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Iran can repeat 'crushing response' any time: Navy chief

TEHRAN — Chief of the Iranian Navy Hossein Khanzadi warned on Monday that Iran's crushing response to violation of its territory can be repeated.

Khanzadi was making a reference to the IRGC's shooting down of a U.S. unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) that intruded into the airspace of Iran. The intruding drone

was shot by Iran's homegrown air defense missile system called "Khordad-3rd".

"I say with confidence that this crushing response can always be repeated and the enemy is aware of this," The rear admiral said, pointing out that all the world saw the downing of the U.S. unmanned aerial vehicle. →3

Jahromi: U.S. cyberattacks on missile systems failed

Staff and agencies

Tehran says that recent U.S. cyber-attacks against Iranian missile control systems have failed to cause any disruptions.

"The media ask whether the alleged cyber-attacks against Iran did take place. They try hard, but they have yet to carry out a successful attack," IT Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi said in a tweet on Monday.

On Thursday, American sources

claimed that the United States had targeted computer systems that control Iranian rocket and missile launchers.

The attacks came shortly after the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) shot down a U.S. Navy RQ-4A global Hawk drone that had entered Iranian airspace in the Persian Gulf region to gather intelligence, using the indigenous Khordad 3 surface-to-air missile system. →2

Iraqi parliament votes in defense, interior, justice ministers

TEHRAN— The education portfolio is the only one yet to be filled in Iraq's government after lawmakers on Monday voted in Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi's nominees as defense, interior and justice ministers.

Najah al-Shammari, Yaseen al-Yasiri and Faruq Ameen were respectively confirmed in those posts, lawmakers said.

But Safana al-Hamdani, the nominee for minister of education and the only women

to be put forward so far for a ministerial post, was rejected.

"Most lawmakers were not satisfied that (she)... is fit for the job," said legislator Abbas al-Zamili of the Iranian-backed Badr Organization.

Months of deadlock over forming a cabinet have raised the prospect of further unrest as the country struggles to rebuild and recover after three years of conflict with Islamic State.



ARTICLE

Hamid Bayati
Tehran Times journalist

Cyber-attack against Iran: A failed strategy of U.S. presidents from Bush to Trump

It was first in July 2010 when the United States launched a serious cyber-attack against Iran. At the time, it was said that a virus named Stuxnet was used for damaging the computer systems that controlled Iranian nuclear industry.

After that, on January 16 2011, New York Times and many other media published news about how Stuxnet malicious computer worm was jointly built by U.S., the Zionist regime, United Kingdom and Germany.

New York Times revealed that George W. Bush, U.S. former president, initially issued the permit for production of Stuxnet and then they started building the virus in cooperation with the Zionist regime.

According to the official documents, Stuxnet was built jointly by U.S., Germany, U.K. and the Zionist regime, but Germany and U.K. may not have been aware what function the virus will have in future. What we know for sure is that George W. Bush issued the permit for building Stuxnet and Barack Obama gave the permit for using the virus in 2009.

Where did Stuxnet come from?

According to western and Zionist news agencies, in 2009, Stuxnet mostly infiltrated the computers via software such as USB flash drives and internet and then the virus was transferred to every other computer that became connected to an infected computer.

At the time, the emergence of this computer worm was all over the news. On October second 2010, India Times and Daily Telegraph published some news and revealed that the Zionist regime was involved in building this virus.

What is interesting in both their reports, is that they mentioned that Stuxnet used a file named "Myrtus" to infiltrate the computers.

What is Myrtus?

Myrtus is a word with Hebrew roots that refer to the story of Esther. Esther was the second wife of Persian king Ahasuerus (commonly identified as Xerxes) in ancient Persia. She was a Jewish woman who was under the guardianship of her cousin, Mordecai who was an advisor to king Ahasuerus and convinced the king to marry her. →7

Trump's new deal: Exchanging Bolton and Pompeo with Esper

By Hanif Ghaffari

TEHRAN — It seems that the power game in White House has become more complicated than ever. The United States President Donald Trump has nominated Mark Esper as his next Defense Secretary.

In a recent report, Foreign Policy news agency has pointed out that Mark Esper has a close relationship with hardliners of White House. The report goes on to say that Mark Esper has close relations with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Advisor John Bolton and these relations will help Trump to keep his unstable administration moving.

It seems that the nomination of Mark Esper has convinced American media that the position of John Bolton and Mike Pompeo on Trump's team has been stabilized.

Mark Esper has had close relationships with John Bolton since George W. Bush was in office;

he was also classmates with Mike Pompeo in U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Despite their long history together, John Bolton and Mike Pompeo still don't have good feelings about having Esper on board. Of course, Bolton and Pompeo don't have any problem with Esper himself, but they are extremely worried about Trump's intentions in appointing Esper as his Defense Secretary.

According to reliable sources, as of March, Donald Trump has started clandestine meetings with some traditional republicans about removing Bolton and Pompeo from his cabinet.

Obviously, Trump is mad at Bolton and Pompeo because their plans and suggestions have not solved any of U.S. foreign policy problems and have only reduced Trump's popularity in key states. However, Trump might still have doubts about removing them, because by doing so he will almost certainly lose the support of Tea Party

Movement and Neoliberals.

Now with selecting Esper as the new head of Pentagon, Trump is trying to compensate for the future absence of Pompe and Bolton in his cabinet and send a message to Tea Party supporters and Neoliberals.

In this message, Trump is trying to tell these parties that even in the absence of Pompeo and Bolton, Pentagon will still be ruled by republicans and firing these two top headline republic officials doesn't mean that Trump is any less a supporter of headline republic parties.

Under this scenario, Trump can gain the votes of all three different parties of Neoliberals, Tea Party Movement supporters and traditional republicans in upcoming presidential elections.

It seems that in near future, more details of this complicated game that Trump is playing behind the scenes will be revealed. A game in which Pentagon is used as a winning point.

Saudi Arabia's nuclear ambitions raise alarm in Mideast

TEHRAN — Saudi Arabia's expanding nuclear and missile programs have raised fears that it aims to acquire nuclear weapons, with analysts warning that a nuclear Riyadh under its "reckless" leadership would pose a threat to the countries in the region.

Saudi Arabia, a signatory of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), signed in 2005 a so-called small quantities protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency, which exempts countries with no or minimal nuclear

programs from inspections.

Riyadh, which is constructing a nuclear reactor, has so far resisted calls by the IAEA to implement proportionate safeguards and an inspection regime that would prohibit possible deviation towards weaponization.

"The small quantities protocol was designed to simplify safeguards for states with minimal or no nuclear material, but it is no longer adequate for Saudi Arabia's expanding nuclear program," Kelsey Davenport, director of Nonproliferation

Policy at Arms Control Association, told Middle East Eye.

Referring to Saudi Arabia's threats to pursue nuclear weapons, its exemption from inspections and its developing ballistic missile program, Davenport said: "There are legitimate reasons to be concerned that Saudi Arabia is seeking to develop the technical capabilities that would allow Riyadh to quickly pursue nuclear weapons if the political decision were made to do so." →13

U.S. sanctions disrupting anti-drugs fight: Zarif

TEHRAN — Iran's foreign minister has criticized the U.S. sanctions for hindering Iran's effort and cooperation with other countries in the fight against drug trafficking, saying Washington and a number of Western countries are responsible for the consequences of such interruption.

Mohammad Javad Zarif made the remarks as he addressed a conference in Tehran marking International Day against Drug Trafficking and Abuse of Illicit Drugs.

The top diplomat referred to a report by the United Nations, saying that "today, Iran is the flag-bearer of the fight against drug trafficking."

"The martyrdom of more than 8,800 policemen with over 12,000 others being left disabled as the heavy cost Iran has so far paid for," Mehr quoted Zarif as saying. →2



© Tehran Times / Maryam Kamyab



ARTICLE

Mahnaz Abdi
Head of the TehranTimes
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Offering basic goods at IME for regulated market, flourished production

Supplying basic goods is one of the major issues on the Iranian government's agenda in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21) and it is one of the focal pillars in the national budget bill for this year.

In this due, the government is taking numerous strategies for the supply of these goods. One of them is allocating foreign currency for the imports of basic goods through domestic Forex Management Integrated System (locally known as NIMA) which allows importers to supply their required foreign currency without specific problems.

Also, following a directive by President Hassan Rouhani, Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) is providing new facilities for importers of basic goods which makes them able to clear their commodities in less than an hour, as last month announced by IRICA Deputy Director Mehrdad Jamal Orounaghi.

The official said that for basic goods such as meat, system formalities and clearance procedures will be carried out in less than an hour and importers can transport their goods soon after.

All such measures are taking for the supply of basic goods, while some actions are also required for a regulated market for these goods. Many capital market experts believe that offering basic goods at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) can help the government regulate and control the market in a better way.

In an interview recently conducted by IRNA, Hossein Khezli Kharazi, a capital market expert, said, "Mercantile exchange was set up in our economy with the aim of fair price discovery. The best way for discovery of the fair prices of basic goods is relying on a supply-demand mechanism and IME is the only transparent market for this purpose."

Through transparent statistics obtained via IME, the government can even allocate subsidies for the basic goods, he added.

Setting prices for the basic goods makes the markets face two rates (official and free market), it is why the experts suggest the government offer the commodities at stock exchange to discover the real prices. →4

Ban Ki-moon says folly of U.S. decision to quit nuclear deal has caused regional tension

By staff and agency

Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has said that the folly of the U.S. decision to withdraw from the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, has caused regional tension.



“I am deeply concerned by the current tensions in the (Persian) Gulf. They highlight the dangers posed by the lack of an effective Middle East security framework, and the folly of the U.S. decision to withdraw from the JCPOA. This rash move not only weakens regional stability, but also sends the wrong signal to on-going negotiations over North Korea’s nuclear issues,” The Elders quoted Ban as saying in a statement issued on Friday.

The Elders called on all parties to the JCPOA, and the United States, to resume dialogue on the longer- and broader-term prospects for Iran’s security relations with the region, beyond the “sunset provisions” of the nuclear deal, as well as its reintegration into the international economic system.

They welcomed the recent statements by President Trump and Secretary of State Pompeo that the U.S. does not want a war with Iran, and encouraged leaders and policymakers in Washington and Tehran to approach the issue in a spirit of good faith and mutual respect.

The Elders are an independent group of global leaders working together for peace, justice and human rights.

Susan Rice says Trump should sideline Bolton and Pompeo, send envoy to Iran to defuse tension

By staff and agency

Susan Rice, the former U.S. national security advisor, has said President Donald Trump needs to sideline John Bolton, the national security advisor, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and send an envoy to Iran for talks if he seeks to defuse tension.

In an article published by the New York Times on Sunday, she said that Trump should take five actions, including sidelining Bolton and Pompeo and sending envoy to Iran to defuse tension with Iran in the region.

Following is an excerpt of the article:

First, he needs to sideline his out-of-control national security adviser plus his hawkish sidekick, the secretary of state.

Second, the president needs to narrow and clarify his redlines for military action against Iran. He should make plain that three things would force consideration of a United States military response — attacks on American personnel, Iran rushing to acquire the fissile material for a bomb and any direct Iranian attack on Israel. Mr. Trump should also reassure Congress that he will not start an unnecessary war of choice against Iran that would flout his own redlines and require wildly contorting a 2002 authorization to use force against Al Qaeda.

Third, Mr. Trump needs quickly to communicate directly his redlines to Iran and propose a path to avert war. To do so, he should enlist a retired nonpartisan career ambassador who knows Iran well — someone of the caliber of Bill Burns, a former deputy secretary of state, who has negotiated with Iran, or Thomas Pickering, a six-time ambassador and former under secretary of state. If Mr. Trump can’t stomach someone outside his team, he can send his reputedly rational deputy secretary of state, John Sullivan, to New York to meet with Iran’s ambassador to the United Nations, Majid Takht Ravanchi, who studied in the United States, helped negotiate the nuclear deal and is a reliable conduit to Tehran.

Fourth, Mr. Trump needs to lay out a series of reciprocal steps whereby both sides give a little, so familiarity and confidence can be built for more significant discussions. For instance, Mr. Trump might offer to allow Iran again to export its low-enriched uranium in exchange for Iran shelving its threat to exceed the stockpile limits imposed by the nuclear deal. (Iran says it uses or sells the uranium to fuel power plants, but Mr. Trump blocked its export last month.)

Next, he could trade a pause in the buildup of additional United States forces in the (Persian) Gulf for a firm Iranian commitment not to target foreign aircraft. Let’s test if Iran will adhere to that pledge, for an initial ninety days, while we hold in reserve the option of deploying reinforcements.

Fifth, President Trump should offer a time-limited “suspension” of the United States withdrawal from the nuclear deal and allow temporary (perhaps partial) relief from the newly reimposed sanctions, if Iran immediately releases American persons it has imprisoned and agrees to direct talks with the United States and the other partners to the nuclear deal on extending and strengthening the agreement. If the talks yield progress, we could expand sanctions relief.

U.S. sanctions disrupting anti-drugs fight: Zarif

➔ Zarif stressed that Iran’s anti-narcotic measures are not merely restricted to its borders, saying they have regional and international effects due to its geographical location including its 921-kilometer long border with Afghanistan, which is the world’s biggest producer of traditional drugs.

The foreign minister noted that Iranian forces confiscated over 800 tons of opium last year, which accounts for 80% of the opium seized in the world.

He also rebuked some Western governments for opposing the goal of “a world free of narcotic drugs”.

“Ignoring the measures taken by supporters of free drug trafficking by raising the human rights issue, Iran works to promote public health by monitoring the corridors,” the minister stated.

Iran to take second step in limiting nuclear commitments ‘more strongly’

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Monday that Iran will take the second step in reducing its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal “more strongly”.

On May 8, Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) declared Tehran’s partial withdrawal from the nuclear deal commitments in response to the U.S. exit from the multilateral pact and reimposition of sanctions on Iran.

The decision by Tehran was taken one year after the U.S. ditched the agreement endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Under the nuclear agreement, officially called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran is tasked to put caps on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

Iran has insisted that it cannot remain unilaterally committed to the deal.

“We will continue reducing our commitments as long as no practical step is taken to meet Iran’s legal demands within the framework of the JCPOA. If they do not take any action in a few days, we will take second step more strongly,” Mousavi told a regular news briefing.

Mousavi said that survival of the JCPOA depends on the remaining signatories’ commitments to their obligations.

The remaining parties to the JCPOA are the European Union, E3 – Germany, France and Britain – Russia and China.

Iran threatened to step up uranium enrichment if an agreement is not made within 60 days to protect it from the sanctions’ effects. The deadline ends on July 7.

In line with Tehran’s decision to scale back its commitments under the nuclear deal, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) announced on June 17 that Iran’s stockpile of enriched uranium will exceed 300 kilograms by June 27.

After June 27, Kamalvandi said, Iran will speed up its uranium enrichment activities beyond 3.67 percent if the remaining sides



don’t take a practical step.

“After surpassing 300 kilogram, we will increase the speed of producing enriched uranium above 3.67 percent,” Kamalvandi stated.

Iran has insisted it will reverse its decision if it is shielded from sanctions.

‘Iran does not want superficial INSTEX’

Mousavi also said INSTEX, a European special purpose vehicle aimed at facilitating legitimate trade between European economic operators and Iran, should be not be “artificial”.

He went on to say that Iran’s oil revenues should reach the amount before the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA.

On January 31, France, Germany and Britain, announced the creation of INSTEX. On March 20, Iran’s central bank governor Abdolnaser Hemmati also announced that a mechanism similar to INSTEX has been registered in Iran, officially called the Special Trade and Finance Institute (STFI).

During a joint press conference with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Tehran on June 10, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas 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.”

Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani recently told a top French parliamentarian that INSTEX “remains on the paper”.

Kamal Kharrazi, chief of the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, also told the visiting British Minister of State for the Middle East on Sunday that London’s talks of the JCPOA are “repeated words”.

‘Iran not to surrender to pressure’

Mousavi also reiterated long-held position by Iran that Tehran will not surrender to sanctions and pressure, noting maximum pressure against Iran does not work.

Despite incessant harsh sanctions and pressures, President Donald Trump and his close aides are calling for dialogue with Iran. However, Tehran has insisted it will not go to the negotiating table because of the sanctions and pressure.

‘Iran ready for talks with regional countries’

Mousavi also said that Iran has always been ready for talks with regional countries.

“We are even ready to hold talks with neighbors who think differently and we do not reject mediations in this respect,” the Foreign Ministry spokesman said in indirect reference

to Saudi Arabia and the UAE who have aligned with the U.S. against Iran.

■ ‘We responded firmly to U.S. violation of Iran’s airspace’

He also said that Iran responded to the U.S. drone’s violation of the Iranian airspace “firmly”, maintaining Iran’s full preparedness.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) shot down an unmanned U.S. surveillance drone on Thursday morning after it breached Iran’s airspace. The IRGC brought the drone down by firing a surface-to-air missile at it.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Friday that the U.S. military drone entered the Iranian airspace from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and it was targeted near Kouh-e Mobarak.

■ Mousavi calls Britain’s Murrison ‘novice’

On British Minister of State for the Middle East Andrew Murrison’s anti-remarks after his return from Iran, Mousavi said he is “novice” and described his remarks as “unconstructive”.

According to BBC, Murrison has said the UK believes Iran “almost certainly bears responsibility for the attacks” following his visit to Iran on Sunday.

On June 13, two commercial oil tankers were hit in the Gulf of Oman, prompting the evacuation and rescue of dozens of crew members.

The United States has blamed Iran for the attacks.

Hunt also issued a statement on June 14 blaming Iran and the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps for the attacks. He claimed no other state or non-state actor could have been responsible. The UK official, however, did not present any evidence for his claim.

On June 15, the Iranian Foreign Ministry summoned British Ambassador Robert Macaire over the accusations.

Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Mahmoud Barimani conveyed Tehran’s strong protest to the British government’s “unfounded allegations” and “unacceptable” anti-Iran stances.

Jahromir: U.S. cyberattacks on missile systems failed

Jahromi says Iran neutralized 33 million cyberattacks from March 2018 to March 2019

➔ “We have been facing cyber-terrorism for a long time...Last year we neutralized 33 million attacks with the (national) firewall,” Jahromi was quoted by Press TV as saying.

Iran’s past calendar year ended on March 20, 2019.

U.S. sources reveal that that American intelligence and military officers are working on clandestine plans against the Islamic Republic.

Citing unnamed current and former U.S. government officials, the New York Times said in a report on Sunday that the plans pushed by the White House are designed to develop new options, including in cyberspace, to counter the Islamic Republic without escalating tensions into a full-out conventional war.

According to the officials, the White House has told military and intelligence officials it now also wants options in line with the kind of operations conducted by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps

(IRGC), including the downing of the intruding U.S. spy drone.

They did not provide further details about the secret operations under consideration by the White House, the report said.

The Times, however, said they could include a wide range of activities such as additional cyber-attacks, secret operations aimed at disabling speedboats used by the IRGC and covert operations inside Iran aimed at fomenting more unrest.

The IRGC Navy is well-known for the speedboats it operates in the Persian Gulf, which it has used to successfully contain foreign ships and aircraft carriers around the key Strait of Hormuz in the past.

The American officials said Washington might also look for ways to divide or undermine the effectiveness of Iran-allied groups in the region.

Pointing to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency’s longstanding covert plans against Iran, the officials said that senior American officials have discussed with the White House



options for expanded clandestine operations by the spy agency, as well as plans to step up existing efforts against Tehran.

One former American officer said there was a range of options that the Pentagon and the CIA could pursue to potentially keep Iran off balance but that would not have “crystal-clear attribution” to the United States.

The U.S. has been escalating tensions

‘Tehran will not release Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe’

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Jailed **British-Iranian** spy Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe will serve out her five-year prison sentence, Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Monday, dismissing a call for her release by a British minister visiting Tehran.

“Mrs. Zaghari is an Iranian. She has been convicted on security charges and is spending her sentence in prison,” Abbas Mousavi told a press conference.

“Iran does not recognize dual nationality,” he said.

Foreign Office Minister Andrew Murrison pressed Iran for the “urgent and unconditional release” of Zaghari-Ratcliffe on Sunday, during a visit to Iran to discuss

the situation in the Middle East, his ministerial area of responsibility.

Referring to pressures on Iran’s diplomatic mission in London, Mousavi said measures such as Zaghari’s husband’s move who has started a strike on the doorsteps to Iran’s Embassy in London, are intended to increase the media hype and attract attention, underscoring that such moves will not help resolve the case.

“Causing disturbance and hindrance to the daily and current routines of an embassy’s affairs is in violation of international conventions and such moves are not accepted by Iran,” he said, describing the recent moves in front of the Iranian diplomatic mission in London as destructive.

Hanged spy got what he deserved: defense minister

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The **Iranian** minister of defense says a CIA spy who was recently hanged in Iran received the treatment he deserved.

“We have said many a time, what suits people who commit treason is just what the Aerospace Organization did to this spy and we thank the organization for what they did,” Amir Hatami said on Monday.

On Saturday sources in Iran reported that prisoner Jamal Haji-Zavareh, who was charged with spying for the United States, had been executed the previous Monday.

Haji-Zavareh, an employee of the Ministry of Defense Aerospace

Organization who had been retired in 2010, had clearly confessed to spying for the U.S. government and the CIA and was found in possession of espionage documents and equipment, the Judiciary Organization of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran reported.

The statement said the spy’s case had been addressed by the military court and then referred for approval to the Supreme Court.

Jamal’s wife, Leila Tajik, was found to having assisted him and is sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment.

Hatami on Monday said although Haji-Zavareh had been retired, he later started spying for the U.S.

‘Europe does not want to pay the least price to save nuclear deal’

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday that Europe does not want to pay the least price to keep 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

“We have been convinced that Europe’s refusal to abide by its commitments under the JCPOA does not come from inability but from lack of will. Europe does not want to pay the least cost to preserve the JCPOA. The European companies do not dare to disobey the U.S. Treasury’s orders which means Europe’s lack of sovereignty even inside of its borders,” Araghchi said during a meeting with British Minister of State for the Middle East Andrew Murrison in Tehran.

Araghchi noted that Iran’s decision to reduce its commitments under the JCPOA is a “national decision”, saying Tehran will go ahead with the plan by the time the country’s demands are met.

Murrison called on Iran to remain committed to the JCPOA, saying Britain will abide by the deal.

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. The deadline ends on July 7.

Iran has threatened if a decision is not made by that date it will take the next steps.

In line with Tehran’s decision to scale back its commitments under the nuclear deal in protest to reimposition of sanctions, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) announced on June 17 that Iran’s stockpile of enriched uranium will exceed 300 kilograms by June 27.

After June 27, Kamalvandi said, Iran will speed up its uranium enrichment activities beyond 3.67 percent if the other sides don’t take a practical step.

