies all over the world that do business with Iran.

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

On 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.

Abe's visit to Iran falls within historic ties: government

1 → 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.

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."

Rouhani urges Europeans to resist U.S. "economic terrorism" against Iran

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday that the Europeans should resist the U.S. "economic terrorism" against Iran and fulfil their obligations under the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Rouhani made the remarks during a meeting with German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas who visited Iran on Monday.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has never reached and will never reach a dead end by sanctions and pressure. If the European countries believe that the JCPOA benefits relations between Iran and the European Union and also the regional peace and stability, they should make efforts to preserve it and take practical and serious actions in this respect," the president stated.

Rouhani noted that the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in May 2018 has had nothing but negative effects on regional security and interaction among the countries.

"The U.S. violated resolution of the United Nations Security Council by unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA and started terrorist actions in the region. However, we have not witnessed proper and responsible response by Europe," he said.

He added, "During the past year, despite proper political position, we have not seen a practical action by Europe. Now, we have to decide and take action in a way that benefits us, you and all the countries and the region."

Rouhani said, "The war that the U.S. has



The German foreign minister notes, "Anybody familiar with the history of Iran knows that the strategy of maximum pressure on the Iranian nation will never bear fruit and, for this reason, the European Union is making an all-out effort to maintain the JCPOA."

started against Iran for the past one year will never be beneficial for anybody and the Iranian people have proved that they will withstand pressure and bullying behaviors."

Elsewhere, he said that Iran is prepared for any situation, however, there is still opportunity of salvaging the deal and the EU can play a positive role in this respect.

For his part, Maas said that the EU will spare no effort to reduce tension in the region.

"Germany opposes the U.S. policies against Iran and is making efforts to keep the JCPOA and fulfil its obligation," Maas said.

Elsewhere, the German foreign minister noted, "Anybody familiar with the history of Iran knows that the strategy of maximum pressure on the Iranian nation will never bear fruit and, for this reason, the European Union is making an all-out effort to maintain the JCPOA."

Last month, Jens Ploetner, the political director at the German Foreign Ministry, held talks with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Araghchi in Tehran. Ploetner said Germany will "remain committed" to the JCPOA.

Ploetner also said, "European countries will keep up their efforts and consultations aimed at meeting Iran's demands and preserving the JCPOA."

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told ABC News in an interview published on June 2 that "there will be consequences" if the U.S. keeps up its economic pressure campaign against the Iranian people.

On May 8, Iran announced a partial withdrawal from some aspects of the nuclear 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 protect it from the sanctions' effects.

Basij thanks Ukrainian wrestler for T-shirt display

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The head of the Basij Organization has thanked Ukrainian wrestler Elmar Nuraliyev for displaying his T-shirt with a picture of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

In a message to Nuraliyev on Tuesday, Qolamhosseini Gheibparvar said his "heroic act" was a sign of "a pious, revolutionary youth of the day".

"Your love for guardianship, which emanates from deep religiosity, is a model for all the world's freedom seekers and heroes," the message read.

Gheibparvar added that he prided himself for such youth.

Nuraliyev, originally from Azerbaijan,



recently garnered a national gold medal and when he was to stand on the podium to receive his medal, he appeared in a T-shirt with the picture of Ayatollah Khamenei, with a sentence in Arabic which read "I follow your order, O Khamenei."

Iran frees Lebanese-American prisoner Nizar Zakka

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Nizar Zakka, the Lebanese-American national, who was imprisoned in Iran for espionage, has been freed and was on his way back to his native Lebanon, officials confirmed on Tuesday.

A diplomat with the Lebanese embassy in Tehran confirmed the release of Zakka.

On Tuesday, ISNA quoted "an official in the Lebanese embassy" saying that Zakka had left Tehran for Beirut "minutes ago". It said he was accompanied by Abbas Ebrahim, Lebanon's General Security chief.

The dual-national Zakka had traveled to Iran four times to attend official meetings before he was arrested in 2015 on charges of "cooperating with foreign governments

against Iran's national interests", according to ISNA.

He had been sentenced to 10 years in prison and payment of \$4 million.

Last week, sources said Lebanese President Michel Aoun had negotiated Zakka's release with Tehran.

On Tuesday, Keyvan Khosravi, the spokesman for Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said that Zakka had been released following a request by Aoun as well as mediation by Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

According to al Jazeera, General Security said Zakka was set to President Aoun at Baabda Palace.

UN watchdog confirms Iran's promised uranium enrichment hike

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iran has followed through on a threat to accelerate its production of enriched uranium, the head of the UN's atomic watchdog has said, departing from his usual guarded language to say he was worried about increasing tension.

The assessment comes at a time of sharply increased U.S.-Iranian confrontation, a year after Washington abandoned an international agreement that imposed curbs on Tehran's nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of financial sanctions.

Washington tightened sanctions on Iran from the start of May, ordering all countries and companies to halt any imports of Iranian oil or be banished from the global financial system. It also dispatched extra troops to the region to counter unspecified threats from Iran.

Iran responded with a threat to increase its enrichment of uranium, saying it was up to European countries who still support the nuclear deal to save it by finding ways to ensure Tehran receives the economic benefits it was promised.

IAEA chief Yukiya Amano, whose agency is responsible for monitoring Iranian compliance with the nuclear deal, said on Monday Iran was now producing more enriched uranium than before, but it was not clear when it might reach the stockpile limit of 300 kg set in the pact, Aljazeera reported.

"Yes, [the] production rate is increasing," he told a news conference on Monday when asked if enriched



uranium production had accelerated since the agency's last quarterly report, which found Iran compliant with the nuclear deal as of May 20.

He declined to quantify the increase.

Iran said last month it was still abiding by the deal but would quadruple its production of enriched uranium - a move that could take it out of compliance if stockpiles rise too far.

Washington's European allies opposed U.S. decision last year to abandon the nuclear deal, reached in 2015 between Iran and China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

They have promised to help Iran find other ways to

trade, although with no success so far. All major European companies that had announced plans to invest in Iran have since called them off for fear of U.S. punishment.

Germany, France and Britain have since set up a special-purpose trade vehicle called INSTEX, designed to allow payments to Iran that would legally bypass sanctions. It is yet to be operationalized.

During a visit to Tehran on Monday, Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said the European signatories to the nuclear pact were doing their "utmost to prevent the failure of the deal".

"The situation in the region here is highly explosive and extremely serious," Maas told a news conference alongside Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif.

"A dangerous escalation of existing tensions can also lead to military escalation."

INSTEX was a new instrument and not straightforward to put into effect, Maas told reporters, adding: "But all the formal requirements are in place now, and so I'm assuming we'll be ready to use it in the foreseeable future."

Washington says the nuclear deal should be expanded to cover other issues including Iran's missile program and its influence in the region.

European countries argue that while they share those concerns, it would be harder to address them without the nuclear deal in place.

Iran has ruled out any negotiation over its ballistic missile program.

Non-accreditation of NYT 'man in Tehran' older than paper claims: source

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Tehran refused an accreditation to the New York Times' Tehran bureau chief long before what the American paper claims, a source says.

On Monday, the New York Times reported that Iran had revoked the press accreditation for Thomas Erdbrink back in February, with the paper trying not to make the status of its man in Tehran public so far.

The correspondent, a 43-year-old Dutch citizen, had reported for the NYT from the Islamic republic since 2012 but had been unable to work since late February when his credentials were revoked by Tehran, according to a report by the newspaper.

The NYT said it had decided to go public with his situation "after recent speculation and comments on social media".

"Mr. Erdbrink's absence from the news report has become increasingly conspicuous because of escalating tensions between the Iranian authorities and the United States," the paper's report said.



However, a source with links to the press department of the Iranian Ministry of Culture, which is in charge of issuing permits to foreign press representatives, said Erdbrink's case dates back to much earlier than the NYT claims.

"It has been a year since they are not issuing him a [press] ID," the source told the Tehran Times on condition of anonymity, adding that the NYT is making the public report probably to make Iran re-accredit Erdbrink.

Tensions between the United States and Iran have simmered in recent weeks after

more than a year of increasingly fractious relations unleashed by President Donald Trump's decision in May 2018 to withdraw from a landmark nuclear deal.

Under the 2015 agreement, Iran agreed to scale back its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

Since pulling out of the nuclear deal, the White House has rolled out a "maximum pressure" policy against Iran. As part of that, Trump's administration reimposed punitive sanctions and moved to cut the country's oil exports to zero.

The U.S. also blacklisted Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a "terrorist group", which prompted a tit-for-tat response from Tehran. Last month, Washington bolstered its military presence in the Persian Gulf in response to an unspecified threat.

Since then, a war of words between the rivals has continued to escalate, with Tehran accusing the U.S. of waging "psychological warfare" and "economic terrorism" with its

various moves.

Our man in Tehran

Amid the high tensions, Michael Slackman, the paper's international editor, was quoted as saying there were "some indications" the situation would be resolved in the near future.

Parliament defers Zarif's briefing session on Caspian Sea

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was scheduled to attend a parliament's open session on Tuesday to respond to lawmakers' questions but the parliament postponed the briefing session due to the top diplomat's busy schedule.

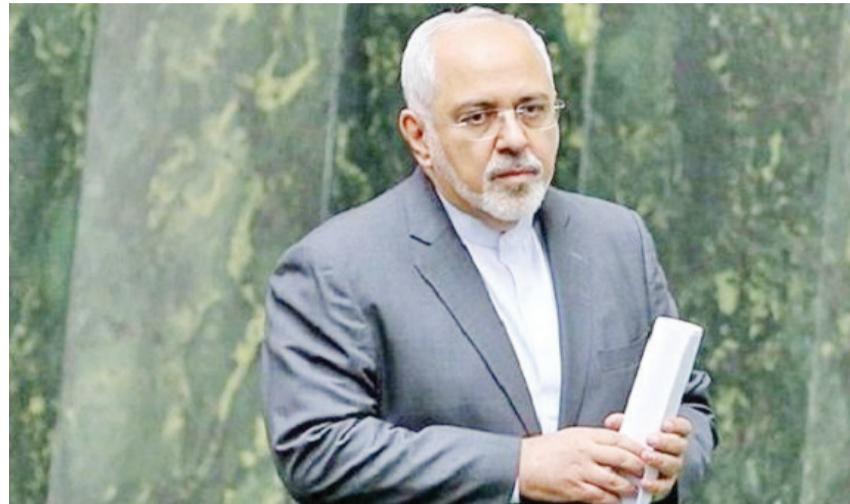
Zarif was expected to elaborate on the convention signed by Iran and four other Caspian Sea littoral states and the sea's legal status, according to Mehr news agency.

Zarif hosted his German counterpart Heiko Mass and a high-ranking delegation on Monday.

He is also scheduled to have a Wednesday meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, to discuss a number of bilateral and international issues, including the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA), which has been in shambles ever since the U.S. withdrew from it.

The date of Zarif's briefing session will be decided later, Mehr reported.

Amir Hossein Ghazizadeh, a member of



the parliament's presiding board, said the briefing session was scheduled due to the sensitivity of the issue and the related dis-

cussions surrounding it.

Zarif will be questioned by three lawmakers, including Mostafa Kavakelian, a member

of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, Abdolkarim Hosseinzadeh and Mohammad Hossein Ghorbani.

Iran, Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan agreed in principle in August 2018 on how to divide up the potentially huge oil and gas resources of the Caspian Sea, paving the way for more energy exploration and pipeline projects.

However, the delimitation of the seabed, which is seemingly at the center of the dispute, will require additional agreements between littoral nations.

For almost three decades, the five littoral states have argued over how to divide the world's biggest enclosed body of water.

After the agreement was signed, rumors inside and outside the country started circulating the media that Iran had given up its right to ownership of the Caspian in early negotiations over the sea's legal status in 1996.

However, the Foreign Ministry promptly reacted to the rumors, dismissing all of them as "unfounded claims".

Rouhani felicitates new Kazakh president on election win



POLITICAL TEHRAN — In a letter on Tuesday, President Hassan Rouhani of Iran congratulated Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on winning Kazakhstan's presidential election.

In his letter, Rouhani voiced hope for closer relations between Tehran and Nursultan in all fields during the new Kazakh president's term in order to serve common interests and enhance regional peace and stability, Tasnim reported.

Tokayev, the governing party's chosen successor to Nursultan Nazarbayev, won nearly 71 percent of the vote on June 9, far ahead of his nearest rival Amirzhan Kosanov, who received only 16 percent.

Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan's 78-year-old former Communist Party chief, announced in March that he was handing over his presidential powers to Tokayev, while retaining his posts as head of the security council and the governing party.

Iranian Ambassador to Kazakhstan Majid Saber told Tasnim last week that he anticipated the close relations between Iran and Kazakhstan to continue to grow during the new Kazakh president's term.

"The relations between Iran and Kazakhstan are deep-rooted, age-old and based upon mutual interests. At present, Kazakhstan has a major position in Iran's regional strategy as the most important and most stable republic in Central Asia," Saber said.

Envoy warns of U.S. plans to target Iran-Europe trade channel

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The Iranian Ambassador to the UK warned on Monday of U.S. plans to impose sanctions on the Special Trade and Finance Institute (STFI), which Iran established as a counterpart to the European mechanism known as INSTEX.

"With this sanction, INSTEX will be practically destroyed and Europe's diplomacy will end in total failure," Hamid Baeidinejad said in a tweet.

He further said he hoped everyone understands now that the biggest threat against the nuclear pact, also known as the JCPOA, and regional security is the United States' "economic terrorism against Iran."

Baeidinejad made the remarks in reference to a Bloomberg report on Monday, which said the Trump

administration is weighing sanctions against INSTEX, a move likely to sever the economic and humanitarian lifeline that France, Germany and the UK have sought to create for Tehran.

Bloomberg quoted a senior Trump administration official as saying that the STFI is essentially an extension of Iran's central bank, which already is covered by U.S. sanctions and, according to the administration, hasn't implemented minimum global safeguards against money laundering and terrorism financing.

European countries established INSTEX in January to help shield limited trade with Iran from U.S. sanctions imposed after President Donald Trump withdrew from the multinational Iran nuclear deal a year ago.



IRGC spokesman rejects rumors about commanders

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Brigadier General Ramazan Sharif, the spokesman for the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), has rejected as fake news the recent rumors that a number of top IRGC commanders have either fled the country or been arrested.

Sharif described the move as part of a series of anti-Iran measures which began with the U.S. designation of the IRGC as a

terrorist group.

"After the spiteful and unlawful U.S. designation of the Guards as a terrorist organization, we have witnessed widespread international reactions, most of which were critical of this evil decision," he stated.

The move backfired on the U.S. and has unified Iranians in support of the IRGC, Sharif added.

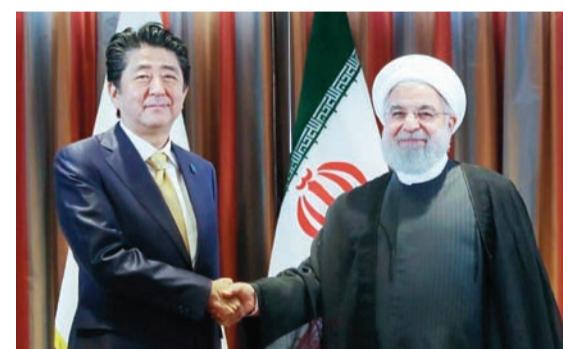
Washington in April branded the IRGC



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

In response, the Iranian Supreme National Security Council named the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) a terrorist organization, and the U.S. government a sponsor of terror.

A Low Carbon Enlightenment



While the US Federal Reserve Bank dollar liquidity which enables production of molecules of US freedom is unlimited, global storage for excess oil and products is not; so in other words, while the Fed can print dollars it cannot print oil tanks & tankers.

of freedom.

I believe there is a serious risk of a market meltdown (China Syndrome) similar to the 1985 tin crisis when the global tin price collapsed literally overnight from \$8,000 to \$4000 per tonne when price support by International Tin Council members ceased. A 'Buyer's Market' dominated by consumers would then begin at a lower price level which would see oil production cut back, new development cease, and demand for oil rising again to begin a new phase in the boom/bust commodity market cycle.

As I wrote previously, I believe commodity markets in freedom molecules of raw energy is giving way to smart markets in energy services for reasons of increasing energy intensity of oil & gas production. Meanwhile, conventional finance capital is being displaced by smart markets in services where law, accountancy and internet communications and technology converge in Financial Technology (Fintech). It is here in emerging markets in energy services where 21st Century solutions lie to Iran's 20th Century problems.

Energy Fintech

In February 2019 I held a series of high level workshops in Tehran at which I outlined a new generation of energy financial technology (Energy Fintech) based upon risk, cost, surplus and data sharing agreements between people, rather than between machines, and simple financial

energy instruments.

Firstly, Energy Swaps,

where flows of energy molecules

may be exchanged geographically; converted to energy

services (eg gas for power), or even exchanged for the

value of technology use (eg James Watt's 1778 exchange

of the use of his innovative pumping engine for a third of coal savings by tin mine owners).

Secondly, there is the Energy Credit Obligation (ECO) – prepayment for energy

services – which is a funding instrument superior in outcome to conventional debt and equity ownership shares.

Energy Diplomacy

The latest development in the fraught relationship

between the US and Iran will be the arrival of Japan's

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tehran this week with a

view to mediation. While Japan is unusual in being on

good terms with both Iran and the US, few commentators

believe prospects of conventional diplomacy are bright.

However, there are several reasons why unconventional

energy diplomacy may be productive. Firstly, Japan is

a global leader in technology, quality management and

engineering with a long tradition of collaborative par-

nership working and long term strategic thinking. Indeed

it is said that there are as many Sumo wrestlers in the US

as there are lawyers in Japan, where, unlike in the US,

trust is assumed and simple agreements are negotiated

consensually.

Secondly, Japan is taking the lead in a fundamental

review of the international agreement and organisation

for promoting energy investment, the Energy Charter

Treaty (ECT), the purpose of which is essentially to ensure

energy security for the EU, and more recently to promote

Euro investment in energy in order to create a PetroEuro.

In November 2016 Iran signed the ECT only as an

Observer, pending the outcome of the political EU Energy

Union initiative to create an EU-wide commodity market

in energy. The wisdom of Iran's decision is evident from

the outcome of the INSTEX Euro payments mechanism,

which is fundamentally doomed to failure since when

the US Treasury gives banks the choice of clearing Euro

payments for Iran or clearing US dollars, almost all banks

choose dollars.

A Low Carbon Enlightenment

I believe that Japan is well placed to bring to Iran a

host of skills and technologies in areas such as desalina-

tion, biotechnology, heating/cooling engineering, and

renewable energy. These technologies and services may

not fall within US sanctions for humanitarian reasons

but nevertheless cannot be implemented because of the

failure of the INSTEX system.

It is in this field that Energy Fintech may open up new

payment, financing and funding options since banks need

not be directly involved in the clearing of payments, but

may act as service providers bringing together interna-

tional investors and domestic Iranian investors with the

massive opportunities now available in Iran to create

what has been described as a Low Carbon Enlightenment.

Law on auditing officials' assets goes into force: Judiciary

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The law on auditing the assets of the authorities of the Islamic Republic has been passed and gone into force, Judiciary spokesman Gholam Hossein Esmaeili announced on Tuesday.

There was a delay in the passing of the law, Esmaeili said, pointing out that the Judiciary chief has said everyone is tasked with implementing the law and any delay in this regard is not acceptable.

Therefore, the law on auditing the assets of the authorities was passed on Monday, he added, ISNA reported.

Empty threats show enemies' weakness: general

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Chief of the Iranian Army's ground forces says the empty threats uttered by enemies show their "weakness" and "inability".

Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari made the remarks on Tuesday in a meeting with the personnel of Islamic Republic of Iran Army Aviation in Kermanshah province.

Heidari said despite the threats, the enemies are drawing back from all of their goals and policies against Iran, Mehr reported.

The Islamic Republic has reached a level of deterrence power that it nips all of the enemies' measures and plots in the bud, he stated.

One who is able to do something does not need to threaten, the general remarked.

Heidari further pointed out that the enemy was once in Iraq and Afghanistan and so close to Iran's borders, but they retreated because they were well aware of the Iranian forces' capabilities and military preparedness.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	230617.7
IFX	2937.48

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,521 rials
GBP	53,265 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$62.47/b
WTI	\$53.76/b
OPEC Basket	\$60.88/b
Gold	\$1,322.70/oz
Silver	\$14.70/oz
Platinum	\$808.50/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Iran-Slovakia business forum slated for late-June

ECONOMY TEHRAN — An Iran-Slovakia business forum is scheduled to be held at Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA)'s building in Tehran on June 25, ICCIMA portal reported.

In this regard, a trade delegation comprised of renowned Slovakian businessmen and entrepreneurs active in various areas including gas, oil and petrochemicals, agriculture, fertilizers, engineering, mining, glass products, healthcare services, aviation, e-commerce, railway, industrial machinery, transportation and logistics, will be visiting Tehran during June 23-26 to meet with their Iranian counterparts and discuss mutual cooperation.

Comprised of the representatives of 30 Slovakian companies, the delegation is scheduled to also attend the fourth meeting of Iran-Slovakia's Joint Economic Committee in Tehran.



Tehran City's real estate deals down 36.5% in a month on year

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The number of real estate deals in Tehran City fell 36.5 percent in the past Iranian calendar month of Ordibehesht (April 21-May 21), compared to the same month in the past year, IRIB reported on Tuesday citing the data released by Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA).

TCCIMA data also revealed that Ordibehesht witnessed 12,128 deals in this year, which is 3.5 times more than that of its previous month, Farvardin.

PBO publishes general outlines on budget bill amendment

1 → In late December, President Hassan Rouhani presented the administration's draft of the national budget bill for the current Iranian calendar year 1398, which started on March 21, to the Majlis.

