

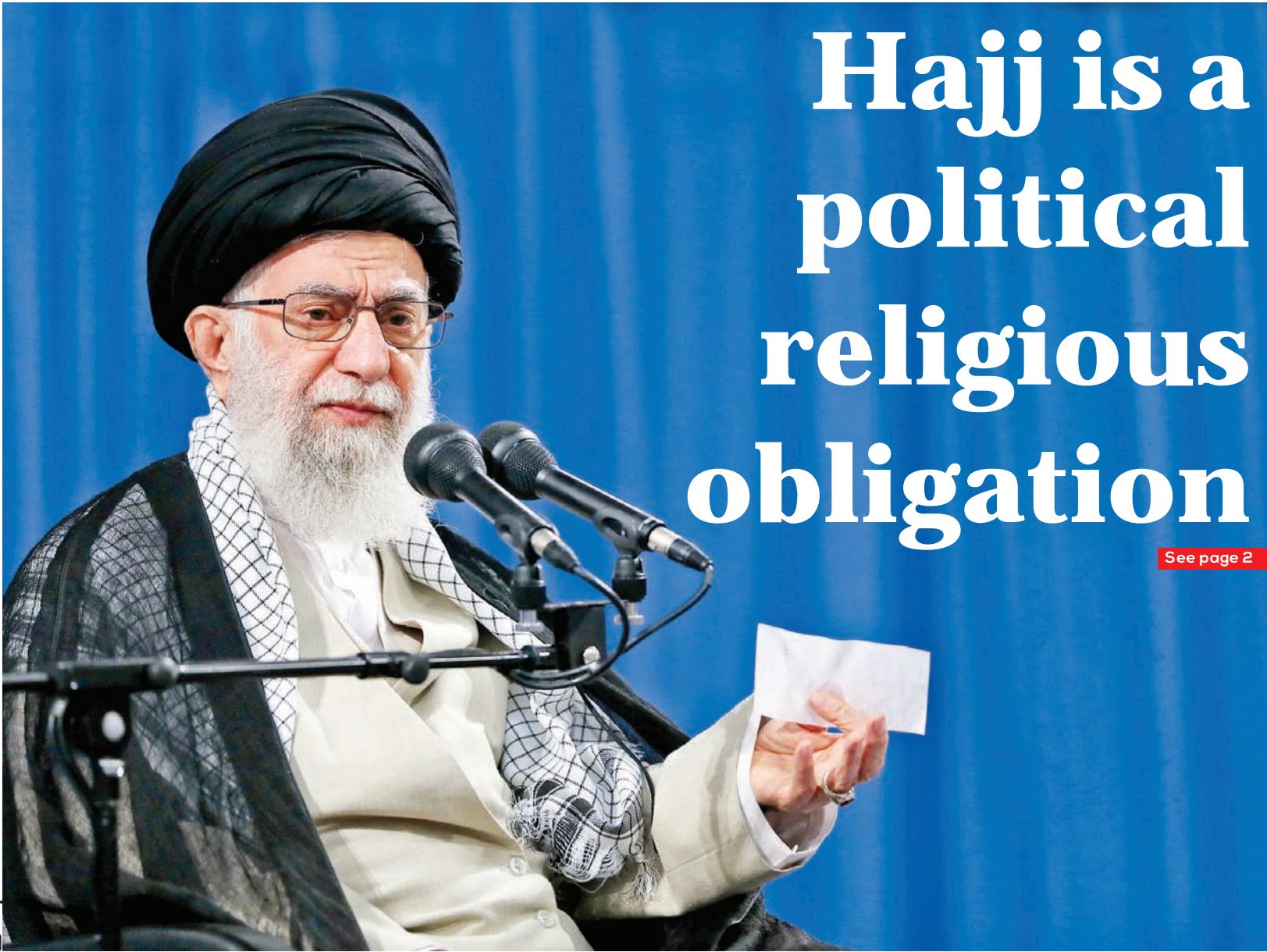


Iran to relax uranium enrichment level on July 7 **2**

Iran's commitment to JCPOA will be commensurate to Europeans' **2**

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Congratulations on birthday of Hazrat Masoumeh (SA) and Daughter's Day



Hajj is a political religious obligation

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Without oil deal Instex will not work, Zanganeh says

TEHRAN – Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said the European Union mechanism for trade with Iran, known as INSTEX, is not going to be useful without including oil sales. "Without oil deal, it's very clear, Instex will not work," Zanganeh said in a Bloomberg Television interview in Vienna on Tuesday.

The official further noted that although U.S. sanctions has put some pressure on the Iranian oil industry, however NIOC is taking all necessary measures to make sure that the country's oil exports stay afloat. Iran is striving "day and night to find ways" to export its oil, Zanganeh said. **→5**

'Enrichment is a right not given by any country to be revoked later'

TEHRAN – Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the international organizations in Vienna has said that nuclear enrichment is an "inalienable right" to any country which has signed the NPT and it is not something to be "given by any country" to "be" revoked later. "Enrichment is an inalienable right of any member, delicately affirmed in a

trade-off by the NPT. This is not given by any country, only to be revoked later," Kazem Gharibabadi tweeted on Tuesday. The tweet by Ambassador Gharibabadi came after the White House said in a statement that "it was a mistake under the Iran nuclear deal to allow Iran to enrich uranium at any level." **→2**