“After surpassing 300 kilogram, we will increase the speed of producing enriched uranium above 3.67 percent,” Kamalvandi stated.

Iran has insisted it will reverse its decision if it is shielded from sanctions.

Raisi: Rights violators claim to be rights advocates

Iran regards human rights as core of divine religions: Judiciary chief

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – The Islamic Republic of Iran has always regarded human rights as the central point of divine religions and has always championed peace and human rights in the world, Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi said on Monday.

“Observance of human rights is a prerequisite for realization of justice,” Raisi said, adding, “Observance of human rights is the basis of every decision and action in the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

He criticized the countries which accuse Iran of violating human rights, saying Iran’s decisions would not be impacted by foreign pressure, ISNA reported.

Officials in Tehran has described U.S. sanctions against Iranian people as “economic war” and “economic terrorism”. President Rouhani has said since the sanctions include ordinary people they are examples of “crimes against humanity”.

■ **‘Economic terrorism purposefully violates rights of Iranians’**

The top judge went on to say that



sanctions are violating the rights of the Iranian people.

“Today, the Iranian people are faced

with a purposeful violation of their rights by the U.S. through a new kind of economic terrorism,” the top judge said, pointing

to the harsh U.S. sanctions on Tehran.

Raisi further said the human rights violators claim to be advocates of human rights and freedom.

“The U.S. and its allies in the Middle East are the main violators of human rights in Palestine and Yemen,” he stated.

The Saudi-led coalition has caused an indescribable human disaster in modern history in Yemen by using American, French, British and German weapons.

Contrary to repeated farcical remarks that Iran is seeking the annihilation of Israel by Benjamin Netanyahu and some other Zealots, Iran has called for a referendum in the occupied Palestine to end more than 70 years of violence.

This policy was echoed again by Judiciary chief Raisi, saying the Islamic Republic supports a solution based on democracy in the occupied territories according to which the native inhabitants including Muslims, Christians and Jews can determine their fate.

MP calls Trump’s war threats a ‘psychological operation’

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – A top Iranian lawmaker says U.S. President Donald Trump’s threats to attack Iran is merely a “psychological operation”, Mehr reported on Monday.

“The U.S. has been trying to foment insecurity in the Islamic Republic’s borders and give hope to regional officials who have paid a lot to the U.S.,” said Ahmad Amirabadi, a member of the Majlis presiding board.

On the IRGC’s downing of a U.S. spy drone in Iran’s airspace, Amirabadi said the move highlighted Iran’s deterrence power and that the Islamic Republic is capable of eliminating most of the advanced American military equipment.

“Our armed forces can destroy any aircraft if they intend to,” the MP asserted.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he suggested that Iran “must sue the intrusion of the U.S. drone into its territories in international courts, the United Nations and the [UN] Security Council.”

“Also, countries that have made their skies available to



American planes should be sued by the Islamic Republic in international courts, the United Nations and the Security Council,” he suggested.

The remarks came after Trump said the U.S. had been

“cocked and loaded” to retaliate against Iran after he learned an Iranian missile system shot down a U.S. military drone.

However, the U.S. president claimed he decided to call off the mission after he learned 150 Iranians would die as a result of the strike.

The U.S. Global Hawk spy drone intruded into Iranian airspace on Thursday and was shot down by the IRGC after the drone ignored Iran’s several warnings. The Guards said there was another intruding U.S. manned plane beside the Global Hawk but the force refrained from targeting it.

“There was a plane with 38 people yesterday, did you see that?” Trump told reporters on Saturday before leaving the White House for Camp David.

“I think that’s a big story. They had it in their sights and they didn’t shoot it down. I think they were very wise not to do that. And we appreciate that they didn’t do that. I think that was a very wise decision.”

However, he later tweeted that “I never called the strike against Iran ‘BACK,’ as people are incorrectly reporting. I just stopped it from going forward at this time!”

Iran confiscates 800 tons of narcotics in 3 months

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – Deputy Police Chief Ayoub Soleimani said on Sunday the total amount of illicit drugs confiscated across the country over the past three months have reached 800 tons.

Soleimani said the amount of confiscated narcotic shows a 4 percent increase compared to the same period last year, the Tasnim news agency reported.

The number of operations to fight illicit drugs has also doubled this year, he said.

Soleimani also said, “We have been working to reduce the casualties inflicted on police forces through smart operations and intelligence activities and (as a result) we had only one martyr this year.”

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

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



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

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

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that the U.S. sanctions against Iran have affected the campaign against drug trade.

Trump’s JCPOA exit was a big mistake, says Pakistani MP

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – A Pakistani senator said on Monday that the Donald Trump’s unilateral pullout from the Iran nuclear deal, also called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), was a big mistake.

His move is threatening peace in the region and the entire international community, Raja Muhammad Zafar-ul-Haq told IRNA. Zafar-ul-Haq said U.S. President Donald Trump’s insane policies are threatening world peace.

“Trump is a foolish person,” he added. He said Trump is trying his utmost to sabotage the deal which was signed after extensive diplomatic efforts.

Noting that Iran has been a major trading partner of Europe over the past years, the MP said that’s why Germany, France and the UK with the support of other major countries in the world signed the JCPOA in order to boost economic ties with Iran.

“We in Pakistan thought that the agree-



ment would have a positive impact on Iran-U.S. ties but that could not happen because of the aggressive policies of the Trump administration,” the MP lamented.

He said it is very unfortunate that the U.S. is leveling baseless allegations against Iran without any evidence.

“Accusing Iran for all the problems in the world is a very big mistake by the U.S.,” he said, describing Iran as an important country of the region and close friend of Pakistan.

Russia says ready to help offset U.S. sanctions on Iran

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – Moscow says along with its partners it is prepared to take steps to counter new sanctions that the U.S. imposed on Iran on Monday.

Sergei Ryabkov, the Russian deputy foreign minister, made the announcement after U.S. President Donald Trump on Sunday threatened Tehran with new sanctions.

The Russian diplomat did not specify what those steps would be, but said that the imposition of U.S. sanctions, which come as part of the Trump administration’s “maximum pressure campaign” against the Islamic Republic, would aggravate tensions.

Ryabkov also urged Washington to try negotiating with Tehran, instead of imposing new sanctions.

Trump has said the United States will impose “major” new sanctions on Iran in two days - a move sure to exacerbate tensions with the Islamic Republic.



“We are putting major additional Sanctions on Iran on Monday,” Trump tweeted. “I look forward to the day that Sanctions come off Iran, and they become a productive and prosperous nation again - The sooner the better!”

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said new sanctions imposed by the United States on Iran are illegal.

Tensions between Iran and the U.S. saw a sharp rise on the first anniversary of Washington’s exit from a 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and six world powers.

The U.S. moved to ratchet up pressure on Iran by tightening oil sanctions and sending military reinforcements, including an aircraft carrier strike group, a squadron of B-52 bombers, and a battery of patriot missiles, to the Persian Gulf region.

This was followed by the downing of a U.S. drone over the territorial waters off Iran’s coastal province of Hormozgan on Thursday.

In the wake of the downing of RQ-4 Global Hawk, Trump claimed that he had called off a planned attack on Iran early Friday morning.

Top national security officials from Russia, Israel and the U.S. gather for a rare summit starting on Monday in Israel, with Iran top on the agenda.

According to media reports, both Washington and Tel Aviv would be trying

to use the gathering as an opportunity to turn Russia against Iran.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose country is a close ally of Tehran, denied that the U.S. could secure concessions on key issues.

“I don’t think anyone is trying to steamroll us on anything – they must understand that is a far-fetched possibility. But we do need the dialogue,” he told Russian channel NTV.

President Putin has earlier warned Washington against any military attack on Iran.

Speaking on Thursday, Putin said potential U.S. military action against Iran would be a “catastrophe for the region as a minimum.”

He also reminded that Tehran was in full compliance with the nuclear agreement, something that has been verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency in 15 reports. The Russian head of state also called the sanctions against Iran “unreasonable.”

General says Iran ready to hold joint military drills with Iraq

TEHRAN (MNA) – Chief of Iran’s Army Ground Force Brigadier General Kioumars Heidari said on Monday his forces are ready to expand the level of military cooperation with Iraq through joint drills and the transfer of knowledge.

In a meeting with visiting Deputy Commander of the Iraqi Army Tariq Abbas Ibrahim

Abdulussein in Tehran, Brigadier General Heidari called for holding joint drills by the Iraqi and Iranian militaries in order to enhance the forces’ coordination in the fight against terrorism.

Referring to the religious commonalities, geopolitical situation and the common enemies that have aligned Iran and Iraq, General

Heidari said uprooting the ISIL terrorists in Iraq was the result of the joint efforts between the two neighbors.

He added that his forces are ready to help boost the Iraqi military’s power by transferring knowledge and expertise in various defense aspects.

The Iraqi commander, for his part, ap-

preciated Iran’s help and support in fighting terrorist groups and called for boosting all relations in different defense sectors.

He also said following the previous visits by Iraqi delegations to Iran and observing the country’s defensive capabilities, Baghdad had requested to boost military cooperation with Iran.

Commander on Iran-U.S. feud: Good and evil cannot reconcile

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – The deputy chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has said the United States’ hostility toward the Islamic Republic is due to Iran’s anti-imperialistic nature, emphasizing that the war between Iran and the U.S. will continue because “good and evil” cannot reconcile.



“As good and evil cannot go together, they are always lined up against one another and this enmity and war is always on overtly and covertly,” Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi said.

“The main feature of the Islamic Revolution is that it is rightful, and that is the main cause behind the global imperialism’s enmity against the Revolution,” Fadavi remarked, Fars said.

He added that the U.S. and its allies started plotting against Iran since the very beginning of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, using different conspiracies and deceptions to stop, deviate or limit the scope of the Islamic Revolution.

The commander also appreciated Imam Khomeini’s wisdom and the leadership of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei for defusing and foiling anti-Iran plots.

Tensions between Tehran and Washington have escalated in recent weeks.

On Thursday, Iran’s IRGC shot down an unmanned U.S. surveillance drone morning after it breached Iran’s airspace. The IRGC brought the drone down by firing a surface-to-air missile at it.

Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the aerospace unit of the IRGC, said on Friday that the drone had received warnings for four times before being shot down.

Trump calls Persian Gulf ‘dangerous’ place, questions U.S. presence in waterway

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – U.S. President Donald Trump in a tweet on Monday seemed to be questioning his country’s military presence in the Persian Gulf, only days after Iran shot down a \$200 million U.S. drone that ventured into its territory.

“China gets 91% of its Oil from the Strait [sic], Japan 62%, & many other countries likewise. So why are we protecting the shipping lanes for other countries (many years) for zero compensation,” Trump tweeted.

By “the Strait” he was referring to the Strait of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.

“All of these countries should be protecting their own ships on what has always been a dangerous journey. We don’t even need to be there in that the U.S. has just become (by far) the largest producer of Energy anywhere in the world!”

On Thursday Iran shot down an American spy drone, which ignored the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps’ repeated warnings and intruded into the country’s airspace.

The IRGC specified the downed aircraft as a sophisticated Global Hawk drone, saying it was brought down over Iran’s southern coastal province of Hormozgan.

The Guards, however, spared a second spy plane carrying 35 people, for which U.S. President Donald Trump thanked Iran.

The downing of the drone came as a heavy blow to the U.S. administration with its “maximum pressure” policy toward Iran. Officials in Washington think that through sanctions they can force Iran into a new deal after the 2015 nuclear pact they ditched last year.



Iran can repeat ‘crushing response’ any time: Navy chief

1 → “Relying on the revolutionary youth, we have reached a point where we can stand on our own feet, provide the region with security, and push enemies back from the region,” Khamzadi added, according to the Mehr news agency.

Tensions initially built up between U.S. and Iran after U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew Washington from the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and imposed severe sanctions against Tehran.

The Trump administration insists that they are ready for talks with Iran but Tehran says it will resist in face of all pressures and that there will be no talks with a party which has already violated many international agreements.



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	242567.9
IFX	3103.24

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,800 rials
GBP	53,542 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$64.39/b
WTI	\$57.84/b
OPEC Basket	\$63.95/b
Gold	\$1,409.25/oz
Silver	\$15.40/oz
Platinum	\$818.35/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Offering basic goods at IME for regulated market, flourished production

1 → Offering basic goods at IME is also a strategy to realize the motto of “Flourishing Production” given that the current Iranian calendar year of 1398 is named as the year of “Pickup in Production” by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.



Mohammad Hassan-Nejad, a member of the Economic Committee of Iranian parliament (Majlis), believes that the Year of Pickup in Production requires combatting and removing rent-seeking and one of the ways to such goal, which can be materialized through cooperation of Majlis and government, is offering basic goods totally at IME.

He says, “If we want flourishing of production, there is no doubt that we should lay the ground for transparency and competition in the market. So, I recommend that the government offers basic goods and raw materials completely at the IME so that there will be no place for rent-seeking.”

‘Preserving production units is top priority of industry ministry’

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Preserving the existing production units in the country is the top priority of Iranian Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade, IRIB quoted Mohamadreza Fayaz, the advisor to industry, mining and trade minister, as saying on Sunday.

Speaking in a press conference on the occasion of the National Day of Industry and Mine (July 1), the official said the ministry has put three major policies on agenda in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21).

The first one is that no industrial unit which is doing production stops activity, the second one is that those units that have stopped activity will come back to the production cycle, and the



third one is to meet the management or raw materials demands of the units that are facing problems in this fields.

As previously reported, Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade has outlined 35 plans covering seven major areas for developing the country’s industry and mining sectors on the occasion of the National Day of Industry and Mining.

Improving the business environment associated with the country’s industry, mining and trade sectors has been given significant attention in this planning and six specific programs have been defined in this regard.

In this due, reforming production processes and guidelines, eliminating or reducing the timing of license issuances, simplifying rules and regulations impeding production, removing barriers in the way of production and trade, and providing open access to information for the general public are some of the programs which are put on the agenda.

Establishing a comprehensive information system aiming to exchange information with other governmental institutions and executive agencies related to industry, mining and trade sectors, and a strategic plan for managing currency policies, bank profits and macroeconomic goals to support production in the industrial sectors as well as ranking and encouraging investors and entrepreneurs in order to increase the presence of industrial units in the national and international arenas, are some other programs which are to be followed by the industry ministry.

IRISL ranks 14th among world’s top 100 shipping lines

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) is ranked 14th in Alphaliner’s latest list of world’s top 100 shipping lines published on June 20, Tasnim news agency reported on Monday.

The Alphaliner Top 100 is the ranking of the largest container or liner operators in terms of global capacity, taking into account the fleets of virtually all of the container operators worldwide.

Based on the provided data, the IRISL’s capacity now takes up 0.7 percent of world’s shipping lines, up 0.3 percent from the last year report.

In 2018, IRISL stood at the 19th place in Alphaliner’s Top 100 ranking, while the company held the 22nd place in its preceding year.

The IRISL Group currently owns 50 vessels with a total capacity of 154,415 TEU. Of the mentioned vessels, 46 are owned by IRISL and four of them are leased.

As the world’s largest container shipping company, the Danish Maersk is ranked first in the list of the world’s top 100 container/liner operators with 716 vessels and a total capacity of 4,146,098 twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEU).

Geneva-based Mediterranean Shipping



Company (MSC) holds the second-highest place in the list. The company owns 536 ships with a total container capacity of 3,402,000 TEU.

With 474 vessels and a total capacity of 2,895,058 TEU, the Chinese state-owned

China Ocean Shipping Company, known as COSCO or COSCO Group is the world’s third biggest shipping company while the French company CMA CGM holds the fourth place with 521 ships and a capacity of 2,689,265 TEU.

Iran enjoys appropriate self-reliance in steel sector: industry min.

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani said the country has achieved a proper self-reliance in steel industry, ILNA reported.

Making the remarks in a meeting with the members of Iran Steel Association at the place of the ministry on Sunday, the minister said, “This industry can be still developed and regarding the huge investment made in this sector during the past years, we will soon observe a good balance also in production chain of this product in the country.”

Steel industry is one of the industries in which some good investment has been made and today it has become a production advantage, Rahmani further underscored.

Iranian Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister for Mining Affairs Jafar Sargini said on Saturday that Iran’s annual steel production is planned to reach 45 million tons by the Iranian calendar year 1400 (March 2021-March 2022).

Referring to the sanctions, the official said, “All those who have imposed sanctions against Iran aim to destroy he country’s production capabilities; therefore, the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade prefer that the steel producers focus first on production and in this due development projects with the physical progress of over 70 percent

will also help achieve this target.”

On June 15, the official had announced that the country’s annual crude steel production is planned to reach 30 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020).

He put Iran’s crude steel production at 25 million tons in the past year, Tasnim news agency reported.

Sargini had also announced that Iran will inaugurate steel projects with the capacity of at least 10 million tons during the current Iranian calendar year.

Meanwhile, in a press conference on June 8, the deputy minister said the ministry has taken necessary measures to maintain the country’s metal exports despite the U.S. sanctions.

“We have established a special working group in the ministry which is closely assessing the situation and making necessary arrangements to mitigate the impact of U.S. sanctions,” Sargini told the Tehran Times in the press conference.

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

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

Iran to establish \$4.5b transport development fund

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Transport and Urban Development Ministry has announced that the government has allocated 190 trillion rials (over \$4.5 billion) for establishing a transport development fund, IRIB reported.

According to Transport and Urban Development Minister, Mohammad Eslami, “The establishment of the transport development fund has been envisioned by the country’s Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021) and 190 trillion rials was allocated in this regard.”

The minister noted that the fund’s statute has been approved by the cabinet, saying in the current Iranian calendar year’s budget bill 200 billion rials (nearly \$4.76 million) has been allocated to this fund.

The official further stated that the government should benefit from the capacities and capabilities of his ministry in managing the transport development fund.

In the past two decades, Iran’s transportation infrastructure has gone through major transformation and every year the country is advancing more in this area.

Currently more than 80 percent of the country’s roads are paved and the government is also hugely planning on expanding and developing the country’s railway network.

Since the country have numerous neighbors with which it has close trade ties, the expansion of land export routes including railway and roads in the border regions of the country have become the Transport and Urban Development Ministry’s top priority in the transportation area.



German business sentiment lowest since 2014: Ifo

German business morale fell to its lowest level since November 2014 in June, a survey showed on Monday, adding weight to expectations that Europe’s largest economy contracted in the second quarter.

As per reuters.com, The Ifo institute said its business climate index deteriorated for the third month in a row, to 97.4 in June from 97.9 in May. That was below a consensus forecast for 97.2.

The “German economy is heading for the doldrums,” Ifo President Clemens Fuest said, adding that the business climate in both the manufacturing and services sectors had worsened.

After nine successive years of growth, the German economy is struggling as trade disputes and a cooling world economy hurt its export-dependent manufacturers and as Britain’s delayed exit from the European Union creates uncertainties.

The Bundesbank said this month it expects the economy to contract slightly in the second quarter after an expansion of 0.4% between January and March. The government has halved its 2019 growth forecast to 0.5% after an expansion of 1.5% in 2018, the weakest rate in five years.

Ifo economist Klaus Wohlrabe said the trade conflict between the United States and China was the main source of uncertainty for German businesses, which rely on exports to the world’s two largest economies for growth.

He said he did not expect a recession, a view also held



by analysts.

“All told, we expect the German economy to slow to little more than a crawl in the second quarter,” Christina Iacovides of Capital Economics wrote in a note.

An index measuring managers’ assessment of their current situation rose slightly while another gauging expectations fell to its lowest level since February.

That suggested the slump in the headline reading to levels not seen since the euro zone debt crisis was driven by concerns that trade conflicts between the United States and both China and the European Union could worsen and further dampen exports.

“Fear of losing. This is the best summary of the current

state of Germany’s businesses,” Carsten Brzeski of ING wrote in a note.

■ Solid domestic economy

The services sector, buoyed by a solid domestic economy, has been providing impetus as industry shrinks, but some economists fear the recession in the manufacturing sector could spread.

The economy has been relying on private consumption for growth, a cycle supported by a robust labor market, low interest rates and rising wages. Separate data published on Monday showed that real wages rose at a slower pace in the first quarter, however, which could dampen Germans’ appetite to spend.

Brzeski said he expected the services sector to continue providing impetus for the broader economy and that the slowdown in the manufacturing sector would bottom out.

The European Central Bank’s decision not to raise interest rates in the next year and to open the door to cutting them or buying more bonds could cement the status of consumption as the main growth driver in Germany, he added.

A “bottoming-out is in sight for German industry,” Brzeski said. The “recent U-turn of the ECB towards more dovishness indicates that financing conditions for new domestic investments will remain favorable. However, let’s be clear, a bottoming out is still far from being a strong rebound.”

Azerbaijan to expand economic cooperation with Switzerland

Azerbaijan and Switzerland enjoy a significant growth in trade and the two countries have good potential to expand the scope of economic ties.

As per azernews.az, the next meeting of the Azerbaijan-Switzerland joint commission on trade and economic cooperation will be held on June 28 in Bern.

Khanim Ibrahimova, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Switzerland, discussed with

Erwin Bollinger, Delegate of the Swiss Federal Council for Trade Agreements, preparation for the meeting and the development of cooperation in various fields, the expansion of the legal framework and increase of trade.

Ibrahimova noted that one of the priorities of the development of Azerbaijan-Switzerland bilateral relations is economic cooperation.

In turn, Bollinger said that Switzerland is interested in further development of relations with Azerbaijan and stressed that the joint intergovernmental commission has increased its efforts in this direction.

The previous, 7th meeting of the commission was held on March 10, 2016, in Baku. The Azerbaijani side is co-chaired by Minister of Economy Shahin Mustafayev. It is noteworthy that within the frame-

work of the joint coming commission meeting, memorandums of cooperation will be signed between the Agency for the Development of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses of Azerbaijan and the Swiss Association for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Azerbaijan Export and Investment Promotion Foundation (AZPROMO) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Swiss Thurgau canton.

Majlis passes bill for boosting gas condensate, oil refining capacity

ENERGY

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TEHRAN — Iranian Parliament has approved the generalities of a bill for increasing the capacity of the country's oil and gas condensate refineries by domestic investment, IRNA reported.

The bill was approved by the MPs during an open session of the parliament on Sunday, with 136 votes in favor, 32 votes against and three abstentions.

According to the spokesperson for the Parliament's Energy Committee, Sakineh Almasi, the bill would increase the capacities of gas condensate and crude oil refineries using public investment.

"Construction of refineries is a clever response by Iran to oil sanctions, and helps boosting production and creates new job opportunities," she said.

The approval of the bill comes after the Research Center of Iran's parliament announced last week that petro-refineries are two times more profitable than refineries and suggested that National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC)'s new refinery projects be defined as petro-refineries.

In a report dubbed "Petro-refineries,



their role in competing the oil value chain and the status in Iran's oil industry" stated that constructing petro-refineries is one of the most important ways to alleviate severe economic impacts of price fluctuations and

achieve a much higher margin of profit.