The proposed bill amounts to 17.03 quadrillion rials (about \$405 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials).

Last week, Iranian Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Farhad Dejpasand said that reducing the current year's budget dependency on oil exports is the most important economic objective in the country.

Sino-European Entrepreneurs Summit kicks off to discuss business cooperation

The 10th Sino-European Entrepreneurs Summit (SEES) on Monday kicked off in London with the focus on China-Europe business cooperation in new era.

As per xinhuanet.com, China and Europe share broad consensus on major issues such as improving global economic governance, upholding multilateralism and advocating free trade, Chinese ambassador to Britain Liu Xiaoming said in his opening remarks.

Both sides should enhance mutual trust, work together to take the lead in innovation-driven industrial upgrading, and enhance open cooperation and share development opportunities, said Liu.

"Together, we could create a prosperous future for China-UK relations and together, we could build a new era for China-Europe cooperation," said Liu.

British Minister for Investment Graham Stuart said the British government is committed to making the country truly global, independent and open.

"We want to help all Chinese investors, large and small, from tech start-ups to asset management firms and advanced manufacturers, to invest in our vibrant economy or base your businesses here," said Stuart.

He also said Britain is a natural partner of China and will provide support in implementing the Belt and Road initiative (BRI).

Iran inks MOU with Iraqi Kurdistan to boost bilateral trade

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian Secretariat of Free Zones High Council signed a memorandum of understanding with Importer and Exporter Union of Iraqi Kurdistan region for expansion of economic relations between Iranian free zones and the Kurdistan region.

The MOU was signed in a ceremony attended by Akbar Eftekhari, the deputy secretary of Free Zones High Council for production, exports and technology affairs, and Mostafa Abdulrahman Abdullah, president of the Importer and Exporter Union of Iraqi Kurdistan region, IRIB reported on Tuesday.

Speaking in the signing ceremony, Eftekhari underlined the capabilities and capacities of Iran's free trade zones, noting that Iranian free trade zones offer significantly beneficial investment and trade opportunities for the businessmen and investors in the region.

He pointed to manufacturing and industrial units in the country's free zones, saying "About 1000 industrial and manufacturing units are operating



Akbar Eftekhari (1st R), the deputy secretary of Iran's Free Zones High Council, shaking hand with Mostafa Abdulrahman Abdullah, president of the Importer and Exporter Union of Iraqi Kurdistan region, after signing a memorandum of understanding in Tehran.

in the free zones and considering the number of active units in the country's

special economic zones, this number would exceed 2000."

Abdulrahman for his part, expressed satisfaction with the signed MOU, and noted that of the 10,000 members of the Kurdistan Importer and Exporter Union, 2000 members are in communication with Iranian businessmen and companies.

According to the official, although the Iraqi Kurdistan Region has a good relationship with traders and businessmen all around the world, but having common borders with the Islamic Republic of Iran has made it easier and more profitable for the region to expand trade with Iran.

He further pointed to the unjust U.S. sanctions against Iran saying, "Despite the U.S. sanctions, the Kurdistan region is eager to cooperate with Iran more and more in order to meet its basic needs."

Developing mutual trade based on the production capacities of the two sides, reducing the cost of finished products by improving the supply chains, distribution of the two sides' manufactured products in the region, and development of investment in the two countries were some of the areas covered in the signed MOU.

'Iran-Japan Joint Chamber of Commerce to be set up soon'

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran-Japan Joint Chamber of Commerce will be opened in Tehran in near future, Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Chairman Gholam-Hossein Shafeie announced.

Speaking to ILNA, Shafeie noted that the two countries' joint commerce committee has been already formed, and the two sides plan to turn the committee into a joint chamber very soon.

The official expressed hope that with the Japanese Prime minister Shinzo Abe's visit to Iran the two countries could remove some of the hurdles in the way of bilateral trade.

"Japan has been one of Iran's oldest trade partners and we have had great economic relations throughout history," he said.

Shafeie mentioned the negative impact of the U.S. sanctions on the two countries' bilateral trade, saying "although the U.S. sanctions have affected our relations but the

Japanese are highly interested in maintaining ties with Iran and we hope that Abe's Iran visit will remove part of these restrictions and we will return to the good old relations."

He further noted that most of Iran's non-oil exports to Japan include nuts, carpets, fruit juice concentrates, and the imports are mostly machinery and electronic equipment.

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is scheduled to travel to Iran on Wednesday, 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.

Petrochemical sanctions, political theatrics: NPC head

ENERGY TEHRAN — Imposition of sanctions by the U.S. on Iran's petrochemical sector is some political theatrics which will not impact Iran's petrochemical output and exports much, National Iranian Oil Company (NPC) Head stated.

Speaking to reporters on Monday, Behzad Mohammadi said sanctions are nothing new to Iran's petrochemical industry and this sector has been subject to the bans since 2013, Shana reported.

"The imposed sanctions on the petrochemical industry would not influence our production and exports much and we are focused on developing the sector disregarding the sanctions," the official said.

He said NPC had been successful to materialize over 90 percent of its revenue generation



NPC Head Behzad Mohammadi

plan for the country.

Mohammadi further stated that Kaveh, Bushehr and Ilam Olefin projects will become operational in this Iranian calendar calendar year, which began on March 21, adding 5 million tons to the country's petrochemical production capacity.

Moreover, 15 other petrochemical projects are expected to become operational by the end of the next Iranian calendar year, the official added.

"Regarding catalyst supply in the sector, we have no trouble both for production and supply of catalysts and the sanctions imposed by the U.S. on the petrochemical industry only serve as mere political theatrics rather than impacting the sector", the NPC head noted.

As the United States sanctioned Iran's Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGPIC) on June 7, many analysts and officials believe them to have no significant impact on the country's economy in a broad sense.

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

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

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

According to a Reuters report published on June 7, a former U.S. Treasury official, who asked not to be named, said the new sanctions would have little effect.

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

More China tariffs could push the U.S. into a 'Trump recession,' CEO says

By Shirley Tay

The U.S. economy may be pushed into a "Trump recession" if Washington follows through on its threat to impose tariffs on an additional \$300 billion worth of Chinese goods, says Gary Shapiro, president and CEO of the Consumer Technology Association.

Speaking to CNBC, Shapiro called tariffs an "economic fence" and said they are "not a good strategy" to help Washington resolve its trade dispute with Beijing.

Speaking to CNBC at the CES Asia technology conference in Shanghai, Gary Shapiro from the Consumer Technology Association called tariffs an "economic fence" and said they are "not a good strategy" to help Washington resolve its trade dispute with Beijing.

"They are taxes, they hurt consumers, they hurt American companies," Shapiro said, noting that positive assessments of U.S. President Donald Trump's hard-line tariff approach are not widely held by economists outside the White House.

As Beijing and Washington remain deadlocked in an increasingly aggressive trade dispute, some economists have said that tariffs on Chinese goods — which Trump has repeatedly said will benefit the U.S. — may eventually backfire and tip the U.S. economy into a recession.

Despite such fears and a worse-than-expected jobs data for May, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told CNBC on Sunday that the U.S. economy is still the "bright spot of the world" — and he doesn't see any signs of an economic downturn.

Trump on Monday renewed his tariff threats on China after Myron Brilliant, the head of international affairs at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, told CNBC that Trump's "weaponization of tariffs" hurts the U.S. economy and "creates uncertainty" with trading partners.

Trump confirmed that an additional raft of levies will be slapped on Beijing if Chinese President Xi Jinping does not



show up at the G-20 meeting in Japan — an event investors and economists will be watching for signs of a breakthrough in the trade impasse.

The current tensions between the U.S. and China appeared to reach a new height when Washington placed Huawei on a U.S. entity list in May, limiting the Chinese telecom giant's ability to purchase goods from American firms.

While the U.S. Commerce Department has granted a 90-day reprieve to Huawei, China has already been ramping up development of its own semiconductor industry — which could ultimately hurt the profits of U.S. companies.

According to Shapiro, restrictive measures in the tech space could escalate "out of control" and cause both consumers and U.S. chip companies to be "trampled."

The blacklisting of Huawei will not only push China to become more closed off to the rest of the world, but will also hinder the United States' ability to maintain "world leadership" in the technology market, Shapiro told CNBC's Arjun Kharpal.

"We have these great American chip companies ready to sell to all around the world," he said. "And the fact is, I think the U.S. policy may be really pushing China to do everything by itself, and not only put up walls around China, but we're putting up an economic fence around the United States."

If the U.S. wants to advance "and be innovative, maintain world leadership, we have to be out there in the world marketplace," he added.

(Source: cnbc.com)

Monetary loosening 'may be enough for Asia-Pac economies for now'

By Janice Heng

Most Asia-Pacific economies may not resort to fiscal stimulus unless a full-blown trade war between the United States and China comes to pass, say economists.

Last week, China indicated that it has "tremendous" room for monetary and fiscal adjustment if trade tensions worsen. But although manufacturing figures have weakened across the region, fiscal moves have been taken mainly by markets closer to the trade war, such as South Korea.

For others, monetary loosening may suffice for now. Policy-makers began taking a more accommodative policy stance even before the recent trade war escalation, noted Asean+3 Macroeconomic Research Office chief economist Khor Hoe Ee, who does not expect fiscal moves to be on the cards for now.

"Most regional economies continue to be in the mid-phase of the business cycle, and close to long-term trend in the credit cycle. There is thus generally no need for major stimulus measures at this juncture, as the current policy mix is broadly appropriate."

Malaysia and the Philippines have already cut their policy rates; China and the Philippines have also cut reserve requirements for banks.

Last Tuesday, the Reserve Bank of Australia cut its official cash rate for the first time in almost three years. Economists at UOB Global Economics and Markets Research expect Bank Indonesia to possibly join the rate-cutting cycle in the second half of this year.

DBS economists expect the U.S. to make rate cuts of 25 basis points each in September and December, "to be explained as insurance against global market risks and chronically below-target inflation".

In a May report, Deutsche Bank economists considered the likely policy responses of emerging Asia economies in the case of an all-out trade war, if the U.S. slaps a 25 percent tariff rate on remaining China imports - a decision likely to be made by the end of this month. They expect

ASEAN governments with the fiscal space should accelerate their infrastructure build-up and boost public investment." With falling global interest rates, governments can tap lower financing costs for capital expenditure, he added.

To support exporters specifically, governments could look at moves such as income tax rebates, lower trade financing costs and more generous tax deductions for machinery and equipment investments, he said.

Regional exporters that have been particularly hard hit include Taiwan and South Korea. In both markets, the purchasing managers' index - a leading indicator - for new export orders has been in contractionary territory for at least nine months.

(Source: businesstimes.com.sg)

Forouzan oilfield's F18 platform deck installed

ENERGY TEHRAN – Installation operation of the topside deck in Forouzan oil field's F18 platform completed on Monday, Shana reported quoting the head of Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC).

According to Hamid Bovard, the construction of the 940-ton deck has cost 43 million euros and the loading and transportation operations were started last month.

"After completing the deck installation, the F18 will be ready to drill seven wells in

the form of EPC/EPD projects," he added.

In 2017, the F18 jacket weighing 1800 tons, was transported from Qeshm yard and installed in Forouzan field which Iran shares with Saudi Arabia in the Persian Gulf.

The loading operation of the jacket of residential platform FYB was also started in May 2017.

The 1025-ton jacket of the residential platform which was built in the Naft Sazeh Qeshm Co. yard was installed in its place in late June 2017.



Forouzan Field was discovered in 1966 with estimated in-place reserves of 2.309 billion barrels of crude. The field is known as Marjan in Saudi Arabia.

How to manage country without oil: Parl. Research Center

ENERGY TEHRAN – In its recent report, the Research Center of the Iranian Parliament has discussed ways to reach a non-oil economy, the one which is not dependent on oil revenues.

Among the discussed methods by the Research Center, it can be referred to levying tax on capital gains, taxes on costly real estate and imports management.

"No economist supports continuation of sanctions. Economic sanctions weaken the country's production power and reduces people's welfare in the long and short run," the report says.

Noting that Iran's economy is currently experiencing a vulnerable stage, the report regards moving towards a non-oil economy as a suitable path to encounter the sanctions, which are designed to hit the economy in its Achilles heel, i.e. oil revenues.

However, the report admits that reducing reliance on oil income cannot be translated into decreasing oil exports to zero but as it discusses in case oil exports drop to zero, the conditions would be manageable via managing balance of payments and controlling the forex market.



Urging the government to take a sustainable anti-sanctions attitude, the report calls for taking required measure to amend the foreign exchange rates, market and in general the structure of forex sector.

Iran launches OFEC to curb OFAC sanctions

Parliament of Iran has initiated a radical economic plan to manage the economy without oil revenues.

The preemptive economic plan dubbed as Oil-Free Economy (OFEC) will target the weaponization of oil against the country by zeroing the oil revenues in the budget.

Parliament Research Center of Iran (MRC) which is responsible for the development of the plan has announced that OFEC will divert the oil revenues from the public budget to the sovereign wealth fund of Iran which is called NDFI (National Development Fund of Iran), to be spent in non-budgetary development projects, while the national government budget will be totally financed through taxation of untaxed sectors, introducing new tax bases including capital gain tax (CGT), transferring the ownership of some of its shares in stock exchange and other non-oil revenues.

OFEC also will try to neutralize the OFAC-led sanctions against Iran's trade and external sector by effective management of foreign exchange reserves and outflows, expanding tourism with neighbor countries and imposing tariffs on less-necessary imports.

Dubai Intros Floating solar power plants



Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, to achieve economic, social, and environmental sustainable development and preserve natural resources within the framework of federal and local strategies, including the UAE Vision 2021, UAE Centennial 2071, the Dubai Plan 2021, and the DCES 2050, as directed by His Highness, to make Dubai the city with the lowest carbon footprint in the world by 2050," said HE Saeed Mohammed Al Tayer, MD & CEO of DEWA.

"At DEWA, we launch innovative initiatives and solutions in line with our vision to provide an innovative and sustainable world for generations to come.

Floating photovoltaic systems are one of the most prominent emerging technologies that rely on installing solar photovoltaic systems directly above water," added Al Tayer.

Achieving the objectives of the Dubai Clean Energy Strategy 2050 will require a production capacity of 42,000 megawatts (MW) of clean and renewable energy by 2050.

DEWA launched several ambitious initiatives and projects to achieve these objectives, including the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park. This is the largest single-site solar park in the world, based on the Independent Power Project model, with a planned capacity of 5,000MW by 2030 at a total investment of AED 50 billion.

OPEC's struggle to avoid \$40 oil

By Nick Cunningham

A few weeks ago, OPEC+ was mulling the possibility of exiting the production cut agreement because the oil market was at risk of over-tightening. Now Saudi Arabia is scrambling to extend the cuts and may even unilaterally lower its own production further in an effort to head off a price slide.

On Monday, officials from Saudi Arabia and Russia reportedly discussed a possible scenario in which oil prices crashed below \$40 per barrel, a recognition that the market has rapidly deteriorated. They view that outcome as a possibility if they can't agree on an extension. "Today there are big risks of oversupply," Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said in Moscow after meeting with Saudi oil minister Khalid al-Falih. "We've agreed that we need to run a deeper analysis and to see how events unfold in June."

Russian President Vladimir Putin seemed to fuel speculation of a rift in Vienna in comments to Interfax news last week. "Of course Saudi Arabia wants oil prices to remain higher," the Interfax news agency quoted Mr. Putin as saying. "But we have no such need due to the more diversified nature of the Russian economy."

Preventing downward spiral

The Saudis, of course, are desperate to prevent such a downward spiral. "Both at the bilateral and the OPEC+ level, we work in order to take preventive steps so as not to allow that scenario to happen," al-Falih said in Moscow. He is undoubtedly trying to convince Novak of the wisdom of extending the production cuts.

Perhaps to sweeten the pot, Saudi Arabia is considering investments in "multiple" projects in Russia, including the Arctic LNG 2 gas project, a stake in Russian petrochemical company Sibur Holding, along with other projects in partnership with Gazprom and Rosneft, Bloomberg reports.



The outlook for the oil market has darkened rather quickly. Less than a month ago, the IEA predicted a rather significant supply deficit in the second quarter even as it acknowledged some cracks in demand. But since then things have seemingly taken a turn for the worse, with oil posting its worst month since the financial crisis.

A growing number of analysts are drawing up downbeat assessments for the oil market next year.

The "balances for 2020 were already worrisome, and the downgrade in demand we are contemplating put them potentially in the ugly category," Roger Diwan of IHS Markit Ltd. told Bloomberg.

Notably, top analysts see a supply surplus next year even if output from Iran and Venezuela fails to rebound. For instance, S&P Global Platts, as of now, estimates a surplus of 400,000 bpd in 2020, while the EIA puts the glut at a more modest 100,000 bpd. IHS Markit sees a whopping 800,000-bpd surplus.

The reason is that demand is cratering and U.S. shale is still expected to grow. "There is growing evidence of a sharper-than-expected slowdown in demand," said Martijn Rats, oil analyst at Morgan Stanley, according to Bloomberg. The U.S.-China trade war has dramatically increased concerns about an economic slowdown.

The contraction territory

The global economy is decelerating, with manufacturing activity around the world slowing down, a sure sign of an economy hitting some bumps. "You've suddenly got all sorts of countries around the world seeing their manufacturing indexes fall into contraction territory. That's going to be bad for demand," Bill O'Grady, chief market strategist at Confluence Investment Management, said in a Wall Street Journal interview.

But assuming OPEC+ decides to extend the production cuts, the group will go a long way in guarding against a more dramatic sell-off, even if it requires ongoing sacrifice on their part.

The "weak economic data and widening trade conflict have made for a gloomier demand outlook. In response, we have revised our third-quarter forecast for Brent down to \$66 (previously \$73)," Commerzbank wrote in a note. "We are leaving our year's end forecast of \$70 unchanged ... this is because we are convinced that OPEC and Russia will do everything in their power to prevent an oversupply and to ensure higher prices."

The bank noted that while Putin is skeptical of letting prices rise too far, and is generally satisfied with prices in their current range, he has also indicated that Russia and OPEC would make a joint decision. "This suggests that Russia will take part in a production cut agreement beyond mid-year," Commerzbank concluded.

Saudi Arabia may go further. After the U.S. announced no new waivers for countries buying Iranian oil, there was speculation that Riyadh would decide to boost output, perhaps by as much as 400,000 or 500,000 bpd. But with the recent weakening of the market, that's now off the table. Instead, Saudi Arabia trimmed output by 120,000 bpd in May from a month earlier. The Saudis "could potentially even take production lower," Helima Croft of RBC Capital Markets told the WSJ.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Puerto Rico's latest IRP increases solar and storage targets

The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) filed the latest edition of its 2019-2038 integrated resource plan late Friday. The report, prepared by Siemens, is a rework of a plan submitted in February, which Puerto Rico's energy bureau deemed noncompliant with regulations.

As stated by greentechmedia.com, though the most recent integrated resource plan (IRP) bears similarities to the previous version, the latest edition calls for higher deploy-

ment of solar and storage — which already rivaled some of the most ambitious plans for the mainland — and more flexibility associated with the natural-gas infrastructure it recommends.

In the plan's first five years, the proposed IRP states that the island should add 1,800 megawatts of solar PV and 920 megawatts of energy storage, with combined request for proposals for these technologies. Those build-outs are

more ambitious than what PREPA sought in its previous plan, which called for up to 1,200 megawatts of solar and up to 900 megawatts of energy storage.

In addition to planning a future grid that's affordable and reliable, Puerto Rico's embattled utility faces the formidable task of shoring up the island's grid after two devastating storms, Hurricanes Maria and Irma, damaged almost all electrical infrastructure.

South Pars platform 14B shipped toward installation spot

ENERGY TEHRAN – Platform 14B of Iran's South Pars gas field (in the Persian Gulf) was shipped in Bandar Abbas, the capital city of southern province of Hormozgan, on Tuesday to be installed on its designated offshore spot, Tasnim reported.

Platform 14B, which is the third platform of South Pars phase 14 of development, will add 500 million cubic feet of gas per day to the capacity of the gas field.

The 2500-ton platform is built in a 115-month period and the estimated costs of the project are reported to be \$570 million.

This project is 100 percent implemented by Iranian engineers and experts and more than 60 percent of its equipment is also domestic.



The first platform of phase 14 of developing South Pars gas field started operation in summer 2018 and the second platform namely 14C was shipped in September 2018 and the installation operation of this platform were completed in October 2018.

Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) is in charge of implanting development phases of the giant gas field.

South Pars gas field, which Iran shares with Qatar, is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate. The field is divided into 24 standard phases.

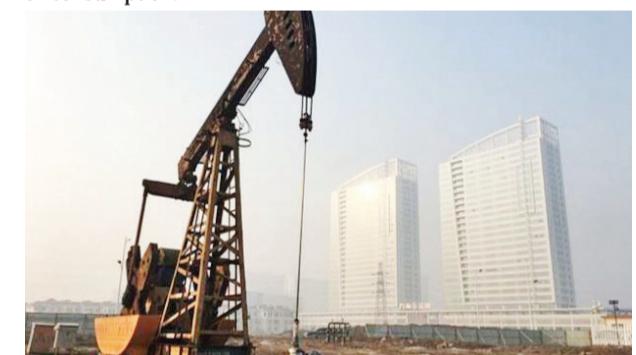
Oil price stable as market eyes ongoing supply cuts amid downturn

Oil prices stabilized on Tuesday on expectations that producer group OPEC and its allies will keep withholding supply to prevent prices from tumbling amid a broad economic slowdown which has started eating away at fuel demand growth.