UN expert urges world powers to reconsider G20 Riyadh summit

TEHRAN – A United Nations expert who investigated the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi has called on world powers to reconsider holding the next G20 summit in Saudi Arabia. Agnes Callamard, the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, in a report last month found "credible evidence" that linked Saudi Arabia's powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) to the killing of Khashoggi. Callamard, who presented her report

to the UN but does not speak for it, said on Tuesday that the next G20 summit, scheduled for November 2020 in Riyadh, offered a chance to pressure Saudi Arabia. "Political accountability for Mr Khashoggi will mean that it doesn't happen or it's moved elsewhere, or something is being done to ensure that the political system in the U.S. and in other countries does not become complicit of that international crime," Callamard said at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC. **→13**

ARTICLE
Ali Shamkhani
Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council

The difficult test of defending European identity and security

In a summit attended by the world's top security officials which was held in Russia in Khordad (May) this year, I explained the United States' role in expansion of hybrid threats and its exploitation of mixed financial, economic, and technological tools in order to impose its will on independent countries.

Without doubt, U.S. withdrawal from Barjam (JCPOA) is one of the main manifestations of unilateralism as the major goal of the Trump administration's foreign policy. This measure is a clear example of a hybrid terrorist operation because of its illegal exploitation of sanctions as a tool against Iran.

The adoption of such approach and the subsequent behaviors of the U.S. were not restricted to withdrawing from Barjam and confronting Iran, but because it is adopting such a policy toward other important international treaties, it is considered an increasing threat for other countries' national security and the world's security.

If we examine the U.S. exit from Barjam from the perspective of pursuing its unilateralist policy and implementing hybrid threats to advance it, it is completely clear that adopting such policy by the U.S. only has a "situational effect" on Iran and its "transitional effect", which changes the equations governing the international system, has targeted Europe and other member states to this multi-lateral agreement that claim to be actors in international relations.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, in order to protect its independence and counter the illegal behaviors of America – especially after its withdrawal from Barjam, has paid a huge price to stop the unbridled trend of unilateralism by the U.S. in addition to adhering to the accepted commitments.

Europe has been a second-rate and passive actor which has failed to play a role as a united and effective bloc with regard to international relations, despite being humiliated by America and failing to stand up to the destructive effects of Washington's unilateralism whose scope has expanded to numerous international treaties. **→3**

Demonstrators voice support for Sheikh Zakzaky

TEHRAN – A number of Iranian physicians, scholars, journalists, and seminary students staged a rally outside the United Nations office in Tehran to voice their solidarity with top Shiite cleric and leader of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) Sheikh Ibrahim al-Zakzaky.

The protesters held the rally in the Iranian capital on Wednesday to condemn the Nigerian government for preventing Sheikh Zakzaky from receiving medical treatment as his health condition is deteriorating in prison.

The participants in the demonstration were carrying banners and placards saying "Free Zakzaky" and "the UN's silence tantamount to betrayal of human rights", according to a report by Tasnim news agency.



The protesters also voiced their outrage against the silence of the UN and other international organizations about the killing of Shiites in Nigeria and Bahrain.

Sheikh Zakzaky has been held in detention since December 2015 and was charged just in April

2018 with murder, culpable homicide, unlawful assembly, disruption of public peace and other accusations. He has pleaded not guilty.

In 2016, Nigeria's federal high court ordered his unconditional release from jail following a trial, but the government has so far refused to set him free.

The top cleric, who is in his mid-sixties, lost his left eyesight in a raid which was carried out by the Nigerian army on his residence in the northern town of Zaria in December 2015.

During the raid, Zakzaky's wife sustained serious wounds too and more than 300 of his followers and three of his sons were killed. Zakzaky, his wife, and a large number of the cleric's followers have since been in custody.

Does economic growth worth degrading the environment?

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN – Although environmental consequences of economic growth brings about numerous reactions of economists and environmentalists, there is still doubt that environment protection rules and regulations hinder economic growth, or future development have dire consequences on the environment which does not worth it.

Here the question arises that whether eliminating natural resources must continue to make up for the slow economic growth or come up with more practicable solutions to safeguard non-renewable resources.

Many cases in Iran and other countries demonstrate the direct relation between socio-economic development and environmental degradation, showing that human are using natural resources

at a pace much faster than it can replenish.

For instance, deforestation is the permanent destruction of forests in order to make the land available for other uses. An estimated 18 million acres (7.3 million hectares) of forest, which is roughly the size of the country of Panama, are lost each year, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Reza Bayani, an official with Forests, Range and Watershed Management Organization in Late-April said that approximately 12,000 hectares of forests across Iran is wiped out annually.

Bayani referring to illegal logging as the leading cause of forest degradation, noted that timber smuggling steadily proceeding in the forests poses a serious threat to the country's ecology for a minor population benefits.

Yousefali Ebrahimpour, commander of the protection unit of natural resources and watershed

management department of the province earlier in February said that over 450 tons of smuggled log has been seized in the forests in West Azarbaijan province, which were being smuggled to the northern provinces of the country.

While the following year flash floods in 31 provinces of the country started on March 19, caused great losses and damages which was due to deforestation and vegetation depletion in addition to building encroaching river beds.

Seyed Mohammad Mojabi, head of environment committee of the Expediency Council in May said that following recurrent droughts and low precipitation, related organizations believed that severe rainfalls seem far-fetched in a country with arid and semi-arid climate and decided to allow construction projects through river banks, which increased flood devastation. **→12**



Marking memory of 290 passengers whose plane was downed by U.S. in July 1988

On Wednesday, Iran commemorated the anniversary of the downing of its passenger plane by a U.S. Navy over the Persian Gulf waters. Flowers were flown to the Persian Gulf waters in memory of those killed in the unforgivable and heinous act.