The parliament's research center emphasized the importance of completing the value chain of the oil and gas industry to increase value added and prevent crude

oil sales as one of the principles that has been underlined in the country's Sixth National Five-Year Development Plan (2016-2021).

"According to French energy giant Total, by 2020 global demand for oil products will increase by 1.1 percent while the demand for polymers increases by 3.3 percent, so with this in mind, the creation of a hybrid system of refining and petrochemicals (petro-refinery) seems a necessity," the report read.

Most of Iran's refining activities take place in Southern regions of the country were South Pars gas field's refineries account for refining 74 percent of the gas produced in Iran, according to the managing director of South Pars Gas Company (SPGC).

Currently South Pars refineries refining capacity exceeds 2 billion cubic feet per day.

Since the U.S.'s withdrawal from Iran's nuclear pact in May 2018, vowing to drive Iran's oil exports down to zero, the Islamic Republic has been taking various measures to counter the U.S. actions and alleviate the impacts of the unjust sanctions on its economy.

Zanganeh denies reports of decline in Iran's oil exports

ENERGY

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TEHRAN — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said on Monday that reports about recent declines in Iranian oil exports are not true. "The news is absolutely wrong," Zanganeh was quoted as saying by IRIB.

The minister did not provide any figures for the country's oil exports in the face of U.S. sanctions. "Giving a figure is not in our interests," he added.

In late May, Reuters reported that Iranian crude oil exports fell in May to 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) or lower. The United States reimposed sanctions on Iran in November after pulling out of a 2015 nuclear accord between Tehran and six world powers, aiming to cut Iran's sales to zero.

The United States also told buyers of Iranian oil to stop purchases by May 1 or face sanctions, ending six months of waivers that had allowed Iran's biggest customers to import limited volumes.



However, in the same month, Iranian oil ministry announced that the country is mobilizing all its resources to sell its oil in a gray market, countering unjust and illegitimate

U.S. sanctions.

Deputy Director of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) Hadi Haqshenas said in late May that crude oil loadings and exports from the country's ports has not been halted and the exports are ongoing just like before.

"Perhaps the destinations of oil cargoes from our ports have changed but the legal exports are ongoing," Haqshenas said.

The official noted that the oil ministry has adopted new tactics and new destinations in shipping its oil exports following the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions, giving no details of the new tactics or destinations.

"Of course, it cannot be denied that the loading of oil and products has fallen compared to the past, but the shipping of oil cargoes from our ports has definitely not stopped," he added.

Iranian oil industry has been under pressure from the U.S. efforts to isolate the country by reimposing sanctions.

Oil prices up on U.S.-Iran tensions

Oil prices rose on Monday, extending vast gains last week prompted by tensions between Iran and the United States, as Washington was set to announce new sanctions on Tehran.

As stated by reuters.com, Brent futures were up 11 cents, or 0.17%, at \$65.31 a barrel by 0845 GMT.

West Texas Intermediate crude was up 40 cents, or 0.7%, at \$57.83 a barrel.

Oil prices surged after Iran shot down a drone on Thursday that the United States claimed was in international airspace and Tehran said was over its territory.

Brent racked up a gain of about 5% last week, its first weekly gain in five weeks, and WTI jumped about 10%, its biggest weekly percentage gain since December 2016.

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Friday that he called off a military strike to retaliate for the incident, saying the potential Iranian death toll would be disproportionate, adding on Sunday that he was not seeking war.

Meanwhile, global supply may remain tight as OPEC and its allies including Russia appear likely to extend their oil cut pact at their meeting July 1-2 in Vienna, according to analysts.

An "extension of OPEC+ production

cuts through the end of the year seems highly likely given recent price action", U.S. investment bank Jefferies said in a note.

The "market expects an extension though, and any failure could see oil price gap down. The probabilities favor restraint however," it added.

Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak on Monday said international co-operation on crude production had helped stabilize oil markets and is more important than ever.

"There is a good example of successful cooperation in balancing the oil market between the OPEC countries and non-OPEC. Thanks to joint efforts, we today see a stabilization of world oil markets," Novak said.

Boosting oil demand, prospects of a near-term interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve aimed at bolstering the U.S. economy have weakened the dollar.

Oil is usually priced in dollars, and a slide in the value of the weaker greenback makes it cheaper for holders of other currencies.

Meanwhile, Baker Hughes said on Friday that U.S. energy companies added an oil rig last week, the first increase in three weeks, bringing the total count to 789.

Wind power: £100m fund aims to boost UK companies

With the UK so well suited to exploiting wind power, turbines have been erected in more than 30 locations from Brighton to the Moray Firth.

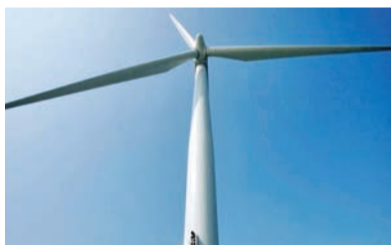
As per bbc.com, the Offshore Wind Industry Council says its initiative will help hundreds of firms "maximize opportunities" in the offshore wind supply chain.

The "Offshore Wind Growth Partnership will provide practical help for UK companies so they can compete successfully for contracts in this thriving global market," said Benj Sykes, chairman of the OWIC and UK country manager for the Danish firm Orsted.

The OWIC, which is a joint government and industry body, will invest the privately-raised funds over 10 years to support companies in the supply chain.

Firms that manufacture parts, lay cables and maintain wind farms will receive support ranging from "expert advice on manufacturing and commercialization" to funding for innovation. They will also be given support to export their products and services.

By 2030 the offshore wind power market is expected to be worth £30b per year, with the UK expected to be generating a third of its electricity from wind. The OWIC hopes



to raise the participation of UK businesses in the industry from 48% currently to 60%, under a sector deal agreed between industry and government.

The new fund will bring "investment, thousands of high-quality jobs and huge economic opportunities for communities across the UK", energy and clean growth minister Chris Skidmore said.

Last month GMB general secretary, Tim Roache said Britain's politicians needed to "sharpen their elbows in the fight for jobs" when it came to opportunities in the growing renewables sector.

The union says up to 1,000 jobs could be created at two mothballed yards in Fife if EDF chose local firms to manufacture parts for a huge wind farm project there, rather than as is expected the work being done in Indonesia, Belgium and Spain.

Libya's oil production could double within 5 years

By Irina Slav

Despite frequent oil field outages and now an open conflict between the UN-recognized government and the eastern-affiliated LNA, Libya's oil production could double to 2 million bpd by 2023, IHS Markit analyst Fotios Katsoulas wrote in a recent report.

At the moment, the North African country's production is hovering around the 1-million-bpd mark, which is in itself an achievement given the difficult security situation and the constant risk of yet another field outage or pipeline blockade as we have seen in the past three years since the Libyan National Army took control of the Oil Crescent export infrastructure, driving out the Petroleum Facilities Guard. Since then, the two factions have clashed over the oil ports several times.

In addition, there have been pipeline blockades by disgruntled locals and other military factions, which have too led to field outages, the longest of which lasted three months earlier this year and affected a third of production, pumped at Libya's largest field, Sharara.

■ **The average export rate**

Despite all this and continued concern



about the security situation in the restive country, IHS Markit's Katsoulas noted that exports from Libya have actually increased during the second quarter of the year, reaching an average of 960,000 bpd between April and mid-June. This is 40 percent higher than the average export rate for the first quarter of the year when Sharara was offline.

This sounds surprising, to say the least, especially in light of the other main concern on oil markets: that demand is weakening and will continue to weaken through the rest of the year and beyond. Libya does not seem concerned about this. What it is concerned with, at least according to statements from

the head of its National Oil Corporation, is the danger of a production outage.

In May, PVM Oil Associates analyst Stephen Brennock said, the "security situation is deteriorating and with Libya lurching from one crisis to another, conditions are increasingly ripe for a supply shock."

Another analyst, from Standard Chartered, said investors were "clearly ignoring" the warnings of NOC's Mustafa Sanalla, who said in late May, that "Protracted hostilities continue to hamper NOC operations and our ability to serve the Libyan people. Key infrastructure is being damaged and security eroded - allowing criminal elements to prosper."

More recently, NOC warned that there has been increased military presence — from the LNA — at one of the Oil Crescent's terminals, Ras Lanuf, and this could increase the risk of the facility becoming a target of an attack.

■ **Libyan oil infrastructure**

The "presence of forces inside the terminal represents an unacceptable risk to employees. This renders the terminal a potential military target, thereby risking the destruction of Libyan oil infrastructure - and the resulting economic crisis that would follow," Sanalla said.

Now, while none of this is conducive to increased investment in oil and gas, Libya, according to Katsoulas, is already in talks with foreign companies about such investments to the tune of no less than \$60 billion. Granted, cash will only start flowing when investors are at least reasonably certain the pattern of outages changes, but the fact there are negotiations being held is reassuring for the future of Libya's oil industry despite the still considerable risks.

This, in turn, means there is optimism in the industry about future demand despite the short-term pessimism and longer-term skepticism as environmentalists and politicians begin targeting Big Oil's main future source of revenue: plastics.

(Source: oilprice.com)

NIDC drills 28 oil, gas wells in a quarter

ENERGY

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TEHRAN— National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) dug and completed digging operation of 28 oil and gas wells during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), according to an official with the NIDC.

Mohammad Al-e Khamis, the deputy managing director of NIDC for drilling operation, said over 36,960 meters of digging has been conducted for the mentioned onshore and offshore wells, Shana reported.

Last month, Hamidreza Khoshayand, the deputy managing director of NIDC, announced that digging operation of ten new wells of South Azadegan oilfield was started sooner than the schedule, IRNA reported.



South Azadegan is one of five major oilfields Iran shares with Iraq at the western part of Iran's southwestern region of Karoun, known as West Karoun fields.

West Karoun holds great importance for the country's oil industry since according to the latest studies, its in-situ deposit is estimated to be 67 billion barrels containing both light and heavy crude oils, and therefore it could have a big impact on Iran's oil output increases in the future.

With the fields fully operational, their output could add 1.2 million bpd to the country's oil production capacity.

Having an estimated 67 billion barrels of in-situ oil, West Karoun fields definitely deserve the spotlight which has been put on them recently.

NIDC, a subsidiary of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), undertakes most drilling operations across the country and drilled 4,489 onshore and offshore oil and gas wells in nearly 40 years.

Hong Kong's power firms sign LNG deals for first import terminal

Hong Kong Electric Co and Castle Peak Power Company said on Friday they have signed a supply deal for Hong Kong's first import of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and for the lease of an import vessel.

According to businesstimes.com.sg, Hong Kong is undertaking a massive shift to use more natural gas to fuel its electric power generation from coal, potentially creating a steady and lucrative demand source in the Asian LNG market.

Both Hong Kong-based power companies said they have signed an agreement with Shell Eastern Trading - a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell - for a long-term LNG supply for the Hong Kong Offshore LNG terminal.

Shell will supply LNG to both companies from its global LNG portfolio once the project has been completed.

They did not specify the supply deal details, but Reuters had first reported the impending deal in March last year citing sources familiar with the matter as saying the supply deal is for 1.2 million tons per annum (mtpa) for 10 years starting after 2020.

Castle Peak Power Company and Hong Kong Electric Co said in a separate statement that their joint venture has signed an agreement with Mitsui O.S.K. Lines Ltd (MOL) for the hire of a floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU) on a time-charter basis for the LNG project.



They added that the FSRU vessel will be used for receiving, storing, and regasifying LNG for the supply of natural gas to CAPCO and HK Electric for power generation through two separate subsea gas pipelines.

■ **Offshore LNG terminal**

MOL will also be responsible for providing operations and maintenance services for the FSRU vessel and offshore LNG terminal.

Castle Peak Power Company Ltd (CAPCO) is a joint venture of utility CLP Power Hong Kong Limited and China Southern Power Grid International (HK) Co, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of China Southern Power Grid Co Ltd.

CAPCO owns three power stations - Castle Peak Power Station, Black Point Power Station and Penny's Bay Power Station - which are operated by CLP Power.

As part of its commitment to the Paris Climate Change Agreement, Hong Kong is keen to spike the use of natural gas in its total fuel mix for power generation to about 50 percent by 2020 from 22 percent, as of 2012.

The "FSRU vessel, together with the jetty and submarine pipelines, will enable us to have access to diverse gas sources for cost-competitive LNG supplies," HK Electric Managing Director Wan Chi-tin said in the statement.

The "new LNG terminal project will provide HK Electric with greater flexibility and a new channel for Lamma Power Station to obtain natural gas, easing the pressing need to enhance the security of gas supply."

Hong Kong currently produces power using imported fuel in domestic power plants or from imported natural gas from the mainland. Hong Kong's coal-fired plants will reach the end of their useful life in the next decade.

Vladimir Golstein: Ukraine's poroshenko reaps perfect storm he has created himself

TEHRAN (FNA) — Vladimir Golstein, professor of Slavic studies, says corruption, poverty and conflict in Eastern Ukraine, in addition to generating Russophobic hysteria created by Petro Poroshenko during his presidency were the key features to his failure in the Ukrainian election, in which the nation overwhelmingly voted for a comedian to succeed him, Volodymyr Zelensky.

In an exclusive interview with FNA, Dr. Golstein denounced Poroshenko's pro-West policy, saying "Ukrainians were not interested in Poroshenko's ties with the West, which were primarily symbolic, and which have benefited only the radical nationalists in Western Ukraine, the corrupt intellectual and business elites in Kiev.... The United States has already expressed its commitment to keep on paying for Ukrainian failings, as it needs the failing and aggressive Ukraine as a counterpoint to Russia."

Vladimir Golstein, Ph.D., Slavic Languages and Literatures, teaches Russian literature at Brown University in Rhode Island, the US. He is the author of several books and numerous articles on Russian culture, religion, philosophy, and poetry, of the past two centuries, as well as the current foreign policy issues.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ Why have Ukrainians voted against Petro Poroshenko?

A: Ukrainians were not interested in Poroshenko's ties with the West, which were primarily symbolic, and which have benefited only the radical nationalists in Western Ukraine, the corrupt intellectual and business elites in Kiev, and those capable Ukrainians who managed to leave the country and begin to earn their living abroad. Majority of Ukrainians who stayed home, however, had to face the reality on the ground, which was very different from promises. And what they saw on the ground was rather distressing: rising corruption and authoritarianism, drastic increase in the price of communal services in light of increased pauperization of the population, and continuous violence in the East, the violence that takes away Ukrainian lives. Parallel to that, they also saw cynicism of Poroshenko and his ministers, who were creating Russophobic hysteria, introducing martial laws, and curbing all sorts of freedoms under the guise of "Putin threat." The Ukrainian society simply said that enough is enough. Poroshenko has reaped the perfect storm that he has created himself: as the economy began to sink, hatred and intolerance was on the rise, as so was social and economic stratification.

■ The West claims to assist Ukraine to recover its economy through financial measures, including loans by the IMF. Why has the country not survived financially?

A: IMF reforms are primarily geared to enslave a country, as we've seen on numerous other occasions. Ukraine was not ready, nor did it have an economic base to transform its economy. Ukraine was integrated with the Russian economy, selling to Russia its machines, turbines, and agricultural products that the EU didn't really need. Consequently, having broken its ties with Russia, and not developing any meaningful means of trading with Europe, Ukraine was left with nothing. The IMF loans and other forms of Western help was used to just stay afloat and continue its failing war in the East of the country. Furthermore, there are numerous reports that expose the greed of oligarchs and corrupt government officials that stifled and crushed various small businesses, the enterprises that could have moved economy off the ground.

■ President-elect Zelensky has shown he is pro-West, but at the same time, he claims to have open talk with Russia. Will he succeed?

A: The new president has promised a lot. The question is, will he be able to deliver? Current euphoria can be quickly replaced with disappointment. Zelensky clearly needs to normalize relationship with Russia, a complicated task as it is, since it would imply the end of the war in the East, the new economic cooperation, the willingness to pay European prices for gas, and agreement to stay politically neutral and not joining NATO. But any meaningful action in any of these four directions will provoke outcry among his critics that he is selling out to Russia. In light of five years of anti-Russian hysteria that had engulfed Ukraine, it is hard to imagine that he'll embark on this project right away. Much easier way would be to continue provoking and blaming Russia, while begging the West to pay for the slowly disintegrated country. The United States has already expressed its commitment to keep on paying for Ukrainian failings, as it needs the failing and aggressive Ukraine as a counterpoint to Russia, and as a country preventing German-Russian cooperation, and prosperous independent Europe.

Abandon illusions in face of U.S. pressure

Source:Global Times — The U.S. Commerce Department Friday added five more Chinese companies on its Entity List, the latest move by the US to bar Chinese high-tech companies from buying US components. The department said these companies have supported China's military high-tech research.

This move is counterproductive to a planned meeting between two state leaders in Osaka, Japan. Washington believes that the greater the pressure it exerts, the more benefit it can take, which is totally illogical.

Ever since it launched a trade war against China, the US has been finding more ways to apply maximum pressure, and is now inflicting pain on itself. Meanwhile, with increasingly stronger countermeasures, China is more determined to refuse to make concessions on matters of principle. Advancing China's technological and economic capabilities is fundamental to its relations with the US. Washington's latest move will undoubtedly reinforce this understanding.

China aims to safeguard the fair international trade environment and defend its right to develop in an all-round way. China firmly guards its principles but doesn't refuse to make necessary compromises.

The US doesn't want to see China develop its high technology, which is determined by its strategic need to lead China in technology forever. The US will crack down on China by brutal means even when China's progress precisely conforms to international norms. By adding five more Chinese companies to its blacklist, the US has shown that its attitude won't change.

It doesn't matter if the US wants to use a cutoff of components supply to strengthen its bargaining position or is attempting to make China unconditionally concede in the high-tech area - or both.

Without high-tech development, China's economic growth will be deeply limited in the long term. Scientific and technological advance is indispensable for China to achieve a better living standard. ➔13

Trump vulnerable with his base on health care

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — Undoubtedly, the former vice-president of the United States will focus on social services, including health insurance, in the 2020 presidential election race. In this case, Biden can bring the middle and poor Americans. It should not be forgotten that Trump in the field of foreign policy is not well placed in the polls, and only about 40 percent of American citizens confirm their policies in the face of the international system. Biden, meanwhile, specializes in foreign policy, and his vision is more than approved by American citizens. Meanwhile, Biden's only concern is the tramp control in the economy. The former vice president of the United States is trying to get support from Barack Obama. As Forbes reported, The health insurance industry is preparing to expand individual coverage offered under the Affordable Care Act in 2020 just as Joe Biden talks about implementing some improvements to the law.

The ACA, also known as Obama care, is yet again expected to be an issue in a U.S. presidential election with Democrats like former Vice President Biden already talking about some fixes to the law and adding a "public option." Meanwhile, others like U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders want wholesale changes that would end the private insurer's role in coverage. The debate will heat up just as it appears health insurance companies are expanding coverage for the second year in a row after a period of retrenchment and departures of big-name players like UnitedHealth Group, Aetna and Humana. Insurers that exited the Obama care business were unable to successfully manage the costs of newly insured sick patients.

Democratic group's poll shows Trump vulnerable with his base on health care

As Politico reported, The Democratic research group American Bridge is preparing a \$50 million campaign to win over a slice of President Donald Trump's base, and new polling has convinced the organization that Trump is vulnerable on pocketbook issues, especially health care, among white working-class voters. The battleground-state polling is a new step in American Bridge's plans to target Trump voters in small towns and rural areas with ads linking local events to unpopular Trump policies. The group's president, Bradley Beychok, is not aiming to win a majority of those people in 2020. But even making modest inroads with these voters compared to 2016 would be a huge boost to the party's hopes of beating Trump next year.

"We're trying to go from losing these segments [of voters] 85-15 to maybe 75-25,"



Beychok said, acknowledging that, even if the project succeeds, the party will still likely lose that segment badly. "2018 gave us some good indications, and there's data that these voters are attainable. But they want you to reach them and speak to them in a localized manner. You have to compete for these folks every day, and you can't wait until the general."

American Bridge polled voters in small towns and rural areas, screening out self-identified liberal Democrats, to find out what they thought of the president. The group gave Trump a positive job approval rating overall, and it backed a generic Republican for Congress by 29 points over a generic Democrat. But the Republican-leaning pool of voters also gave Trump unfavorable ratings on several key issues, highlighting potential avenues of attack for American Bridge: 50 percent rated Trump negatively on "cutting

taxes for people like me."

Several health care questions were worse for the president. Just 25 percent of respondents gave Trump a positive rating for "reducing health care costs," compared to 67 percent who rated him negatively, while they split against Trump 39-51 on "taking on the drug and pharmaceutical companies."

The polling is "trying to unpack where Trump's branding exists and where there might be openings to have a conversation with these voters about Trump in a way that makes them reconsider their loyalty or attachment to him," said Molly Murphy, a Democratic pollster with the firm Anzalone Liszt Grove Research who is working on the project. There is evidence from the 2018 midterms that, while Democrats have struggled mightily with rural voters in recent elections, there is an opening for improvement.

Undoubtedly, the former vice-president of the United States will focus on social services, including health insurance, in the 2020 presidential election race. In this case, Biden can bring the middle and poor Americans. It should not be forgotten that Trump in the field of foreign policy is not well placed in the polls, and only about 40 percent of American citizens confirm their policies in the face of the international system.

Pence goes to war: America will be fighting forever



is inevitable no matter who is in the driver's seat in the White House because America's numerous enemies, which he identified, cannot otherwise be dissuaded from their "nefarious behavior."

Pence's choice of words is revealing. There is a "virtual certainty" of "fight[ing] on a battlefield for America" and that battlefield is global, including both transnational Islamic terrorism and the western hemisphere. The language implies that American security requires "full spectrum dominance" everywhere. It encompasses traditional national enemies, with a Pyongyang that "threatens peace," a China that is "militarized," and a Russia that is both "aggressive" and expansionistic. The soldiers must be prepared to fight "when - not if - that day comes."

First of all, it is discouraging to note that Pence believes that a war or wars must take place, and further, one must have to wonder exactly what scenarios are envisioned by Pence, and also presumably by his boss

and colleagues, regarding precisely how war against other nuclear powers will play out. Nor does he entertain what would happen when the rest of the world begins to perceive the United States at its enemy due to its willingness to interfere in everyone's politics. And the American soldiers would die not knowing what they were fighting for, since they would understand from the onset that it had nothing to do with the defense of the United States.