As per thestar.com.my, front-month Brent crude futures, the international benchmark for oil prices, were at \$62.36 at 0023 GMT, 7 cents, or 0.1%, above Friday's close.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$53.42 per barrel, 16 cents, or 0.3%, above their last settlement.

Prices fell by around 1% in the previous session and crude futures are down by some 20% from their 2019 peaks in late April, dragged lower by a widespread economic downturn that has started to impact oil consumption.



Russia on Monday said it might support an extension of supply cuts that have been in place since January, warning oil prices could fall as low as \$30 per barrel if producers supply too much crude.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and some non-affiliated producers including Russia, known collectively as OPEC+, have withheld supplies since the start of the year to prop up prices.

"Due to the general fear of an economic downturn ... (and) the realization that demand growth is slowing ... no one will argue for abandoning (the) OPEC+ accord," said Fereidun Fesharaki, chairman of energy consultancy FGE, in a note published on Tuesday.

FGE said global crude oil demand growth could drop below 1 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2019, down from previous expectations of 1.3 to 1.4 million bpd.

UK energy provider Scottish Power building a huge battery to boost wind turbine efficiency

Clean energy is all well and good, but it becomes a much less efficient form of power generation when you don't have the proper infrastructure to store it. That's where Scotland's latest plans come in -- according to The Guardian, energy supplier Scottish Power is about to take on the «most ambitious battery power project» in Europe: the construction and deployment of a massive, «industry-scale» battery.

According to techspot.com, this battery will allegedly be roughly half the size of a (European) football field, and it could provide the UK as a whole with more consistent on-demand green energy from roughly 215 wind turbines.

As it stands, the excess energy produced by these turbines doesn't get much use, but this battery project could solve that problem.

In a statement to The Guardian, a Scottish Power spokesman mentioned that after a mere hour of charging, the battery should be able to power «806 Nissan Leaf» cars for more than «182,000 miles» -- impressive numbers, no matter how you look at them.

If there's ever a gap in the UK's ability to produce enough clean energy to suit involved customers' power needs (if an array of turbines stop working, for example), the battery can step in to discharge a portion of its energy as needed.

Work on this project is expected to begin at the Whitelee wind farm, with the full construction process set for completion by the end of next year.

Pompeo's China view shows fossilized mind-set

By Zhang Wenzong

GLOBAL TIMES — Since US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo assumed office, he has frequently expressed his views about China in the public domain, be it during official visits, at congressional hearings or in interviews. Influenced by his ideology or maybe also by the US domestic milieu, which is full of skepticism against China, Pompeo spares no effort in portraying himself as an anti-China hawk. But his recent remarks about China are full of distorted logic, deep prejudice and a fossilized mindset.

It is not an exaggeration to say that Pompeo is the one who has exerted himself the most in tarnishing Chinese tech giant Huawei's image. But his arguments are always flawed.

In order to gain a monopoly on 5G, the US is using its national power to crack down on Huawei. But according to Pompeo, "The risk to privacy from [Huawei] technology is very, very real." This is ridiculous. Since US whistleblower Edward Snowden, a subcontractor of the National Security Agency (NSA), leaked the secret that the NSA comprehensively monitored and collected data from citizens worldwide through IT companies including Cisco, IBM, Google, Qualcomm, Apple, Intel, Oracle and Microsoft, the US has lost its moral high ground.

The country is now using shameful acts to try to cut off Huawei from the global industrial chain. But facts speak louder than words. Even if Washington threatens its allies to choose between Huawei and the US, quite a few Western countries and enterprises are reluctant to yield.

Pompeo is also quite concerned about human rights in China and expressed concern about the Hong Kong-proposed amendments to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance. Since the US has articulated that China is its strategic competitor, it is not hard for Chinese people to realize what's behind Pompeo's special attention on China. Compared with the US' ruthless strategic squeeze and economic isolation of Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Chinese people will only be grateful of their choice. Over the years, the security situation in China's Xinjiang has significantly improved, as the soaring tourist numbers in the region show. Hong Kong is still shimmering with charm. The city's progress has been underscored by the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Pompeo, with his outdated geopolitical mindset, has accused Beijing of using the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to lay a debt trap, slandered Beijing's stance on the South China Sea, chided China's "military presence in the Arctic Ocean," groundlessly worrying that the Arctic Ocean would become another South China Sea.

Since US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo assumed office, he has frequently expressed his views about China in the public domain, be it during official visits, at congressional hearings or in interviews.

But if the BRI laid a debt trap, how come over 100 countries and international organizations are participating in it proactively? Since the so-called South China Sea arbitration was shelved, the overall situation in the South China Sea has improved. China has deployed defense facilities on some islands and reefs, without affecting navigation in the South China Sea. Instead, it is the US fleet that has become an uninvited guest, making waves by challenging China's sovereignty. Some US radicals have continuously suggested blocking the Straits of Malacca on special occasions to undermine the lifeline of China and other countries in the region. They should desist from uttering such remarks.

The economic value of the Arctic shipping routes has become even more important with concern on global warming rising. China has no military presence in the Arctic, while an anxious US has beefed up its military installations. It is the US itself which is the most eager to militarize the Arctic.

From Henry Kissinger, Alexander Haig to Condoleezza Rice, there has been no lack of talented strategists among all US secretaries of state since World War II, who always made rational judgments and decisions for the true benefit of the US. But a secretary of state like Pompeo, who makes irresponsible remarks and judges others by his own standards, is rarely seen. In the current US government, Pompeo is not the only one with outdated geopolitical thinking. But even among them, he is one of those whose behavior raises the most eyebrows. Many commentators in both China and the US believe that Pompeo seems to have failed to step out of the boots of CIA director, his former role. He has dealt with other governments and people by exaggerating threats, distorting information, coercion, deception, and concealment, revealing the true traits of the US. This is probably not good news for the US with weakening soft power.

Although the US has highlighted competition with China, forces inside the US that support the continued development of relations with Beijing cannot be underestimated. Many US states value exports to China; universities welcome Chinese students; some US enterprises have long expected to benefit from the BRI.

Many high-tech companies in Silicon Valley are the beneficiaries of globalization and Huawei's win-win partners. They dare not express their opposition to the US government's crackdown on Huawei. Different voices can also be heard among elites about the way Pompeo and the current US government handle relations with China. The right-wing Republicans have continued to create crises on the grounds of national security and have attempted to mobilize the American people. However, if McCarthyism resurfaces, people in the US will be the first to be affected.

Neither did the bashing and suppression of China by those like Pompeo evoke much applause in the international community. Even if there are different opinions about Huawei and BRI, many countries are not intimidated by the US and boldly express their support for Chinese enterprises and policies. It is true that a just cause has many supporters while an unjust one finds few followers.

Like former Trump advisor Steve Bannon, who is a far-right advocate, Pompeo is obsessed with calling for China's fall. They have portrayed China's rise as something horrible. It is despicable to confuse right with wrong and mislead the people. China has not been intimidated by the US. Neither has the world been confused by US politicians' slander and attempts at delusion. On the contrary, China has deepened reforms and expanded opening-up, with the Chinese people full of confidence in the future of the country and themselves. The Chinese believe that a big heart embraces all.

China is ready to confront the Trump government Beijing does not surrender to Washington

Trump has said he would meet with his Chinese counterpart at the summit, while U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin also told reporters over the weekend that any major progress to resolve the trade war will come during the leaders' meeting.

The president said in an interview with CNBC's "Squawk Box" on Monday that if Xi doesn't meet with him at the Osaka summit later this month, more U.S. tariffs on Chinese exports will go into effect. Trump told reporters last week that "a lot of interesting things are happening" during talks with China, but said he could impose tariffs on "at least" another \$300 billion worth of goods. He provided no further details on the negotiations. Trade tensions escalated last month when Trump increased tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports to 25 percent. China responded by increasing tariffs on \$60 billion worth of American products that went into effect earlier this month.

Washington then raised the stakes by placing Chinese telecom giant Huawei on a blacklist that effectively bars U.S. companies from supplying it with computer chips, software and other components without government approval. Chinese state media has also warned that Beijing could cut the U.S. off from rare earth minerals Opens a New Window. that are widely used in electric cars and mobile phones.

Battered Chinese companies put American plans on hold as trade war rattles confidence in US



As South China Morning Post reported, Batten down the hatches is the central message from Chinese companies operating in the US, buffeted by increasing regulatory restrictions from both governments and a tightening labour market.

Investment by Chinese companies in the United States has fallen by nearly 90 per cent since its peak in 2016, including a sharp drop in 2018 and early 2019, with more companies reporting lower revenues and thinner profit margins than a year ago.

"The trade war creates a less welcoming business environment for Chinese companies," said Chen Xu, chairman of the China General Chamber of Commerce-USA and president and chief executive of Bank of China USA, in introducing the chamber's annual business survey, which was released on Monday. "This environment's uncertainty shakes our members' confidence and discourages them from making further investments in the US."

Half of the respondents in the survey – conducted in February and March – felt the investment and business environment had deteriorated in 2018, more than double the 23 per cent that saw it that way last year. With investment decisions lagging broader shifts in US-China relations, the report's relatively downbeat findings likely understated the mood given the bad news since members were surveyed a few months ago.

In a mirror image, the most recent American Chamber of Commerce in China survey of US companies operating on the mainland, released in February, was similarly downbeat, referring to relations as a "ticking time bomb". On Monday, US President Donald Trump renewed his threat to put tariffs on another US\$300 billion of Chinese goods in a CNBC interview, the latest salvo of the tit-for-tat trade war. Investment and security-related regulations are tightening on both sides of the Pacific.

Distrust has gone well beyond trade and the military to include education, visa policy and people-to-people exchanges, with little prospect of relief. "This year marks the 40th anniversary of US-China diplomatic relations," the China General Chamber survey said. "At this moment, our relationship is being tested." A third of companies predicted that conditions would get worse over the next two years, up from 12 per cent last year.

The 240 responses from Monday's survey that involved Chinese companies such as Fuyao Glass, Hisense and International Vitamin, out of a pool of 1,500 chamber members, suggested that most were managing their existing US operations but delaying on putting much new money on the table. Respondents were particularly concerned by higher tariffs and tighter US investment rules, especially where hi-tech companies faced tougher scrutiny from the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), part of the revamped Foreign Investment Risk Review Modernisation Act.

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analysts rightly believe that the conflict is not limited to economic and

commercial issues, and it will also affect the political, security and

regional spheres.

While Chinese investment has declined globally in recent years, the drop has been sharper in the US than Europe given tighter scrutiny by Washington over China's state-led campaign to acquire sensitive Western technology.

Companies reported smaller profit margins on average this year compared to 2018 or 2017, while 60 per cent of respondents said their US revenue stayed the same or fell last year, compared with 47 per cent a year earlier.

At least as great a factor behind the Chinese investment chill in recent years was Chinese government policy, analysts said, including tighter capital controls imposed when the yuan came under pressure in early 2017 as China's capital reserves fell to less than US\$3 trillion, spooking

authorities.

Last month, Chinese-owned electric-car maker Nio laid off 70 workers and closed an office in Silicon Valley, citing "uncertainty" over possible subsidy cuts by Beijing. Chinese state-owned companies, which tend to follow government directives more closely than their private counterparts, had been quick to pare their US investments, said Cassie Gao, a senior analyst with Rhodium Group.

Rhodium data showed that foreign direct investment from China into the US fell from a peak of US\$46.2 billion in 2016 to US\$29.4 billion in 2017 and US\$5.4 billion last year. "We've seen things tank," Gao said.

Companies in the survey also cited the challenge of wage inflation, a lack of qualified workers and difficulties in finding and keeping good local talent, given the tight US labour market. Many businesses said they had responded by increasing wages and trying to promote their "core values" and corporate culture. Amid all the gloom and doom, however, some

warned that the political and economic punch-up between Beijing and Washington could give a skewed impression of matters, with relations stronger at local levels than headlines suggested.

"I think there's tension between the view inside the Beltway and those outside," said Bonnie Glaser, director of the China Power Project at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank. "Mayors and governors are quite keen for Chinese business. Universities do not want to lose government money but they also want the tuition [fees] from foreign students."

A few blocks over from the Washington hotel where the survey was released, economic development officials from dozens of US cities and states have gathered this week, tax breaks and other incentives in hand, in hopes of luring business executives from Chinese, Taiwanese and other foreign companies at the annual SelectUSA

foreign investment conference.

The city of Tampa, Florida, said it was redoubling efforts to attract Chinese business to diversify its traditional economic focus on Latin America. In January, after investing US\$24 million in high-capacity gantry cranes, Port Tampa Bay welcomed with a band and water spouts the start of direct shipping service to and from China through the Panama Canal operated by China Ocean Shipping, using ships with a capacity of 4,500 20-foot containers. On Friday, rival CMA CGM Group will start its direct service, connecting Tampa with such Asian ports as Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Ningbo and Shanghai.

Those follow the 2015 purchase of Tampa-based World Triathlon Corp by Dalian Wanda Group for US\$650 million and the expansion of a regional logistics hub for products made in China and elsewhere.

"China is certainly important to us," said Steve Morey, senior vice-president of Global Tampa Bay, an economic development group. "The welcome mat is totally out."

Farther west, the southern state of Louisiana received a 2019 award from the China General Chamber after Shandong Yuhuang Chemical Group decided to invest US\$1.85 billion in a methanol production complex, one of the largest Chinese direct investments in the US. This dovetails with a US\$1.2 billion investment by Wanhuwa Chemical Group in a chemical manufacturing complex also in southeast Louisiana's St James parish.

"Certainly, the challenging situation around tariffs and trade war activities has slowed activity down somewhat," said Don Pierson, the state's economic development secretary. "But we're optimistic the differences between the two countries will be resolved."

Pierson said he did not expect any new petrochemical investments by Chinese companies to run afoul of CFIUS given the basic, commodity nature of these investments in Louisiana.

Idaho is home to a semiconductor industry that is small by US standards but one that accounts for over half of its exports to China by value. State officials say because most of Idaho's chip industry focuses on inspection and back-end cleaning, they do not see a huge risk from tightening US regulations.

And longer term, the outlook remains strong. "Trade with China is a train, no one can stop it," said Eddie Yen, director of the state's Asia Trade Office. "There may be some noise right now, but if you look at the bigger picture, the train can't be stopped."

But there will be collateral damage, he added, including the danger that more Chinese technology companies will ques-

tion the reliability of US suppliers in the future.

The state also has tried to work around the tariff battle, focusing on products too important or high quality for China to levy punitive taxes on, including alfalfa hay to feed Chinese livestock, said Tara Qu, head of Idaho's China office in Shanghai.

And while Beijing and Washington work to block each other's trade, semiconductors and other products will find a way where there's a need, she said, including items that may be sent to places like Vietnam, repackaged and sent on to China. "Traders always have their ways," Qu said. "This won't stop trade."

As the Trump administration pressures US companies to divest from China and reroute their supply chains, Vietnam is often seen as a promising alternative given its efficient, relatively low-wage workforce and pro-business environment. Commercial property prices have increased some 40 per cent in the past year in Ho Chi Minh City and beyond as US-China tension has intensified. Michael Vu Nguyen, president of Hanoi-based An Phat International Inc, said Vietnam was guardedly optimistic. But it is also wary of overreaching in such a volatile environment given its limited capacity.

"We want to help where we can, but we're very small compared to the US and China," he said. "When the two big guys fight, we just stay low."

The top three sectors where Chinese companies in the US have focused in are industrial, energy and financial, while the top five states where companies have chosen to base their headquarters are California, New York, Texas, Illinois and New Jersey, according to the chamber.

What has happened today between the United States and China is rooted in the behaviors of the last two years of the US president with Beijing. US-China relations continue to decline during the Trump presidency. Of course, there were disagreements between Beijing and Washington over security and cyber-security issues at the time of Barack Obama, but the emergence of trade and economic disputes in their bilateral relations should be analyzed "beyond a simple controversy." In other words, from the beginning of 2017 and Trump's presence at the top of the political and executive equations of the United States, we have witnessed the emergence of constant crises and challenges in the relations between Washington and Beijing. Many international affairs analysts rightly believe that the conflict is not limited to economic and commercial issues, and it will also affect the political, security and regional spheres.

Forget the U.S.-China trade war is a conflict over Taiwan the real threat?

By Ted Galen Carpenter

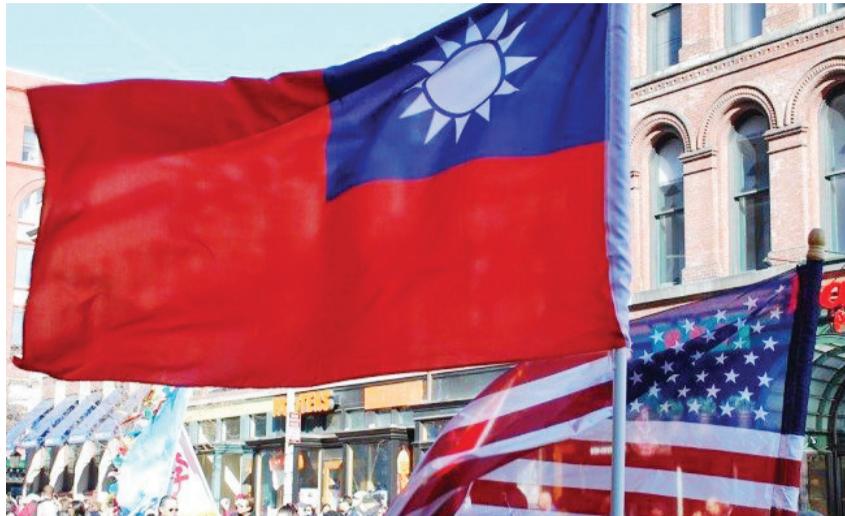
ANTIWAR — Tensions between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China (PRC) are surging to an alarming extent. The latest indicator is the recent exchange of heated rhetoric between Gen. Wei Fenghe, China's Minister of National Defense, and Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, the Taiwanese government's chief policymaking body dealing with cross-strait relations. As Taiwan's self-proclaimed protector, Washington should be extremely worried about these developments.

Speaking on June 1 at the Shangri-La Dialogue, an annual multilateral conference on Pacific security issues, Wei warned against efforts either in Taiwan or foreign countries to thwart China's goal of reunification. Moreover, "any underestimation of the PLA's resolve and will is extremely dangerous." Wei added ominously that, "If anyone dares to split Taiwan from China, the Chinese military will have no choice but to fight at all costs, at all costs, (sic.) for national unity. If the PLA cannot even safeguard the unity of our motherland, what do we need it for?"

The Mainland Affairs Council responded with equally harsh and uncompromising language. In a statement issued the following day, the council reassured that Taiwan has never been a part of the PRC and would never accept Beijing's control or threats. It accused China not only of "challenging international norms and order," but added the gratuitous slap that Beijing's claim to seek peaceful development was "a lie of the ages." Lest anyone not fully grasp the extent of Taipei's hostility toward the PRC, the statement went on: "We need to remind the public that the Chinese Communist Party is practicing anti-democracy, anti-peace between the two sides of the strait and further resorting to war. This is the main cause of the tension in the Taiwan Strait and the region, and it is the source of danger and provocation against peace and stability."

Do You Know What Happened Today In History?

The vitriolic exchange constituted a worrisome escalation of the animosity between Taipei and Beijing that has been roiling for the past three years. The victory of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in Taiwan's 2016 elections dashed any



"While Americans are focused on the ongoing trade war between the United States and China, the danger is growing of an actual shooting war that could involve Taiwan."

hopes Chinese leaders had that the burgeoning economic ties with the mainland would translate gradually into increased Taiwanese popular support for political reunification. Anger at that strategy's failure led Beijing to revive a campaign to increase Taiwan's diplomatic isolation by poaching the few small nations that still maintain formal relations with Taipei. The PRC's menacing military activities also increased. Chinese war games in and around the Taiwan Strait have soared since 2016. The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency's 2019 report to Congress also concludes that Beijing is building up its ground, air, and naval forces to achieve a more robust capability to invade Taiwan.

Anger at Beijing's treatment of Taiwan has led to congressional and executive branch measures to strengthen Washington's backing for Taipei. A major step occurred in March 2018 when President Trump signed into law the Taiwan Travel Act (TTA), which encouraged high-level U.S. officials to meet with their Taiwan counterparts. That legislation, which passed both houses of Congress, ended Washington's

cautious practice under the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) of holding meetings only with relatively low-level Taiwanese officials.

It was especially noticeable that the TTA specifically promoted interaction by "cabinet-level national security officials." That provision proved to be more than a symbolic gesture when National Security Adviser John Bolton met with Taiwan National Security Council Secretary-General David Lee in May. Bolton's intention to push for stronger security ties between the United States and Taiwan cannot be overstated. Before his current stint in government service, he pushed for highly dangerous and provocative policies. He urged the United States to establish formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan and even advocated moving U.S. military forces from Okinawa to Taiwan. Either measure would cross a bright red line as far as Beijing is concerned and would likely trigger PRC military action to prevent Taiwan's permanent political separation from the mainland. Having someone with those views holding a crucial policy post and sitting just a few

doors down from the Oval Office greatly increases the likelihood of a further boost in U.S. support for Taiwan, despite the risk of war with China.

There are multiple signs from various sources of growing U.S. backing for Taiwan's de facto independence. Congress certainly is stepping up its support. By a unanimous voice vote in early May, the House of Representatives passed the Taiwan Assurance Act, which expresses firm support for Taiwan while urging Taipei to increase its own defense spending. The legislation also recommends that Washington continue "regular sales of defense articles" to Taiwan and back Taipei's participation in international organizations—something Beijing emphatically resists.

The Trump administration doesn't seem to need much prodding. U.S. warships have transited the Taiwan Strait on several occasions over the past year to demonstrate military support for Taipei. At the Shangri-La Dialogue session, Acting Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan stated that the United States would no longer "tiptoe around" destabilizing Chinese behavior regarding Taiwan or the South China Sea.