On July 3, 1988, the USS Vincennes fired missiles at an Iran Air Airbus A300B2 which was flying over the Strait of Hormuz from the port city of Bandar Abbas to Dubai, carrying 274 passengers and 16 crew members.

Following the attack, the plane disintegrated and crashed into the Persian Gulf waters, killing all 290 on board, among them 66 children.

ARTICLE
Masoud Hossein
Head of the Sport Desk of the Tehran Times

Iranian clubs forced to meet adequate standards

Iran football federation has threatened the clubs to "shut down" the country's professional football league if they fail to meet adequate standards.

Chaotic scenes broke out during the matches between Iranian football teams last season. The fans broke the seats in the stadiums and clashed with the security forces many times.

The Football Federation of Iran Disciplinary Committee made penalties for some clubs and their violent fans in previous similar cases but the incidents were repeated at pitches everywhere in Iran.

So many incidents have been out of the football federation control and clubs must take responsibility and play an active role in stamping out violence among their supporters.

"The league competition should be equipped with electronic ticketing and seat numbering systems in the new season. There will be a zero-tolerance policy in relation to any threats against the competition," Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) President Mehdi Taj was quoted as saying.

Due to security reasons, the organizers should not allow the fans to attend a match more than the capacity of the stadiums and all pitches should be equipped with CCTV cameras, he said.

"The clubs should also be awarded TV broadcast rights in the new season," Taj added.

Video Assistant referee (VAR) should be available in all stadiums, with many leagues around the world opting to put the method into practice following a successful run at the 2018 World Cup.

FIFA wants to display transparency to the teams and supporters.

Iran's Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, Masoud Soltanifar, has recently said that football hooligans will face sever action if they try to make trouble at the stadiums.

"The matches should not be marred by misbehavior of some fans who violate the rules. Fortunately, the clubs have helpful cultural plans for the new season. Sport is a factor of making tens of millions of people happy," Soltanifar said.

Iran Professional League (IPL) 2019-20 season will kick off on July 30.

Hajj is a political religious obligation: Leader

POLITICAL TEHRAN — As the time for Abrahamic rituals of Hajj approaches, the time when Muslims visit Mecca to perform Hajj, officials of Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization on Wednesday met with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.



During the meeting, the Leader said that Hajj is a political religious obligation, underlining the political duties of pilgrims during their pilgrimage.

A major mistake regarding Hajj is to advise against politicizing it, he underlined.

"Creating unity is a political matter. Supporting and defending the oppressed in the Islamic world, like the Palestinian and Yemeni nations, is a political matter, exactly based on Islamic teachings and an obligation," the Khamenei.ir quoted the Leader as saying.

"Hajj is a political act and this political act is itself a religious obligation. That they prohibit such political acts is itself a political move, but an anti-religious one. That they say you have no right to talk against America is a satanic political act."

The Leader also highlighted Hajj as a manifestation of submission to and humbleness before God.

Hajj also has social aspects such as unity, brotherhood, harmony, as well as a display of unity and morality, Ayatollah Khamenei noted.

Ayatollah Khamenei says Saudi Arabia is tasked to provide security for Hajj pilgrims

Elsewhere in his remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei said the Saudi government bears major responsibilities during the Hajj period. "Among their responsibilities is providing security for the pilgrims but they should not create a security atmosphere," he said.

"While the pilgrims are in Mecca and Medina, they [the Saudi government] should treat them properly, respectfully, and with honor, because they are the guests of God."

During a visit to Saudi Arabia in December 2018, Head of Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization Alireza Rashidian held meetings with officials from the kingdom's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah about the 2019 Hajj season.

The two sides signed an agreement at the conclusion of the meetings aimed at making better arrangements for Iranian pilgrims and preventing the problems they faced in previous years.

The agreement stipulates that 86,500 Iranian pilgrims would go on pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia in the coming Hajj season.

In 2016, more than 1.8 million pilgrims attended Hajj, but Iranians stayed at home after tensions between Riyadh and Tehran boiled over a deadly crush of people during the 2015 pilgrimage.

On September 2, 2015, thousands of people lost their lives in the deadly crush after Saudi authorities blocked a road in Mina during a ritual, forcing large crowds of pilgrims to collide.

The crush was the deadliest incident in the history of the pilgrimage. According to an Associated Press count based on official statements from the 36 countries that lost citizens in the disaster, more than 2,400 pilgrims were killed in the incident.

Saudi Arabia claims nearly 770 people were killed, but officials at Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization say about 4,700 people, including over 460 Iranian pilgrims, lost their lives.

INSTEX a preliminary step for Europe to implement its commitments: Zarif

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday that INSTEX is a preliminary step for Europe to implement its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"If INSTEX becomes operational, it will be a preliminary to 11 commitments that Europeans should meet," he told reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting.

He also said Iran will be committed to the JCPOA as long as the Europeans will be.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has said that INSTEX does not suffice.

"Nobody in the government has set hope on Europe's INSTEX, however, we have not blocked its path," IRNA quoted him as saying on Wednesday in a tweet message.

INSTEX is a European special purpose vehicle aimed at facilitating legitimate trade between Europe and Iran.

On Friday, the remaining signatories to the JCPOA met in the Austrian capital as a last-ditch effort to save the accord after the U.S. withdrew last year.

They announced in a statement that the European Union mechanism for trade with Iran is up and running.