The speech is, in short, a recognition that the Trump Administration sees perpetual war on the horizon, a viewpoint that is particularly alarming as one can quite easily make the case that the United States is not seriously threatened at all by anyone on Pence's enemies list and is therefore the aggressor. China is a regional power, Russia does not have the resources or will to reestablish the Soviet Union, and North Korea has only limited capability to attack anyone, even if it should choose to do so. Islamic terrorism is largely

It should be clearly understood Pence, Graham and Pompeo are all calling for wars of choice, where the military is being used as an option rather than diplomacy in a situation where there is no imminent threat. Iraq, Syria and Libya are examples of such wars and all three have turned out very badly.

Voter-file analysis recently conducted by Catalist, the Democratic data firm, indicated that the party's gains in 2018 House races were actually strongest in rural areas, not the suburban ones that got more media coverage, relative to the results of the 2016 presidential election. The gains "weren't enough to get over 50 percent and win seats in many rural districts," Catalist's Yair Ghitza wrote - but winning a bigger share of the rural vote in key swing states in 2020 could put Democrats on a path back to the White House.

Beychok said it's imperative for Democrats to begin that work now, long before they have a 2020 presidential nominee, in order to have a fighting chance of flipping some of these voters. In a departure from past research efforts, American Bridge is focusing its research on the county-level impact of Trump policies and deploying door-to-door canvassers to find stories that could resonate with voters largely predisposed to vote against Democrats.

"We have to recognize Trump's strengths, and one of them is that he's a very good healer," Beychok said, referencing Trump's ability to rebound from negative news during the 2016 election and anticipating that the president's general election strategy will focus on keeping his base animated. Indeed, Trump and campaign manager Brad Parscale projected confidence in holding the president's base in a recent Time magazine interview. American Bridge's advertising campaign is designed to fill in the gap before the Democratic primary wraps up next year, Beychok said, but the results of that primary will obviously play a huge role in the general election results. In the meantime, the Democratic group is trying to give a chunk of Trump's base as much reason to waver as possible while the presidential candidates are firing up the base. "There's this construct in the Democratic Party: focus on the base, or focus on white working-class voters," Beychok said. "The idea you can't do both is false."

The survey was conducted online by Anzalone Liszt Grove Research from June 3-9, surveying 1,700 voters in Florida, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Ultimately, Trump's concerns about Biden's social insurance scheme have increased. Ultimately, the re-issue of social insurance in the United States, also from Joe Biden, can partly lead to a shift in balance in economic and welfare surveys (at the expense of Trumps). A matter that the President of the United States and his entourage are deeply concerned about.

a creation of the United States in the first place and maintains its potency by the adverse impact of the continued US presence in Muslim lands. And the suggestion that Venezuela and/or Cuba might be a threat to America is, quite frankly, laughable.

If Mike Pence is seriously interested in looking around to see who has been most interested in starting new wars, he should look to gentlemen named Bush and Obama, not to mention his own colleagues John Bolton and Mike Pompeo. And then there are Washington's feckless allies Israel and Saudi Arabia, who are keen to advance their own interests by means of piles of dead American soldiers.

Is there no one around to question why exactly American soldiers are sent to die in so many places that can hardly be found on a map? Or to ask what the compelling national interests might be to require sending soldiers to such God-forsaken death pits? One can be sure that the newly minted Army officers that Pence addressed have no desire to be killed in Mali, but it would take a brave young man or woman to speak the truth if asked by a senior officer.

And Pence unfortunately has many friends who believe in force majeure as he does on Capitol Hill. Senator Lindsey Graham appeared on Fox News Sunday the day after the Vice President spoke and said "I would give Cuba an ultimatum to get out of Venezuela. If they don't, I would let the Venezuelan military know, you got to choose between democracy and Maduro, and if you choose Maduro and Cuba, we are coming after you. This is in our backyard."

It should be clearly understood Pence, Graham and Pompeo are all calling for wars of choice, where the military is being used as an option rather than diplomacy in a situation where there is no imminent threat. Iraq, Syria and Libya are examples of such wars and all three have turned out very badly. And then there is the moral dimension. By the standard set by the Nuremberg Trials after World War 2, initiating an armed conflict in that fashion is a war crime. Indeed, it is the ultimate war crime as it brings so many evils with it. Mike Pence's vision of America the perpetual war criminal is not something to be proud of.

Trump is not sure of his economic success!

By Ali Azimi

TEHRAN - One of the problems that Biden faces with Donald Trump will be the issue of economics. Undoubtedly, Biden will criticize Trump's economic policy in the field of foreign trade in the 2010 presidential election race.

New economic surveys in the United States show that the relative satisfaction of American citizens of Trump's actions does not mean their full support from the President of the United States.

Voters worry about Trump's tariff threats with China

Usa Today reported that As President Trump prepares to talk trade with China's leader this week, Americans are worried that his threat to impose tough new tariffs on Beijing will hurt the economy back home.

Close to half of those surveyed in a USA TODAY/Suffolk University Poll, 47 percent, predicted that ratcheting up tariffs on Chinese goods would harm the economy in their state; just 19 percent said it would help.

Those expressing concern included some of the president's core supporters, among them one in five Republicans and one in four of those who approved of the job Trump is doing as president. Trump has announced plans for an "extended" meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping at the Group of 20 summit in Japan, which starts June 28. Vice President Mike Pence said Friday there were signs of progress in talks with China, raising hopes of a breakthrough in the contentious trade negotiations.

Steven Folden, 50, a firefighter and paramedic from Fayetteville, Georgia, is a Republican but says he is only "about 30 percent in agreement" with the president when it comes to trade. He said Trump's re-election could be affected. "If the economy stays strong and continues to do what it's doing, I think Trump will win," said Folden, who was among those polled. "If the economy falters in the least little bit ... I think (Joe) Biden will be the winner."

Amy Angel, 59, a Democrat from Fairfax, Va., warned of the consequences of stiff new tariffs. "Prices are going to go up; we're going to lose jobs; it's going to hurt our economy," the stay-at-home mother of five said. "Strategically, I can only hope that it happens soon enough that it affects his re-election."

Also CNBC reported that The economy is perennially a key issue for American voters in elections, and President Donald Trump is counting in part on tail winds from a strong economy to carry him to victory.

But in a handful of key states he carried in 2016, unemployment numbers are not moving in his favor, which could spell trouble in 2020, according to new employment numbers out Friday.

Unemployment rates edged up year over year in Mississippi, Arizona, North Carolina, Indiana, South Carolina, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska, according to the latest numbers from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Trump's net approval rating remains high in most of these states. But more people in Arizona and North Carolina disapprove of



his job as president than approve, according to the latest Morning Consult poll.

North Carolina has 15 electoral votes and Arizona has 11. Moreover, Trump pulled off somewhat narrow victories over Hillary Clinton in each state in the 2016 election -- 3.6% in North Carolina and 3.5% in Arizona.

In Indiana, Nebraska and Kansas, Trump's net approval ratings are in the low single digits, according to the Morning Consult poll. The states have a combined 22 electoral votes. Trump won by more comfortable margins in these states -- 19% in Indiana, 25% in Nebraska and 20.5% in Kansas. It is unlikely that all eight states, which have a combined 73 electoral votes, would flip to the Democratic candidate in 2020. Trump lost the popular vote in 2016, but won in the Electoral College thanks in large part to victories in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan, which all voted for Democrat Barack Obama twice. Employment edged up year over year in all three states.

How Trump could have terrible economic timing

In just one week, the current economic expansion will turn 10 years old and officially become the longest in American history, an occasion likely to elicit bragging from the White House. But it will also highlight a major risk for President Donald Trump. Signs of a slowdown are mounting with weaker job growth, reduced manufacturing activity and a nervous Federal Reserve hinting at slashing interest rates -- suggesting that Trump could suffer from terrible economic timing. All recent presidents other than Bill Clinton experienced slowdowns in their first terms, but most sought reelection as the economy was improving. No president since Calvin Coolidge in 1924 has held on to the White House during an election year marred by recession.

Trump may avoid running for reelection in an official recession, especially if he gets his much desired rate cuts from the Fed. But there is a good chance he'll be seeking a second term with the economy slowing and unemployment rising, especially if he continues to engage in bruising trade battles. Voters tend to lock in their assessment of

a president's performance on the economy a few months before Election Day, meaning Trump's strongest argument for four more years may not wind up being all that strong. "The economy has been a tailwind for him, but by Election Day next year it will at best no longer be blowing," said Mark Zandi, the chief economist at Moody's Analytics who maintains a model gauging how economic trends influence voting outcomes. "And there is a reasonable probability that he will be facing an economic headwind for reelection with growth slowing to the point that unemployment is starting to rise next year, though a lot depends on what he does with the trade wars and what the Fed does in response."

Economic numbers in the second quarter of an election year -- in this case April through June of next year -- tend to exert the biggest impact on election outcomes, Zandi notes. That's when voters focus on the race and their own economic situation and before they get distracted by summer vacations. That means Trump's strongest economic performance -- a growth rate close to 3 percent in 2018, boosted by a big tax cut -- might have come too soon for electoral purposes. Trump in fact might be better off with a shallow recession right now -- generally defined as a pair of quarters with shrinking GDP -- with growth picking up again next year heading into the election.

"If there is going to be a recession, it's probably good to get it over early," said Karlyn Bowman, polling analyst at the American Enterprise Institute. "His marks on handling the economy and jobs are just about the only positive marks he has." A near-term recession still does not seem likely. Economic forecasters see a slide back into growth between 1 and 2 percent as the impact from the tax cut fades, economies outside the U.S. struggle and trade tensions linger. The Fed is predicting 2.1 percent growth this year and 2.0 percent next year, with the unemployment rate rising slightly next year to 3.7 percent from 3.6 percent.

The rate of job growth has already slowed to an average of 151,000 over the last three months, down from an average of 238,000 earlier in the year. That's enough to keep the

unemployment rate from rising but not by much. Readings on manufacturing activity in the Philadelphia and New York regions this month registered sharp declines just as Trump was threatening tariffs on Mexico. And in its announcement on interest rates last week, the Fed said that "indicators of business fixed investment have been soft."

The administration's main argument that growth will pick up again is based on the belief that the tax cuts, which lowered corporate rates and incentivized investment, would produce a sustained boom in business spending. That could still materialize -- but it hasn't yet. The White House is strongly sticking to that argument, dismissing predictions of a sharp slowdown and continuing to promise that job gains will pick up again and growth will stay at a 3 percent pace, providing a solid backdrop for the reelection campaign. "We should expect a bounce back. The labor market fundamentals are very strong and haven't changed very much," Kevin Hassett, the outgoing chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, said in a recent interview. "The last two years we grew at a healthy clip because we became an attractive tax climate and we deregulated aggressively. It feels like those fundamentals are still in place."

Right now, the economy remains Trump's strongest issue, though his high ratings on the subject have not lifted his overall approval rating. And his numbers on the economy are already showing some signs of slipping.

A Fox News poll last week found that 57 percent of voters feel optimistic about the economy, down from 66 percent when Trump took office and 63 percent in February. The survey found that 48 percent of voters believe Trump's policies "help people with more money," 31 percent said they help everyone and just 5 percent said they help "people like me."

A Quinnipiac survey last month found that 39 percent approve of Trump's trade policies while 53 percent disapprove. In critical swings states that carried Trump to the White House in 2016 -- Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio and Iowa -- voters disapprove of the president's handling of trade by 56 percent to 41 percent.

Consistent high ratings on the economy as an issue have also never pushed Trump's job approval rating over 50 percent, suggesting the president is not getting a large amount of credit for economy. Trump suggested in an interview with Time last week that he may not even try to convince swing voters that they should back him. "I think my base is so strong, I'm not sure that I have to do that," he said. If he decides he needs to woo swing voters, Trump will likely have a more difficult time doing so if forecasts of a slowing economy in 2020 come true. "He had a strong blip last year with the deficit-financed tax cut, but that stimulus is gone and we are left with trend-line underlying growth," said Zandi. "The link between the tax cut and long-term growth was investment, and investment has flat-lined since last year. The president will be lucky if we stay at 2 percent because right now we are below it."

Cyber-attack against Iran: a failed strategy of U.S. presidents from Bush to Trump

1 → According to these reports, Esther was somehow considered as the queen of world Jews and the Zionist regime was inspired by this historical character to name the malware to infiltrate Iran's systems.

■ Trump following in footsteps of Bush and Obama

After the presidency of George W. Bush and Obama, the plans for launching cyber-attacks against Iran are still at work in White House. Recently, western media, specially the American ones, announced that Donald Trump has issued the permit for attacking Iranian computer systems.

It is claimed that the permission for beginning cyber-attacks was given on Thursday right after Trump, allegedly, called off his attack against Iran in retaliation for downing U.S. invading drone just 10 minutes before it was to be launched.

Two informed sources have told Associated Press that the cyber-attacks are been approved by Trump.

It is even claimed that the cyber-attack targeted at computer systems of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) was a retaliation against recent incident in Oman Sea.

According to Washington Post, one of the cyber-attacks targeted the computers controlling missile and rocket launch system and the other targeted a spying system that monitored the movement of ships in Hormoz Strait.

According to Washington Post, the cyber-attacks were planned weeks ago and they were designed in retaliation for the incidents in Oman Sea. Earlier in June, a number of oil tankers were attacked in Hormoz Strait. U.S. accuses Iran of being involved in the attacks but Tehran has responded that the accusations are completely baseless.

American Ministry of Defense has not yet responded to any of these reports.

■ Retrying a failed strategy

Trump has chosen a strategy against Iran that was also tried by Bush and Obama.

According to the reports published in New York Times, contrary to the intentions of U.S. and the Zionist regime, Stuxnet was never able to carry out its mission completely, that was the destruction of Iran's nuclear program, it only slowed down the process of Iran's nuclear developments.

So, it seems that Trump is running a test on Iran; and, now, instead of direct military war, he has chosen to launch cyber-attacks and offered negotiations without any precondition.

Currently, Trump has three big projects at hand: the Deal of the Century, Iran and North Korea.

In dealing with North Korea, Trump also first started with direct threats, to the point that many predicted an imminent war would start, but he suddenly offered to negotiate with North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un; however, these negotiations have not yet come to any conclusion.

White House has also devised the Deal of the Century project for the Middle East, but the Palestinians have not agreed to abide by it. Finally, Trump has also been unsuccessful in dealing with Iran.

By abandoning the nuclear deal with Iran and imposing sanctions on Iran, Trump burned all the bridges between the two countries and now he is wondering if he can push Tehran into submission by trying out other strategies such as cyber-attacks and economic pressure.

For Iran, it is clear that these strategies are not going to work, but testing these strategies will have great costs for the White House.

Japan needs to end its two-faced China policy

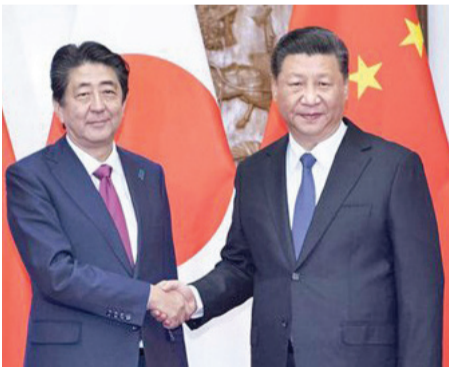
By Jiao Kun

GLOBALTIMES — Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Beijing in October 2018. Action speaks louder than words. This is the adage we have to keep in mind when thinking about China-Japan relations.

With the Osaka G20 summit coming up, official sources have confirmed that Chinese President Xi Jinping will attend the meeting, which is widely seen by the Japanese side as proof of improved relations with China. News also indicates the possibility of an official visit to Japan by President Xi next year. Since Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited China in October 2018, a thaw in ties has been the subject of discussion. In March, Abe even declared at the congress that Japan-China relations had been restored to normalcy. As a token of that, two economic delegations led by Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono and Secretary General of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party Toshihiro Nikai were sent to Beijing the next month.

The Chinese government responded to the Japanese gesture in a positive but more restrained way. Shortly after Abe's declaration that relations were back on track, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at a press conference that the two countries were just in the incipient stages of improving relations. More is yet to come, and more needs to be seen.

Until now, there has been more rhetoric than action by Japan. Both Japanese delegations sent to China functioned more in a symbolic manner, without reaching substantial deals or drawing action plans. The one led by Nikai attended the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation organized by the Chinese government, but only expressed Japan's support for the plan, instead of making its intentions about joining the plan clear.



In fact, Abe himself was questioning the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative during his trip to Europe in April. Furthermore, some of Japan's recent moves can be seen as hostile toward its neighbor. On April 19, Japan and the US organized in Washington DC the traditional security consultative committee between the two countries in which US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo blamed China for launching cyberattacks. The joint statement further specifies that a cyberattack could constitute an armed attack, and thus trigger Article V of the Japan-US Security Treaty. This means China is seen as a potential enemy in cyber space, and Japan and the US will act together, once either of them purportedly comes under cyberattack by China.

According to the Yomiuri Shimbun about three months ago, the Defense Ministry of Japan decided to develop a long-range missile, which is expected to be based on an existing model XASM 3, and will be compatible with the most advanced F-35 fighter jets imported from the US. What is more surprising is that Japan's Defense Ministry justified its decision by citing the so-called increased attack ability of the Chinese navy. As Abe claim to normalize ties with China, Japan has shown another


face on multiple occasions.

Abe has been promoting himself in Japan as a leader enthusiastic about diplomacy and having forged rich outcomes in handling foreign relations. The coming G20 summit is another seemingly perfect stage for him to show the Japanese people his diplomatic skills, especially when the upper house election is impending. However, Abe's interest in diplomacy has in fact led him to a dead end in almost every direction.


After Abe met with Russian President Vladimir Putin many times, the hope of striking a peace treaty with Russia and retrieving at least part of the so-called northern territories is now almost dead. At the beginning of this year, Japanese congressman Katsuyuki Kawai, who is also Abe's special advisor for foreign affairs, said publicly in the US that Japan's purpose in signing a peace treaty with Russia is to form a united front against China, only to trigger strong objection from the Russian side.

Japan has been feuding with South Korea on various issues for a long time. Abe's recent whim to negotiate with North Korea without condition was rejected by the latter and dubbed "shameless". Even relations with the US are getting strained: Trade negotiations between Japan and the US are set to start right after the upper house election in July. With Trump wielding his "America First" stick, Japan will be forced to make more sacrifices.

So China is now the last hope for Abe to gain Brownie points in diplomacy, and this explains to a great extent the recent thaw in China-Japan ties. But Japan should understand that the two-faced policy it has been demonstrating will hardly bring about real trust. As the traditional international order is reshaped, it would be wise that Abe steer his country into a true partnership with its neighbor.



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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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Mysterious glowing light on Mars captured by NASA’s Curiosity probe

A photograph taken by NASA’s Curiosity rover on Mars has captured a mysterious bright glow on a distant Martian hillside.

The black and white photograph shows the desert landscape with high rocky hills in the background.

In front of the larger rock formations, a tiny elongated white blob appears to be streaking past.

NASA has previously admitted to similar anomalies in pictures taken by the probe. This image was taken on 16 June, and while conspiracy theorists have said the photograph is evidence of extra-terrestrials on the Red Planet, it appears more likely to have been a cosmic ray, some kind of camera lens flare or sunlight reflecting on rocks.

The Curiosity rover landed on the surface of Mars in 2012, and is armed with 17 cameras. Since then it has roamed all over the planet, beaming back huge amounts of data along with vast quantities of photographs. Many other pictures it has captured have featured anomalous lights too.

The rover has two mounted “navcams” on its mast, which act as a stereo pair of cameras – a bit like eyes. The black and white images capture panoramic 3D



imagery and each has a 45 degree field of view, giving ground control crews a detailed view of the planet’s terrain.

The image in question was taken by the right navcam. Unfortunately, the left camera wasn’t looking in the same direction, and photos from the same set and time show it having swiveled down to take some kind

of space selfie, showing parts of the craft over rocks and dust on the ground.

The appearance and disappearance of the unidentified white blob appears to have been rapid, as photos taken immediately before and after don’t show the same unidentified phenomenon.

When another bright spot captured in

pictures taken by the rover made headlines in 2014, people claimed it was “light from an alien hut”.

But Justin Maki, the leader of the team that built and operates Curiosity’s navcams rapidly put those theories to bed.

He said: “In the thousands of images we’ve received from Curiosity, we see ones with bright spots nearly every week.

“These can be caused by cosmic-ray hits or sunlight glinting from rock surfaces, as the most likely explanations.”

Cosmic rays are formed by highly charged atomic particles, often from outside our own solar system, which travel through space at almost the speed of light and can produce visual effects upon impact. They are more common on Mars than on Earth due to the thin atmosphere which doesn’t provide as effective a barrier to cosmic radiation. Cosmic rays are formed by highly charged atomic particles, often from outside our own solar system, which travel through space at almost the speed of light and can produce visual effects upon impact. They are more common on Mars than on Earth due to the thin atmosphere which doesn’t provide as effective a barrier to cosmic radiation.

(Source: The Independent)

New study deciphers the success of alien bird species



Thanks to a new study, researchers are beginning to understand what makes alien species and why some places are more susceptible to invaders than others.

For the study, a team of researchers in Australia and the United States compiled a database of 4,000 alien bird introductions. Using complex statistical analysis, scientists examined the importance of local environment factors, species traits and the size of the invasion in predicting the success of the alien birds.

Their survey showed the characteristics of the local environment were the most important factors in determining the success of the invasion. Researchers determined alien birds were more likely to establish a population if the new habitat already hosted alien species and was similar to their native range.

“Alien birds are more likely to establish populations in areas that already have more aliens of other sorts,” lead researcher Tim Blackburn, a professor of invasion biology at University College London, wrote in The Conversation. “This is consistent with the ‘invasional meltdown’ hypothesis that previous invasions help facilitate future alien arrivals.”

But while previous studies have suggested human degradation of the environment can make ecosystems more susceptible to invasive species, the latest

data showed alien birds were more likely to invade less-degraded habitat.

Environmental disturbance -- like a big storm, for example -- diminished the odds of an invading bird species’ success.

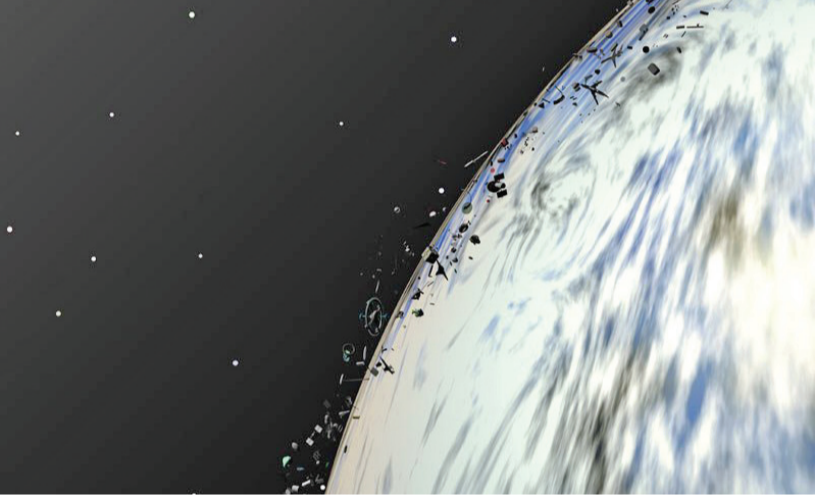
Researchers found alien bird species have greater success invading habitat that have some but not a lot of native birds living there. An insect-eating invader, for example, is likely to have more success invading habitat where a few insect-eating native species are taking advantage of a local insect population. But overall, native plant and animal diversity had only a small effect on the success of an invader.