While Americans are focused on the ongoing trade war between the United States and China, the danger is growing of an actual shooting war that could involve Taiwan. The rhetoric coming out of both Beijing and Taipei is increasingly confrontational and shrill. Taiwan's governing party is firmly committed to resisting the PRC's pressure for reunification; indeed, incumbent president Tsai Ing-wen is being challenged by an even more hardline, pro-independence faction within the DPP. At the same time, Chinese leaders seem intent on pushing their reunification agenda with greater insistence and urgency.

Those are not comforting trends. Washington has a vague but very real commitment under the Taiwan Relations Act to protect the island's security. Both Congress and the Trump administration seem to be drifting toward boosting the traditional level of U.S. support in response to Beijing's escalating pressure on Taiwan. The danger is growing that the TRA's paper security commitment may be put to a real-world test. U.S. leaders and the American people need to ask themselves whether they are really willing to risk war with a nuclear-armed power to protect Taiwan. The prudent answer clearly should be "no."

Of sanctions and trade wars



TEHRAN (FNA) — The United States has launched an economic war against Iran, which has no other choice but to take necessary countermeasures. The world is watching with great concern, and nations have every reason to worry, because Washington is resolved to pursue unilateralism.

In the world where we live, all countries are interdependent. At stake are the global security and economy and everyone in it. There will be no winners in a trade or sanction war, and no one can remain unaffected. In fact, Iran is not the only target. Since 2017, the United States has initiated trade wars with China and additional tariffs and other measures against its major trading partners. It has also imposed illegal sanctions on countries like Iraq, Syria and Libya.

Claiming "America First," the United States has also adopted a series of unilateral and protectionist measures, wielding a "big stick" of tariffs to force its own will onto China and others. This is sheer trade bullying and does harm to the world. It undermines the authority of the multilateral trading system, the WTO that has been propagated by the US-led West itself.

The United States, by launching unilateral investigations according to its domestic law and imposing additional tariffs on Chinese products, has violated WTO rules, such as most-favored-nation treatment and tariff binding. By imposing illegal and unjustified sanctions on Iran, it has also violated the fundamental norms of international law.

This hurts the interests of many countries, weakens the authority of the WTO, and the UN and its dispute settlement mechanism, and jeopardizes the multilateral trading system and the international political order. It poses a serious threat to global growth and security. The global economy is yet to fully recover from the devastating financial crisis in 2008.

However, some people may have already forgotten the pain. Higher tariffs have caused disorder of international trade, impending

global recovery and hurting businesses and well-being of the people. As a result, the global economy is facing a rising risk of recession. The same could be said about America's wars in the region. The region is yet to recover from the illegal wars on Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen.

In its Global Economic Prospects released in January 2019, the World Bank revised its forecast of global growth further down to 2.9 percent, citing continuous trade frictions as a major downward risk. The IMF, in its

World Economic Outlook report published in April, marked down its projection of world economic growth for 2019 to 3.3 percent from the 2018 estimate of 3.6 percent, suggesting that economic and trade friction could further depress the global economy and weaken already anemic investment.

The oil ban on Iran disrupts global energy and supply chains. Iran is a key oil supplier with key links in global energy and supply chains. Given the large volume of oil and components from the country and other end-products exported to the world markets, the US oil ban will hurt all multinationals – not least US ones – that work with Iran and other countries.

The oil ban measures drive up the costs of supply chains and undermine their stability and security. Some countries and businesses are forced to relocate sources of supply at the expense of optimal global allocation of resources. What is even more worrying is that the US measures are putting multilateralism under threat.

In fact, slapping sanctions and tariffs and abusing state power to crush companies and undermine countries look quite familiar, reminding us of other US moves in recent years: The withdrawal from UNESCO and the UN Human Rights Council, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Iran nuclear deal known as the JCPOA. Being challenged is the rules-based international order and the authority of the UN.

Multilateralism and mutually-beneficial cooperation are in the interests of all countries. Unilateralism and protectionism, on the other hand, go against the trend of history and will lead to nowhere. Facing bullying, countries cannot sit by in silence; after all, anyone could be the next victim.

The US is entirely responsible for the severe setback in security in the Persian Gulf and the broader Middle East. This hasn't made America great again. On the contrary, it has hurt regional security, US economy, and global energy markets. Iran's position is clear: Iran does not want a war, but it is not afraid of one; if the war reaches its doorstep, it will fight to the end.

Concerning differences and frictions on the region and security front, Iran has already stuck a nuclear deal in what was to be a win-win agreement. Now after increasing US unilateralism that saw an abrogation of the nuclear deal by Washington and after EU's inaction to provide Tehran with the promised merits, the deal has changed nature into a zero-sum game, leaving Iran no other option but to stop a trend that will eventually end up in its loss. Hence, Tehran is warning the EU and the US change course and revise their tricky strategy or wait for Iran's reciprocal move. In essence, this is not Tehran that should sit to the negotiating table with Washington; rather this is the US that should stop unilateralism and get back to the multilaterally and internationally endorsed nuclear deal and remove the sanctions reimposed on Iran.

What is true U.S. motivation for trade war?

GLOBAL TIMES — The China-US trade war is mired in a stalemate. Strategic distrust between the two sides is deepening. There is a severe lack of political motivation to break the deadlock.

Is this a trade war in the traditional sense? At the very beginning, both sides believed the US was trying to redefine China-US relations via the trade war. But such viewpoints were not that solid. It appeared that US President Donald Trump was aiming to solve the trade imbalance between the two countries and protect US intellectual property rights in a way he deemed appropriate. But he has many radical advisors around him. The attitude of Washington was swaying.

The US crackdown on Chinese tech giant Huawei reinforces the understanding of Chinese society that the US did not simply intend to address the trade imbalance but also wanted to deal a heavy blow to China's high-tech development capability and further contain China's development. The maximum pressure imposed by the US has also generated a serious sense of crisis among the Chinese people.

If China compromises, that means it renders the US the right to define and reshape future China-US relations at will. The US would resort to maximum pressure as a means to make hegemonic demands at China, a catastrophe for China's national security.

Washington often claims that China's development model poses a threat, while the Chinese people tend to think that the US elite do not accept China's development based on its current strength.

The US should understand that China's rapid development is driven by the wish of the Chinese people to live a better life. US containment of China's development, in essence, restricts the right of the Chinese people to improve their lives. If the US links the trade war with China to its suppression of the Chinese people's wishes, it is a dangerous confrontation with the collective right of the Chinese people.

China and the US can negotiate their ways of trading. China's development is a win-win and all-win process. If China's development squeezes the room of other countries,

it would be unsustainable and China will be bound to adjust.

China cannot accept the bossy US approach. Washington uses tariffs as a stick, a hegemonic move that threatens China's national interests. If the US institutionalizes such an attitude toward China, uses tariffs and cuts off supply of high-tech products like chips as leverage, China will firmly resist US pressure at whatever cost.

Both China and the US must be clear and make it clear to each other what they want to gain from the trade war. Their words must match deeds and trust on the other side. If distrust prevails from this strategic problem, China-US ties can hardly ease and any new agreement, if made, will soon be scrapped. The global economic integration resulting from globalization is different from that of the Cold War era. People of all countries cherish peace and are tired of conflicts and chaos. This means a new cold war will not persist as a long-term strategy.

China and the US should avoid the worst-case scenario that will be detrimental to

Jonathan Fryer: UK government foolishly triggers article 50 to divorce from EU

of the nation?

A: Because the referendum result was so close (52:48 for Leave) credible reports of foreign interference, notably from Russian-based bots, promoting Leave, undermine the validity of the outcome. This situation is made worse by the fact that the Leave campaign lied, e.g. saying that Britain sends £350 million a week to the EU and that Turkey was about to join the EU. Boris Johnson, former Foreign Secretary, is facing court proceedings over his false statements during the campaign. Opinion polls suggest that there has been a shift in public opinion in the UK and if there were a second referendum this time Remain would win. But the Conservative government, as well as the leadership of the opposition Labour Party, are determined to press on with Brexit, to "respect" the result of the 2016 vote. However, the country is deeply divided over the matter, as was shown in the European elections in May when the two best performing parties were the Brexit Party championing Brexit and the Liberal Democrats demanding Stop Brexit.

Speaking with FNA in an exclusive interview, Mr. Jonathan Fryer said, "There is no guarantee that Mrs May's successor will be more successful in delivering Brexit than she has been. There is strong opposition to the Withdrawal Agreement Bill in the House of Commons which heightens the risk of Britain crashing out of the EU without a deal, which could have disastrous economic and practical consequences."

Jonathan Fryer is a British writer, broadcaster, lecturer and Liberal Democrat politician. He served as Chairman of the London Liberal Democrats, where he supervised the headquarters' move to Brixton and streamlined its operations.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ Studies show the social media were full of pro-Brexit deliberate interferences prior and at the time of the divorce referendum. Do you believe such reports should be taken into consideration by the current policy makers delivering Brexit? Is that for certain the referendum reflected the real intention

EU needs Britain more than Britain needs the EU, and in some cases going to Brussels badly prepared for the negotiations on the draft Withdrawal Agreement. It was a big mistake not to consult with other political parties until after problems were entrenched. Similarly, the government should have tested opinion within Parliament rather than trying to ram its Agreement through. Theresa May personally showed herself to be stubborn and unwilling to take advice. By early May this year she was even refusing to meet Cabinet Ministers, while at the same time prevaricating about the date of her departure. In the meantime, the other EU member states have become increasingly exasperated by the British government's stance, though probably they would be relieved if Brexit does not happen.

■ Theresa May was determined to deliver the Brexit; but, she failed. Is there guarantee that the next leader succeeding her will not face exactly the same Brexit conundrum that brought her down?

A: There is no guarantee that Mrs May's successor will be more successful in delivering Brexit than she has been. There is strong opposition to the Withdrawal Agreement Bill in the House of Commons which heightens the risk of Britain crashing out of the EU on 31 October without a deal, which could have disastrous economic and practical consequences. Business and industry are rightly



worried about this. But the narrative of No Deal Brexit, supported by the Brexit Party, has gained increasing traction within the Conservative Party. Nonetheless a growing number of senior Conservatives, such as the Chancellor Finance Minister Philip Hammond, have been arguing that it may be impossible for Parliament to agree on a way forward, other than ruling out No Deal, so therefore the matter should be put back to the British people in another referendum, in which Remain would be an option. For such a referendum, or even a general election, to happen there would probably need to be another extension to Article 50 beyond 31 October. There is a groundswell of opinion in favour of such a "People's Vote", but of course no guarantee, despite the opinion polls, that Remain would win, especially if the campaign is as mendacious as the last one.

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The Tehran Times new pocket-sized glossary is now available on the market. The reader-friendly is a rich source of the most common journalistic terminology collected by the daily's retired staff.

It can benefit a wide range of tastes from students to professional journalists. Persian equivalents have been given for all entries, including idioms and expressions. The glossary also includes example sentences for entries the authors thought it would be a bit difficult to learn.

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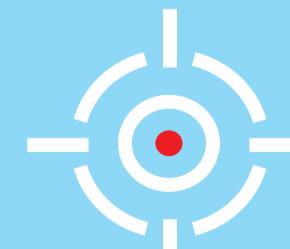
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Apollo 11's 50th anniversary evokes glory, regret in space travel

Fifty years after Apollo 11 astronauts were first to walk on the moon, the United States and the world are celebrating the historic achievement, while many also lament that moon missions ended decades ago.

The 50th anniversary recalls the spirit and riveting fascination of that first moon mission. Some 600 million people around the globe are believed to have watched the first moonwalk on television -- mostly in black and white, on an 18-inch screen.

The July 20 anniversary also highlights the brief, often politically doomed, attempts to mount another moon mission over the last few decades. And it has put a spotlight on NASA's plan under the Trump administration to launch the Artemis program -- named for the twin sister of Apollo in Greek mythology.

For many, like Apollo astronaut Al Worden, the fact that no one has returned to the moon since 1972 is a harsh and unfortunate reality.

"This anniversary reminds me that there was a time when this country could do great things," said Worden, 87, who orbited the moon as Command Module pilot for Apollo 15, which launched July 26, 1971.

"We had a president who set the tone, explained it and got the resources. We have not had that type of leadership since then," Worden said.

He and many others believe that space ultimately will save humanity as the population and problems grow on Earth.

"We know we can't live here forever," Worden said. "The success of Apollo reminds us that as Americans, if we get together and work together, we can do incredible, impossible things."

Recalling the success of the Apollo program is nothing short of mind-blowing for Regina Spellman and Ken Poimboeuf.

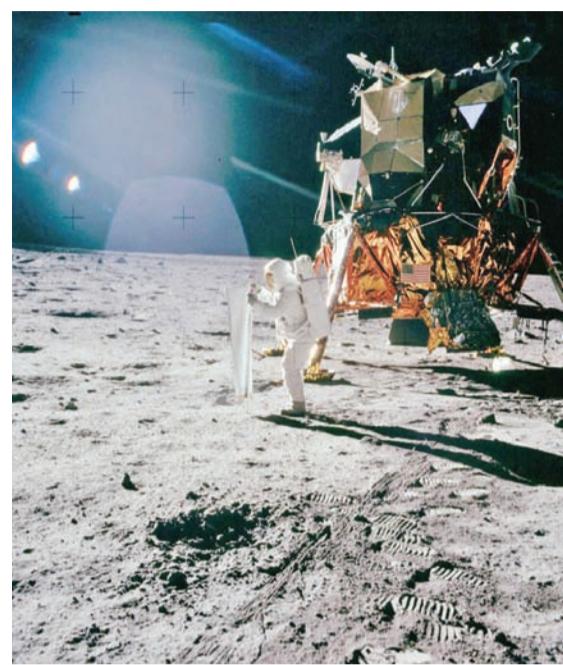
They are working on retooling Pad 39B at Kennedy Space Center in Florida, where Apollo 10 launched, to handle new missions to the moon. NASA has a goal of returning people to the moon by 2024.

Poimboeuf, 76, is a contractor who also worked as an electrical engineer at the space center during the Apollo era, including the Apollo 11 mission.

"I was awestruck by Apollo 11," said Poimboeuf, who works for Millennium Engineering and Integration. "People were all saying, 'I can't believe we're really doing this.'"

Spellman is NASA's senior project manager on the pad renovations. She said her job makes her think every day about the challenges the Apollo program overcame.

"They started with a clean slate. Without that ability to stand on the shoulders of the giants that came before us, things would be much more difficult," Spellman said.



Still there are new unknowns, she said.

"By establishing a sustainable presence on the moon, we're not going to know what to expect because no one has ever done that," she said. "We've got a brand-new launch vehicle also, the space launch system."

With the planned Artemis moon missions, the space launch system would include an SLS rocket, the largest since Apollo's Saturn V, and an Orion capsule.

Any talk about Apollo history, or of returning to the moon, must include the sobering truth about putting people in space: Accidents -- even fatalities -- can and do occur.

Robert Sieck, a NASA retiree and former shuttle launch director, recalls the horrific fire that killed three astronauts during an Apollo 1 launch test.

The fire on Jan. 27, 1967, swept through the command module, killing Roger Chaffee, Ed White and Gus Grissom. The Apollo program was put on hold more than 18 months and underwent major redesign. That accident is now studied, along with the in-flight explosions of the shuttles Challenger and Columbia, in NASA's Lessons Learned program.

Sieck, 80, had been in a neighboring control room at the space center that day and left work an hour before the fire. Like millions of Americans, he watched it on TV.

"Having known the astronauts involved, there was grief and shock. As an engineer, we had to learn from that," Sieck said. He called the eventual Apollo success "a great example of the teamwork" of thousands of people.

"It didn't feel like work. We enjoyed what we were doing," he said. "The stress did have an impact on families, though. It was rewarding work, but only the strong survived."

Sieck said he never thought it would be decades before astronauts returned to the moon or even ventured on to Mars.

"But we came this far, let's keep going," he said.

Moving forward, NASA's Lessons Learned program is key to preventing further tragedy, while all acknowledge that it is impossible to remove risk from space exploration.

Michael Ciannilli, who manages the program, said the key lessons focus on human behavior and group dynamics, such as heading off complacency in established programs and getting personnel to speak up about problems and listening to them.

Some are critical of NASA's new efforts to go to the moon. NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine has said repeatedly that the biggest obstacle is political, not technical.

Worden said he has seen nothing but Apollo ideas with slight variations and updates in the space agency. He also said that new space companies SpaceX and Blue Origin seem to have a big leg up on NASA.

"In my mind, we've sort of lost the inventive edge we had, because we really just sort of are building the same thing we did 50 years ago," Worden said. "SLS is a repeat of the Saturn V. It's a big rocket, but it's pretty much the same construction of Saturn V. The Orion is just another Apollo spacecraft that's a little bigger."

Talk of going to Mars is largely speculation, he said, because the spacecraft required doesn't exist.

"The shuttle and space station are significant, but we need to go beyond Earth orbit," Worden said.

Bob Cabana, director of Kennedy Space Center, took on critics in recent comments to the media.

"I've heard people say, 'China just landed on the far side of the moon. How did we fall so far behind after Apollo?'" Cabana said. "Well, we've also landed on the far side -- of Mars. That was a pretty fantastic accomplishment. We also were just flying to an asteroid. And flying by Ultima Thule beyond Pluto."

Cabana, 70, is a former space shuttle astronaut. He said he wants to do things that inspire a new generation.

"I'm part of the Apollo Generation. I got to see Apollo 13 launch. That planted a seed. ... I thought maybe I could do that," Cabana said. "But we want to establish the Artemis Generation."

(Source: UPI)

Huge, unexplained "mass" spotted under the moon

A huge, mysterious "mass of material" has been spotted underneath the Moon.

The vast chunk is sitting underneath the biggest crater in the entire solar system, known as the South Pole-Aitken basin.

And it may be part of the material that smashed into our neighbor and formed the planet, according to the researchers who discovered it. But that is just one theory on where it may have come from, and scientists stress that it is still unknown what the material is and where it might have come from.

"Imagine taking a pile of metal five times larger than the Big Island of Hawaii and burying it underground. That's roughly how much unexpected mass we detected," said Peter B James, assistant professor of planetary geophysics in Baylor's College of Arts & Sciences and lead author on a new study of the huge chunk.

The crater that the mass sits on top of is over-shaped and 2,000 kilometers wide. It goes down several miles.

Though it is incredibly vast, it can't be seen from Earth because it is on the so-called dark side of the Moon, which faces away from us at all times.

Instead, it was examined by data to send to researchers by NASA spacecraft that sent back data on the small changes in gravity around the Moon.

"When we combined that with lunar topography data from the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter, we discovered the unexpectedly large amount of mass hundreds of miles underneath the South Pole-Aitken basin," said Professor James, whose research has been published in Geophysical Research Letters. "One of the explanations of this extra mass is that the metal from the asteroid that



formed this crater is still embedded in the Moon's mantle."

Scientists simulated a possible collision with an asteroid on a computer, and found that some kinds of metal could settle into the layer between the crust and the core, where this chunk is still sitting.

"We did the math and showed that a sufficiently dispersed core of the asteroid that made the impact could remain suspended in the Moon's mantle until the present day, rather than sinking to the Moon's core," Professor James said in a statement.

If it is an asteroid impact, then it could be an unprecedented look at the kinds of collisions that were happening four billion years ago, when the crater was formed. Bigger impacts are thought to have happened through history -- even on Earth -- but they have been lost with time, and so the crater could be a way of looking back at a process that shaped our own planet and those that surround us.

But the mass might also have formed with the Moon itself. It might be a build-up of dense gas that came about when the Moon formed into the large solid mass that we know today.

(Source: The Independent)

Oak tree has evolutionary roots in Southern Hemisphere

Researchers have unearthed a collection of chinquapin fruit and leaf fossils in Patagonia that suggests the oak and beech family, one of the most important plant families, has evolutionary roots in the Southern Hemisphere.

"The oak and beech family is recognized everywhere as one of the most important plant groups and has always been considered northern," Peter Wilf, professor of geosciences at Pennsylvania State University, said in a news release. "We're adding a huge spatial dimension to the history of the Fagaceae family, and that's exciting."

Plant species belonging to the Fagaceae family are common throughout the Northern Hemisphere. The only members known to grow on the other side of the equator are found in Southeast Asia.

But new analysis suggests the family once extended much farther into the Southern Hemisphere. The tropical forests of Asia, researchers estimate, once stretched across thousands of miles across the Gondwanan supercontinent.

Scientists discovered oak-like leaves among the thousands of leaf fossils recovered from Laguna del Hunco, a dig site in Argentina's Chubut province. Researchers from the U.S. and Argentina have been excavating ancient plant fossils at the site for nearly two decades.

The newly identified oak-like leaves feature straight secondary veins and one tooth per secondary vein. Scientists also found fossilized fruits belonging to Castanopsis, an Asian evergreen genus. Today, Castanopsis species dominate the low elevation mountain rainforests of Southeast Asia.

"One of the first clues was a little lip where the fruit is splitting open," Wilf said. "I recognized this lip as being similar to the fruit of the Japanese chinquapin. Then I realized there's a nut inside."



The new findings -- published this week in the journal *Science* -- suggest modern Castanopsis species trace their evolutionary origins to the Southern Hemisphere, and that during the Eocene, 52.2 million years ago, beech and oak relatives proliferated throughout the Southern Hemisphere.

"We're finding, in the same rocks as Castanopsis, fossils of many other plants that live with it today in New Guinea and elsewhere, including ferns, conifers and flowering plants," said Wilf. "You can trace some of the associations with Castanopsis seen in Eocene Argentina to southern China and beyond."