European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini has said that INSTEX has become operational and is processing the first transactions.

"On Friday we also gave an important announcement on the defense of the nuclear deal with Iran: the instrument to support legitimate trade exchanges with Iran (called INSTEX) has become operational and is processing the first transactions. Together with the three countries that set it up — France, Germany and the UK — another seven European countries will join the mechanism. On Friday we also gathered the Joint Commission that works to guarantee the deal's implementation," she said in an announcement published on her website on Sunday.

However, Majid Takht Ravanchi, Iran's permanent representative to the United Nations, on Saturday likened INSTEX to a "beautiful car without gasoline".

"The current situation of INSTEX does not suffice. This mechanism without money is like a beautiful car without gasoline," he told reporters.

U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew Washington in May 2018 from the multilateral nuclear accord reached between Iran and seven other parties, including the European Union, E3 — Britain, France, Germany — the U.S., Russia and China.

Afterwards, Washington re-imposed unilateral sanctions on Iran that had been lifted under the deal.

Iran to relax uranium enrichment level on July 7

"The Arak nuclear reactor will return to its previous activities after July 7 if other sides don't respect their commitment"

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The Iranian president says Tehran will get past a 3.67% uranium enrichment level set by the 2015 nuclear deal on July 7 as a retaliatory measure to U.S. ditching of the agreement.

"We will discard that commitment. We will go beyond 3.67% as much as we want and as much as we need to," Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday.

Rouhani also said if the remaining signatories of the nuclear deal do not fulfill their promises, the Arak nuclear reactor will return to its previous activities after July 7.

The best way for the United States is to rectify its mistake, Rouhani said, referring to the U.S. unilateral withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on May 8, 2018.

Just a year after the U.S. exit from the JCPOA, Iran announced on May 8 that it would suspend some of its commitments under the deal. The country said it will no longer export its surplus uranium and heavy water to foreign countries.

It also warned that it would carry out further suspensions of its nuclear commitments



Rouhani tells the U.S.: "If you are afraid of fire, do not ignite it.... The Americans have set up fire in the region since a year ago."

if the other parties to the deal failed to take practical steps to honor their commitments within 60 days.

President Rouhani, who was addressing a cabinet session on Wednesday, said that all the Iranian measures are "reversible" if the remaining parties live up to their obligations under the JCPOA.

"Any moment they return to the JCPOA, we will also return to the deal," the president said.

He also said while the Americans have begun provocative moves in the region since a year ago, they say that it is dangerous to play with fire.

"Extinguishing this fire is only possible by returning to commitments and the UN resolutions," the president said, adding that if they are not willing to uphold their commitments, Iran will take its next measures right at the end of the 60-day deadline.

Referring to U.S. President Donald Trump's recent remarks in which he has said Iran is playing with fire by limiting its JCPOA undertakings, Rouhani said, "If you are afraid of fire, do not ignite it.... The Americans have set up fire in the region since a year ago."

Zarif says Iran's commitment to JCPOA will be commensurate to Europeans'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that Iran will show commitment to the 2015 nuclear deal as long as Europeans fulfill their commitments.

Under the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions on the country.

"Iran is committed to the full implementation of the #JCPOA: as long as E3/EU implement THEIR economic commitments," Zarif tweeted.

Zarif added that Iran's loyalty to the JCPOA will be commensurate to those of the Europeans, including the E3 - France, Germany and Britain which are signatory

to the deal - and the rest of the European Union states.

"Iran will comply with its commitments under the JCPOA in exactly the same manner as the EU/E3 have—and will—comply with theirs. Fair enough?" Zarif insisted.

Iran announced on Sunday that its stockpile of the enriched uranium has reached beyond the 300 kilograms allowed under the agreement. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which monitors Iran's nuclear program under the deal, confirmed in Vienna that the stockpile had surpassed the limit.

On Monday, Zarif said Iran was just exercising its right to respond to the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement and reimposition of sanctions on Iran.

Zarif also refuted claims that it was a vio-

lation of the JCPOA, referring to paragraph 36 of the JCPOA according to which a mechanism has been devised to resolve disputes when parties believe other signatories are not fulfilling their obligations.

Zarif said as soon as the E3 honor their obligation Iran will reverse its decision.

As a retaliation against the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA and reimposition of sanctions on Iran coupled with a failure by the European Union to compensate for the U.S. exit, Iran officially announced that it stops selling stockpiles of enriched uranium and heavy water for 60 days from May 8. Iran also said if a solution is not found within 60 days to protect it from the sanctions effect it will take the next steps. The deadline falls on July 7.

The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran

(AEOI) had announced on June 17 that Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium will exceed 300 kilograms by June 27. The atomic organization also said Iran will speed up its uranium enrichment activities beyond 3.67 percent if the other sides don't take a practical step to shield Iran from sanctions effect.

"After surpassing 300 kilograms, we will increase the speed of producing enriched uranium above 3.67 percent," AEOI spokesman Behrooz Kamalvandi told reporters while visiting the Arak heavy water nuclear reactor.

On Friday, the EU announced that its special financial mechanism for trade with Iran, known as INSTEX, has gone into effect. However, Iran says the mechanism is far short of Iran's expectation. Iran insists the mechanism should include Iran's oil purchases.

Diplomat to U.S.: "Enrichment is a right not given by any country to be revoked later"

Gharibabadi said, "The USA officials positions on this issue reminds me of Obama's remarks at Saban Forum on Dec 2013."