Scientists hope their work -- published this week in the journal Nature -- can help conservationists identify and better protect habitats most susceptible to invasion.

“We know alien species are the main driver of recent extinctions in both animals and plants so there is a clear and urgent need for better biosecurity measures to prevent or mitigate the impact of future invasions and protect endangered native species,” said David Redding, a research fellow at UCL. “With increased global trade, more species are being transported around the world either purposefully or as stowaways, which creates more opportunities for alien species to establish themselves in new habitats.”

(Source: UPI)

UN, European bodies outline joint push against space junk



European and UN bodies have outlined a joint push for global action on space junk, saying that debris orbiting the earth must be cleaned up as satellites launched by private companies and other new entrants are adding to the crowding.

So-called space debris has been an issue since the Cold War-era space race between the United States and Soviet Union. But in the absence of solutions, and with emerging countries like China and India having developed the ability to shoot down satellites, it has only got worse.

The amount of debris — ranging from dead satellites to specks of paint — is so great that the European Space Agency “very frequently” has to alter its satellites’ course to avoid larger objects, ESA chief Jan Woerner said. He was taking part in a stage discussion with the head of the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), Simonetta Di Pippo.

“If your car is gone, you are allowed to have it 25 years in the middle of a crossing — that would be totally stupid. It’s not possible,” Woerner said. “And ... space is something like that — like a road, like a street. It’s infrastructure and we have to make it clean.”

Together, ESA and UNOOSA have launched an initiative to raise awareness of the problem of space debris.

With private companies like Space

Exploration Technologies, or SpaceX seeking to launch thousands of new satellites, they hope to get countries to agree on action.

“You have really more and more countries, more and more private-sector entities entering into the field,” Di Pippo said at the event with Woerner at the headquarters of UNOOSA, which promotes international cooperation on using space peacefully.

Woerner said he would ask ministers from the ESA’s 22 member states at a meeting in November to fund an initiative in which his agency would pay one company to bring down one of its defunct satellites safely, hoping it will lead to more.

He said the action needed was similar to that on climate change, without any debate as to whether it is man-made.

“Nobody can deny that the debris is there, nobody can deny that we have climate change. Now I can discuss ‘Is this debris German debris, Portuguese debris or Chinese debris?’ It doesn’t matter,” Woerner said.

“We have to get rid of it. And therefore awareness is number 1, and then immediately when we get people also being aware — also politicians, of course — then we can act.”

(Source: Reuters)

Meteors help Martian clouds form

How did the Red Planet get all of its clouds? CU Boulder researchers may have discovered the secret: just add meteors.

Astronomers have long observed clouds in Mars’ middle atmosphere, which begins about 18 miles (30 kilometers) above the surface, but have struggled to explain how they formed.

Now, a new study published in the journal Nature Geoscience, examines those wispy accumulations and suggests that they owe their existence to a phenomenon called “meteoric smoke” -- essentially, the icy dust created by space debris slamming into the planet’s atmosphere.

The findings are a good reminder that planets and their weather patterns aren’t isolated from the solar systems around them.

“We’re used to thinking of Earth, Mars and other bodies as these really self-contained planets that determine their own climates,” said Victoria Hartwick, a graduate student in the Department of Atmospheric and Ocean Sciences (ATOC) and lead author of the new study. “But climate isn’t independent of the surrounding solar system.”

The research, which included co-authors Brian Toon at CU Boulder and Nicholas Heavens at Hampton University in Virginia, hangs on a basic fact about clouds: They don’t come out of nowhere.

“Clouds don’t just form on their own,” said Hartwick,

also of the Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics at CU Boulder. “They need something that they can condense onto.”

On Earth, for example, low-lying clouds begin life as tiny grains of sea salt or dust blown high into the air. Water molecules clump around these particles, becoming bigger and bigger until they form the large puffs that you can see from the ground.

But, as far as scientists can tell, those sorts of cloud seeds don’t exist in Mars’ middle atmosphere, Hartwick said. And that’s what led her and her colleagues to meteors.

Hartwick explained that about two to three tons of space debris crash into Mars every day on average. And as those meteors rip apart in the planet’s atmosphere, they inject a huge volume of dust into the air.

To find out if such smoke would be enough to give rise to Mars’ mysterious clouds, Hartwick’s team turned to massive computer simulations that attempt to mimic the flows and turbulence of the planet’s atmosphere.

And sure enough, when they included meteors in their calculations, clouds appeared.

“Our model couldn’t form clouds at these altitudes before,” Hartwick said. “But now, they’re all there, and they seem to be in all the right places.”

The idea might not be as outlandish as it sounds, she added. Research has shown that similar interplanetary

schmutz may help to seed clouds near Earth’s poles.

But she also says that you shouldn’t expect to see gigantic thunderheads forming above the surface of Mars anytime soon. The clouds her team studied were much more like bits of cotton candy than the clouds Earthlings are used to.

“But just because they’re thin and you can’t really see them doesn’t mean they can’t have an effect on the dynamics of the climate,” Hartwick said.

The researchers’ simulations, for example, showed that middle atmosphere clouds could have a large impact on the Martian climate. Depending on where the team looked, those clouds could cause temperatures at high altitudes to swing up or down by as much as 18 degrees Fahrenheit (10 degrees Celsius).

And that climactic impact is what gets Brian Toon, a professor in ATOC, excited. He said that the team’s findings on modern-day Martian clouds may also help to reveal the planet’s past evolution and how it once managed to support liquid water at its surface.

“More and more climate models are finding that the ancient climate of Mars, when rivers were flowing across its surface and life might have originated, was warmed by high altitude clouds,” Toon said. “It is likely that this discovery will become a major part of that idea for warming Mars.”

(Source: Science Daily)

Earthquake location influenced by stress buildup of previous ruptures

The fault slips that generate earthquakes release lots of stored energy, energy that reverberates violently across the planet’s crust. But earthquakes also create new stresses.

New research suggests the accumulation of stress caused by historic earthquakes could explain why and where the next seismic event occurs.

In regions vulnerable to earthquakes, major seismic events seem to occur at random. But new findings -- published this week in the journal Nature Communications -- suggest the static stress stored on a fault plane prior to rupture, so-called Coulomb pre-stress, can help explain historic and modern earthquake patterns.

Until now, most models assume pre-stress is zero, but authors of the new study suggest such an assumption is flawed. The stress on a brittle fault plane is accumulated over centuries to millennia as a result of tectonic loading and a history of earthquakes. Through their analysis, scientists showed Coulomb pre-stress should not be ignored.

Researchers used written accounts of historic earthquake damage, modern seismic data and state-of-the-art modelling to show positive stress caused by a history of earthquakes is almost always present along faults prior to rupture.

“Earthquakes are caused by rock sliding past each other along fault lines which causes the forces and stress in the surrounding rocks to change after a big earthquake,” Zoe Mildon, lecturer in earth sciences at the University of Plymouth, said in a news release. “It is often assumed that the nearest fault to a particular earthquake will be the next to rupture.”

The latest study showed that is rarely the case. According to Mildon and her colleagues, current earthquake prediction models are over-reliant on Coulomb stress transfer theory, CST, which describes the transfer of stress to surrounding material in the wake of a seismic event.

The new study suggests cumulative stress, or historical stress, within fault systems is a better predictor of future earthquakes.

“Our model adds the stresses of lots of earthquakes together and shows that in the majority of cases fault lines are positively stressed when they rupture,” Mildon said. “It is a step change in modelling CST and shows this is an ignored yet vital factor when trying to explain earthquake triggering.”

Scientists arrived at their conclusions after studying the history of earthquakes in Italy’s central Apennines region. When researchers tracked the location of earthquakes in the region over the last 700 years, they found 97 percent of the faults were wholly or partially stressed -- boasting a positive Coulomb pre-stress -- prior to rupture.

“Earthquakes are hugely destructive to both people and property, and the Holy Grail of earthquake science would be to predict where they are going to happen and when,” Mildon said. “We are a very long way from that, and indeed it may never be possible to accurately predict the location, time and size of future earthquakes. Our research, however, could be a starting point in helping us develop better forecasts of which fault lines might be more susceptible based on previous tremors.”

(Source: UPI)

A baby planet is sculpting strange patterns in the dust around its young star

When stars are young, they’re often surrounded by a ring of dust and gas known as a protoplanetary disk. Eventually, the material in this disk can clump together, forming everything from planets to asteroids.

Now, an international team of researchers has found a young star with thin rings and gaps in the outer part of its protoplanetary disk, a region typically home to wide, smooth halos - and they think a newborn exoplanet is to blame for the strange but stunning structures.

In a paper published Friday in The Astronomical Journal, the researchers describe how they noticed the strange rings while studying images of HD169142, a protoplanetary disk 370 light-years away, produced by the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array.

Based on their analysis, the scientists determined that the never-before-seen structures in HD169142’s outer disk were likely caused by the inward migration of a recently formed exoplanet about 10 times as massive as Earth.

“Here, one small planet interacting with tiny dust particles can reproduce these rings in isolation, revealing its properties in an indirect way,” lead researcher Sebastian Pérez from the University of Santiago, Chile, said in a press release.

“This one and other similar experiments open new possibilities of characterization of super young extra-solar planets.”

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Scientists say dinosaur fossils found in Colorado are those of a 68 million years old triceratops

Several weeks ago, construction workers digging near a Denver, Colorado, retirement home made a startling discovery: dinosaur bones.

Paleontologists from the Denver Museum of Nature and Science quickly got to work identifying the partial skeleton found in Highlands Ranch, a short drive south of Denver.

Now, they say it was an adult triceratops buried in the bedrock -- and the fossils were 68 million years old.

“It’s always exciting to get a call about possible fossils, and I can’t wait to share more details as we continue to dig,” Tyler Lyson said, according to the museum’s press release.

“Finds like this, while relatively rare, are a great reminder of how dynamic our planet is and how much more there is out there to discover.”

Believe it or not, Denver is a fossil hotspot, especially when it comes to triceratops.

In 2017, horned dinosaur fossils were uncovered at Thornton, a Denver construction site, and were revealed to belong to a triceratops relative, the torosaurus.

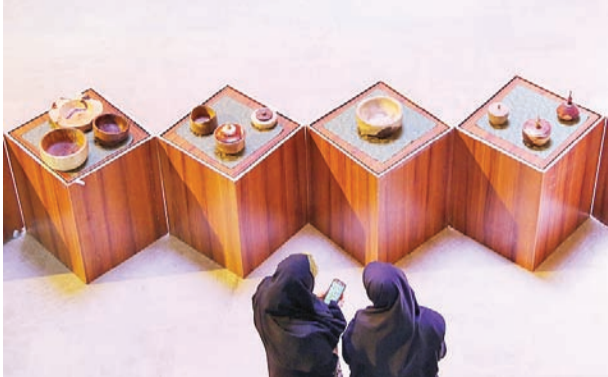
Ever wonder why the Colorado Rockies sport a Barney lookalike as their mascot? Back when Coors’ Field was under construction, an unidentified fossil was discovered there, too.

Scientists say the possibility of unearthing more fossils runs very high. Now, the construction crews are working hand in hand with scientists to further explore the site in search of more fossil finds.

(Source: CNN)

CHHTO hosts woodturning exhibit

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A collection of woodworks crafted by art students has been put on show at the headquarters of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization in Tehran.



“The exhibit pursues a scientific and academic approach to examine various aspects including form, technique and interpretation,” said Saeid Shahrokhi, a university professor, who is the exhibit’s coordinator, CHTN reported.

The event will be running through June 26.

Back in February, Parsa Qazi, who is famed as Iran’s “youngest” woodturner, was honored by Ghada Hijavi, the head of World Crafts Council-Asia Pacific Region.

Over the past couple of years, dozens of high-quality Iranian handicrafts have been honored with UNESCO seals of excellence.

UNESCO asks Hungary to halt Liget Budapest project

The World Heritage Center of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, has requested Hungary to halt its Liget Budapest Project in a report, news site hvg.hu said.



A visualization of the planned Ethnographic Museum, which is part of the project.

In its aim to conserve buildings included in the World Heritage List, the organization noted that the project has potential for negative impact from high rise buildings erected up to 120 meters high. UNESCO is asking Hungary to halt the project and recommends the plans be submitted to the World Heritage Center for review.

The 2019 UNESCO mission observed a number of other projects, new developments and reconstruction works ongoing in the project and its buffer zone of which the center said it had no previous information, including a demolition at Paulay Ede utca 52 and renovation of the Opera House, whc.unesco.org added.

(Source: Budapest Business Journal)

ROUND THE GLOBE

Maloti-Drakensberg Park

Maloti Drakensberg Transboundary, which is inscribed in UNESCO World Heritage list, is a transnational property spanning the border between the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa.

A UNESCO World Heritage site, the property comprises Sehlabathebe National Park (6,500ha) in Lesotho and uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park (242,813 ha) in South Africa.



Maloti Drakensberg Transboundary World Heritage Site is renowned for its spectacular natural landscape, importance as a haven for many threatened and endemic species, and for its wealth of rock paintings made by the San people over a period of 4000 years.

The property covers an area of 249,313 ha making it the largest protected area complex along the Great Escarpment of southern Africa.

The Maloti Drakensberg range of mountains constitutes the principal water production area in Southern Africa. The areas along the international border between the two countries create a drainage divide on the escarpment that forms the watershed for two of southern Africa’s largest drainage basins. The Thukela River from uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park flows eastwards into the Indian Ocean. The rivers of southern Maloti Drakensberg including SNP drain into the Senqu/Orange River which flows westwards into the Atlantic Ocean, and extension of the UDP WHS to include SNP will add special hydrologic qualities to the area. The Senqu/Orange River from Sehlabathebe National Park flows westwards into the Atlantic Ocean.

The synthesis of rock art sites and their natural setting in Maloti-Drakensberg Park convey a very strong sense of authenticity in setting, location and atmosphere but also material, substance and workmanship.

(Source: UNESCO)

Vank Cathedral: A gorgeous fusion of Islamic, Armenian architecture

TOURISM TEHRAN — The centuries-old Vank Cathedral (locally called Kelisa-ye Vank) is widely referred to as an everlasting masterpiece of architecture.

Located in New Jolfa district of Isfahan, central Iran, the Cathedral harmoniously blends Islamic motifs and elements with those of Armenians. Vank means “monastery” or “convent” in the Armenian language.

Built in the first half of the 17th century, with the encouragement of the Safavid rulers, Kelisa-ye Vank is a historic focal point of the Armenian Church in Iran.

The cathedral consists of a domed sanctuary, much like an Iranian mosque, but with the significant addition of a semi-octagonal apse and raised chancel usually seen in western churches.

Its sumptuous interior is richly ornamented with restored wall paintings full of life and color, including gruesome martyrdoms and pantomime demons. The ceiling above the entrance is painted with delicate floral motifs in the style of Persian miniature.

The cathedral’s exteriors are in relatively modern brickwork and are exceptionally plain compared to its elaborately decorated interior.

There is also a museum exhibiting a fabulous collection of illustrated gospels and Bibles, some dating back as far as the 10th century.



Its sumptuous interior is opulently ornamented with restored wall paintings full of life and color, including gruesome martyrdoms and pantomime demons.

Hundreds of Armenians, who migrated to Isfahan during Ottoman–Safavid War (1603–18), contributed to the cathedral being completed.

Some say that the varying fortunes and independence of this suburb across the Zayande River and its eclectic mix of European missionaries, mercenaries and travelers can be traced almost chronologically in the cathedral’s combination of building styles and contrasts in its external and internal architectural treatment.

The construction is said to begin in 1606 by the first arrivals being completed with major alterations to design between 1655 and 1664 under the supervision of Archbishop David.

The Armenian quarter of Isfahan dates from the time of Shah Abbas I, who transported a colony of Christians from the town of Jolfa (now on Iran’s northern border) en masse, and named the village ‘New Jolfa’. Shah Abbas sought their skills as merchants, entrepreneurs and artists and he ensured that their religious freedom was respected – albeit at a distance from the city’s Islamic center. At one time over 42,000 Armenian Christians reportedly lived here.

Many visitors visit the cathedral in the afternoon and stay on in New Jolfa to enjoy dinner in the relatively liberal village atmosphere.

Isfahan is Iran’s top tourist destination for good reasons. Its profusion of tree-lined boulevards, Persian gardens and important Islamic buildings gives it a visual appeal unmatched by any other Iranian city, and the many artisans working here underpin its reputation as a living museum of traditional culture.

Here is a select of comments that visitors to the cathedral have posted to TripAdvisor, one of the most popular travel websites in the world:

■ "Beautiful piece of history"

A not-to-be-missed visit in Isfahan. A beautiful piece of art and a nice museum. Useful to understand the construction of the city and yet another part of Armenian history in the world. (Sibtravelling from Brussels, Belgium; reviewed April 2019)

Mirror of the sky: Visit Hoz-e Sultan in central Iranian plateau



TOURISM TEHRAN — Salt lakes sometimes appear like giant expanses of mirror, making it hard to differentiate between the sky and the ground. Hoz-e Sultan, a lonely salt lake in the heart of Iran, is one of those.

Covering 37,075 hectares, the lake gives its visitors the impression of a gigantic natural mirror on earth. The light is reflected through dense layers minerals and salt deposits beneath.

With an altitude of about 720 meters above the sea level, the lake is said to be one of the lowest parts of the Iranian plateau. The lake assumes different characteristics, sizes and shapes in various seasons of the year so that its attractiveness varies from time to time.

Situated some 40 kilometers northward of Qom, the lake is adjacent to the Qom – Tehran highway. The lake is also an epicenter of a relatively rich fauna. Locals say, it is a suitable place for breeding a kind of shrimp, called Artemia.

Shour, Ghara-Chai and Varamin are amongst rivers that discharge into the lake. The latter come from southern parts of Tehran Province. Melting snows and some seasonal rainfalls contribute to the inputs as well.

The region is a haven for some breeds of migratory birds, a majority of them come from the north Caspian countries. There can be found footprints of houbara, pigeon, grey goose, mallard, duck, ruddy shelduck, stork, flamingo, falconers, grey goose, stork and different kinds of eagles.

Hoz-e Sultan and its surroundings were used to be a natural habitat for mammals like rabbit, rat, fox and deer, which may still be spotted in the region.

Best time to tour the lake starts from early spring to late autumn.



EVA Air attendants strike halts flights for 1,000s in Taiwan

A strike by flight attendants at EVA Air, Taiwan’s second-largest airline, has left thousands of passengers scrambling for alternative transport.

Local media reported more than 100 flights were being canceled and almost 20,000 passengers would be affected on the first three days of the strike, which began Thursday afternoon after negotiations broke down. The airline operates about 80 international flights daily and its domestic operations were not affected.

About 100 union members staged a sit-in outside the airline’s suburban Taipei headquarters Thursday night to press their demands.

“I urge EVA Air to solve our problems and take care of our demands,” union member Chao Chieh-huan said.

On its Twitter feed, the airline said it was “working closely with concerned authorities, fellow airlines, and travel agencies to arrange alternative flights for passengers and doing all we can to reduce delays.”

“This untimely labor action will significantly impact and inconvenience our passengers, our flight attendants” fellow employees and the travel industry,” the airline said. Updates were being published on a strike response website and passengers could also call the airline’s reservation center.

Union members have demanded a raise in daily allowances and an end to a practice in which non-union members enjoy the same benefits as members.

Management has said daily allowances are already higher than those offered by competitors and barring non-union members who do the same work from enjoying equal benefits would harm safety and morale.

EVA Air Chief Executive Vice President Ho Ching-sheng addressed union members, but showed little inclination toward compromise.

“We understand that many flight attendants are involved because of peer pressure and we urge those flight attendants to think about what they have done. They should understand that it’s not appropriate to do so.”

Earlier this year, pilots at Taiwan’s largest carrier, China Airlines, went on strike for seven days over benefits and working conditions before reaching an agreement with the mediation of the transport and labor ministries and the vice premier.

(Source: AP)

Barrier Reef corals help scientists calibrate ancient climate records

Corals can help scientists track ancient climate patterns, but new research suggests that traditional analysis methods for analyzing coral’s ancient growth aren’t as accurate as previously thought.

Luckily, scientists have developed an improved method, a combination of high-resolution microscopic analysis and geochemical modeling. Researchers described the new technique this week in the journal *Frontiers in Marine Science*.

Deciphering the climate records coded in coral skeletons is similar to deciphering tree rings. As coral grows, new layers of calcium are deposited. Each layer traps geochemical signatures that can provide clues to the climatic conditions.

By measuring the amount of strontium and the lighter isotope of oxygen trapped in different calcium layers, scientists can estimate ancient sea surface temperatures. However, the technique isn’t perfect.

Researchers compared coral-based sea-surface temperature records against temperature probe measurements.

“Remarkably, the coral records are accurate most of the time, but there are instances where measurements have been off by as much as nine degrees Celsius, and this needs to be rectified.”

Bruce Fouke, a professor of geology and microbiology at the University of Illinois, said in a news release.

As they grow, coral polyps deposit aragonite, a crystallized form of calcium carbonate. Unfortunately for climate scientists, seawater can also deposit aragonite crystals as it passes through the coral skeleton. Through a process called diagenesis, these seawater-derived crystals can alter the skeleton’s chemistry.

“It is difficult to tell the diagenetic aragonite from the original coral skeleton without using high-powered microscopes,” said Kyle Fouke, an undergraduate student at Bucknell University. “It is also challenging to know exactly when the diagenetic alteration took place -- days or decades after the skeletons were formed. Unless you are using the newest microscopy techniques to help select your samples, you could be collecting and measuring a mix of the two very different temperature records.”

To better understand the effects of diagenetic aragonite, scientists surveyed Porites coral skeletons growing on the Great Barrier Reef.

(Source: AccuWeather)

We are in Iran for cooperation, not to sign memorandums: Russian official

By Setareh Behrooz

TEHRAN — The Deputy Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation, Mikhail Mamonov, said that Russian working groups are in Iran for cooperation not just to sign memorandums.

He made the remarks during an interview with the Tehran Times at the Espinas Palace Hotel in Tehran on June 17.

Headed a delegation, Mamonov attended a meeting of the joint working groups in the field of communications and information technology.