Oak and beech ancestors disappeared from Patagonia millions of years ago as a result of climate change. Though adaptable, the ancient plant family requires time and space to adjust. Today, climate change is happening at a rapid pace.

"Those kinds of climate changes can have massive effects on biodiversity," said Kevin Nixon, a professor of plant biology at Cornell University. "The relevance of understanding this is we can start to look at extinction processes. The better we can understand what causes extinction, the better we can deal with it."

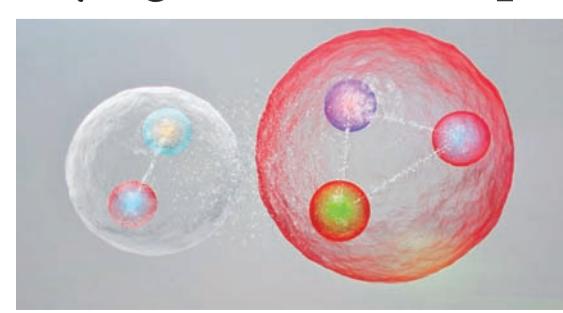
(Source: UPI)

Physicists have finally figured out how pentaquarks are built

To make a quark quintet, combine a trio and a duo.

Exotic subatomic particles called pentaquarks contain five smaller particles called quarks and antiquarks. But those particles aren't a simple clump of five constituents rattling around. Instead, the pentaquarks are molecule-like agglomerations of a pair of smaller particles, each of which consists of either three quarks or a quark and an antiquark, scientists report in the June 7 *Physical Review Letters*.

First spotted in 2015 at the Large Hadron Collider in Geneva, pentaquarks were unlike anything seen before. All previous known quark-containing particles were either baryons -- particles such as protons and neutrons which contain three quarks -- or mesons, which consist of one



quark and one antiquark. But pentaquarks, with their five component particles, didn't fit into either of those

categories.

"There was no clear picture how these pentaquarks were built," says particle physicist Tomasz Skwarnicki of Syracuse University in New York, a coauthor of the study.

Some scientists thought that the pentaquarks' five constituents could mingle on an equal footing. But detailed measurements from the LHCb experiment reveal that the pentaquarks are made from two known particles, a baryon and a meson, stuck together. That finding makes the particles a bit less exotic than had been speculated.

Still, Skwarnicki says, the result reveals new facets of particle physics: Before this result, it wasn't clear that baryons and mesons could glom onto one another at all.

(Source: science news.org)

Ancient asteroid crater located off coast of Scotland

The location of an ancient impact crater made by the biggest asteroid ever to hit Britain has been traced to a spot under the sea between mainland Scotland and the Outer Hebrides.

Researchers at Oxford and Aberdeen universities found signs of the violent collision in Scotland on a field trip in 2008, but have only now pinpointed where the asteroid came down.

Tests on rocks near Ullapool in north-west Scotland revealed that an object about a mile wide had crashed into a spot in the Minch, a strait that separates the mainland and northern Inner Hebrides from Lewis and Harris, six miles west of the village of Lochinver.

The 38,000 mph collision, which thumped a 12-mile-wide crater into the ground, happened 1.2bn years ago, when most life on Earth was still in the oceans and plants had yet to take root on land. At the time, what is now Scotland was a semi-arid land that lay close to the equator.

The impact would have sent huge roiling clouds of dust and gas at several hundred degrees in all directions from the impact site," said Ken Amor, an Oxford researcher who led the latest study. What is left of the crater is submerged in 200-meter-deep water and covered in sediment.

The first hints of the impact came more than a decade ago when Amor was helping undergraduates on a geology field trip in the Scottish Highlands. On the last day, the scientists stopped in Stoer, a small village, to inspect an unusual rock formation known as the Stac Fada member (SFM).

Previous researchers speculated that the distinctive red sandstone had come from a volcano, but Amor realized that "strange green blobs" in the rock resembled features of an impact crater that underlies the town of Nördlingen near the Danube in western Bavaria. Amor took samples of the SFM back to Oxford and found strong evidence of an asteroid strike: quartz crystals that had been deformed by the shock of an impact.

He also found high levels of platinum and palladium, metals that are enriched in meteorites, the name given to space rocks that survive their fiery passage through the atmosphere to reach Earth's surface.

Having confirmed that an asteroid had come down near Stoer, Amor's team set about finding the impact crater. Using three independent techniques that drew on the scatter of dust and rocks thrown up by the impact, and the orientation of tiny magnetic grains blasted into the sky, the researchers traced backwards to the point of impact. Details of the work appear in the *Journal of the Geological Society*.

Assuming the crater has not been eroded away, it should be possible to detect with a seismic reflection survey of the kind used by prospecting oil companies, Amor said. Further studies of the rock might enable scientists to trace the meteorite back to a family of asteroids still orbiting the sun.

It is unclear how common such impacts are because craters are wiped from Earth's surface by erosion, burial and plate tectonics. However, asteroids of the size of the one that hit the Minch are thought to strike between once every 100,000 years and once every 1m years. While the impact would have been dramatic, sending a mushroom cloud and fireball high into the sky, it was minor compared with the spectacular strike in Mexico's Yucatan peninsula 66m years ago, when a space rock estimated at six to 50 miles wide put an end to the reign of the dinosaurs.

(Source: The Guardian)

Subaru Telescope captures 1800 exploding stars

By combining one of the world's most powerful digital cameras and a telescope capable of capturing a wider shot of the night sky compared to other big telescopes, a team of researchers from Japan have been able to identify about 1800 new supernovae, including 58 Type Ia supernovae 8 billion light years away, reports a new study recently released online.

A supernova is the name given to an exploding star that has reached the end of its life. The star often becomes as bright as its host galaxy, shining one billion times brighter than the Sun for anytime between a month to six months before dimming down. Supernova classed as Type Ia are useful because their constant maximum brightness allows researchers to calculate how far the star is from Earth. This is particularly useful for researchers who want to measure the expansion of the Universe.

In recent years, researchers began reporting a new type of supernovae five to ten times brighter than Type Ia supernovae. Named Super Luminous Supernovae, many have been trying to learn more about these stars. Their unusual brightness enables researchers to spot stars in the farthest parts of the Universe usually too faint to observe. Since distant Universe means the early Universe, studying this kind of star could reveal characteristics about the first, massive stars created after the Big Bang.

But supernovae are rare events, and there are only a handful of telescopes in the world capable of capturing sharp images of distant stars. In order to maximize the chances of observing a supernova, a team led by Kavli Institute for the Physics and Mathematics of the Universe (Kavli IPMU) Professor Naoki Yasuda, and researchers from Tohoku University, Konan University, the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan, School of Science, the University of Tokyo, and Kyoto University, used the Subaru Telescope.

This telescope is capable of generating shape stellar images, and the Hyper Suprime-Cam, an 870 mega-pixel digital camera attached at its top, captures a very wide area of the night

Oman's tourism rates soar as expat numbers plummet

The number of foreign tourists visiting Oman in April rose by more than a third compared with the same time last year, according to figures issued by the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

There were 330,685 foreign visitors to Oman in April 2019 – 84,452 more than the same month in the previous year, accounting for a 34.3 percent increase.

The majority of the visitors were GCC nationals – with 152,249 visitors making up 46 percent of the overall number of tourists in April this year, an increase of 41 percent.

There were 155,810 non-Arab nationals visiting from across the world, with the main bulk from Europe – predominantly Germany, the UK, Italy and Spain.



Europeans still account for the bulk of non-Arab visitors to Oman.

Oman saw 14,000 cruise ship visitors for the same time period – that was 53.7 percent more than the same month in 2018.

And the number of hotel guests rose by nearly half as much from 134,000 in April 2018 to 199,000 in April, 2019.

While the number of guests staying in Oman's hotels increased, room rates remained steady year-on-year, although occupancy rates fell slightly from 64.3 percent to 63 percent.

While the report did not attempt to explain the latter, local press have reported an increase in the number of available hotel and hotel apartment rooms across the country.

But while the number of foreign tourists is on the increase, the country's Omanization project has seen the expat population fall below 2 million for the first time in two years, the NCSI said in a separate report.

The drop means foreign residents now only account for 43 percent of the country's overall population – the lowest in three years.

The decline in expat numbers is the result of Oman's ongoing expat visa ban for certain professions and industries aimed at tackling the number of unemployed locals.

(Source: Arab News)

U.S. passengers say they'd wait to ride the Boeing 737 max again

Boeing may soon be ready to return its 737 Max 8 plane to service, but not all passengers are ready to fly on it quite yet.

According to a new study for Atmosphere, led by consultant Henry Harteveldt, 20 percent of U.S. travelers would definitely avoid flying on a Boeing 737 Max 8 plane in the first six months after flights on the aircraft resume, The Los Angeles Times reported. The study noted that more than 40 percent of would-be flyers would be willing to pay more for a different aircraft or take a less convenient flight to avoid the Max.

"Travelers aren't merely scared of the 737 Max, they're terrified of it," Harteveldt said in the report, according to the newspaper. "The 737 Max is, for now, an 'airplane non grata' – a plane passengers do not want to fly." The survey found that only 14 percent of respondents would definitely fly on a 737 Max within six months of its return.

(Source: MSN)

ROUND THE GLOBE

Bardejov

A World Heritage, the town of Bardejov is located in north-eastern Slovakia, on a floodplain terrace of the river Topla near the Polish border.

Due to its proximity to the major trade route that stretches across the Carpathian Mountains, from Hungary into Poland, Bardejov was able to develop into an important medieval town.

The town's surviving urban plan, with a regular division of streets around a spacious market square, is an indication of European civilization from the 13th to 14th centuries.



Burghers' houses, dating from the first half of the 15th century, surround three sides of the square and document the highly developed burgher culture. The fourth side of the square is closed by the Roman Catholic Church of St. Giles, a three-nave Gothic basilica with a precious collection of eleven late Gothic altars.

The Renaissance town hall occupies the center of the square. The historic core of the town is encircled by the fortification system which was, at the time of its construction, one of the most advanced in Central Europe.

Bardejov provides exceptionally well-preserved evidence of the economic and social structure of trading towns in medieval Central Europe. Its surviving building stock represents a developed burgher culture and Jewish community, thus illustrating a multi-national and multi-cultural society.

The delimitation and size of the property are appropriate and all the important elements necessary to convey the Outstanding Universal Value of the property are contained within its boundaries.

(Source: UNESCO)

Plan underway to improve accessibility for disabled travelers, locals

TOURISM TEHRAN – Iran's Welfare Organization is encouraging initiatives to make disabled tourists more comfortable on vacations and to improve the quality of life for disabled locals.

"We are pursuing a pilot plan to turn the Qeshm Free Trade Zone into a travel destination suitable for the physically-impaired people and then expand the scheme to other areas," Mehr quoted Ebrahim Kazemi, an official with the Organization, as saying on Tuesday.

Based on a memorandum of understanding signed between the Organization and Qeshm Free Trade Zone, Qeshm Island will be the first free zone to be fit for commuting of the disabled people, he said.

The plan will subsequently be implemented in the provinces of Lorestan, Golestan, and Isfahan, the official added.

In May, Vali Teymouri, the deputy tourism chief, announced that Si-e Tir, a historical stone-paved one-way street in downtown Tehran, was designated as an accessible tourism destination for all people, deputy



tourism chief has said.

Introduced by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the creation of the international "Accessible Tourism Destination" aims to make sure that a destination can be enjoyed by any tourist, regardless of their physical, sensory or cognitive abilities.

Development and implementation of the Accessible Tourism Destination(s), that shifts the focus on the availability of tourism services for people with disabilities and veterans, is jointly on the agenda of the UNWTO and the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, Teymouri said.

The UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All are meant to be used as a general, basic mainstreaming framework for ensuring that people with disabilities have access to the physical environment, the transportation system, information and communications channels, as well as to a wide range of public facilities and services.

Tehran street titled "Handicrafts Parade"



HERITAGE TEHRAN – Authorities in the capital city of Tehran have granted the title of "Handicrafts Parade" to a downtown street, where there are tens of shops specialized in handicrafts, CHTN reported.

The title was given to Nejatollahi Street (former Villa) on June 10, which marks the World Handicrafts Day, in a ceremony attended by a host of people including Tehran Mayor Pirouz Hanachi, tourism chief Ali-Asghar Mounesan,

Ghada Hijavi, the head of World Crafts Council-Asia Pacific Region and several other officials.

The street, situated south of Karim Khan Blvd, rings a bell for Iranian nationals and even travelers to the ancient land when it comes to buying or browsing Iranian handicrafts.

According to data compiled by the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, over two million artisans are currently working in various fields of handicrafts across Iran.

Some 70,000 artisans, craftspeople live in Isfahan province



HERITAGE TEHRAN – Some 70,000 artisans and craftspeople have so far been identified across the central province of Isfahan.

"[Some] one-third of the world's handicrafts are practiced in Isfahan, and estimates by the provincial tourism department suggest that currently 70,000 craftspeople live in Isfahan province," provincial tourism chief Fereydoun Al-lahyari said on Monday, CHTN reported.

More than two million artisans are currently working in various fields of

handicrafts across Iran, Pouya Mahmoudian, the deputy director of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization said in February.

"Until now, some 400,000 craftspeople have been registered with the CHHTO," Pouya Mahmoudian said.

According to a recent data compiled by the CHHTO, handicrafts exports from the Islamic Republic reached \$289 million in the past Iranian calendar year 1397 (ended March 20), showing three percent growth year on year.

Subatan highlands, a heaven for hikers, nature lovers and off-road adventurers



TOURISM TEHRAN – Subatan highlands, popularly known as a "heaven" in northwestern Iran, is also a heaven for trekking, hiking and adventurous backpacking trips. It's also an amazing off-road destination.

The countryside may be a top choice for ones seeking to beat the heat escaping the hustle and bustle of city life. It rewards its visitors with stunning landscapes and fascinating vistas and also the hospitality and culture of locals.

The trek usually starts from Neor Lake passing through the green Talesh mountains in a west-to-east direction. Meeting or even conversing with indigenous nomads in the tents and huts may be a highlight of your journey!

Situated between Ardabil and Khalkhal, the Neor Lake is a must-see for nature enthusiasts. First half of the year is a preferred time to visit Subatan.

Trekkers should bear in mind that trekking shoes and hiking equipment are needed since the walking time is quite long. Remember to bring your wind coat and an extra layer in a light backpack!



Dramatic change in ancient nomad diets coincides with expansion of networks across Eurasia

A meta-analysis of dietary information recorded in the bones of ancient animals and humans recovered from sites scattered across the Eurasian steppe, from the Caucasus region to Mongolia, demonstrates that pastoralists spread domesticated crops across the steppe through their trade and social networks.

Researchers from Kiel University sifted through previously published stable isotopic data and applied new quantitative analyses that calibrate human dietary intake against environmental inputs. The results have allowed them to better isolate the timing of the incorporation of agricultural products into the diets of pastoral nomads and, crucially, link burgeoning socio-political networks to this dietary transformation.

Through a big data project that explored over a thousand stable isotope data points, researchers were able to find evidence for an early transition to agriculture -- based on dietary intake across Eurasia. "Our understanding of the pace of crop transmission across the Eurasian steppe

has been surprisingly unclear due in part to a focus on the excavation of cemeteries, rather than settlements where people threw out their food," says Alicia Ventresca Miller, lead author, formerly of Kiel University and currently at the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History. "Even when settlement sites are excavated, the preservation of carbonized seed remains is often poor. This is what makes stable isotope analyses of human remains from this region so valuable -- it provides direct insights into the dietary dynamics of ancient pastoralists who inhabited diverse environments."

Millet spreads across the Eurasian steppe

Millet, originally domesticated in China, appears to have been occasionally consumed at low levels by pastoralists inhabiting the far-flung regions of Siberia and southeastern Kazakhstan, possibly as early as the late third millennium. This initial uptake of millet coincided with the expansion of trans-regional networks across the steppe, when objects and ideas were first regularly

exchanged over long-distances.

However, it was not until a thousand years later that millet became a regular feature of pastoralist diets. This timing coincides with the intensification of complex political structures at the transition to the Iron Age. Burgeoning socio-political confederations drove a marked increase in the exchange of costly prestige goods, which strengthened political networks -- and facilitated the transfer of cultigens.

Wheat and Barley in the Trans-Urals

Despite taking part in these political networks, groups in the Trans-Urals invested in wheat and barley farming rather than millet. A dietary focus on wheat and barley may have been due to different farming techniques, greater water availability, or a higher value on these cultigens. "Our research suggests that cultigens were converted from a rare luxury during the Bronze Age to a medium demarcating elite participation in political networks during the Iron Age," states Cheryl Makarewicz of Kiel University.

Regional variation in millet consumption

While herding of livestock was widespread, not all regions adopted millet. In southwest Siberia, dietary intake was focused on pastoral animal products and locally available wild plants and fish. In contrast, the delayed adoption of millet by populations in Mongolia during the Late Iron Age coincides with the rise of the Xiongnu nomadic empire. "This is particularly interesting because it suggests that communities in Mongolia and Siberia opted out of the transition to millet agriculture, while continuing to engage with neighboring groups," explains Ventresca Miller.

This study shows the great potential of using the available isotope record to provide evidence for human dietary intake in areas where paleobotany is understudied. Further research should clarify the exact type of grains, for example broomcorn or foxtail millet, were fundamental to the shift in dietary intake and how networks of exchange linked different regions.

(Source: Science Daily)

'Only 5% of Iranians aware of color-coded food labels on products'

HEALTH TEHRAN — Only 5 percent of people in the country are aware of color-coded food labels on products, the Health Ministry's public relations director Kianoush Jahanpour announced, IRNA reported on Monday.

Since summer 2017, Iranian manufacturers are required to include 'traffic light' labels on food packaging to signify the fat, saturated fat, sugar, and salt content of the food stuff.

"Unfortunately people are not well informed about these labels to observe them in their choices," he said.

Iran is one of the first countries in which all the products have the 'traffic light' labels on food packaging, he explained.

In early March, the Food and Drug Administration of Iran (FDIA) announced that it launched a system on TTAC (Track-n-Trace and Authentication Control) application through which users can check authenticity of food products.

The application, which was previously used for medicine, provides several services. Along with scanning the barcode and Checking UID, users have the possibility to check the scratch-code installed on the item in the system for authenticating. It is also possible to obtain information about certain drugs using its name or ATC code.



Tagged with the traffic light labels it help consumers to make healthier choices consider-

ering the amounts of unhealthy substances in food items.

The color-coded food labels are intended to help shoppers know at a glance whether a product contains a low, medium or high amount of fat, saturated fat, salt, sugar and calories and make choices for a more healthier and balanced diet

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Unhealthy diet amongst Iranians

In December 2018, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences announced that obesity and overweight have grown 5.5 folds over the past four decades in Iran.

Studies show that salt intake of Iranians amounts to 10.6 germs a day which almost doubles global standards.

Meanwhile, the Iranian Heart Association has announced that salt consumption in Iran is twice as much as global standards.

World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that adults consume less than 5 grams (just under a teaspoon) of salt per day; however, based on global statistics, most people consume too much salt — on average 9–12 grams per day that is around twice the recommended maximum level of intake.

Unhealthy dietary habits are the key driver behind developing non-communicable diseases and switching from healthy traditional food to fast foods which contain high amounts of fat and sodium and low fiber are the causes of such disorders.

Second accelerator center for diagnostic devices to be launched

HEALTH TEHRAN — The second startup accelerator center for production of diagnostic devices will be launched in Iran, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

A startup accelerator is a business program that supports early-stage, growth-driven companies through education, mentorship and financing.

The medical working group of vice presidency for science and technology held several meetings with experts in order to provide infrastructure for the accelerator.

The Iranian producers of diagnostic device including in vitro diagnostic device (IVD) presented their products during the meetings in order to pave the way for mass production of them.



Providing information about other products related to diagnostic device, encouraging production line for the devices and holding exhibition in order to support the production of Iranian diagnostic device were also discussed during the meetings.

The decrease in expenses, better access to laboratory services, providing laboratory services at the medical centers are some achievements of using the Iranian diagnostic devices.

The World Health Organization estimates that a quarter of death and disease globally is caused by hazards and environmental burdens in developing countries with little to no access to preventative care and diagnostic devices.

Since developing countries are poor agricultural regions that are still becoming economically and socially advanced, it is harder for doctors to carry around an entire lab for diagnostics.

Several researchers have taken up the challenge of developing point-of-care diagnostic devices that are portable and affordable for the most part and don't use external power sources.

First Iranian blood sugar test device designed



HEALTH TEHRAN — The first Iranian blood sugar test device was designed by engineers, said the acting director of Food and Drug Administration.

The product was unveiled over Iran Health Exhibition which is running from June 9 to 12 in Tehran.

The device first needs to pass the necessary quality tests and if it receives the required licenses, it can be used instead of the foreign rivals, Fars news agency quoted Mohammadreza Shanesaz as saying on

Monday.

"With doing the necessary follow-ups and starting production, we hope to gradually limit the imports of blood sugar test devices and finally replace all of them with homegrown versions," said Shanesaz.

According to Healthline, a blood sugar test is a procedure that measures the amount of sugar, or glucose, in your blood. Doctors may order this test to help diagnose diabetes. People with diabetes can also use this test to manage their condition.

Health Ministry supports digital health startups



HEALTH TEHRAN — The Health Ministry supports over 150 startups which are now active in the field of digital health, IRNA reported on Monday.

Recent improvement in technology creates a capacity for better services and prevention of disease in medical industry, Hossein Vatanpour, an official with the Health Ministry announced.

The development of electronic services is on high agenda at the health ministry, which needs digitalization in different fields, he added.