Ambassador Gharibabadi posted former U.S. President Barack Obama's remarks as follows:

"... Now, you'll hear arguments... that say we can't accept any enrichment on Iranian soil. Period. Full stop. End of conversation. One can envision an ideal world in which Iran said, we'll destroy every element and facility and you name it, it's all gone. There are a lot of things that I can envision that would be wonderful. I can envision a world in which Congress passed every one of my bills that I put forward. But, they have already gone through the cycle to the point where the knowledge, we're not going to be able to eliminate."

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that Iran's low-grade enriched uranium stockpile has exceeded 300 kg. Zarif said Iran was exercising its right based on the mechanism included in the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA) in response to the U.S. exit from the agreement and reimposition of sanctions on Iran.

The diplomatic chiefs of the EU, France, Germany and Britain said on Tuesday they were "extremely concerned" and urged Iran to reverse its decision, according to AP.

"We urge Iran to reverse this step and to refrain from further measures that undermine the nuclear deal," said the joint statement signed by EU diplomatic chief Federica



Mogherini and the three countries' foreign ministers — France's Jean-Yves Le Drian, Germany's Heiko Maas and Britain's Jeremy Hunt.

In response, Zarif said on Tuesday that Iran will be committed to the nuclear agreement as long as the European side honors its commitments.

Under the JCPOA, Iran undertook to put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

"Iran is committed to the full implementation of the #JCPOA: as long as E3/EU implement THEIR economic commitments," Zarif tweeted.

Zarif added that Iran's loyalty to the JCPOA will be commensurate to those of the Europeans, including the E3 - France, Germany and Britain which are signatory to the deal - and the rest of the European Union states.

"Iran will comply with its commitments under the JCPOA in exactly the same manner as the EU/E3 have—and will—comply with theirs. Fair enough?" Zarif insisted.

Zarif has said the decision to scale back nuclear commitments is "reversible" if Europe protects Iran from sanctions. 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 as long as sanctions are in place. 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 falls on July 7.

U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew Washington from the nuclear deal in May 2018 and ordered sanctions on Tehran. Trump has even introduced full ban on Iran's oil export, a move which has been described as an economic war against Tehran.

So far the European Union has not taken a major step to offset U.S. sanctions against Iran. The European special purpose vehicle (INSTEX), which has been devised for trade with Iran, has been described as a "beautiful car without petrol" by Tehran's Ambassador to the UN Majid Takht-Ravanchi.

German author's fascist perception of identity

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The emphasis on Western values of liberalism has gone so far that some who believe in them have accepted that anyone who is not like them is not human as well.

An entirely insulting analysis published by German Die Welt Newspaper shows that the writer does not even understand the basic principles of liberalism.

Some parts of the article is as follow: "There are parallel communities inside and outside the country. The hostile minorities must be behaved toughly, including criminal groups and tribes inside Germany, and extremist Islamists in Iran. Germany has not so far acted properly to confront these communities.

If there is one thing that I understand very well, then it's how the customs and laws governing on the streets, especially in the troubled or very sensitive areas of Germany, where the so-called parallel societies hold power.

It is very difficult for an alien to understand exactly what happens in this second German reality: different languages, different behaviors and different values has frightened many people.

However, this so-called parallel society is not just a society, but it consists of doz-

ens and even hundreds of different societies that have their own relations with Germany, democracy and liberal values. Usually only 'extremists' have a serious problem in respect with integration and often are problematic in terms of security.

People only want to have a good life and be part of a society of Germany. Even if original identity of persons is more valuable for them, they still want to be a part of Germany, a country in which they have achieved freedom.

Despite Germany's efforts to make these societies integrated, there are different rules in the streets made by small and aggressive groups. Extremist forces in mosques, Arab tribes or criminal groups will have the opportunity to strengthen and consolidate their position further, as long as Germany does not confront with this issue inside the country."

These are parts of the author's analysis in German Die Welt Newspaper. It shows that the author does not even have a liberal view of values such as cultural, religious pluralism, etc.

One of the principles that liberalism boasts of it is the pluralistic understanding of identity, religion and culture that has been driven through freedom.

Liberal freedom, as also emphasized by Karl Raimund Popper, is limited only when

it threatens another individual's freedom.

Criticizing the pluralistic identities of German and international society, however, the author of the article shows that he not only does not respect values of pluralism but also he is very close to his ancestors such as Hitler and Mussolini ideologically, and even moves a few steps forward than them.

According to what liberalism claims, the circle of identity inclusion is very diverse in order to prevent plural identities to be marginalized and all identities have the possibility of occurrence in a pluralistic society. Principles and values such as freedom and the possibility of equal opportunities are based in the claim of this school. But the author in a fascist approach limits the scope of identity inclusion to a particular race and culture revealing the 21st century.

The author based on his poisonous approach says: "I have a similar impression of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this case, Germany also has to decide whether it is going to let the criminal Islamist to continue or help them to integrate with liberal western society. But in this regard Germany acts against the West, democracy, human rights, women's rights, homosexual rights, freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, press free-

dom, and inadvertently in the interests of Russia, China, North Korea and extremist Shia Islamists."

The logic of the author is undeniably the same as emphasized in the school of liberalism: the virtue of Western values.

In fact, the author does not recognize that each group of identities has its own cultural, religious values. Regardless of the reasons for the migration, even if we accept the author's logic, one of the reasons that these identities are not integrated in the origin is type of policy taken by destination.

If the destination countries had emphasized on values of pluralism, there was no need to insist on unifying identities and integration in their own societies. In fact, this is denial of people's identity which its results are obvious in the West and in countries such as France and Germany.