"Right after this meeting the cooperation will begin. We have three working groups so I really hope that this working group will help set up cooperation between particular Russian companies. After the meeting we had with Iranian counterparts, my team collect all the contacts and agreements," he said.

"Basically we are here as a part of working group that works within the premises of Russia-Iran intergovernmental commission. So we are a part of this commission. As a working group, we concentrate on ICT development and with first meeting of this sorts under the new minister. We have a new team in Russia basically focused on issues where Russian companies and government agencies can be of assistance to Iranian government in developing Iran's national economy," he explained.

"We will be also happy to exchange views and opinions about up-to-date issues like 5G networks, artificial intelligence, and system of data management; all these issues have critical meaning for national security and development and economic prosperity as well. The solutions that we offer for Iranian companies and partners as cyber security is a very broad domain. Basically we are speaking about ensuring the sustainability of internet, the protection of critical infrastructure, and data storage," Mamonov explained.

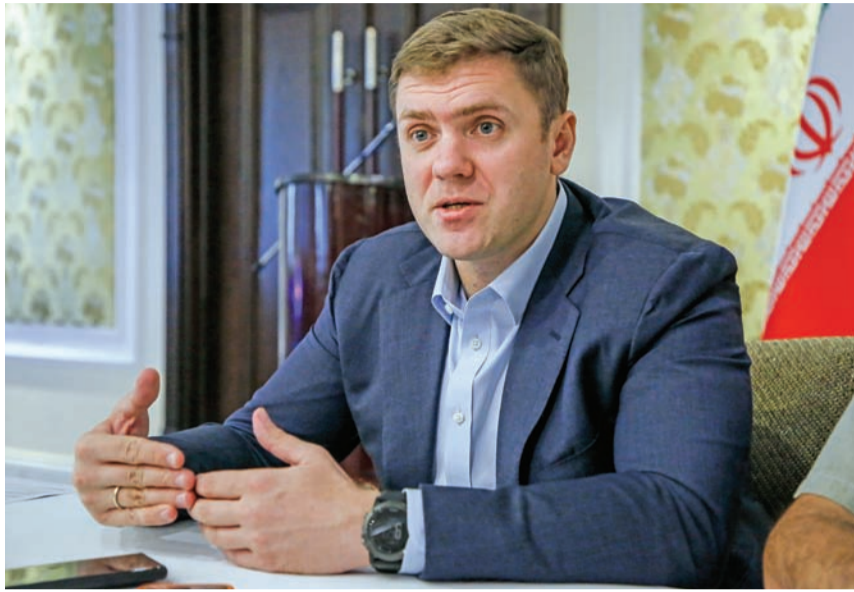
■ Tehran, Moscow to join hands on smart city

"We are studying quite extensively what Tehran has done dealing with smart city and we are impressed by the level of your mobile device penetration rate, the progress you make in e-government. We invited our colleagues to come to Moscow to see how Russian government provided e-services because it is very impressive. We will be happy to have these bilateral talks between Tehran and Moscow between the municipalities. This is what the meeting is for," he explained.

On smart city, Moscow, which is called number one smart city of the world by the UN, can be a great model for Iranian cities, he pointed out.

"Speaking about smart cities, we have a lot of things to offer to Iranian partners and friends to consider including intellectual transport systems, face and other recognition system as well as a number of online services provided by the government and municipal authorities," he added.

"In Russia, we started to develop e-government since 2008 and that would be a long way. Now we have more than 30,000 services provided online and developing 25 online super services by which, I mean typical life situations that every citizens face with in his or her daily life including death, child birth or traffic accident through intellectual



“We will be also happy to exchange views and opinions about up-to-date issues like 5G networks, artificial intelligence, and system of data management; all these issues have critical meaning for national security and development and economic prosperity as well”

system and urban development infrastructure," he said.

"In Russia, the ministry bans double or triple inputs of data by citizens and if you once enter the data in one of the systems they are prohibited to request it another time. There is a special environment called "State Web" that operate with one ecosystem to exchange data, which really helps the citizens not to feel pressure of applying for their license and documents.

"In Russia, you still have to go for some documents like passport and if you wait for more than 15 minutes they provide a cup of coffee for free.

"Until 2024, we plan to have maybe 99 percent of our intergovernmental paperwork done without paper, a quite ambitious goal in the realm of digital economy," he added.

■ Russia is more than ready to cooperate with Iran

"Russia is more than ready to invest in joint companies that could be developing joint products that develop products to be employed in Iran in this regard we provide special financial instruments and if financial issues are the only obstacle for cooperation, it can be solved with some facilities like long term loans," he said.

Mamonov said there is a special foundation under the Ministry of Digital Development that its purpose is investing in prospective companies not startups. The companies that have already established with good record, which can be also trans-national. May be this company supports Iranian companies depending on how serious they are. Iran can also invest on joint projects because Russian state fund doesn't have ambition of earning a lot of money.

"We would be happy to work with Iranian partners. At the initial stage, Iranian government should nominate some partners for

us to begin our cooperation through joint ventures now. Russian companies cannot come to Iran without a reliable partner. We should know about the Iranian partners and how they want to work with Iranian side," he said.

He said that like previous experience that Russia had in Vietnam cooperating in different fields of e-government, smart city and cyber security, his country basically supports B2G business model.

Business-to-government (B2G) is a business model that refers to businesses selling products, services or information to governments or government agencies.

"I am not sure Business-to-Business (B2B) works for Iran. The companies know better than enough that their market strong points. Besides, services like face recognition system for municipality or traffic transit inevitably engaged to states. As the result of this meeting we have a list of potentially fruitful companies and will be keeping up what is going on until two companies agree on something meaningful," he explained.

■ Current ICT projects between Iran and Russia

"A number of ICT projects are underway between the countries. The main project which is there in place is the one between Rostelecom and Iranian partners on traffic transit. This is already working and is to be expanded," he explained.

Another project is Russian ABBYY which is working closely with Iranian authorities. They now offer to digitalize national archives in Iran and even develop a special software to recognize Persian Language and their cooperation can be broadened since ABBYY team is very good in recognition and speech, he said.

"What we want is to help our companies fully be compatible and comply with the rule

and regulation set up by the Iranian state so it takes sometimes to understand the reality and translate it to Russian companies," he said.

He also pointed to the Yandex, a Russian search engine, which was agreed to be present in Iran in October 2015, however it did not happen.

"Some market issues made Yandex to come back from Iran. Yandex was a very Russian company and it takes time for them to become international. Besides, it is also very much dependent on Iranian consumers if they want a new search engine or not," he said.

"The good thing about Russian search engine or social network is that they are very safe so no concern about political influence from abroad. I am sure that Russia is not going to meddle in Iranian internal affairs even if Russian search engines, networks or messengers are present here," he said.

■ A common market for startups in Iran

"We are now discussing the developing of a four-party center in Iran including Iran, Russia, Turkey and Azerbaijan for regional startup center and now working to single out an agenda. I am not sure that Russia is going to invest on startup as a state we don't invest on startups as a state even in Russia anymore.

He also extolled the idea for an ICT common regional market in Iran. "However what we need, are companies that they ask government to help them for finding market. We want to be specific on what to be financed about and about the business model in common market," he said.

"As you know in some aspects the companies are competitive and we need to set up rules of the game. Since if they will be only competitors not cooperatives, they may be it is not the best way to do this and Russia is ready to set up rules of this game," he added.

International payment system

"Post Bank of Iran and Russian Post are discussing the issue of international payment system and I know they are at final stage of negotiations and I hope they reach agreement soon," Mamonov said.

"I am sure that our Mir payment system have chances of setting up direct contacts with Iranian payment system because we need to have a more stable diverse transaction ecosystem," he said.

"I think it might happen. There are lots of issues that they don't have to do with our goodwill political technical and economic issues. We are moving toward direct bilateral currency exchange and this is the right track so it may take some time but we are on way," he said.

He said that Russia also suffers from unreasonable injustice sanctions imposed by the U.S. and in this regard they are very much in the same situation as Iran.

"Russia and its European partners are opposed to the imposed sanctions so setting up this separate payment system between two or more countries is very reasonable and we step for it but it is really related to our financial authorities and our banks, it is not a cup of tea," he lamented.

However the bilateral agreements stimulate or foster businesses and Russian government will be providing credits for their companies in order to cooperate with Iran, he concluded.

New technology helps search teams find people in wilderness

Yesenia D'Alessandro loaded a GPS tracking app on her cellphone and trudged into a remote Hawaii forest, joining more than 100 other volunteers looking for a missing hiker.

She climbed through muddy ravines, crossed streams and faced steep drop-offs in the thick tangle of trees and ferns where her college friend Amanda Eller vanished last month.

"You have to search everywhere," said D'Alessandro, who flew in from Maryland. "You have to go down to that stream bed, even though you don't want to. She could be down there."

D'Alessandro and others gathered GPS data of the ground they covered, and organizers put it on a specialized digital map to help better understand where to look next.

The technology led volunteers to Eller, who was found next to a waterfall and survived for 17 days in the Maui forest by eating plants and drinking stream water. Her dramatic rescue shows how emerging technology helps search teams more efficiently scour the wilderness for missing people.

"It kind of led us to search outside of that high-priority area to where we actually found Amanda," her father, John Eller, said.

More U.S. teams are turning to the technology that combines cellphone GPS with digital maps detailing cliffs, caves, waterways and other hard-to-search terrain. It helps manage the work of large numbers of volunteers.

The system showed when Hawaii searchers had covered a 2-mile (3-kilometre) radius around Eller's car. After that, searchers sent a helicopter farther into the forest, where they spotted the 35-year-old physical therapist and yoga instructor.

"We never would have pushed out if we hadn't searched the reasonable area first. There's no reason to start reaching further and further out of the box if we hadn't completely searched the box," said Chris Berquist, a volunteer search leader.

David Kovar, advocacy director for the non-profit National Association for Search and Rescue, said most search and rescue teams use digital maps. That could mean anything from basic Google Maps to specialized software called SARTopo, which California search and rescue experts used to advise Maui volunteers from afar.



Search organizers in Hawaii asked volunteers to download a \$3.99 app called GPS Tracks, which draws lines on a map showing where a user has walked.

GPS data revealed that searchers were covering the same areas repeatedly as heavy foliage or natural barriers like cliffs blocked their path, Berquist said. Organizers started dropping digital pins on volunteers' maps to give them targets, pushing volunteers to cover more ground and making the search more accurate.

When searchers ran into cliffs or pools of water, Berquist had them place digital pins on their maps. Organizers then sent drone pilots or rappelling experts to the cliffs and divers to the water.

Organizers fed the GPS data to the California team, which used SARTopo to overlay it on topographical maps, allowing everyone to see what areas had already been searched and what still needed to be checked.

Matt Jacobs, a California software engineer and search volunteer, developed SARTopo more than eight years ago after noticing teams struggling to match details on wilderness maps drawn by different agencies.

What started as a hobby project has grown in popularity in the past couple of years to become Jacobs' full-time job. Search and rescue teams from Oregon to North Carolina have started using it.

Searchers used it in March as 100 volunteers fanned out in a Northern California forest, eventually finding 8-year-old Leia Carrico and her 5-year-old sister, Caroline, who got lost near their home.

Last month, teams used it to help locate a 67-year-old hiker who had veered off a trail in a state park north of San Francisco. A California Highway Patrol airplane using an infrared camera spotted the man.

SARTopo also is becoming available as a cellphone app, which will make it even easier to directly connect the GPS data with digital maps so searchers can view them wherever they are.

Government officials are looking at adopting new technology, including in Hawaii. Most large searches are done by volunteers because many places don't do enough of them to keep official teams on staff.

Maui firefighters used hand-drawn maps as they looked for Eller over the first three days of her going missing. That's because the trail system in the Makawao Forest Reserve where she got lost doesn't appear on Google Maps. County officials also overlaid aerial searches onto a satellite map.

Yatsushiro said the Maui Fire Department would adopt similar technology used by volunteers — who kept the search going after the first three days — if firefighters found it helpful after studying available options.

Mike St. John, volunteer leader of the search and rescue unit at the Marin County Sheriff's Office in California, said GPS tracking of where people have looked is "really critical."

"It's about using GPS maps and utilizing GPS to make sure you're hitting your assignment," said St. John, who was among those in California advising the Maui team.

St. John said his search and rescue experts are not set up to offer the same type of help to others that they gave to Maui but are trying to figure out how to do that in the future.

Berquist, the Hawaii search leader, visited California this week to talk with St. John about how Marin County's volunteer program works. He aims to set up something similar back in Maui.

After technology helped find Eller, her father is donating software and other equipment to Berquist's team, developing a search and rescue app and giving \$10,000 to support Hawaii searches and rescues.

"We saw a huge need. And we feel so lucky with everything everybody did for us, so we're looking to give back," John Eller said.

(Source: The Associated Press)

How 'Human on a Chip' technology could change the way we test drugs

The new technology could eliminate the need for animal testing in many instances and has some profound implications for new cancer treatments.

Researchers are revolutionizing drug and cosmetic testing with a one-of-a-kind "human on a chip" biotechnology.

The product was developed by Hesperos Inc., a Florida biotechnology firm, in collaboration with pharmaceutical giant Roche, the University of Central Florida (UCF), and L'Oréal Research.

Advocates say the new in vitro multi-organ system can more accurately and safely test the toxicity and efficacy of chemicals by simulating the human response.

That would eliminate the need for animal testing in many scenarios.

The potential impact is an overhaul of how we currently test drug treatments for diseases, including common cancers.

Their findings were published this past week in the journal Science Translational Medicine.

■ How 'human on a chip' works

Scientists are using human cells generally sourced from induced pluripotent stem cells.

With them, scientists are building different organ components and connecting them on a single transparent chip, emulating how these organs connect in the body.

They "treat each compartment as a chemical reactor, absorber, or what's called a 'holding tank' in chemical engineering," Michael Shuler, Hesperos co-founder, chief



executive officer, and president who is also a professor emeritus at Cornell University in New York, told Healthline.

The holding tank, or reservoir, in conjunction with a blood surrogate, enables researchers to sample how drugs interact and metabolize and how the organs respond.

"We can sample from reservoirs in the system just like you would take a blood sample from your body and run it through an analytical procedure," explains Shuler.

The chip can monitor and assess acute drug treatments spanning from a few hours to days or chronic drug treatments up to 28 days.

■ Testing cancer treatments

There are wide-ranging benefits to the "human on a chip" technology, but perhaps the most notable is what it means for the drug development process.

"The whole idea is 'Can we do this in a way which makes the drug development process more effective and cost-effective?'" Shuler said.

(Source: healthline.com)

How businesses are marketing green innovation

Take a quick look at the business world today, whether brick-and-mortar stores or online, and you will quickly see a wide divergence in the amount of energy being poured into sustainable business initiatives.

The business world is under pressure today to stay ahead of the ever-increasing number of social issues and trends. While the push toward sustainable technologies and products to save the environment is not new, it has never been more significant than it is today.

Many companies are coming up with innovative solutions to help build a green future. They are taking this route to gain customer support as well as to reduce harm to the environment.

The Global Green Economy Index first launched in 2010. It measures the green economy performance of 130 countries and looks at how the experts make their assessments. The GGEI is now the index most widely used by civil societies, policy-makers, international organizations and the private sector to benchmark performance.

With nine of the world's top 10 greenest countries being in Europe, the innovations include energy-saving and eco-friendly logistics. Below are some examples of these initiatives, from which developing businesses could take a few lessons.

■ Renewable power sources

U.S. solar-powered corporations The Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) has been keeping track of the




top corporations using solar power in the United States for several years. These are its results by company based on megawatts (MW) installed:

Since 2012, according to SEIA, the top U.S. companies have increased their solar usage by 240%, and demand for socially responsible financial planning has also increased.

■ Solar power for Australians with disabilities

While Europe is taking the lead on reducing fossil fuel dependency, Australia is among the world's top innovators when it comes to renewable energy enterprises. Natural Solar Initiatives provides affordable solar-powered housing for Australians living with a disability. The initiative will incorporate battery and solar storage into Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA). It has been undertaken to help eligible participants in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

(Source: business.com)



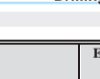
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Second Announcement

Call for public tender (First/Second publish)

One Stages tender

Subject of Tender: P/F KOOMEY AIR ELECTRIC



National Iranian Drilling Company

Tender descriptions:

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3/204/569	Tender No.: FP/98-20/031 Indent No.:08-22-9745037	4, 221, 040, 000

• Qualitative evaluation of tenders

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

• Purchasing & Submitting

Tender Document Distribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof (closing date : -)
Distribution Place	Hall No.:113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148253
Submitting Method	Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 510,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491(Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents
Closing date	Days after the last time of Purchasing. (closing date 1398/05/12) 35 (13/05/1398) The envelopes will be opened At 10:00. a.m On
Documents Receiving Method	Address
	Hall No. 107, 1 st floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569

• Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	212,000,000 Rial /4.452 Euro
Type of guarantee	<p>✓--Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.</p> <p>✓--Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.</p>
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Foreign Procurement Dept.)

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

تہران تایمز نویت اول ۹۸/۴۳ نویت دوم ۹۸/۴۴

‘Get Israel off our backs’: Palestinians react to Kushner plan

TEHRAN — Analysts have rebuked the economic part of the United States’s Middle East peace plan for failing to address the main problem that has heavily curbed the Palestinian economy - the 52-year-old Israeli military occupation over the Palestinian territories.

The economic plan was released by the White House on Saturday and is set to be presented during a U.S.-led workshop in Bahrain on June 25-26.

When the document was released, many noticed that the 40-page plan was void of any political context with the words “occupation”, “freedom”, “equality”, “blockade” missing.

“The absence of those words is actually quite glaring and it’s very indicative of what they see is the issue,” Diana Buttu a Haifa-based analyst and former legal adviser to Palestinian peace negotiators told Al Jazeera. “They’ve put together this optimal, pie-in-the-sky plan that any person who’s involved in economic development would love to see. But it’s not applicable to Palestine because they’ve taken away the political context.”

At the heart of the plan is a proposed \$50bn investment fund which would be split between Palestinians in the occupied territories (more than half of the total amount) and



its neighbors Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan.

The fund will be used for 179 infrastructure and business projects, including building up the Palestinians’ tourism sector.

-----‘Cruelly ironic’
“[Kushner’s economic plan] a mish-mash

of old ideas, not anything new. [The plan] was portrayed as a fresh new perspective, which is simply not the case,” Yara Hawari, a Palestine policy fellow at Al-Shabaka told Al Jazeera.

“You’ll notice that the pitches they use in

the plan are pitches from people from USAID programs, the very programs that the Trump administration cut, which is cruelly ironic.

“Convincing Palestinians of this is basically convincing them to take economic incentives in exchange for their rights,” Hawari said.

A UN report in 2016 found that the economy of the occupied Palestinian territories might reach twice its size if the illegal Israeli military occupation was lifted.

“Occupation imposes a heavy cost” the report read citing Israeli “restrictions on the movement of people and goods; systematic erosion and destruction of the productive base; losses of land, water and other natural resources”, as some of the impediments disrupting the territories’ growth.

Palestinians haven’t had full sovereign control over their economy due to a fragmented domestic market and separation from international markets, the blockade on Gaza, expansion of illegal Israel settlements, construction of the separation barrier on Palestinian territory and the isolation of East Jerusalem, the report stated.

Under international law, Israel as an occupier is obliged to foster economic development for Palestinians, whose territory it occupies, Al Jazeera reported.

Anti-Wahhabi Saudi thinker faces execution: HRW

TEHRAN — Human Rights Watch has condemned the Saudi authorities for seeking the death penalty against a reformist religious thinker and critic on charges that bear “no resemblance to recognized crimes.”

Hassan Farhan al-Maliki was arrested in September 2017 and has been held in detention since then. The Saudi authorities finally brought charges against him in October 2018, Press TV reported.

HRW said al-Maliki’s prosecution for peacefully expressing his religious views contradicts Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman’s claims in October 2017 that he wanted to “revert” the kingdom to “a moderate Islam open to the world and all religions.”

“Mohammed bin Salman has consistently pledged to support a more ‘moderate’ version of Islam while his country maintains a prosecution service that seeks the death penalty against religious reformers for expressing their peaceful ideas,” Michael Page, deputy Middle East director at HRW, said.

“Saudi Arabia’s real road to reform lies in allowing religious thinkers like al-Maliki to express themselves without fear of arrest and possible execution,” Page added.

According to the U.S.-based rights group, al-Maliki is currently on trial over 14 charges, nearly all of them having “no resemblance” to crimes recognized by law.

HRW, which reviewed al-Maliki’s charge sheet, said the first two charges relate to his peaceful expression of his religious opinions about the veracity of certain

sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) and his criticism of several seventh century Islamic figures.

Maliki was also charged with “insulting the country’s rulers and the Supreme Council of Religious Scholars, and describing them as extremist”, and accusing Arab countries of the Persian Gulf of supporting the Daesh terrorist group.

The Other charges included praising Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary General of Lebanon’s Hezbollah resistance movement, and “having sympathy” for the Yemen’s Houthi Ansarullah movement.

He is also facing charges for voicing his religious views in television interviews, attending discussion groups in the kingdom, writing books and studies and publishing them abroad.

The rights group cited a Saudi activist as saying that the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh, which specializes in terrorism trials, has held at least three trial sessions on the cleric’s case. The next hearing has not yet been scheduled.

Saudi Arabia has lately stepped up politically-motivated arrests, prosecution and conviction of peaceful dissident writers, human rights campaigners and independent clerics.

Saudi officials have also intensified security measures in the Shia-populated Eastern Province.

Eastern Province has been the scene of peaceful demonstrations since February 2011. Protesters have been demanding reforms, freedom of expression, the



release of political prisoners, and an end to economic and religious discrimination against the oil-rich region.

The protests have been met with a heavy-handed crackdown by the regime, with security forces increasing security measures across the province.

Over the past years, Riyadh has also redefined its anti-terrorism laws to target activism.

In January 2016, Saudi authorities executed Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr, who was an outspoken critic of the Riyadh regime. Nimr had been arrested in Qatif, Eastern Province, in 2012.

Australia secretly planning to construct new port to accommodate U.S. military forces

TEHRAN — Australia is reportedly working on a secret plan to construct a new deep-water port to accommodate U.S. Marine deployments on its northern coast, a move that is aimed to counter China’s growing presence in the region.

Citing several defense and government officials, the ABC reported on Monday that the new port facility would be built just outside Darwin, capital of the Northern Territory,

which was leased to a Chinese energy and infrastructure firm in 2015.

The Darwin port already includes military facilities and hosts visiting U.S. ships.

According to Press TV, the new maritime facility could be able to accommodate large amphibious warships such as Australia’s Landing Helicopter Docks, and American vessels such as the USS Wasp, which recently

arrived in Sydney, the report said.

Experts say the new port would be ideally suited for the more than 2,000 U.S. Marines and their equipment during regular rotations through the region.