Digital health, medical devices, medicine and herbal medicine are the main focus of different types of startups, which are supported by the ministry, he added.

The ministry supports the startups to turn into knowledge-based companies in order to support innovation fund of Iran, he said.

Digital health is the convergence of digital technologies with health, healthcare, living, and society to enhance the efficiency of healthcare delivery and make medicines more personalized and precise.

Plans underway for giving free genetic test to families at risk of disability

HEALTH TEHRAN — A new scheme is being devised for giving free genetic test and consultation to families who are in their fertility age and have at least one child with a disability, said the head of State Welfare Organization of Iran.

The project is designed to stop the repetitive cycle of disability, IRNA quoted Vahid Qobadi-Dana as saying on Monday.

Qobadi-Dana made the remarks during a meeting between the State Welfare Organization officials and the directors of non-governmental organizations that work for the benefit of people with visual impairment.

Over the meeting, the directors of NGOs offered that a special working group for people with disabilities will be established in State Welfare Organization.

The NGOs also asked the Welfare Organizations for new plans, including creating more jobs for people suffering



from disability, helping them to manage their daily chores autonomously and expand their presence in society, revising some rules and regulations, paying more attention to the law of hiring at least 3% from persons with disability, making

the transportation system more accessible to people with visual impairment and giving their cars special license plates.

In September, Fatemeh Abbasi, the deputy director for prevention department of Welfare Organization said some 25 to 30 thousand children are being born with congenital disabilities in the country annually.

In June 2018, Ashraf Samavat, the director of genetics department in the Health Ministry announced that premarital genetic counselling has become obligatory for all couples.

Genetic counselling is the process through which knowledge about the genetic aspects of illnesses is shared by trained professionals with those who are at an increased risk or either having a heritable disorder or passing it on to their unborn offspring. A genetic counsellor provides information on the inheritance of illnesses and their recurrence risks, World Health Organization explains.

3 interventions could prevent millions of cardiovascular deaths

Millions of people die prematurely each year due to noncommunicable diseases, some of the most common of which are cardiovascular diseases. New research from Harvard suggests that three tried and tested interventions could prevent many of those deaths if implemented through global policies.

Three global interventions could prevent millions of deaths over the next couple of decades.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 17.9 million deaths worldwide each year are due to cardiovascular disease, accounting for an estimated 31% of yearly global deaths.

The WHO note that heart attacks and strokes account for about 85% of these deaths.

In a new study, researchers from the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston, MA, have pinpointed three well-known, verified interventions that have the potential to prevent a significant number of such premature deaths at a global level.

More specifically, the Harvard T. H. Chan investigators estimate that the three public health interventions combined could help extend the lives of 94 million people over 25 years, from 2015 through to 2040.

However, the team notes that for this very achievable goal to become a reality, policy-



to 70% of the world's population could save an estimated 39.4 million people. They also estimate that reducing salt consumption by 30% could prevent an estimated 40 million deaths, as well as decrease blood pressure rates in populations around the world.

This, the researchers explain, is important because high blood pressure is a top risk factor for the development of cardiovascular disease. Finally, they note that cutting the intake of trans fat, which is present in many fast food products and can endanger heart and vascular health, could extend the lives of 14.8 million people, according to the new study.

Danaei and team note that over half of all the premature deaths these interventions would prevent, as well as two-thirds of deaths delayed before the age 70, would most likely be among

men. Should there be a global commitment to implementing these interventions, the regions that would see the most benefits would be East Asia, the Pacific, South Asia, and some countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

"Overall, this study indicates that these [three] interventions have enormous potential to save lives. However, scaling up these interventions to global populations is a huge challenge," the researchers write in their study paper.

Countries all over the world would have to dedicate extra resources to providing antihypertensive (blood pressure-lowering) medication, promote education about the risks associated with too much sodium intake, and update and push out new and better health policies.

These goals are entirely achievable, the investigators emphasize. Other programs have already demonstrated this. One such program, tested by Kaiser Permanente in Northern California, was able to increase blood pressure control to 90% among its patients between 2001–2013.

"These are realistic goals that have been shown to be attainable on smaller scales. We need the commitment to scale up the programs to achieve them globally."

(Source: Medical News Today)

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(Source: WebMD)

Clunker, diesel cars elimination, gasoline vapor cut effective solutions to curb ozone pollution

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Due to an increased concern about the influence of ozone emissions on human health and on the capital's air quality, notably gasoline vapor emissions at petrol stations must be reduced, clunker cars should be scrapped and diesel vehicles also have to be discarded, Tehran Air Quality Control Company caretaker said.

Gasoline vapors contain volatile organic compounds, which harm human health and contribute to ozone pollution.

Ozone in the lower atmosphere is formed by the reaction of sunlight on air containing hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides (NOX) that react to form ozone directly at the source of the pollution namely, cars, industry, gas vapors, chemical solvents, fuel combustion.

Although, cars by themselves do not generate ozone, toxic emissions of oxides of nitrogen is released by diesel cars during fuel combustion in an engine, which contributes to ground level ozone raise, ISNA quoted Hossein Shahidzadeh as saying on Monday.

Referring to the considerable increase of ozone pollution in the capital since past two years, he explained that on the one hand ozone measuring devices are much more precise than those used years ago, on the other particulate matter concentration has reduced in Tehran and with better air quality the air is more exposed to sunlight which leads to increased ozone emission.

He further noted that yet the amount of ozone over the capital is not worrisome, adding that petrol stations contribute a remarkable share to the total Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) emissions, Hydrocarbon vapors are known as ozone precursors and they contribute in the formation of summer smog.

In past recent years, a scheme to reduce these emissions have been launched for the petrol station, through which a system was installed to separate organic vapors from air and off-gases in the stations, however, the scheme is developing at a low pace.

To curb VOC emissions, the scheme must pace up to facilitate the whole chain distribution from the refinery to the tank farm, to the petrol station and during car refueling, he highlighted.

Pointing out that clunker cars and motorcycles are the other sources of VOC pollution and increased ground level ozone, he added that these vehicles should be eliminated to reduce ozone pollution.

Referring to the recent debates on the production of diesel cars by the country's car manufacturing companies, he insisted that production of these engines will speed the pollution in Tehran, as they produce NOX and ozone.

All the efforts made so far to contain the capital's air pollution will become ineffective with the production of diesel cars, so, the responsible organizations must be so careful to issue licenses in this regard, he lamented.

Since the beginning of the current Iranian year (March 21), Tehran air quality has been unhealthy for sensitive groups for 4 days due to high rate of ozone emissions, according to the Tehran Air Quality Control Company.

Last year, 28 days were reported to be polluted for sensitive groups in Tehran, while ozone pollution were to blame for messy air for 15 days of the total 28 unhealthy days.

According to World Health Organization, 4.2 million deaths every year as a result of exposure to ambient (outdoor) air pollution and 91% of the world's population lives in places where air quality exceeds WHO guideline limits.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

U.S.A easing sanctions on North Korea

(June 22, 2000)
Over 50 years ago the U.S.A imposed economic **sanctions** on North Korea after it invaded South Korea. Both are now working towards reconciliation and the U.S. has **eased** the sanctions. BBC Correspondent Rob Watson reported.

After fifty years, the sanctions have now been eased. The decision permits most **exports** to, and **imports** from, North Korea to **resume**. It also means the establishing of direct flights between the U.S. and North Korea. But not all restrictions have been lifted. There will still be a ban on military exports and so-called dual purpose technology with potential military applications. The US says it will also continue to oppose loans to North Korea from global financial institutions, because of what **Washington** sees as the North's continued support of **terrorism**.

Although the Clinton administration insists the intention to ease sanctions was long planned, there's no doubt last week's **summit** between the two Koreas, helped. The U.S. cautiously welcomed the summit as a good first step, but made it clear it still sees North Korea as a potential military threat, and has **routed out** the early withdrawal of U.S. forces from the South. But the easing of sanctions is **consistent** with U.S. policy, aimed at encouraging North Korea out of its isolation.

WORDS

sanctions: if you impose sanctions on a country you take measures to isolate it from the international community. This is usually done if it is decided that the country has broken a law or agreement.
eased: when sanctions are eased, they are made less severe or difficult

exports: goods that are sold to other countries

imports: goods that are bought into a country

resume: if you resume something you begin it again

Washington: referring to Washington D.C., the capital of the U.S.A., but here meaning the U.S. government

terrorism: the use of violence in the pursuit of political goals

summit: a meeting between the leaders of different countries to discuss important matters

routed out: rejected

consistent: if two facts or ideas are consistent they do not contradict each other

(Source: BBC)



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

Guardian Council ratifies bill on soil conservation

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — The Guardian Council ratified the bill on soil conservation which has been passed by the Majlis (Iranian Parliament) earlier in February. Masoumeh Hosseinpour, director general of department for parliamentary and legal affairs at the Department of Environment (DOE) has announced.

The Guardian Council of the Constitution is an appointed and constitutionally mandated 12-member council that wields considerable power and influence.

To become a law, any bill passed by the Majlis must be reviewed and approved by the Guardian Council to become law. The Guardian Council holds veto power over all legislation approved by the Majlis.

The bill has been approved after 14 years of effort put in by the Department of Environment, which is the responsible body to deal with business units polluting the soil or even shut down industries contributing to soil contamination, Hosseinpour explained.

Moreover, the owners of mining, indus-



trial and manufacturing units active in the field of trade are obliged to comply with the

law, she added, Fars reported on Tuesday.

As per the law, any trade or export of

soil is prohibited, and only the excretion of minerals or exportation of low amounts of soil for research purposes is excluded after meeting the legal process, she further noted.

She went on to add that under the law, the judiciary system seeks to establish specific centers in order to pursue the related issues or violations, mining activities are also subject to compliance with environmental regulations.

According to Soil Science Society of America, soil provides ecosystem services critical for life, as acts as a water filter and a growing medium; provides habitat for billions of organisms, contributing to biodiversity; and supplies most of the antibiotics used to fight diseases. Humans use soil as a holding facility for solid waste, filter for wastewater, and foundation for the cities and towns. Finally, soil is the basis of nations' agroecosystems which provides feed, fiber, food and fuel, while Industrial, household, and non-point source pollution jeopardizes the health of the environment and humans.

40,000 flood-stricken families receive appliance packages

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Iran Red Crescent Society (IRCS) volunteer organization provided some 40,000 packages consisting of household appliances to the families affected by flood, head of IRCS volunteer organization Mohammad Nasiri has stated.

Each family receives a package consisting of a refrigerator, oven, TV, blankets and carpets, he added, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam has recognized 110,000 financially struggling families who were hit by flood, he stated, adding, the organization is supposed to provide 40,000 of them with household appliances.

And we decided to distribute package to some 40,000 others, he further concluded. Torrential rain started on March 19 led to flood in at least 25 out of 31 provinces of Iran and caused extensive damage to the houses, schools, urban and

rural infrastructure, crops and livestock. Provinces of Lorestan, Golestan, and Khuzestan are hit the hardest with the flooding.

Nasiri said in early May that Iranian philanthropists have contributed some 2.4 trillion rials (nearly \$57 million) to the people residing in flood-ravaged provinces across the country.

Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation also has announced that Iranian donors have made contributions amounting to 880 billion rials (about \$20 million) to flood-hit families.

170 birds, animals released back to wild



ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — On the occasion of national environment week, some 170 animals and birds of 15 species have been released back to the wild, Mehr news agency reported on Monday.

The national environment week is observed in the country annually from June 9-15, a few days after World Environment Day held annually on June 5.

The animals have been freed in Khojir national park in Pardis county in eastern Tehran, Mohammad Karami, an official with the Department of Environment (DOE) said.

Some 10 foxes and different bird species namely, Eurasian eagle-owl, tawny eagle, kite, kestrel, golden eagle, and cormorant were among species returning back to the nature once again, he noted.

Some of animals and birds were seized from smugglers, and the others have been injured and undergone treatment or surgeries before returning back to their natural habitat, he also added.

The foxes also have been captured by the DOE forces near the villages or towns around the capital, as people report their existence almost everywhere

they occur, if not trap or shot them, he said, adding, while they are such shy animals who prefer to search for food at a time when there is little chance of being spotted by humans.

Fox species were inhabiting in the areas long before to be the cities, however, human encroached on their habitats and left no single habitat for them to live, he lamented, adding, they are no threat to humans and there is no need to persecute the precious species.

He further called on the people to protect the animal species and not to hurt them, as most of them are not dangerous at all.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he regretted that some people capture some animals for trade, which is so inhumane, for instance, when people touch the lambs, due to the human scent and their mother will abandon them, so they will be separated from the nature.

Some people hunt bird species due to income generation, while most of them are not sold in high prices, he lamented, and added that there are many ways to earn income except hurting the valuable species and lead them to disappearance.

Canada to ban single-use plastics by 2021, Trudeau promises



Canada will ban "harmful" single-use plastics from as early as 2021, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has announced – saying that his government has to set an example for younger generations.

"I am very pleased to announce that as early as 2021 Canada will ban harmful, single-use plastics from coast to coast," Mr Trudeau said, calling the issue a "global challenge".

Citing the example of the EU parliament, which voted overwhelmingly in March to impose a ban on a range single-use plastics, Mr Trudeau said that Canada, as the country has the longest coastline in the world, was in a unique position to do something about plastic pollution in the ocean.

"Many other countries are doing that and Canada will be one of them," Mr Trudeau said. "This is a big step but we know can do this for 2021."

Mr Trudeau's government says that less than 10 per cent of plastics are currently recycled in Canada, and that each year a million birds around the world – plus more than 100,000 marine mammals – suffer injury or death by becoming entangled in plastic or ingesting it through the food chain.

The prime minister said that given the many images of choked oceans that are now broadcast around the world, it is difficult to explain a lack of action to his children. "You've all heard the stories and seen the photos. And to be honest as a dad it is tough trying to explain to my kids," Mr Trudeau said.

"How do you explain dead whales washing up on beaches across the world, their stomachs jam-packed with plastic bags? How do I tell them that against all odds, you will find plastic at the very deepest point of the Pacific Ocean," he added.

"As parents we're at a point when we take our kids to the beach and we have to search out a patch of sand that isn't littered with straws, Styrofoam or bottles," Mr Trudeau said. "That's a problem, one that we have to do something about."

The EU has estimated that the changes it has proposed will cost around €259m to €695m (£231m to £620m) a year. It is not yet clear what costs Canada will incur under Mr Trudeau's proposal.

However, the government is considering items such as plastic bags, water bottles and straws.

(Source: The Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Clean air days double for Tehraners this year

Tehrani citizens have experienced a 2-fold rise in the number of clean air days since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2018) compared to the same period last year, an official with the Department of Environment has said. Since the aforementioned period, clean air stayed in the capital for 27 days, while last year, during the same period, Tehraners breathed clean air for only 14 days, IRNA quoted Shina Ansari as saying on Sunday.

Also, the air quality of the capital was healthy for 262 days, while being unhealthy for sensitive groups for 59 days, she said, adding that compared to the same period last year, Tehran's air quality reached healthy levels for 229 days and 97 days of unhealthy for sensitive groups has hit the capital.

تهرانی‌ها امسال دو برابر بیشتر روزهای پاک داشتند

مدیر کل دفتر پایش فرآگیر سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست گفت: تهرانی‌ها از ابتدای امسال تا امروز (۱۲ آسفند ۹۷) نسبت به مدت مشابه سال گذشته، دو برابر هوا پاک تنفس کردند.

شنبه انصاری روز یکشنبه در گفت و گو با ایرنا افزود: تهران از ابتدای امسال تا

امروز، ۲۷ روز هوا پاک داشته در حالیکه سال گذشته در مدت مشابه، تعداد روزهای پاک ۱۴ روز بوده است. وی اظهار داشت: همچنین از ابتدای امسال تاکنون،

کیفیت هوا پاکیت برای ۵۹ روز قابل برای ناسالم برای گروه‌های حساس بوده که در مدت مشابه سال گذشته به ترتیب ۲۶۲ و ۹۷ روز بوده که هشت روز نیز ناسالم برای تمام گروه‌ها بوده است.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-plast, -plasty, -plastic”

■ Meaning: living cell or particle

■ For example: The next approach is **angioplasty**, in which a catheter is used to balloon open the arrowed part of the artery.

PHRASAL VERB

Head something off

■ Meaning: to prevent something from happening, especially something bad

■ For example: The President intervened to head off the conflict.

IDIOM

Nip something in the bud

■ Explanation: to prevent something from becoming a problem by stopping it as soon as it starts

■ For example: Try to nip this kind of bad behavior in the bud.

Moscow, Damascus to hand crushing response to terrorists in Idlib: Lavrov

TEHRAN — Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov says Moscow and Damascus will give a "crushing" response to militants launching attacks in Syria's northwestern province of Idlib, the last major stronghold of foreign-backed terrorists in the Arab state.

Lavrov said at a news conference on Monday that "terrorists systematically stage provocations and attack the positions of the Syrian army and communities and also the Russian airbase Hmeimim with multiple rocket systems and drones."

"Neither the Syrian army nor Russia will leave such outrages without crushing retaliation," Lavrov said.

The Russian top diplomat also called for the immediate separation of Syria's opposition from terrorist groups in the Idlib de-escalation zone, in line with an agreement reached between Russia and Turkey last year, to prevent further provocations by armed groups.

Turkey and Russia, Syria's close ally, brokered a deal in September 2018 to create a demilitarized zone in Idlib that would be evacuated of all heavy weapons and militants. Militants have, however, persisted in their stay in the zone and refused to leave the area.



Furthermore, terror outfits have repeatedly violated the agreement by launching numerous attacks on outposts held by the Syrian army and Russian forces.

Lavrov said that special mechanisms for contacts between the Russian and Turkish

leaders and between defense officials of the two countries had been set up to monitor the implementation of the agreement.

"The major role in these efforts is to be played by Turkey. We insist that it must be done as soon as possible," he said, adding

that a great number of provocations are staged in Idlib both against Russia and Syrian servicemen.

The Russian foreign minister further criticized certain foreign parties for pursuing "reckless aggressive policy of interference" in the region which, he said, has led to the "illegal traffic of weapons, oil, artifacts and drugs in Syria and in the entire region."

According to Press TV, Idlib remains the only large area in the hands of anti-Damascus militants after government forces — backed by Iran and Russia — managed to undo militant gains across the country and bring back almost all of Syrian soil under government control.

It is estimated that between 10,000 and 15,000 militants are active in the volatile province.

In recent weeks, Syrian armed forces have been conducting counter-terrorism operations in areas surrounding Idlib.

The Syrian army has warned civilians to leave Idlib amid preparations for a final military campaign to flush terrorists out of the region. If Idlib is retaken by Syrian forces, it would mark a certain defeat for the militants.

Watchdog says UK's MI5 spy agency mishandled snooping data for years

TEHRAN — British intelligence agency MI5 was criticized by a privacy watchdog on Tuesday for "illegally mishandling" surveillance data and storing information about innocent people for years.

Liberty said the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) had delivered a highly critical assessment of the domestic spy agency in London's High Court over storage of data it had amassed under warrants to hack computers, phones and intercept people's communications.

"These shocking revelations expose how MI5 has been illegally mishandling our data for years, storing it when they have no legal basis to do so," said Megan Goulding, a lawyer for the civil liberties group.

"This could include our most deeply sensitive information — our calls and messages, our location data, our web-browsing history."

The IPCO is responsible for checking that sweeping intrusive powers allowed under the Investigatory Powers Act (IPA), dubbed the 'Snooper's Charter' by critics, are used appropriately, including how data is stored or deleted, Reuters reported.

In May, Britain's Home Secretary (interior minister) Sajid Javid said "compliance risks" had been identified with how MI5 handled data.

"The report of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office into these risks concluded that they were serious and required immediate mitigation," Javid wrote in a

statement to parliament. "The Commissioner also expressed concern that MI5 should have reported the compliance risks to him sooner."

Liberty said documents presented at court by the Commissioner, Adrian Fullford, showed that MI5 had in effect been put into "special measures" over its use of data obtained under warrants.

Fulford had also said compliance failures first became clear back in January 2016 but were only brought to the IPCO's attention in February this year, it said.

Javid said in May MI5 had taken "immediate and substantial mitigating actions" to address concerns and the IPCO was monitoring this to ensure sufficient progress. Both the Home Office and IPCO said they had no further comment on the issue.

Britain has been at the forefront of a battle between privacy and security since former U.S. security agency contractor Edward Snowden leaked details of mass monitoring tactics used by U.S. and British agents in 2013.

The IPA, which was partly introduced to provide more transparency around surveillance powers, provides vital tools to protect the public from criminals, pedophiles and terrorism, government and security officials say.

Critics argue it grants police and spies some of the most extensive snooping capabilities in the West.

The Chinese are coming: U.S. attempts to turn the Philippines against its Beijing ally

The U.S. has capitalized on its trade war with China, the threat of terrorism and the regional military threats allegedly posed by Beijing to keep longtime allies such as the Philippines from turning against Washington.

China is now the second-biggest defence spender in the world, losing out only to the U.S. (who — by the way — is so far ahead of the game that it accounts for 36 percent of all global defence spending). The rise of Beijing — and Washington's response to its ever-emerging preeminence — is putting traditional allies of both China and the United States in an increasingly interesting position.

One such ally is the Philippines. In October 2016, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte was so emboldened by his newfound anti-American stance that he even dared the CIA to try to have him removed from power (and ultimately assassinated).

"You want to oust me?" Duterte said at the time. "You want to use the CIA? Go ahead."

At around the same time, his administration also made clear Duterte's intentions to realign his country's foreign policy away from a "shackling dependency" on the United States. In September of that same year, Duterte allegedly said that while he does "not want a rift with America," all U.S. forces

in the southern region of the Philippines "have to go."