The emphasis on integrating itself is a kind of fascist attitude that believes in superiority of a particular identity and values over the others. Radical acts of some immigrants in destination societies is the result of such fascist attitude, interestingly these immigrants and those who are legally entering these countries have been evaluated and qualified by these destination communities and their values.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

IRGC chief: Iran destroyed Washington's fictitious grandeur in world

POLITICAL TEHRAN – Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said on Wednesday that Iran has managed to destroy the United States' fictitious and artificial grandeur in the world.

Major General Hossein Salami said the IRGC is tasked with calculating how to overcome the enemy in each and every scenario, Mehr reported.

Salami made the remarks in a meeting with commanders and personnel of the Khatam al-Anbia Construction unit.

He said the Islamic Republic is resisting against the enemy but at the same time it tries to advance and counter the enemy.

“Economic war”
“Once, military action was the main focus of the enemy... but today, economic war is the main field in which the enemy encounters us,” the general said, emphasizing that Iran is currently at an intersection of global economic pressure.

Salami described the tensions between Tehran and Washington as a “war of wills”, saying that in the current situation it's



“Once, military action was the main focus of the enemy... but today, economic war is the main field in which the enemy encounters us.”

the enemy that is concerned about the outbreak of a war.

“Such concern is evident in their physical and tactical behaviors,” he added.

The remarks came weeks after the IRGC Aerospace Force shot down an intruding U.S. surveillance drone after ignoring several warnings. The United States denied that the drone intruded into Iran's airspace at the time.

U.S. President Donald Trump later claimed he decided to call off an attack on several Iranian targets after he learned 150 Iranians would die as a result of the strike. Commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force Amir Ali Hajizadeh said it was “impossible” for the U.S. to carry out the threat of retaliation, adding, “The Americans must mind their manners, because the era of looking down on the Iranian nation is over.”

The commander also rejected the U.S. claim that the doomed drone had not entered the Iranian airspace, saying, “Other countries have refuted the U.S. claim of not violating the Iranian border.”

Iran won't accept a weakened INSTEX, top MP warns

POLITICAL TEHRAN – Chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee says Iran will not agree to EU's trade mechanism, dubbed INSTEX, if it is aimed at putting all of Iran's oil revenues into one place which could be taken advantage of by the U.S.

Mojtaba Zonnour said INSTEX would be welcomed only if it covers all of Iran's economic relations as were defined within the framework of the nuclear deal, Mehr reported.

He stressed that Iran must be able to have total control over its oil revenues, adding, “If they are planning to use INSTEX as a means to concentrate all of our oil revenues into this channel, this means the enemies are trying to control our financial resources and purchases.”

This would give the U.S. a chance to block

Iran's accounts under any pretext or try to take advantage of our resources, the top MP warned.

Hossein Naqavi Hosseini, the committee's spokesman, also said on Wednesday that Iran does not consider the EU's “faulty” trade mechanism as a measure fulfilling the bloc's promise with regard to its JCPOA commitments.

Naqavi Hosseini said INSTEX is far more restricted than what the EU had promised. He said Iran's measure to exceed the uranium stockpile limit has concerned the European sides, promoting them to hastily announce that INSTEX has become operational in a bid to show they are still committed to the nuclear deal and prevent Iran from using the provisions stipulated in the agreement.

“Limiting INSTEX to medicine and food

products is contrary to what the European sides had promised under the nuclear deal, because the international law does not allow sanctions on food and medicine for any country,” he reiterated.

The remarks came days after the European Union announced that INSTEX was up and running.

“France, Germany, and the United Kingdom informed participants that INSTEX had been made operational and available to all EU member states, and that the first transactions are being processed,” said an EU statement on Friday.

On January 31, France, Germany and Britain, the three European parties to the JCPOA, announced the creation of INSTEX.

INSTEX was announced nearly nine months after the Trump administration withdrew from the JCPOA and reimposed



sanctions on Iran.

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

Human rights chief: U.S. seeking to eliminate traces of human civilization

POLITICAL TEHRAN – Iran's Human Rights Council chief has deplored the U.S. government's crimes against Muslims, saying Washington is seeking to remove every trace of Islamic and human civilization.

“Americans are seeking to eliminate the traces of human civilization,” Mohammad Javad Larjani said on Tuesday, addressing an international meeting on “the American version of human rights,” according to Tasnim.

“They (the Americans) did this in Syria and Iraq, and even destroyed pre-Islamic works,” he said, adding that today, Yemen, which is one of the centers of Islamic civilization, has been subject to severe aggression



backed by the U.S. Pointing to American version of human

rights, Larjani said it has “different layers”, including crimes and moves to deprive nations of their civil rights.

Last month, the Iranian Parliament concluded a report on the U.S. government's violation of human rights, both inside and outside the United States.

Iran's International Human Rights Center has already been compiling annual reports on human rights violations in the United States.

Violation of prisoners' rights, breach of privacy rights, violation of the rights of minorities, breaches of immigrants' rights, racial discrimination, violation of children's rights, violation of freedom of speech, and sexual violence against women in the U.S.

have been among the issues raised in the annual reports.

The United States is internationally criticized for politicizing the issue of human rights and is known as one of the major self-proclaimed defenders of human rights.

Excessive use of force by the U.S. police against protesters, people of color in particular, are among the thorny issues staining the country's rights record.

The incumbent president, Donald Trump, is also viewed as a racist by a large percentage of the American population and people around the world. His insulting language against certain African nations was revealed by a congressman in April last year.