“The Americans are clearly not withdrawing from the Indo-Pacific, whether it’s because of their strategic competition with China or more generally,” said Rory Medcalf from the Australian National University.

The new port would also include commercial and industrial operations in addition to facilities for military activities.

According to the report, officials would announce the plan in the next few weeks.

The U.S. and Australia have been building up their military presence across the western Pacific to counter China’s influence in the region.

U.S., Taliban aim to firm up date for foreign force exit from Afghanistan

TEHRAN — Upcoming peace talks between the United States and the Taliban will focus on working out a timeline for the withdrawal of U.S.-led troops from Afghanistan and on a Taliban guarantee militants won’t plot attacks from Afghan soil, sources said on Monday.

A seventh round of talks between the warring sides begins on Saturday in Qatar’s capital of Doha, where U.S. and Taliban negotiators have been trying to hammer out a deal to end to the 18-year-long war since October.

“Once the timetable for foreign force withdrawal is announced, then talks will automatically enter the next stage,” said Sohail Shaheen, a spokesman for the Taliban’s political office in Doha.

“We don’t need to wait for the completion of the withdrawal, both withdrawal and talks can move forward simultaneously.”

The focus of the talks has been a Taliban demand for the withdrawal of U.S. and other foreign forces and a U.S. demand the Taliban guarantee that Afghanistan will not be used as a base for militant attacks, Reuters reported.

Two other main issues in the process are a ceasefire and talks between the rival Afghan sides - the insurgents and the Western-backed government.

But the Taliban have long refused to talk to the Afghan government, denouncing it as foreign “puppet”, and fighting has seen no let-up.

Two other sources with knowledge of the talks said the sixth round in May ended with unease on both sides, but since then informal meeting had taken place to work out what can be agreed on.

The U.S. special envoy for peace in Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, has also held informal meetings with the Taliban leadership in Doha.

“Based on my recent visits to Afghanistan and Qatar, I believe all sides want rapid progress,” Khalilzad said on Twitter.

Khalilzad, an Afghan-born American diplomat has been leading the talks to secure a political settlement with the hardline group that now controls more Afghan territory than at any time since being toppled in 2001 by U.S.-led forces.

About 20,000 foreign troops, most of them American, are in Afghanistan as part of a U.S.-led NATO mission to train, assist and advise Afghan forces. Some U.S. forces carry out counter-terrorism operations.

At least 3,804 civilians were killed in the war last year, according to the United Nations. Thousands of Afghan soldiers, police and Taliban were also killed.

Nevertheless, the Taliban leader vowed this month to sustain the fight until their objectives were reached.

In March, a draft agreement was reached on the withdrawal of foreign forces in exchange for a commitment by the Taliban to cut ties with militant groups such as



al-Qaeda.

A Taliban source said both sides were expecting some clarity and results on the prime issues in the new round talks.

“A ceasefire and intra-Afghan talks will not be discussed during the seventh round,” said the Taliban source, who declined to be identified.

Some Afghan government officials side fear the United States and the Taliban will strike a deal on the withdrawal of foreign forces, enabling the United States to get out of an unpopular war but leaving government forces to battle on alone.

One killed, eight wounded in fresh Yemeni drone attack on Abha Airport

TEHRAN — The Yemeni armed forces have launched fresh retaliatory attacks on Abha and Jizan airports in southern Saudi Arabia, leaving multiple casualties.

Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya TV quoted its own correspondent as saying that the Yemeni drone attack on Abha Airport has left one killed and eight people wounded.

Earlier, Yemen’s Houthi movement said they had targeted Abha and Jizan airports in southern Saudi Arabia with drone attacks, the group’s Al-Masirah TV said.

The spokesman for the Yemeni armed forces, Brigadier General Yahya Saree, said the country’s air force has carried out “large-scale” attacks with K2 drones against Jizan and Abha airports.

According to Press TV, the first opera-

tion targeted the airfields and important military targets at Jizan airport. The second operation targeted Abha airport and the two operations hit their targets with high accuracy, he said.

“Our operations are continuing and will be more painful to the enemy in the coming days if they continue to escalate.”

The retaliatory attacks came after the Saudi-led coalition launched 30 raids

during the past 48 hours against the Yemeni civilians, leaving several people dead or wounded.

Since June 12, the airports of Abha and Jizan have been subject to almost daily attacks by Yemenis who send their UAVs and missiles in order to paralyze the two airports and force the Saudi enemy to lift the siege on Sana’a airport and stop its raids on Yemeni territory.

Abandon illusions in face of U.S. pressure

➔6 The US is closing its door and cutting off technological exchanges with China. Amid increasingly extreme moves by the U.S., China has no choice but to strengthen independent research and development and find other directions for opening-up in the fields of science and technology.

We must be confident that a big economy like China’s cannot be locked up, and that the U.S. won’t be able to endlessly prolong its suppression, which simultaneously jeopardizes its own interests. A stronger and more innovative China will make the US vacillate.

It is not contradictory for China to engage in talks with the US while fighting against it. China’s development will always face pressures, which will be persistent unless China collapses. It is important for China to carry on developing and making breakthroughs, which will change psychology and the balance of power during the China-US strategic stalemate.

The entire Chinese society should reach a high consensus and unite in the face of this strategic challenge the U.S. has put on our path toward achieving national rejuvenation. This is about the fundamental interests for all Chinese people, and will determine if our livelihood, and those of our future generations, will continue to improve. We must not become loose sand under pressures from Washington.

Saudi Arabia’s nuclear ambitions raise alarm in Mideast

➔1 Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, who enjoy strong support from U.S. President Donald Trump, said last year that his country would promptly acquire nuclear weapons if Iran does.

Iran has warned that it has noticed some of its neighbors with a “proven black record of supporting terrorist movements” working on “suspicious nuclear projects,” which would force Tehran to revise its defense strategy.

According to a report by MEE, Saudi Arabia’s nuclear and missile programs are bound to have significant regional implications.

Earlier this month, Democratic U.S. Senator Tim Kaine revealed that the Trump administration had approved the transfer of nuclear know-how to the kingdom seven times, twice after the Riyadh regime’s killing of Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in early October 2018.

The money-driven politics of the American president have raised doubts about Washington’s resolve, or even ability, to keep possible Saudi nuclear ambitions in check.

The Trump’s administration approved six authorizations that allow American companies to secretly provide Saudi Arabia with nuclear technology or technical assistance, revealed a document issued by the Department of Energy and seen by Reuters in late March.

Simultaneously, Saudi Arabia has reportedly stepped up its ballistic missile program with the help of China.

“Saudi Arabia’s development of ballistic missiles goes against long-standing U.S. policy of opposing missile proliferation in the region,” said Nicholas L. Miller, professor of government at Dartmouth College. “But the Trump administration has so far been relatively quiet about its response.”

“There seems to be a pattern in this administration of looking the other way at provocative Saudi behavior due to the laser-like focus on Iran,” Miller argued.

‘Reckless’ leadership in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia’s concurrent and mostly clandestine missile and nuclear activities combined with bin Salman’s warnings that the kingdom would pursue atomic weapons are also sounding alarm bells in certain regional capitals.

“A nuclear Saudi Arabia means nuclear proliferation in the most unstable and volatile region of the world,” Ali Bakeer, a Turkey-based political analyst, told the online news outlet.

“Given the reckless leadership in Riyadh, this is an alarming development for small states in the [Persian] Gulf in particular, which might either seek a nuclear umbrella from great powers or consider constructing parallel deterrence capabilities of their own if they could afford it,” he added.

Qatar is one of those countries that has feared an invasion by Riyadh. U.S. officials said that Saudi Arabia was planning to invade Qatar and seize its North Dome gas field, before its imposition of an all-out diplomatic and economic boycott on the nation in June 2017, Press TV reported.

Trump to visit S. Korea as Pompeo raises hope for new N. Korea talks

TEHRAN— U.S. President Donald Trump will visit South Korea this weekend after an exchange of letters with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un boosted hopes for talks aimed at ending North Korea’s nuclear program. Trump is set to arrive in South Korea for a two-day visit on Saturday, and will meet President Moon Jae-in on Sunday, following a summit of G20 leaders in Japan, Moon’s spokeswoman, Ko Min-jung, said.

The announcement comes hours after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he hoped a letter Trump sent to Kim could pave the way for a revival of stalled nuclear talks.

Trump and Moon would have “in-depth discussions on ways to work together to foster lasting peace through the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, while strengthening the two countries’ alliance”, Ko told a news briefing on Monday.

Pompeo, who spoke of Trump’s letter to Kim before departing from Washington for the Middle East, said the United States was ready to resume talks with North Korea immediately.

“I’m hopeful that this will provide a good foundation for us to begin ... these important discussions with the North Koreans,” Pompeo told reporters.

Trump is considering a visit to the demilitarized zone (DMZ) separating the two Koreas, a South Korean official said. Trump wanted to go there during a 2017 trip to South Korea but heavy fog prevented it, Reuters reported.

Cameroon face inquiry and possible action after England defeat

Cameroon face an inquiry and possible disciplinary action from soccer authorities after a series of incidents in their 3-0 defeat by England in the last 16 of the women's World Cup on Sunday.

Cameroon players furiously protested refereeing decisions and twice delayed the game while appearing to consider leaving the contest.

The ill-tempered match also included an incident where Cameroon defender Augustine Ejangue spat on the arm of England forward Toni Duggan.

FIFA's disciplinary body is likely to look, as part of its routine reviews of matches, at some of the incidents while Isha Johansen, the chair of the women's football committee for the African Football Confederation (CAF) said her body will be opening an inquiry.

"Whilst remaining proud of our African teams that participated in the FIFA Women's World Cup, yesterday's match between England and Cameroon reflected badly, not only on African women's football but African football on the whole," said Johansen, who is also president of the Sierra Leone Football Association.

"It is an issue which will be addressed and dealt with at the appropriate levels of governance," she added in a statement.

FIFA did not immediately respond to a request for comment from Reuters.

England manager Phil Neville has heavily criticized the behavior of his side's opponents.

"I am completely and utterly ashamed of the opposition," said the former Manchester United player.

(Source: Reuters)

Benitez to leave Newcastle after failing to agree new contract

Manager Rafa Benitez will leave Newcastle United when his contract expires on June 30, the Premier League club said on Monday.

Benitez, 59, was expected to depart after failing to agree a contract extension with Newcastle owner Mike Ashley over the last few months.

With the uncertainty over whether or not Ashley will sell the club ahead of the 2019-20 campaign, there appeared to be plenty of obstacles for both parties to overcome.

"It is with disappointment that we announce manager Rafael Benitez will leave Newcastle United upon the expiry of his contract on 30th June 2019," the club said in a statement.

"We have worked hard to extend Rafa's contract over a significant period of time, however it has not been - and will not be - possible to reach an agreement with Rafa and his representatives."

Former Liverpool and Real Madrid boss Benitez joined Newcastle in March 2016 but failed to save them from relegation from the Premier League.

The Spaniard stayed in charge and led them to promotion from the Championship, then stabilized the club with a 10th-placed finish on their return to the top-flight and then 13th last season.

"We would like to thank Rafa and his coaching team for their efforts over the last three years and their significant contribution to what has been collectively achieved," the club added.

(Source: Mirror)

Ex-IAAF chief Lamine Diack to stand trial in France

Lamine Diack, the disgraced former head of world athletics' ruling body the IAAF, and his son Papa Massata Diack are to stand trial in France on charges of corruption and money laundering, sources told AFP.

Diack was IAAF president between 1999-2015 but his reign ended in chaos amid charges he and his son obstructed sanctions against Russia for doping in return for payments.

Papa Massata Diack, who has never been questioned by French officials, is one of five others who will face trial on the same charges.

The French investigation into Diack began in 2015 when Britain's Sebastian Coe took over from the 86-year-old Senegalese as IAAF president.

French prosecutors took up the case because they suspect money was laundered in France.

The backdrop to the investigation is the system of state-sponsored doping uncovered in Russia by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

Prosecutors allege that Lamine Diack was prepared to accept funding for political campaigns in Senegal in return for IAAF anti-doping officials turning a blind eye to Russian athletes caught doping.

(Source: Eurosport)

'Not easy to dominate' - Federer feels for younger generation

Roger Federer expressed sympathy for the younger generation of tennis players on Sunday, saying that their successes outside of the Grand Slams were being overlooked.

Federer, 37, won the ATP tournament in Halle for a record-stretching 10th time on Sunday, notching up his 102nd career singles title.

He was one of two 37-year-olds to be playing in an ATP final on the same day, with veteran Spaniard Feliciano Lopez also in the singles final at Queen's.

Federer admitted that the continuing success of older players such as himself, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic had left little elbow room for the younger generation.

"As long as me, Rafa and Novak are around it is not going to be easy for a young guy to come up and dominate," he said. "Maybe it would be good for the sport if they did, I don't know. People seem to like it as it is."

Yet Federer insisted that the success of players such as Stefanos Tsitsipas, Borna Coric and Karen Khachanov should not be overlooked.

Coric, 22, beat Federer in the Halle final last year, while 23-year-old Khachanov broke into the top 10 this year after beating Djokovic in straight sets in the final of the Paris Masters last November.

Federer argued that such triumphs were not being given enough recognition, and were being drowned out by the overwhelming focus on the four majors.

(Source: Guardian)

Murray mulls over US Open singles return after Queen's doubles triumph

Former world number one Andy Murray says he could resurrect his singles career at this year's US Open following a remarkable return to tennis with victory in the men's doubles at the Queen's Club tournament on Sunday.

The 32-year-old Scotsman teamed up with Spanish partner Feliciano Lopez to take a 7-6 (8/6), 5-7, 10-5 win over Britain's Joe Salisbury and Rajeev Ram of the United States.

The three-time Grand Slam champion's triumph comes after what he described as "life-changing" hip surgery earlier this year.

Murray said that while he had not made up his mind about a return to singles, the US Open would be the tournament where it could happen.

If so, it would be a remarkable turnaround for a man who was tearfully pondering retirement in January and has seen his singles ranking tumble to 215 in the world.

"I mean, potentially, yeah," he said when pressed as to whether the US Open -- where he won his first Grand Slam title in 2012 -- could be the place to resume his singles career.

"But I don't care, really, either way. Like, it would be nice to play at the US Open, but if I don't -- look, I got so much enjoyment and happiness after winning a first round doubles match here that, you know, that's enough."

"I don't have to be getting to the US Open this year and be really competitive and have to win the tournament for me to enjoy it."



Murray, also a two-time Olympic singles champion, said he had to be mindful about his hip, although he came through the week at Queen's pain free.

"It's not just to get back on the court playing singles," he said.

"It's to protect my hip for the longer term to make sure that my muscles are in the correct balance so that I'm not impacting the hip in

the same spot all of the time.

"I need to improve the range of motion in my hip as well so that when I'm changing direction that there is a bit more freedom for it to move around."

Murray -- watched by his wife Kim and mother Judy on Sunday -- may be regretting deciding not to play with the 37-year-old Lopez at Wimbledon.

Online abuse only makes us stronger, says Mercedes boss



Mercedes have endured a torrent of online abuse in the two weeks since the Canadian Grand Prix but team boss Toto Wolff says the 'haters' have only strengthened the Formula One champions' resolve.

The race in Montreal blew up into a major controversy when Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel crossed the line first but was demoted to second behind Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton after a penalty.

Hamilton, a five-times world champion who has a greater social media presence than any driver, alluded to the situation in post on Instagram last Friday at 0300 local time, ahead of the French Grand Prix.

He spoke of there being "so much hate in this world" but added "No matter what, you can't hold a brother down! I will rise above it all, always."

The champion went on to dominate Sunday's race from pole position, leading every lap and chalking up his fourth win in a row and sixth of the season.

Wolff, whose team have now won 10 successive races, told Reuters that online trolling was "starting to get out of control".

"The trolling that happens in social media has become so bad. People hide behind anonymous, or not even anonymous, accounts and hit out, which after some of these events has been really

bad. Canada was pretty bad," he said.

"To polarise is good, and it can be an emotional and heated discussion. But I think it has come to a point where sometimes the heated discussion around the sport is becoming abuse and becoming personal and I don't think that has a place in sport," added the Austrian.

"At first it's hard to swallow, but it's come to a point that it's making us stronger, every hit creates more desire to prove."

Hamilton has long divided fans and the 34-year-old, who has scaled the heights from a modest multi-racial background, is looking stronger than ever.

"I sometimes get low and then I'm like, I'm going to get through it, I'm going to fight through it. I got a lot of real positive responses from a lot of my fans... and my friends did the same for me, lifted me up," he said of his post.

Hamilton arrived late to Le Castellet, attending fashion shows in Paris and a memorial for designer Karl Lagerfeld on Thursday.

If the decision to allow the champion to skip media commitments was criticised by some, Hamilton's race performance silenced the doubters. Wolff said the decision was in the best interests of all concerned.

(Source: Reuters)

Copa America starts anew in quarters, says Argentina's Messi

Argentina will start from afresh in the Copa America after averting disaster with Sunday's 2-0 victory over Qatar that sent them into the knock-out stages, star Lionel Messi said.

Goals from the Barcelona icon's forward partners Lautaro Martinez and Sergio Aguero were enough to propel Argentina from bottom of Group B to second and into a quarter-final meeting with Venezuela on Friday at Rio's Maracana stadium.

"The important thing was to win to keep going in the Copa, to get through the group stage," said Messi, who will turn 32 on Monday.

"This will be an important boost for what's to come ... another Copa begins now."

"This victory must give us strength and make us grow as a team." Argentina's performance was far from pitch-perfect, but they were good enough to beat a limited Qatar side, who gifted them the opening goal after four minutes when Bassam Hicham played a suicidal ball across his own box straight to Martinez.

Messi admitted, though, that there were nerves in the Argentina camp.

"It's tough playing this kind of game due to the necessity, the obligation (to win), the fear of missing out."

"But beyond that we played well and went through, which is what matters."



Aguero, who was recalled after he was dropped for the 1-1 draw with Paraguay, had a mixed game alongside Messi and Martinez.

He worked hard to create chances for himself but lacked sharpness and precision in his finishing, until his brilliant goal where he burst past two defenders before shooting high into the far corner.

"Luckily I was picked to start and luckily at times the three of us worked well together and we won," he said.

■ **Need to improve**

Argentina will now play a side who beat them 3-1 in a

Hamilton admits F1 show 'needs dramatic overhaul'



Lewis Hamilton and Mercedes moved within reach of an overhaul of some of Formula One's most notable records with his flawless unchallenged triumph in Sunday's French Grand Prix.

But his extraordinary success -- his victory was his sixth in eight races this year -- prompted a negative reaction in some quarters from critics who find Mercedes' domination "boring" and the races lacking in suspense and thrills.

Hamilton, who admits his success feels "unreal", said Sunday he understood if spectators, or the global broadcast audience, lost interest but urged them to blame the sport's rules, not the drivers.

"We need to see a dramatic overhaul," he said, adding that the structure of the sport's management was also in need of change.

He added: "It's really important that people realise it's not the drivers fault -- this is a constant cycle of F1 for years and years. And before I got to F1. It's because the way Bernie (Ecclestone) had it set up and the decisions they made then."

"Until that structure changes, it will be the same in my opinion."

As Hamilton and Mercedes continue their relentless destruction of the records, it is unreasonable to ask his team to slow down, as the president of the sport's ruling body, the International Motoring Federation (FIA) Jean Todt, once the boss

■ **'It's mental really'**

Murray praised Lopez for his extraordinary feat of endurance which saw him out on court for over 15 hours during the week -- and added the title meant more than some of the singles titles he has won.

"This is very different for me, and it's more special than a lot of the singles tournaments that I have won for a lot of different reasons," he said.

"I just won the doubles here with Feli (Lopez), you know, with a metal hip. It's mental, really."

"That's a cool thing to be able to have done, and yeah, just because of probably where I was a few months ago."

"At times, even as far as just two months ago, I just wasn't thinking about this."

Murray will now move on to Eastbourne before playing at Wimbledon where he will be partnered by Frenchman Pierre-Hugues Herbert.

Lopez paid a handsome tribute to Murray and said if he continued on this trajectory he should be back playing singles.

"This happens only once in a lifetime to win here at singles and doubles," said Lopez reflecting on his own extraordinary week.

"I hope that he's (Murray) gonna be playing singles soon. But I'm sure that if he keeps progressing the way he's doing right now, we're gonna see him playing singles again."

(Source: AFP)

friendly in Madrid in March.

"They're quite tough opponents who counter-attack really well and we'll try to be wise to that," said Aguero.

Coach Lionel Scaloni gave a sober assessment of Argentina's form after a third straight match in which they struggled for long periods and failed to entirely convince.

"We're satisfied because we're in the next round ... but we have to improve in every aspect," he said.

"Today at times the team played well and rid itself of fear." And Scaloni hit out at claims back home that the squad was divided.

"As long as we're playing in the Copa, everyone's pulling for the same side. There must be total unanimity," he said.

"Many players aren't even 25 yet and it's a positive thing for them to have played in this match."

However, he was scathing about the state of the Arena do Gremio pitch in Porto Alegre, which will host a both a quarter-final and a semi-final.

"You can't play on this pitch. Even so we tried to play, to press high, we played very well in the second half."

He had kind words for Qatar, who head home after a draw and two defeats from their three group games.

"They're a very worthy team with a great future, with young players," he said.

(Source: AFP)

Milad Mohammadi catches eye of Celtic

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran international winger Milad Mohammadi has caught the eye of Celtic with his impressive form at the Russian Premier League.

The Glasgow giants could step up their bid to try to land Mohammadi if they sell Kieran Tierney.

The left-back has been one of Celtic's most important players in recent seasons, playing a key role as they won the 'treble treble'.

Tierney's impressive performances have led to interest from Arsenal, who are eyeing a long-term replacement for Nacho Monreal.

According to Football Insider, the Gunners are set to make an offer Celtic 'can't refuse' after seeing an initial £15m bid knocked back.

Celtic are desperate to hang on to Tierney but seem resigned to seeing him follow fellow left-back Emilio Izaguirre out the door.

And Neil Lennon wants Milad Mohammadi to come in to fill the void.

The Iran international made headlines at last summer's World Cup as he attempted a roly poly throw in against Spain.

And Mohammadi, who plays for Akhmat Grozny in Russia, could be on his way to Scotland.

He was a member of Ira national football team in the 2018 World Cup.

Mohammadi is out of contract at the end of the month and is available on a free.

The 25-year-old is a long-term target of Celtic and Football Insider claim he's keen on a move.

Mohammadi is also able to play further forward and is wanted by Championship duo Fulham and Bristol City.



Sosha Makani says Mjøndalen IF aim to extend his contract



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian goalkeeper Sosha Makani says that Norwegian football club Mjøndalen IF are going to extend his contract.

Former Persepolis goalie sustained a knee injury in last year's October and missed the rest of the Norwegian Premier League season.