He even went so far as to make such outlandish promises as the U.S.-Filipino naval drills taking place in September 2016 would be the "last military exercise." Not long after, he announced his separation from the U.S., while declaring that it was China, the Philippines, and Russia against the world. He even agreed to set aside an international tribunal's ruling in favour of the Philippines against China, in an apparent effort to keep Beijing outside.

Despite his best efforts — whether genuine or not — Duterte has not been able to contain Manila's relationship with Washington, nor has he been able to cement a long-lasting and non-confrontational association with Beijing.

Last week, Duterte found himself openly questioning China's claims to the South China Sea, stating "I love China, it has helped us a bit but it behoves upon us to ask, is it right for a country to claim the whole ocean?"

Barely a few days later, a spokesman for Duterte said that the Philippines supports any US-led action in the South China Sea that would maintain stability in the region amid China's expanding influence and militarisation of the area.

(Source: RT)

Nechirvan Barzani was sworn in as new president of Iraq's Kurdistan region

TEHRAN — The parliament of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region has sworn in Nечirvan Barzani, the prime minister of the region, as its president, in an attempt to complete the formation of the cabinet of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

On Monday, 52-year-old Barzani, who is deputy leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the nephew of former Kurdish President Masoud Barzani, was inaugurated by the regional parliament, which selected him as the president last month.

On May 28, he had managed to win 68 votes from the 81 lawmakers present in the 111-seat chamber.

Iraqi President Barham Salih, Speaker of the House Mohammad al-Halboosi and some other Iraqi officials attended the swearing-in ceremony on Monday.

According to Press TV, the younger Barzani is filling

the most powerful regional office, vacant since 2017 when his uncle resigned following a failed independence bid. During the vacancy period, the president's powers had been divided between the prime minister, parliament and the judiciary in a makeshift arrangement.

Back in September 2017, the KRG defied stern warnings from the central government in Baghdad and several other states, and held a referendum on separation from mainland Iraq. Kurdish officials said a majority of people had voted 'Yes' to secession.

In response, Baghdad called the vote "unconstitutional" and adopted a series of bans against Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan region.

Iraqi forces also responded to the move by reversing the territorial gains the Kurds had achieved during the military campaign against the Takfiri Daesh terrorist group.



UAE paid businessman to spy on Trump administration

TEHRAN — A businessman from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was paid by his country's intelligence agency to spy on the U.S. government for information on its policies in the Middle East, a news report said.

Rashid al-Malik received tens of thousands of dollars a month for acquiring intelligence on Trump administration policy towards the region in 2017, The Intercept reported, citing unnamed sources and official documents.

Malik reported back to the UAE's National Intelligence Service (NIS) on topics of interest to the oil-producing Persian Gulf state — including U.S. efforts to mediate a Persian Gulf crisis involving Qatar — as well as meetings between U.S. officials and Saudi Arabia's powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), the report detailed.

Malik was tasked to report to his Emirati intelligence handlers on topics of consequence to the UAE, such as attitudes within the Trump administration toward the Muslim



Brotherhood," the report said.

Among the Emirati government officials overseeing Malik was Ali al-Shamsi, the NIS director, according to sources cited.

Al-Shamsi is "more than just a spy, he's also a discreet messenger" for Emirati Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MBZ) and

his brother Tahnoun bin Zayed, the UAE's national security adviser, one source was quoted as saying.

"Shamsi and the Emirati government clearly think they can influence Trump by doing business with him," said one person with knowledge of the UAE's spy operations.

Never tasked'

The news report was denied by Malik's lawyer who told The Intercept his client was "not an intelligence operative".

"He has never been 'tasked' to deliver information about the inner workings of the Trump administration," lawyer Bill Coffield said. It is against the law for anyone other than a diplomatic or consular official to operate inside the U.S. on behalf of a foreign government without first notifying the U.S. Justice Department.

The White House, CIA, and the Justice Department all declined to comment for the story. The UAE's embassy did not respond to requests for a response.

The Intercept report came after the Justice Department last week said George Nader, a well-connected Middle East fixer for the Trump campaign, was arrested for possessing child pornography.

Nader — also an adviser to MBZ — was a witness in U.S. special counsel Robert Mueller's probe into the Trump campaign and alleged Russian election meddling.

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Iraqi Kurdistan names Barzani as prime minister

TEHRAN — The Iraqi Kurdish parliament named Masrour Barzani, the cousin of new President Nechirvan Barzani, as prime minister on Tuesday.

Barzani is a leading figure in the Kurdish Democratic Party who was the region's security chief and is the son of former president Masoud Barzani, who resigned in 2017 after a failed bid for independence from Iraq.

The Barzani family and their political party have ruled the semi-autonomous region since Iraq's constitution was set up in 2003 following the U.S.-led invasion.

Turkey chafes at U.S. pressure over Russian defenses

TEHRAN — Turkey said on Tuesday a U.S. House of Representatives' resolution condemning Ankara's purchase of Russian defense systems and urging potential sanctions was unacceptable.

Relations between the two NATO members have been strained on several fronts including Ankara's plans to buy Russia's S-400 air defense systems, the detention of U.S. consular staff in Turkey, and conflicting strategy over Syria and Iran.

The standoff threatens to bring U.S. sanctions, which would hurt Turkey's already recession-hit economy, and raise questions over its role in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Reuters reported.

The resolution, introduced in May and entitled "Expressing concern for the United States-Turkey alliance", was agreed in the House on Monday.

It urges Turkey to cancel the S-400 purchase and calls for sanctions if it accepts their delivery, which may come as soon as July. That, the resolution said, would undermine the U.S.-led transatlantic defense alliance.

In response, Turkey's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that its foreign policy and judicial system were being maligned by "unfair" and "unfounded" allegations in the resolution.

"It is unacceptable to take decisions which do not serve to increase mutual trust, to continue to keep the language of threats and sanctions on the agenda and to set various artificial deadlines," it added.

President Tayyip Erdogan's government faces a balancing act in its ties with the West and Russia, with which it has close energy ties and is also cooperating in neighboring Syria.

Drug abuse among serving Israeli soldiers on the rise

TEHRAN — A recent report has shed light on a rise in drug abuse among serving Israeli military forces, prompting Chief of Staff of the Israeli Army Aviv Kochavi to order establishment of a special committee to fight the phenomenon.

According to Israeli i24NEWS television news network, Kochavi took the measure in the wake of an increasing number of cases against Israeli soldiers using drugs while in their military bases.

The report added that the number of addicted Israeli soldiers is soaring dramatically despite the fact that strict measures and punitive measures have already been introduced to eradicate the issue.

Among the expected future penalties, the Israeli broadcaster said, are denial of privileges and benefits given to the serving soldiers, reduction or denial of financial grants and educational privileges. They would also be deprived of holidays, Press TV reported.

Last September, thirty-five Israeli soldiers and several civilians were arrested on the grounds of drug trafficking and drug abuse.

Israeli troops open fire on Palestinian security center

TEHRAN — Israeli forces have opened fire on a Palestinian security headquarters in the occupied West Bank city of Nablus, injuring at least one Palestinian officer.

Nablus Governor Ibrahim Ramadan said that a group of Israeli soldiers targeted the headquarters by blockading the building and shot at it "directly and without justification," early on Tuesday, wounding one security guard and causing property damage.

Other reports suggested two Palestinian security officials were wounded during the attack.

The Israeli military claimed that the troops had opened fire as they mistook the Palestinian security forces for "suspects" while searching the area for "terrorists."

But Ramadan dismissed the claims as fabrication and noted that the Israeli forces had opened fire on the building without justification.

"We must not remain silent before such acts. Their goal was to kill. The bullets broke the windows and hit the offices," Ramadan said.

This attack is not the first and will not be the last, especially amidst the current serious escalation against Palestinians, their homes and land, he added.

Earlier on Tuesday, an Israeli army spokesman said that the troops had arrested some 18 Palestinians during an overnight raid across the occupied West Bank.

Palestinian sources also said that Israeli forces had arrested two members of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas in Tulkarm in the West Bank's north.

The Israeli army frequently carries out wide-ranging arrest campaigns across the occupied West Bank under the pretext of searching for "wanted" Palestinians.

According to Press TV, more than 7,000 Palestinians are reportedly held in Israeli jails. Hundreds have been incarcerated under the practice of administrative detention, which allows holding Palestinian inmates in Israeli prisons without trial or charge.

Some Palestinian prisoners have even been held in administrative detention for up to eleven years.

Fifteen Serie A clubs against to proposed Champions League reform

Fifteen of Serie A's 20 clubs have voted against a proposal to create a semi-closed Champions League from 2024 onwards.

In a statement seen by Reuters, the clubs backed a resolution which said that qualification for UEFA club competitions such as the Champions League should be based exclusively on performances in domestic leagues, as happens at present.

Juventus were the only club to vote against the resolution while Inter Milan, AC Milan, AS Roma and Fiorentina all abstained.

The European Club Association (ECA), which represents the region's most powerful clubs, and UEFA have proposed creating a three-tier pan-European league with promotion and relegation between divisions, according to league officials who have seen it.

The top tier would be the new version of the Champions League, but 24 of the 32 teams would keep their places for the following season, breaking the tradition that qualification is achieved through domestic competition.

The ECA, whose chairman Andrea Agnelli is Juventus president, says it wants to help clubs outside the biggest five leagues by giving them more regular European matches.

England's Premier League, Germany's Bundesliga and France's Ligue 1 have already said they oppose the proposal. However, some clubs from outside Europe's biggest leagues, such as Ajax Amsterdam, Legia Warsaw and HJK Helsinki are in favor.

"Any semi-closed model will endanger the value of national competitions," the Serie A clubs said in the resolution.

"We also express our concerns about the economic and competitive impact on Serie A of this UEFA reform," they said.

"We truly hope that UEFA will take our observations into consideration and will work together with the European Leagues to implement a different model that will preserve the sustainability of both national championships and European competitions."

(Source: Reuters)

Stronger, faster, but not higher: Tokyo Olympics to warn on weed

In what you might call a joint statement, Tokyo 2020 organisers Tuesday noted the need to warn countries with relaxed cannabis laws that weed isn't allowed in Japan.

"There are countries and regions around the world that have relaxed rules recently on the use of cannabis," noted Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshiro Muto.

"The use of cannabis constitutes a violation of the law in Japan and that needs to be fully communicated," he added.

Muto said the topic was raised by a member of the Tokyo 2020 executive board as something that should be transmitted to the heads of country teams when they visit Tokyo ahead of the Games.

Cannabis rules in Japan are strict, with up to five years' prison for personal use and seven years for dealing.

Cannabis is also listed as a performance-enhancing drug by the World Anti-Doping Agency.

The US anti-doping agency USADA notes on its website that marijuana could "decrease anxiety and tension, resulting in better sport performance under pressure".

"Due to the illegal nature of marijuana in most countries, the use or abuse of marijuana does not exhibit the ethics and moral judgment that upholds the spirit of sport," the body adds.

The issue hit the headlines in Japan when two Japanese snowboarders were punished after traces of marijuana were detected in their hair following a party in December 2015.

One of the athletes admitted taking the drug at a party while on tour in Colorado, where cannabis was legalised for recreational purposes in 2012, provided the user is 21 years old.

Skateboarding and surfing, two counter-culture pursuits with reputedly high rates of drug use, are among the sports that will be contested at Tokyo 2020.

(Source: AFP)

Brighton and Hove Albion ground staff sacking 'a witch-hunt'

Employees of Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club claim they were unfairly dismissed in a "witch-hunt" after team selection was leaked online.

Three members of ground staff were allegedly denied disciplinary hearings or reasons for their sacking on Friday.

The GMB union said the dismissal "stinks" and called for Brighton to reinstate workers.

Brighton, which recently retained Premier League status, said it would not comment on the incident.

The club announced team selections were being leaked from October 2018.

Ex-deputy head groundsman Ashley Smith, 34, said he was taken into "private meetings" and questioned along with his colleagues from April.

The meetings were not recorded and the employees were allegedly told "they were helping with the inquiry".

"It was a dream job that has been taken off me for no reason," he said.

"I have a family mortgage and it's going to have a massive impact on my whole life. I haven't been sleeping since."

GMB branch secretary Mark Turner said: "No evidence has been found or presented by the club during this near three-month investigation which links our members to the supposed social media team leaks, yet they dismiss our members without notice.

"This just stinks and considering this club prides itself on its commitment to the standards, values and expectations set by the Premier League, the way they have treated their staff throughout this witch hunt is simply deplorable and unfair."

(Source: BBC)

Pogba's remedy for racist abuse is play well not walk off

Manchester United midfielder Paul Pogba said the best way to quell racist spectators is to perform well on the pitch not as some suggest walk off if there is racial abuse.

The 26-year-old was a pivotal figure as France won the World Cup last year and said in an interview with The Times that nothing wins people around better than success.

Pogba is expected to start against Andorra in Euro 2020 qualifying on Tuesday night and played 90 minutes in a loss in Turkey on Saturday when the home fans caused outrage in France by jeering the Marseillaise.

Racism reared its head last season with Manchester City's Raheem Sterling being abused by a group of Chelsea fans. Then Sterling and other black England players were the targets of Montenegro supporters in a Euro 2020 qualifier.

One of those players, Tottenham Hotspur defender Danny Rose said he "can't wait to see the back of football" because of the lack of decisive action to tackle racism. Rose said he was "shocked" at the lightness of UEFA's punishment in ordering Montenegro to play just one game behind closed doors.

Pogba told the newspaper he had once handed his Juventus shirt to a fan who had been making monkey noises at him.

"Leave the pitch? You want to play, you want to score for your team," said Pogba. "And at the end they (racist abusers) will



come and ask for a picture."

Pogba also responded to critics who say he has not justified his then world record £89.3 million (\$113.5 million) move from Juventus in 2016. "I become another player because of the transfer," he said. "Because it was the biggest transfer of history at the time, you get judged differently."

"You expect more because of the price tag. A good game becomes a normal game,

a top game will be a good game."

I am still the Paul I used to be'

He proved a popular target when United started poorly last season under Jose Mourinho. Critics contrasted Pogba's outstanding World Cup performances with those for his club.

He also came under fire as United's early good form under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer -- who replaced Mourinho when the latter

was sacked in December -- tailed off at the end of the campaign.

As a result, United finished sixth and missed out on Champions League football.

However, Pogba can point to being the only player selected in the Premier League team of the season to come from outside the top two -- champions Manchester City and Liverpool.

He believes his appearance -- various styles of haircuts and his body language on the pitch -- plays a role in his being pilloried.

"I always play like that and, thank God, I won the World Cup like that," said Pogba.

"Body language, haircut, all these things is just to speak."

"Since I was a kid I play like this," he said.

"It's not a problem when we win. Only when we lose or if I have a bad performance it becomes a problem."

Pogba, who scored 13 goals in 35 Premier League appearances last season, says he has not changed as a person despite his success and becoming one of the highest earning footballers in the world.

"I am still the Paul I used to be as a kid," he said.

"I grow, I become taller, but I am the same person who follows his dream."

"People will love me like that. People will hate me like that."

(Source: Mirror)

Sources: Barca make final push to sign De Ligt



Barcelona are ready to make a final push to sign Ajax centre-back Matthijs de Ligt this week by re-opening talks with his agent Mino Raiola, sources have told ESPN FC.

Barca thought they had an agreement in place with De Ligt in March, but have seen their offer bettered by clubs including Paris Saint-Germain, who believe they are leading the race.

Juventus, Liverpool and Manchester United have also been linked with De Ligt, but a source close to Bayern Munich told ESPN FC last week that the Bundesliga giants have dropped their interest.

Barca have refused to budge on their initial offer amid new demands from De Ligt and Raiola, and talks have stalled in recent weeks.

But a source said the club would re-establish contact with Raiola this week because they are aware that PSG are best placed to sign the Netherlands international.

The source refused to say whether Barca would increase their offer. Until now, they have been reluctant to pay De Ligt more than his Ajax teammate Frenkie de Jong, who joins next month.

Barca already have an agreement in place with Ajax should they manage to convince De Ligt to move to the Camp Nou for around €80m.

The saga has parallels with their move for De Jong in January. At one point, they thought they had missed out on the midfielder to PSG or Manchester City, but managed to convince him to join.

President Josep Maria Bartomeu travelled to Amsterdam to show De Jong how much the club wanted him and, according to sources, showed him messages from Neymar in which the Brazil star expressed regret at leaving Barca for PSG.

Sources did not confirm whether a delegation would make a similar trip as they try to convince De Ligt that Barcelona is the best place for him to continue his development.

De Ligt, meanwhile, said he had still not made his mind up about where he will play next season after Netherlands lost to Portugal in the UEFA Nations League final on Sunday.

He revealed that Portugal forward Cristiano Ronaldo had asked him to join him at Juventus next season when the two spoke at the final whistle.

"So soon after the game, you are not at all concerned with it. You are disappointed that you have lost and that is the only thing you are thinking about," he told NOS television.

(Source: ESPN)

No hidden agenda in F1 stewards' decision, says Brawn



Formula One could be more transparent about stewards' decisions but there was no hidden agenda behind the penalty that cost Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel victory in Canada, the sport's managing director Ross Brawn said on Tuesday.

Vettel was punished after making a mistake in Sunday's race in Montreal while under pressure from Mercedes' championship leader Lewis Hamilton, who finished second but was declared winner.

Brawn recognised that the five-second penalty added to Vettel's time after the race had triggered a lot of debate.

"I have a lot of respect for the work of the stewards and for their professionalism, and I believe they would be the first to say that they would prefer not to see a race outcome decided via a penalty," he said in a review of the weekend.

"At the same time, I understand how difficult it must be for fans to understand why the driver on the top step of the podium is not the one who crossed the finish line first," added the Briton.

"That's why transparency is important when it comes to explaining the decisions of the stewards, especially in such a complex sport as Formula One."

Brawn, a title-winning former Ferrari technical director and ex-Mercedes team

principal, suggested working with the governing FIA to find a way for stewards to explain their decisions to the fans and how they reached them.

Five stewards review and decide on incidents during races, reviewing an array of data and video evidence in a very tight time frame.

They are also aiming to be consistent with previous decisions.

While Sunday's penalty triggered an outcry that the officials had wrecked a thrilling battle between Vettel and Hamilton, it was recognised by others that they had applied the letter of the law.

Brawn said he would not comment on the decision, given his position and Ferrari's stated intention to appeal, but fans could be assured that it had been taken impartially.

"There is nothing sinister about a decision like this. You might agree with it or not, but none of those who take on the role of steward each weekend has a hidden agenda, and fans can be certain of that," he said. Mercedes have won the first seven rounds of the season and are running away with both championships while Ferrari have not won since the U.S. Grand Prix in October last year — a 10-race drought.

(Source: Reuters)

Warriors edge Raptors to keep NBA title hopes alive

Clutch 3-pointers by Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson enabled the defending champion Golden State Warriors to edge Toronto 106-105 on Monday and sustain their hopes of winning a third consecutive NBA Finals.

But any joy from the victory was dimmed by a right Achilles injury to Kevin Durant only 12 minutes into his first game after being sidelined for a month by a right calf injury.

Curry scored 31 points while Thompson added 26 as the Warriors pulled with 3-2 in the best-of-seven championship series, forcing a sixth game Thursday at Oakland, California, with game seven if needed in Toronto on Sunday.

"Do or die," Curry said. "It wasn't pretty in the second half but we just made the shots."

Durant's long-awaited return ended with the All-Star forward being helped off the court.

"You could kind of just feel the life just go right out of us," Warriors forward Draymond Green said. "But to Steph's credit, he rallied the troops."

"He talked to everybody, went around the huddle and just told everybody to stay locked in and do this for Kevin. And I think we did a good job of coming together."

Durant, the 2017 and 2018 NBA Finals Most valuable Player, departed the arena on crutches but became an inspiration to his teammates.

"We do it for Kevin," Thompson said. "He wants us to compete at the highest level and we'll think of him every

time we step on the hardwood."

Durant posted on Instagram: "I'm hurting deep in my soul right now. I can't lie, but seeing my brothers get this win was like taking a shot of tequila. I got new life."

He also breathed life into Golden State's title quest, Curry said.

"We understand the moment and I think we can rally, considering how the second half went," Curry said.

Durant, Golden State's top playoff scorer with 34.2 points a game, will have an MRI on Tuesday.

"On the one hand I'm so proud of them, just the amazing heart and grit they showed, and on the other I'm just devastated for Kevin," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said.

"So it's a bizarre feeling we all have right now, an incredible win and a horrible loss at the same time."

The Warriors seek their fourth title in five seasons while the Raptors suffered an agonizing near-miss in their bid for the first title in their 24-season history.

History remains on the Raptors' side. Only once in 34 prior situations has a team led the NBA Finals 3-1 and lost the title, that being in 2016 when LeBron James-led Cleveland rallied to defeat Golden State.

- Needed a couple plays -

Kawhi Leonard, who led Toronto with 26 points, sank a back-to-back 3-pointer and jumper to give the Raptors, who trailed by 14 points in the third quarter, their largest

lead at 103-97 with 3:28 remaining.

"In this day and age, up six with three minutes to go, doesn't mean a whole lot," Raptors coach Nick Nurse said.

"I felt good at that point. Just needed to make a couple more plays."

South Korea, Iran share the spoils in friendly

SPORTS TEHRAN — Iran national football team shared the spoils with South Korea in a friendly match on Monday.

In the match held at the Seoul World Cup Stadium, Team Melli were held to a 1-1 draw by South Korea.

Hwang Ui-jo was on the target for the hosts in the 57th minute after two Iran defenders, Milad Mohammadi and Morteza Pouraliganji, got tangled up while trying to clear away a long cross.