Tehran: No hope pinned on Europe's INSTEX

TEHRAN (FNA) – Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Wednesday that although Tehran has not closed the doors, no statesman in Iran is optimistic about the efficacy of the overhyped Europe's financial channel, known as INSTEX.

“Not only do we consider the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchange (INSTEX) an insufficient move, but we also take this mechanism as a preliminary step for Europeans to deliver on their 11 commitments which so far have not been honored,” Mousavi wrote on his Twitter page.

The diplomat underlined that no one in the Iranian government is hopeful about the INSTEX, adding that, however, Tehran has not closed doors to the implementation of the mechanism.

“We are still in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to pursue our rights and demands within the frame of this agreement,” underlined the diplomat.

Germany, France and the UK, the three European signatories to the Iran nuclear deal of 2015, created a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for trade with Iran called INSTEX late in January. The channel hasn't had any financial transaction with Iran yet.

On May 8, exactly one year after U.S. President Donald



Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear deal, Iran announced it will scale down parts of its commitments within the pact, giving Europe 60 days to either normalize economic ties with Iran or accept the modification of Tehran's obligations under the agreement.

Iran set up and registered a counterpart to INSTEX called Special Trade and Financing Instrument between Iran and Europe (STFI) to pave the way for bilateral trade.

On Friday, Secretary General of the European External

Action Service (EEAS) Helga Schmid announced that INSTEX has become operational.

“INSTEX now operational, first transactions being processed and more EU Members States to join. Good progress on Arak and Fordow projects,” Schmid wrote on her twitter account after a meeting of the Joint Commission on the JCPOA ended in Vienna following three and a half hours of talks by the remaining signatories to the deal.

It was the 12th meeting of the Joint Commission on JCPOA which began at 12:00 local time in Vienna.

Meantime, seven European countries--Austria, Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden--in a joint statement expressed their support for the efforts for implementation of the INSTEX.

Later, Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi described the joint commission meeting with the Europeans as “a step forward”, but meantime, reminded that it did not meet Iran's expectations.

“It was a step forward, but it is still not enough and not meeting Iran's expectations,” said Araqchi, who headed the Iranian delegation at the meeting.

“I will report back to Tehran and the final decision will be by Tehran to take,” he added.

Iran is not cause of instability in Persian Gulf, Russia says

Novak says sanctions on Iran are ‘unlawful’

By staff and agency
Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said on Tuesday that Iran is not the cause of instability in the Persian Gulf and that sanctions against the country are “unlawful”.

“As regards restrictions on Iranian exports, we support Iran and we believe that the sanctions are unlawful; they have not been approved by the UN,” Novak told CNBC.

He added that he didn't think Iran should be considered as the cause of the unstable situation in the region.

“These steps seriously destabilize the situa-

tion, not only in Iran, upon whom the sanctions have been imposed, but, as we can all see, in the entire region around the Persian Gulf,” he said.

Tension between Tehran and Washington has increased since Trump withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced harsh sanctions against Iran.

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

region, particularly in the Persian Gulf.

On Saturday, the U.S. deployed F-22 stealth fighters to Qatar for the first time, adding to a buildup of U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf amid tensions with Iran.

The tension started rising after the Iranian military shot down an unmanned U.S. surveillance drone on June 20 after it breached Iran's airspace. The U.S. drone entered the Iranian airspace from the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Russia's top diplomat has also blamed the U.S. for Iran's uranium stockpile surpassing the 300 kilogram limit set by the 2015 nuclear deal.

“Iran's decision to surpass the uranium stockpile limit was caused by U.S. sanctions,” Fars news agency quoted Sergey Lavrov as saying on Tuesday.

He noted that the sanctions have prevented Iran from selling the excess uranium it produces, contributing to its stockpiling.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov on Monday spoke in the same vein. “It should be understood as the natural consequence of the events, which have gone before,” Ryabkov said of Iran's stockpile surpassing the limit.

Assad: Syria will support Iran against all threats

POLITICAL TEHRAN – Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has said his country fully supports the Iranian nation and the Islamic establishment against all threats and acts of aggression.

Assad stated that Syria defends Iranians' strive for their rights and stands by them against all threats and acts that violate the basis of the international law.

The Syrian president made the remarks while speaking at a meeting with Ali Asghar Khaji, a senior assistant on special political affairs to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, in Damascus on Tuesday, Press TV reported.

He was then briefed on the latest developments with regard to the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), after the U.S. withdrawal from the accord in 2018, and Washington's latest escalatory moves in the region.

The two sides also conferred on Syria's fight against terrorism, counterattacks to assaults being carried out by foreign-sponsored Takfiri terrorist groups positioned in Syria's embattled north-western province of Idlib, initiatives for a political solution to Syria's crisis, the next round of Syria peace talks in Kazakhstan and the latest regional and international developments.

Khaji, for his part, pointed to the deeply-rooted relations between Tehran and Damascus, emphasizing that Iran is determined to bolster such ties in all areas in order to serve the interests of both nations.

The Iranian nation and government will continue to support Syria until it liberates all its territory and rebuilds what has been destroyed by the war, he remarked.

Khaji also met and held talks with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem.

During their meeting, the two sides highlighted the need for enhanced coordination and consultations between the two countries regarding upcoming international meetings on the political process in Syria, and all-out promotion of bilateral relations.

The two officials then discussed the recent regional developments, and the U.S. economic terrorism against Syria and Iran.