The 31-year-old, who had injured the

anterior cruciate ligament in his knee, is preparing to return to the team.

"The team's officials have told me they want to extend my contract. I will be No. 1 keeper after making a full recovery," Makani said.

The Former Iran goalie, who has played for Iranian giants Persepolis from 2014 to 2018, has joined Mjøndalen IF in 2016.

Iran come 3rd at Asian Beach Handball Championship 2019



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran defeated Vietnam 2-1 at the Asian Beach Handball Championship 2019 third-place playoff on Monday.

The Iranian team repeated their bronze medal in Weihai, China as Team Mell had finished third in the Asian Beach Handball Championship 2017 in Thailand.

Iran started the campaign on high note, beating Japan 2-0. The Persians also beat

Thailand, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan but lost to Oman in the event's quarter-finals.

Iran also lost to Qatar in the competition's semis.

The competition served as a qualifier for both the 2019 ANOC World Beach Games in Qatar and the 2020 IHF Men's Beach Handball Championships to be held in Italy.

The top two teams received a direct ticket to Italy.

Igor Kolakovic says sorry to Iranian fans

Iran national volleyball team coach Igor Kolakovic has apologized to the fans for Sunday's defeat to France.

Iran lost to France 3-0 (25-18, 26-24, 25-21) in the 2019 FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League in Ardabil's Rezazadeh Hall.

"I must congratulate the France team for this victory and I thank the support of the two cities hosting the games in Iran, Urmia and Ardabil. They supported us from the beginning of the game until the end even though we did not play well, this energy means a lot to me and my team and I apologize if we did not win tonight's game. And sadly we lost the opportunity to qualify at home. But we will have another chance in the final week because there are three more games and I hope we play well against Bulgaria and other teams," Kolakovic said.



Iran captain, Saied Marouf, said: «I congratulate France, it was not a satisfactory game from our side. They are disciplined and they dictate their power on the court.»

France coach, Laurent Tillie, stated: «It was first a nice victory against Iran. We know that Iran did not play with the usual starting players, they made a lot of changes, but it was important for us to have consistency and I am astonished by the amazing fans and atmosphere. This is what volleyball needs.»

France captain, Benjamin Toniutti, said: «I think we played better compared with the first two days, though it was not perfect. We are happy with this game. Iran made a lot of substitutions and we took advantage of this opportunity to win. Regarding the atmosphere, it is beyond volleyball games, and we need this kind of atmosphere to play volleyball. I have played in a lot of countries, but this time, it was way different, and we really enjoyed the weekend. I thank the people for this.»

(Source: FIVB)

USA and China win FIBA 3x3 World Cup 2019

The USA won their first men's title, while China also created history with a triumph in the women's category to cap a thrilling FIBA 3x3 World Cup in Amsterdam from June 18-23, 2019.

The USA started the tournament by ending defending champion Serbia's 15-game winning streak and ran through the competition during a flawless campaign with a 7-0 record.

Sharpshooter Damon Huffman was sizzling from deep with a game-high 8 points to lead the US to an 18-14 victory over Latvia in the final. Kareem Maddox dominated inside with 5 points and 7 rebounds to help end Europe's dominance at the World Cup.

Latvia were led by 'Batman and Robin' duo Karlis Lasmanis and Nauris Miezijs, who combined for 12 points.

In the men's bronze medal match, Poland upset reigning champions Serbia 18-15 thanks largely to a dominant performance from Michael Hicks, who finished with a jaw-dropping 13 points and 8 rebounds.

It means Poland joined USA and Latvia into the Olympic qualifying tournament next March.

Hicks topped all scorers in the competition with 71 points, while USA's Robbie Hummel was named MVP of the men's category. He



was also joined by Hicks and Lasmanis on the Team of the Tournament.

In the women's category, world No.1 China wrapped up a perfect 7-0 campaign with a 19-13 victory over Hungary. They dominated from the start by scoring the first seven points and ZhiTing Zhang controlled the paint throughout to finish with 8 points and 6 rebounds.

Dóra Medgyessy and Cyesha Goree tried hard for Hungary with 5 points apiece.

In the women's bronze medal clash, France beat Australia for the second time in the

tournament with an easy 21-9 victory. Migna Touré top-scored with 7 points, while Ana Maria Filip had 6 points and 7 rebounds.

On Olympic Day coincidentally, China, Hungary and France made it through to the Olympic qualifying tournament. Ji-aYin Jiang was named women's MVP and joined by Migna Touré and Cyesha Goree in the Team of the Tournament. Bec Cole from Australia was the leading scorer with 46 points.

The event was held on Museumplein in the heart of the Dutch capital, with the iconic

Rijksmuseum for urban backdrop. The FIBA 3x3 World Cup venue was the biggest-ever FIBA 3x3 temporary venue. It attracted a sell-out crowd of 2,561 fans on the last day of competition, including FIBA Secretary General Andreas Zagklis. The World Cup was the main event of the Urban Sports Week, which transformed the entire square into an urban cultural festival.

Vadim 'Miller' Poddubchenko took out the Jack's Casino dunk contest – his first win at a World Cup. After an epic final, he was deadlocked with Piotr Grabowski from Poland on 87 points forcing the duo to compete for the title in a dunk off. The Ukrainian pulled off an incredible one-handed 360 off the bounce to claim victory. Kristaps Dargais (Latvia) struck bronze.

Marie-Eve Paget of France won the skills contest to go one better than her silver at last year's World Cup. Rae Lin D'Alie from Italy took home silver and Abdolvand Shadi claimed bronze - the first-ever medal for Iran in a FIBA 3x3 World Cup.

Latvia's Edgar Krumins prevailed in the T-Mobile & Sony shoot-out contest, Stanislav Timofeyenko claimed silver and Marcella Fillipi from Italy won bronze.

(Source: FIBA)

Iranian duo win two medals at 2019 Karate 1-Series A

IRNA — Iranian karate athletes Hamideh Abbasali and Sajad Ganjzadeh claimed two bronze medals at the 2019 Karate 1-Series A in Montreal, Canada.

Abbasali won a bronze medal in the Female Kumite 68+ kg. She defeated Jamaican karate representative Jessica Cargill 1-0 in the bronze medal match.

Italian Clio Ferracuti won the gold medal after beating German Johanna Kneer.

Also, Ganjzadeh clinched a bronze at the Male Kumite +84. The Iranian defeated Zvonimir Zivkovic from Croatia 1-0.

Alparslan Yamanoglu from Turkey won the gold medal after defeating Canadian Daniel Gaysinsky 2-1.

Dragan Skocic nominated for Iran's Sanat Naft job

TASNIM — Croatian football coach Dragan Skocic has been nominated to take charge of Iranian club Sanat Naft.

Portuguese coach Paulo Sergio left Sanat Naft in mid-May to take charge of Saudi Arabian football club Al-Taawoun and the Iranian club has opened negotiations with Skocic and another unnamed Portuguese coach.

Skocic, 50, started his coaching career in Rijeka in 2005 and has also worked at Iranian football clubs Malavan, Foolad and Khoonneh be Khoonneh.

Sanat Naft finished 9th in Iran Professional League (IPL) last season.

Malian defender Coulibaly joins Foolad Khuzestan

TASNIM — Two-time Iran Professional League champions Foolad completed the signing of Moussa Coulibaly.

The details of Coulibaly's contract have not been revealed. Coulibaly was a member of Naft Masjed Soleyman last season.

The center back started his playing career in Iran in Esteghlal Khuzestan in 2013 and was part of the team who won IPL title in 2015-16.

Coulibaly has played in Sepahan football team. Foolad will be headed by former Iran captain Javad Nekounam in the new season.

Determined Catley looking to Tokyo 2020

Steph Catley has turned her attention to the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, after experiencing a devastating early exit at the FIFA Women's World Cup France 2019 on Saturday.

The Matildas rode their luck for much of the tournament in France, but it ran out in dramatic fashion against Norway, as Ante Milicic's side fell to a 4-1 penalty shootout defeat following a grueling 1-1 draw.

Both sides had their share of scoring opportunities at Stade de Nice, but Australia's failure to take any of several early chances, including a narrow Sam Kerr miss within the opening minute, ultimately proved costly.

Catley believes in Australia's quality as a team, but their failure to capitalise on moments of dominance remains an area requiring improvement ahead of their Olympic campaign.

"In the first 10 minutes, I thought 'we're good'," said Catley, the only one of three Australian penalty takers to find the net in the shootout.

"We created a lot of opportunities and I honestly thought if we finished some of those - (it would have been a) different story today.

"That's been the case for us this tournament. We've missed opportunities to put games away, so I think we need to work on that. We have the Olympics coming up, so that's the next major tournament we need to focus on."

The Reign FC mainstay was forced to play in a central defensive role, instead of her preferred position of left-back, for much of the tournament in order to cover for injuries to Clare Polkinghorne and Laura Allaway.

Catley herself bravely played on despite breaking her hand against Jamaica in the group stage, and the ongoing football version of musical chairs required to cover those injuries did few favors to a side working with limited preparation time under head coach Milicic.

A more stable starting line-up and more time on the path set by the former Socceroo are required ahead of the Olympics, according to Catley.

"As much time as possible that we have together going into a major tournament, always helps," she said.

"Playing the same way and understanding each other and our system, It's always a positive. We're definitely going to be together as much as we can, and play as many games as we can and hopefully be ready for that tournament."

While the Matildas will be eager to perform in Tokyo, they first must navigate what looms as a tricky final stage of the AFC Women's Olympic Qualifying Tournament, which they will enter when third round begins in early 2020.

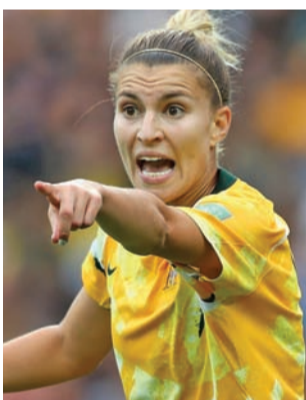
Catley admits it will take time to get over their World Cup exit but remains hopeful that glory on the world stage is still within Australia's grasp.

"This team had high expectations and goals coming into this tournament," she said. "To go out this way, it was pretty rough, and I haven't really wrapped my head around it. It doesn't really feel like we're out."

"It's something that we have to figure out as players and regroup as a team. It's just a lot of feeling and a lot of disappointment right now.

"(But) it's a very strong group and as you can see in the way that we play, we never doubt what we can do or think that we can win, so taking that, being more clinical and doing all the little things right, we're going to be fine."

(Source: the-afc)



INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433

» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com

» Printed at: Jame Jam Barta Born - 44197737

Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimesdaily

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Patience is sent from heaven in proportion to calamity. He who lacks fortitude in mourning and beats his breast in regret, loses his reward.
Imam Ali (AS)

South Korea’s SICAF picks movies from Iran

A R T **TEHRAN** — Eight movies from Iranian filmmakers will be competing in the Seoul International Cartoon and Animation Festival (SICAF), which will take place in the South Korean capital during July, the organizers have announced.



“Eaten” by Iranian director Mohsen Rezapur will be screened in the short film competition of the Seoul International Cartoon and Animation Festival in South Korea.

“Eaten” about life in a mysterious and unknown planet by Mohsen Rezapur, and “Black or White” on a relationship between a zebra and a butterfly by Mohammad-Ali Soleimanzadeh will be screened in the short film competition.

The section also features “The Rabbit Hunter” by Mohammad-Amin Kamali about a rabbit Hunter who finds himself injured in a large cave, and “Mr. Deer” by Mojtaba Musavi about a group of people with animal faces in a nowhere land who have forgotten humanity and ethics and they do not avoid sins.

The SICAF Kid category will screen “Black Monster” by Reyhaneh Kavosh and Ali Raeis about an old woman who dreams of having a son, “Son of the Sea” by Abbas Jalali-Yekta on a man who lives in a house with his wife and the illusion of their son on the wall, and “The Incomplete” by Erfan Parsapur on a hungry but perfectionist and obsessive officer.

“I Have Two Loves”, a music video about Paris and France by Mohammad Mohammadian, will go on screen in the Online and Commissioned category.

Korean director Hong Sung-ho’s fairy tale “Red Shoes” about seven dwarfs who were once fabulous seven princes will open the festival on July 17.

The SICAF, an international event that specializes in animation representing Asia, will run for five days.

Hafez Awards set for July 12

A R T **TEHRAN** — The 19th edition of the Hafez Awards, Iran’s first and only private awards in the film industry and TV productions, will be held in Tehran on July 12.



Picture of Ali Moallem, the founder of the Hafez Awards, who is seen between the Hafez trophies.

“The judges have reviewed the movies that have been on screen over the past year and nominations will be announced soon,” Omid Moallem, the director of the event and son Ali Moallem, the founder of the gala, said during a press conference in Tehran on Monday.

He added that all experimental films produced over the past year will be assessed to be honored with an Abbas Kiarostami Award, which was established last year.

The organizers also plan to honor actress Golab Adineh with an Ali Moallem Award for her lifetime achievements.

The celebration is organized every year by the Persian cinematic monthly Donya-ye Tasvir (Picture World), which was held under the title of Donya-ye Tasvir Cinematic and TV Films Celebration for several years.

Iranian writer says wars happen because of West’s fake definition of peace

A R T **TEHRAN** — Habib Ahmadzadeh, the author of the Iranian bestselling war novel “Chess with the Doomsday Machine”, has said that the reason behind the wars in the world is the fake definition of peace as presented by the West.

He made the remarks during the international conference Belgrade Counterpoint 2019 held in the Serbian capital of Belgrade on June 17 and 18. “Art in Times of Crisis and War” was the subject discussed at the conference.

Ahmadzadeh said that wars occur only because the West gives a fake definition of real and sustainable peace.

He also noted that ignoring injustice can also act as the main reason behind any war, and that the hyperbolized word “peace” as defined in the West is merely a pain reliever for a patient who is suffering from cancer.

“We Iranians are perhaps the only nation in the world that does not believe in this fake definition, and that is why the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, bravely did not accept the letter from (U.S. President) Donald Trump,” he said at the conference.

“I think there is no humiliating joke worse than this in the world that Trump with 3,000 atomic bombs, gives a letter to the prime minister of the country which was once invaded by the U.S atomic bombs, to bring to our country that itself believes making atomic bombs is haram and forbidden,” explained Ahmadzadeh, whose novel on the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war “Chess with the Doomsday Machine” was published in Serbian last year.

A number of writers including Serbian-Swiss writer and publisher Slobodan Despot, Serbian director Emir Kusturica, and Russian writer German Sadulaev, were among the participating authors at the conference this year.

Belgrade Counterpoint is organized by Serbia’s Ministry of Culture and Information and the Center for Studies in Cultural Development.

The event is an international conference aiming to gather artists and thinkers from different parts of the world, who with their work contribute significantly to an understanding of contemporary global currents.



Iranian writer Habib Ahmadzadeh (2nd L) attends “Belgrade Counterpoint 2019”.

Muhenna to publish “Tintin and Sinbad” in Turkish



Front cover of the book “Tintin and Sinbad”.

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — The **d e s k** Muhenna Publishing House in the northwestern Turkish city of Bursa plans to publish in Turkish “Tintin and Sinbad”, Iranian writer Mohammad Mirkiani’s book on the cultural invasion of the West.

Berna Karagözoglu, a faculty member the Persian Language and Literature Department of the Agri Ibrahim Cecen University, is due to translate the book into Turkish, Qadyani, the Persian publisher of the book, has announced.

“Tintin and Sinbad” was written in 1991 for young adults. The book has been republished eleven times since then.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, wrote a

commendation for “Tintin and Sinbad” in 2016, 22 years after it was written.

“I have always tried to explain this story, but unfortunately, not many have believed it. Now this is good: witness this book, the narrator of the story has seen the events himself with his own eyes, and has published the story of Tintin and Sinbad,” the Leader wrote.

“Now it has become easier for me. I only need to give a copy of this book to all the children,” he added.

In this book, Tintin and his friends appear and experience a new adventure in the East, where they intend to find oriental tales to dominate, but Sinbad with his oriental-themed legends fights against the invaders.

Iranian drama “Castle of Dreams” scoops awards at Shanghai festival



Iranian director Reza Mirkarimi (C) poses with Chinese filmmaker Li Shaohong (L) and Chinese actor Wu Jing (R) after accepting the Golden Goblet Award for best director at the closing ceremony of the 22nd Shanghai International Film Festival in China on June 23, 2019. (SIFF)

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian **d e s k** director Reza Mirkarimi’s drama “Castle of Dreams” has won three main honors of the 22nd Shanghai International Film Festival, including the Golden Goblet Award for the best film.

The film also brought Mirkarimi the best director award during the closing ceremony of the event in the Chinese city on Sunday.

The film is about two young children, whose mother has just died and their father, Jalal, after long years of absence, returns to sort things out, but he does not want to take the children with him.

The film’s star, Hamed Behdad, shared the award for best actor with Chang Feng, the Chinese actor of “The Return” by Qin Hailu.

“Inhale-Exhale”, a joint production between Georgia, Russia and Sweden by Georgian director Dito Tsintsadze, received jury grand prize and Salome Demuria was selected as best actress for her role in the film.

Filmmakers Nuri Bilge Ceylan from Turkey, Aleksey German JR. from Russia, Paolo Genovese from Italy and Rajkumar Hirani from India, and Chinese actors Wang Jingchun and Zhao Tao were the members of the jury.

Iceland’s Ambátt gives a chilling reprieve from a hot summer day in Tehran

By Marjohn Sheikhi

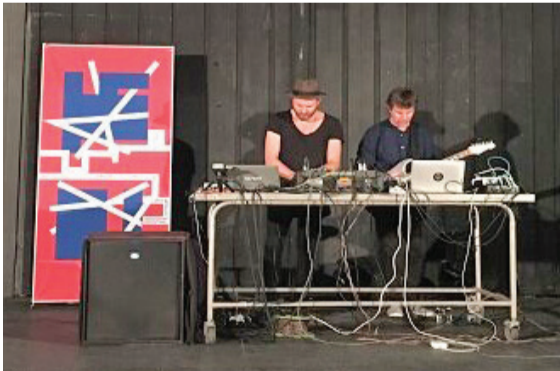
TEHRAN (MNA) — Icelandic electronic duo act Ambátt, comprising Pan Thorarensen and Porkell Atlason, gave a chilling performance on Sun. in the Iranian capital, as part of the 4th Tehran International Contemporary Music Festival.

Sunday, June 23, 2019. It’s one of those unbearably hot days in Tehran, temperature rising as high as 40 degrees Celsius in the afternoon with a vengeful sun beating down on rushing pedestrians and too few clouds scattered in the sky to be able to shield us from that scorching heat that seems to have it in for us today. You don’t really get used to hot temperatures in Tehran, because while summers feel literally like a season in hell, winters by contrast can get extremely cold, so your body is always going through these two phases of extreme temperatures without getting a chance to just settle down with one.

At any rate, one would think we in Tehran are still better suited to a 40-degree temperature than people from Iceland, whose hottest day of 30 degrees was in 1939, almost a century ago. But for Pan Thorarensen and Porkell Atlason, two prolific electronic musicians from the faraway Nordic island nation, the heat was tolerable as the two were already used to it during their many trips to other countries.

Pan and Porkell, the former lauded as a catalyst of electronic music in Iceland and the latter a classically-trained guitarist and composer, have made the long trip to Tehran as part of a duo act, Ambátt, to participate at the 4th Tehran International Contemporary Music Festival, the idea of which was originally thought of by Navid Gohari and Ehsan Tarokh in the spring of 2014. A very young festival, no doubt, but with great potential and aspirations, still experimenting, still learning, improving, expanding. The festival this year has invited musicians from Poland, Iceland, Sweden, and Belgium to accompany the Iranian artists in their pursuit of wooing the ever-esurient ears of music lovers during a five-day program of contemporary music.

Ambátt’s performance is held at Hafez Black Box, and I only realize why the workshop next to Hafez Music Hall in downtown Tehran is called a black box when I step into



it. It looks like a garage, small but with a high ceiling, and the walls are painted an aesthetic, chiaroscuro black that actually look much cooler in photos than in real life. To be honest, I am a little surprised at the choice of the venue. It looks better suited for a garage punk performance with the crowd banging heads in a mosh pit than an electronic duo act with their equipment (two computers, a sampler and wires – lots and lots of wires) crammed on top of a metal, rolling table and the audience sitting awkwardly on plastic chairs. The festival artistic director, Navid Gohari, explains that the choice of the venue was intentional, as the festival aims to make use of other places besides the capital’s reliable, go-to music halls such as Vahdat opera house, which sits, interestingly enough, just opposite of Hafez Black Box.

When the performance starts, it no longer matters where you are, as you begin to lose yourself in the ambient soundscape created by brooding, relaxing, sometimes eerie melodies, and then as the show progresses and nears its end, the sounds of birds chirping, and heavy trudging on snow, becomes less and less peaceful, until it becomes close to a sense of impending doom, but less subtle and more urgent, more certain, with music booming loudly in the crevices of your chest like there is someone beating heavily on a drum in there.

There is something truly peculiar about an electronic live performance. On the one hand, seeing how the music is actually made, with software and samplers, the awareness that there is no bird or a streaming river or rain, gives the crowd a kind of self-aware, meta experience. Something like metatheatre, in which the play draws your attention to its nature as theater, reminding you of the artificiality of the presentation. Yet, you can’t deny that the experience is at the same time immersive. The music lulls you into a trance, the melodies engulf your senses like a continuous streaming river. You are both seeing and not seeing the equipment on the table. The musicians are solely focused on their computers, they can’t afford even a moment of eye contact with the audience. But you can hardly bring yourself to care. You see how the music is made, beat by beat, every twitch of a hand on the computer or the sampler is visible, but deep down you are ready to commit yourself to a ‘willing suspension of disbelief’. Ambátt’s performance helps you to see what is not there, besides what obviously is.

Their debut collaborative album, and the only one to date, ‘Flugufen’ (2016) is a mix of different music styles, experimenting with trumpet in one track, and vocals in another. But their show in Tehran was even more unrestrained than the album. It relied heavily on improvisation, on what the musicians felt sounded right in the moment, and the end result was one hour of immersive, unbound and liberating electronic music that both soothed and invigorated your senses.

Ambátt will perform a duet with Iranian-Polish SpectroDuo ensemble on Monday. SpectroDuo was founded in 2013 by Polish composer and conductor Martyna Kosecka and Iranian composer and musician Idin Samimi Mofakham. The contemporary music ensemble has a focus on electronic and electroacoustic experimental live shows, sometimes structured in complex forms, and other times performed on free improvisation. SpectroDuo, according to Pan, is taking part at the upcoming Icelandic experimental music festival ‘Extreme Chill’ in September. The festival, which aims to create connections between Icelandic and foreign musicians, has been founded and organized by Pan in Reykjavik since 2010.