Iran winger Ramin Rezaeian's corner went off the leg of defender Kim Young-gwon and past Jo Hyeon-woo into the net in the 62nd minute. Two teams are preparing for the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualifications which

begins in September.

Korea Republic won't be too disturbed not to have won, as they finished the international break unbeaten after having defeated Australia 1-0 on Friday.

It was Marc Wilmots's second match in charge of Team Melli.

Iran had defeated Syria 5-0 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Thursday.

South Korea, ranked 37th, have nine wins, nine draws and 13 losses against the 21st-ranked Iran.

Iran have not suffered a defeat against South Korea since 2011. Team Melli collected four consecutive 1-0 wins before taking a scoreless draw in a World Cup qualifying match in August 2017.



Iran will continue attacking football: Marc Wilmots



SPORTS TEHRAN — Iran national football coach marc Wilmots is satisfied with his team's performance against South Korea, saying Team Melli will continue their attacking football.

Iran shared the spoils with South Korea in a friendly match on Tuesday.

Hwang Ui-jo was on the target for the hosts in the 57th minute and Kim Young-gwon scored an own goal in the 62nd minute.

"It was a friendly match but I believe that it was a top-level football. I think it was a satisfying match for the fans who attended the game because both of teams created scoring chances," Wilmots said in the post-match news conference.

"As I've already said the best defense is a good offense and my boys played an attacking football. We created about 10 scoring chances and it's very good," he added.

Korea improves but still can't beat Iran

Another goal from red-hot striker Hwang Ui-jo gave South Korea a 1-1 tie with Iran in Seoul on Tuesday. It means that fans have to go back to January 2011 for the last victory over the West Asian team but at least this time there was a goal to celebrate.

This was a more enjoyable and open affair than recent clashes perhaps due to the absence of Carlos Queiroz, a thorn in the Korean side from 2011 until earlier this year when he left to take the Colombia job. Under the Portuguese tactician, Korea lost four and tied once of the five meetings, never even scoring a goal.

This time was different. Iran under Queiroz was always organized, disciplined and tough to play against. This was the first game of new boss Marc Wilmots and perhaps it will take time for the former Belgian coach to get Iran playing the way he wants but this a more open opposition.

That the best player in the first-half was Iranian goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand says it all. Asia's number one was all over the place keeping out shots and headers from the likes of Son Heung-min and colleagues.

Once again Son played all 90 minutes and was roared on by a crowd of over 60,000 every time he possessed the ball but even Asia's biggest star could not find a way past

the man who is probably Asia's best goalkeeper.

As it was however this was a much more vibrant and dynamic performance than the lackluster 1-0 win over Australia four days earlier.

The Taeguk Warriors managed to open up Iran, some-

thing that rarely happened when Queiroz was in charge.

While Iran did not look quite as solid at the back, there was still a threat. Ahmad Nourallahi went close early in the second half with a shot that hit the woodwork but just before the hour Hwang broke the deadlock for the second time in four days.

The Gamba Osaka striker ran on to a long ball and took advantage of a defensive mix-up to smartly chip the ball over Beiranvand and into the net. It was the first goal that Korea had scored against Iran since January 2011 and Hwang's seventh since October.

More should have followed immediately with Son going close but then Iran equalized from a corner. Goalkeeper Cho Hyun-woo came for the ball and uncharacteristically missed and it ended up in the back of the net courtesy of an own goal from Kim Yong-gwon.

Korea continued to push forward in search of the winner but it never came though Son came close with what would have been a spectacular goal. If the team is going to defeat Iran, it will have to wait until the next decade.

And that is it for a few weeks at least. The next meaningful action comes in September when Korea starts qualification for the 2022 World Cup.

(Source: Koreatimes.co.kr)

The Brazilian blind football team gave the home crowd plenty to cheer about on Sunday, reclaiming the International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) Blind Football American Championships title from rivals Argentina in São Paulo.

A 2-0 win secured Brazil's sixth Copa America to continue their storied record in the competition.

Raimundo Nonato was the star of the show, netting both goals in the first half. Nonato also led the tournament in scoring with nine goals overall.

Argentina came into the final with a clean sheet having won three matches against Chile, Peru and Colombia and two goal-less draws versus Brazil and Mexico.

Brazil, meanwhile, had wins against Colombia, Peru, Mexico and Chile, only conceding one goal against Chile to top the table in the round-robin stage.

On Sunday, Brazil drew first blood with a successful penalty after Ricardinho Alves was pulled down inside the area just eight minutes into the game. Nonato powered the ball into the left corner with his right foot after the ball hit the crossbar.

Five minutes later Nonato struck again, finishing a solo run from the Brazilian half

in expert style.



for the whole team on the field."

The final score was a repeat of the last time the two great rival teams met. In 2018 at the World Championships in Madrid, Spain, Brazil also triumphed with a 2-0 win.

"It is always great to play at home. The pressure is very great here, because we could not miss this title. But we did it and we did

it in front of our friendly crowds," added Ricardinho.

Brazil knew they would face a tough test on Sunday. Argentina came into the American Championships as the defending champions.

In 2017, Argentina stopped Brazil from winning a third Copa America title in a row with a 2-1 win on penalties following a 2-2 draw.

With their place in the final, Argentina have secured themselves a spot at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. Brazil already gained their spot with their world title win at Madrid 2018.

Mexico capture bronze

Mexico beat Colombia 2-1 on penalties after a thrilling 0-0 draw following extra time. Mexico was able to turn the tables on Colombia who defeated them 3-0 in the bronze medal game at the 2017 American Championships. Chile finished the competition fifth followed by Peru.

The next major event for teams from the Americas will come at the 2019 Parapan American Games in Lima, Peru from 23 August. Brazil are unbeaten since the first time the sport was featured at the Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2007.

(Source: Paralympic)

Gucci not interested in Iran Professional League

TASNIM — Reza Ghochanejhad 'Gucci' has no interest in playing in Iran Professional League (IPL) as he aims to continue his career in a European football team.

Gucci, who joined A-League club Sydney FC on loan from Cypriot club APOEL, is now a free agent player.

The 31-year-old forward has been continuously linked with a move to Iranian football clubs Persepolis, Tractor Sazi and Padideh.

"I am not interested in playing in Iran league and I want to continue my football in a European football club," the former SC Heerenveen striker said.

The forward has played 44 times for Team Melli, scoring 17 goals and represented Iran in two World Cups, before retiring from international football after last year's tournament in Russia.

KIA U-13 Football Academy win Cordial Cup

TASNIM — KIA U-13 Football Academy claimed the title of the 2019 Cordial Cup on Monday.

Defending champions KIA Academy defeated Hamburger SV 5-2 in the final match.

A total of 48 teams took part in the U-13 tournament.

The 22nd international Cordial Cup took place from June 7 to 10 in the Kitzbueheler Alps.

The KIA Football Academy is an Iranian youth football academy based in Tehran. The academy was established in April 2015 by former Iran national team captain Mehdi Mahdavikia and long-time youth coach Ali Doustimehr.

Winfried Schaefer files complaint to FIFA, Esteghlal GM says

PLDC — Winfried Schaefer has filed a complaint to FIFA saying Iranian team Esteghlal still owes him salary from his spell in charge of the team, Esteghlal general manager Amir Hossein Fathi said.

Esteghlal parted company with Schaefer in early May following poor results in Iran Professional League and AFC Champions League.

"Schaefer has filed a complaint to FIFA however we also have documents and I hope the case will be finished at its lowest price," Fathi said.

Esteghlal have reached an agreement with former Inter Milan coach Andrea Stramaccioni and Esteghlal GM says the details of the contract will remain undisclosed.

"We will pen a contract with Stramaccioni soon. I hope we can take advantage of his services. Stramaccioni's assistants are in Tehran at the moment. We will finalize a two-year contract with the Italian coach," he added.

Farhad Majidi, who was appointed Esteghlal interim coach as Schaefer's replacement, has been named as Iran U23 football team head coach.

"Majidi is one of Esteghlal's legends but Mr. Taj (head of Iran football federation) asked me to let him join the Olympic team. I think the national team is our priority," he concluded.

Oblak wants Atleti exit, favors United



Atletico Madrid goalkeeper Jan Oblak wants to leave in the summer following broken promises over his future -- and the boyhood Manchester United fan favours a move to Old Trafford over Paris Saint-Germain, a source has told ESPN FC.

Last week, Oblak voiced concerns about Atletico's competitiveness, with star forward Antoine Griezmann set to leave and Lucas Hernandez, Diego Godin, Filipe Luis and Juanfran also departing.

Oblak wants Atleti to match his ambition and is considering his options, with PSG also in the running after announcing that Gianluigi Buffon would leave in the summer.

However, a source told ESPN FC that United are in the chase for Oblak, despite the fact that they will not be playing in the Champions League next season.

The source said the 26-year-old wants to play in the Premier League. David De Gea's United future is in considerable doubt -- the Spain international is also a PSG target -- and sources told ESPN FC in April that United were considering triggering Oblak's €120 million buyout clause in the event De Gea leaves.

Earlier this year, Oblak signed a new deal until 2023 and was told the Atletico squad would be strengthened to compete for La Liga and the Champions League.

Brazilian centre-back Felipe has joined from Porto and striker Nicolas Ibanez has come in from Atleti's Mexican franchise Atletico de San Luis, but the source said Oblak did not feel the list of possible Griezmann replacements was good enough.

Regarded as one of the finest goalkeepers in the world, Oblak won his fourth Zamora Award as La Liga's best goalkeeper after helping Atletico finish second in the table last season.

The Slovenia international kept 27 clean sheets in 50 matches in 2018 -- more than any other goalkeeper in Europe's top five leagues including Liverpool's Alisson and United's De Gea -- and conceded just 36 goals.

Manchester United declined to comment when asked by ESPN FC about interest in Oblak.

(Source: ESPN)

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

What is to be reckoned is transient, and what is to be expected is coming.

Imam Ali (AS)

Slovak Ambassador Lubomir Golian visits IIDCYA

CULTURE TEHRAN — Slovak Ambassador Lubomir Golian paid a visit to the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) in Tehran on Saturday.



IIDCYA Public Relations Office director Hamed Rahnama (L) hands an original painting of an Iranian child to Slovak Ambassador Lubomir Golian in Tehran on June 10, 2019. (IIDCYA)

In a meeting with IIDCYA Public Relations Office director Hamed Rahnama, the ambassador said that his country plans to organize several cultural festivals in Tehran and is ready to expand cultural relations with Iranian cultural organizations.

He added that a selection of his country's legends is ready to be published in Persian in Tehran.

According to Golian, the stories belong to the 19th century and will be introduced in a cultural program in Tehran.

Rahnama called arts the joint commonalities of all nations, which help remove the obstacles on the road to cultural relations.

He also proposed holding children's friendship weeks between the two countries.

Boosting art and cultural relations in different fields of cinema, animation and book illustration were also among the topics discussed at the meeting.

Rahnama handed an original painting of an Iranian child to the ambassador at the end of their meeting.

Mohammad Motamedi to give benefit concert for Lorestan flood victims

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian vocalist Mohammad Motamedi will be giving a charity concert in Tehran to raise funds for the flood victims in the Lorestan region.

The concert will take place at the Milad Hall of the Tehran International Permanent Fairgrounds on June 19, he said during a press conference in Tehran on Tuesday.

The concert has been organized by the Association of Freedom and Development Watch, and musician Hossein Zandi will collaborate as the conductor, Motamedi added.

The March heavy rainfall in Lorestan and several other provinces in western, southwestern and northeastern Iran led to severe flooding, which struck and damaged many cities and villages.

Iranian musicians to perform at London's Kings Place

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian setar virtuoso Mehdi Ros-tami and his brother Adib, who is a tombak player, are scheduled to give a concert at the Kings Place Hall in London on July 6.

They will perform selections from their debut album "Melodic Circles".

The album, which is a collection of traditional Iranian and Kurdish music, was released by the ARC label in the UK in 2018. "Melodic Circles" was among the top 10 albums of 2018 selected by Songlines Magazine.



Mohammad Motamedi in an undated photo.

Afghan director Ramin Rasuli making his new film in Iran

A R T TEHRAN — Afghan filmmaker Ramin Rasuli is making his new movie titled "Dogs Did Not Sleep Last Night" on location in Iran.

A cast of Iranian and Afghan actors is collaborating on this project, a public relations team announced on Tuesday.

A joint production between Iran and Afghanistan, the film tells the story of a remote Afghan village seized by the Taliban, and the exploits occurring after a village girl takes a U.S. airborne soldier, who has survived a helicopter crash, into their village.

"Dogs Did Not Sleep Last Night" is Rasuli's second film in Iran with Iranian producer Siavash Haqqi.

He made his debut film "Lina" in 2017 in the country with a cast composed of prominent Iranian actors Amir Aqai and Homayun Ershadi and Afghan actress Hasiba Ebrahimi.



Afghan actress Atefeh Amini acts in a scene from "Dogs Did Not Sleep Last Night" by her fellow Afghan, filmmaker Ramin Rasuli.

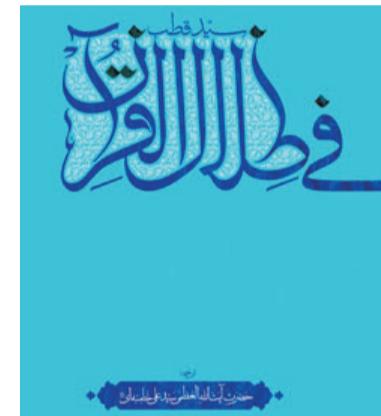
Leader's Persian translation of "In the Shade of the Quran" published

A R T TEHRAN — A d e s k Persian translation of Egyptian writer Sayyid Qutb's book "In the Shade of the Quran" by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, has recently been published in Tehran, the Islamic Revolution Publications announced on Tuesday.

The book mostly focuses on the verbal and spiritual beauty of the Holy Quran, as well as the proportion of the verses and concepts.

The Leader began the translation when he was only 30 and completed the first volume, which includes the beginning of the Quran up to verse 182 in the second chapter, Surah Baqarah.

However, the Leader found out that author and translator Ahmad Araam (1904-



Front cover of Egyptian writer Sayyid Qutb's book "In the Shade of the Quran". (1998) had been working on the book and he stopped his translation.

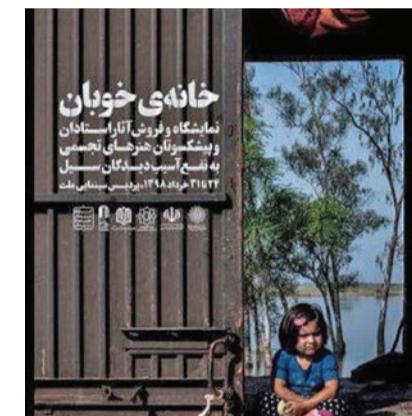
"The House of the Blessed" to raise funds for Iran's flood victims

A R T TEHRAN — Over 80 d e s k veteran Iranian artists will showcase their latest works in an exhibition titled "The House of the Blessed" to raise funds for victims of Iran's recent floods.

The exhibit, which will open on Friday at the gallery of Mellat Cineplex in Tehran, will put a collection of paintings, photos, drawings, cartoons and sculptures by Mohammad Ehsai, Kambiz Derambakhsh, Kurosh Shishegaran, Fakhreddin Fakhreddini, Hossein Mahjubi and several other artists on display.

A portion of the funds raised by the exhibition, which is scheduled to run until June 21, will be donated to the survivors of the flood.

The heavy rainfall in Fars, Golestan, Mazandaran, Lorestan, Khuzestan and several other provinces in western, southwestern and northeastern Iran in March led to severe flooding, which struck and damaged many



A poster for art exhibition "The House of the Blessed".

Shiraz European Film Week canceled

A R T TEHRAN — The European Film Week, d e s k which opened on Saturday simultaneously in eight Iranian cities, was canceled in Shiraz, the Persian service of IRNA reported on Tuesday.

A manager of the Golestan Cineplex in Shiraz, which was playing host to the festival, announced the cancellation on Monday evening, but gave no reason for it.

Agusti Villaronga's 2010 drama "Black Bread" on the Spanish Civil War, Cypriot director and producer Marios Piperides' 2018 comedy drama "Smuggling Hendrix" were screened at the cineplex on Saturday.

The cineplex also reviewed Portuguese director Joao Botelho's "Pilgrimage" and Bulgarian director Nadejda Koseva's "Irina" on Sunday.

The ten-day festival is currently underway on Kish Island and in the cities of Babol, Isfahan, Kerman, Mashhad and Tabriz.

The ten-day festival opened at the Iranian Artists Forum



A poster for the European Film Week.

in Tehran by screening "The Dark Valley", a 2014 Austrian-German western drama directed by Andreas Prochaska, and "The Silent Army", Van de Velde's 2008 drama about the hardships of child soldiers in Africa.

Iran's Art and Experience Cinema and the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) are co-organizing the festival, which is screening movies from Bulgaria, Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Slovenia, Finland, Denmark and England.

European diplomats and cineastes and a large number of Iranian filmmakers joined together on Saturday at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran to open the European Film Week.

Dutch director Jean van de Velde, Cypriot producer Marios Piperides and Swiss producer Thierry Spicher filmmakers from Iran, including Fereidun Jeirani, Rasul Sadr-Ameli and Mohammad-Mehdi Asgarpur, are scheduled to hold workshops at the event.

Woodstock 50 loses NY site for anniversary music festival

NEW YORK (Reuters) — The troubled Woodstock 50 music festival on Monday lost the site of a planned anniversary event in August, the latest setback for the weekend marking the famed 1969 "peace and music" festival, but organizers said they were pursuing a new location.

The Aug. 16-19 festival was to have taken place at the Watkins Glen motor racing venue in upstate New York with a line-up including Jay-Z and Miley Cyrus.

On Monday, Watkins Glen said in a statement it had "terminated the site license for Woodstock pursuant to provisions

of the contract. As such, (it) will not be hosting the Woodstock 50 Festival," the site owners said in a statement.

Watkins Glen did not say why it had decided to pull out.

Gregory Peck, one of the organizers of Woodstock 50, said the team behind the festival was "in discussions with another venue" to host the event and looked "forward to sharing the new location when tickets go on sale in the coming weeks."

Woodstock 50 is backed by the co-producer of the original 1969 Woodstock festival, which was billed as "three days of

peace and music" and is regarded as one of the pivotal moments in music history.

The anniversary festival was thrown into chaos in April after the lead Japanese investors abruptly pulled out. It has been plagued with other problems, including obtaining permits and arranging security and sanitation.

Tickets for the festival, expected to attract about 60,000 people, have not gone on sale.

Organizers said last month they had obtained new funding and expressed confidence that the show would go on.

Woodstock 50 announced in March that more than 80 musical acts, including 1969 festival veterans John Fogerty, Canned Heat and Santana, would take part.

Some 100,000 fans, including campers, were originally expected to attend, but that number was later reduced to 60,000.

The nonprofit Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, the current owner of the field where the 1969 Woodstock festival took place, has also scaled back plans for a three-day anniversary event. It said in February it will instead host separate concerts by Ringo Starr, Santana and the Doobie Brothers.

Scorsese gets playful with Dylan in "Rolling Thunder Revue" film

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Director Martin Scorsese has made his second film about Bob Dylan, and this time the filmmaker has taken a cue from the elusive rock star to weave a fantastical mix of facts and imagination.

"Rolling Thunder Revue: A Bob Dylan Story", to be released on Netflix and in limited movie theaters on Wednesday, depicts one of the singer's strangest concert tours — his 1975 U.S. road trip that had the playfulness of an old-time medicine show and a camera crew in tow.

The Rolling Thunder tour, with an eclectic troupe of performers that included folk singers Joni Mitchell, Joan Baez and Roger McGuinn, as well as poet Allen Ginsberg and glam rocker Mick Ronson, played in small venues with little advance notice, despite Dylan's status as the time as a major star.

"It wasn't a success, not if you measure success in terms of profit. But it was an adventure," Dylan says in Scorsese's film.

Dylan shaped some of the documentary footage into the 1978 film "Renaldo and Clara," blending it with improvised scenes. It bombed with critics and audiences and was his last attempt at directing.

Scorsese's film, taken from over 100 hours of footage shot in 1975, echoes the same spirit, mixing commentary from Dylan and Baez with interviews with Sharon Stone and other actors who spin imaginary tales about their



Director Martin Scorsese poses at the 71st Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France May 9, 2018. (Reuters/Regis Duvignau)

supposed involvement with the tour.

"We are not calling it a documentary," said Margaret Bodde, one of the producers.

Scorsese took a different approach in his previous film about Dylan, the 2005 "No Direction Home" which was an unembellished documentary about the singer's 1960s transformation from a college dropout in New York City's

folk scene to an international rock star.

The new film shows Dylan in 1975 performing songs such as "Mr. Tambourine Man" and "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" in white face paint with wild-eyed intensity.

"There's just a certain kind of connection to the audience that he seemed to have on this tour that I think will blow everyone's minds," Bodde said.

The movie's fictional elements "really grew out of the spirit of the tour," she said. "Because Bob looks so different on that tour and he's kind of an actor."

One of the invented characters in the film is an ornery Dutch filmmaker, played by Bette Midler's husband Martin von Haselberg, who is presented as a filmmaker who tried to capture the essence of the tour in 1975.

In a mock interview, the accented Dutchman complains that Dylan never gave him straight answers.

Scorsese, an Oscar-winning director, largely left out improvised scenes between members of the tour that Dylan used in "Renaldo and Clara."

"The tour itself, not that movie, that's what we were interested in," said David Tedeschi, one of the editors on the Scorsese film.

But one scene, an encounter between Dylan and Baez, made the cut. Baez wears a wedding dress and the two former lovers trade quips about why they each married someone else.