IRGC disbands terrorist team in West Azerbaijan

POLITICAL TEHRAN – The IRGC Hamzeh Seyyed al-Shuhada unit has disbanded a team of terrorists in the northwestern province of West Azarbaijan, killing two of its members.

The terrorists were ambushed as they were trying to infiltrate the country from the province's Chaldoran County, the IRGC said in a statement on Tuesday, Press TV reported.

Two terrorists were killed in the clashes and several others were wounded, the statement added.

It also said two IRGC servicemen lost their lives during the operation and a considerable amount of weapons, ammunition, and communication equipment were seized.

On June 24, IRGC stated that it had dismantled a four-member gang of terrorists in the same region.

Forces from the Hamzeh Seyyed al-Shuhada unit engaged in clashes with members of the terror outfit, killing one terrorist and injuring two others in the process. The fourth terrorist was captured.

The IRGC has been at the forefront of the fight against terrorism and extremism in the region.

However, in an unprecedented and strange move, the United States designated the Guards as a foreign terrorist organization back in April.

The measure elicited some angry reactions in Iran, where the parliament passed a bill designating U.S. forces in the region, including CENTCOM, the U.S. central commands in the Persian Gulf region, as a terrorist group.

The difficult test of defending European identity and security

1 → If we examine the U.S. exit from Barjam from the perspective of pursuing its unilateralist policy and implementing hybrid threats to advance it, it is completely clear that adopting such policy by the U.S. only has a “situational effect” on Iran and its “transitional effect”, which changes the equations governing the international system, has targeted Europe and other member states to this multilateral agreement that claim to be actors in international relations.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, in order to protect its independence and counter the illegal behaviors of America – especially after its withdrawal from Barjam, has paid a huge price to stop the unbridled trend of unilateralism by the U.S. in addition to adhering to the accepted commitments.

Europe has been a second-rate and passive actor which has failed to play a role as a united and effective bloc with regard to international relations, despite being humiliated by America and failing to stand up to the destructive effects of Washington's unilateralism whose scope has expanded to numerous international treaties.

The battlefield of countering America's unilateralism, more than being an arena for examining the strength and capacity of the Islamic Republic of Iran to continue the path taken, is a harsh and dangerous arena for experimenting Europe's determination in the area of defending its vulnerable identity and security against the U.S. unilateralist approach.

In the event that Trump removes the obstacle to eliminating Europe's influence on the world's equations, there would be no reason for the next U.S. presidents – whether Republican or Democrat – to avoid taking advantage of its benefits in order to maximize U.S. interests in the face of a weakened Europe.

With continuation of such trend, it is highly predictable that new extremist factions might gain power in Europe in order to revive the lost identity and independence of the continent in the current humiliating conditions. The responsibility of the formation of future structural and security challenges in Europe directly lies with the current leaders of Europe.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	248943.9
IFX	3213.53

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,422 rials
GBP	52,894 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$63.10/b
WTI	\$56.81/b
OPEC Basket	\$65.71/b
Gold	\$1,425.65/oz
Silver	\$15.32/oz
Platinum	\$836.90/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Non-oil exports up 483% in 15 years: TPO

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Iran's non-oil exports has increased by 483 percent over the past 15 years, the acting head of the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Mohammad Reza Modoudi said on Tuesday.

In a statement published on TPO website on the occasion of the 15th establishment anniversary of TPO, Modoudi noted that the country's annual non-oil exports is currently \$44.3 billion, up \$36.7 billion from \$7.6 billion 15 years ago when TPO was established.



According to the official, non-oil exports to the neighboring countries has witnessed an even greater increase, with the figure jumping from \$3.2 billion to \$24 billion.

In early June, Modoudi announced that the value of Iran's non-oil exports reached \$8.4 billion in the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-May 21), up 8.9 percent compared to the same period last year.

Meanwhile, the country's imports during the two-month period stood at \$6.7 billion, down by eight percent year on year.

The official also put the country's exports of services at \$1.6 billion, up by 17 percent from a year earlier.

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

Iran's non-oil trade registered a \$1.5-billion positive balance in the past Iranian calendar year (March 2018-March 2019).

Strong domestic demand propels growth in Germany's services sector: PMI

Activity in Germany's services sector was the strongest in nine months in June, a survey showed, another indication that domestic demand will continue driving growth in Europe's biggest economy as exports fall.

IHS Markit's final services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 55.8 from 55.4 in May. The figure, published on Wednesday, was higher than a flash reading of 55.6 and was well above the 50.0 mark that separates growth from contraction.

As stated by uk.reuters.com, strong domestic demand prompted a steeper rise in new business than in May, sustaining a robust — albeit slightly weaker — rate of job creation in the sector, the survey showed.

But business expectations among services providers weakened to their lowest level since October 2015, reflecting growing concerns that the sharp slowdown in the manufacturing sector could spread to the rest of the economy.

The "survey's forward-looking indicator — the only one based on sentiment — raises questions marks over how long the service sector can continue growing at such a pace and keep compensating for the weakness in manufacturing," said Phil Smith, principal economist at IHS Markit.

"Slowdown fears have weighed on service sector optimism." A sister survey published on Monday showed that activity in the export-dependent manufacturing sector contracted in June for the sixth month in a row, as weaker demand weighed on new orders and led to a fall in employment.

A composite PMI covering both sectors came in at 52.6 in June, unchanged from both the May and flash readings.

In its 10th year of growth, the German economy is expected to expand by a modest 0.5% this year, according to government projections.

The slowdown has started to leave its mark on an otherwise solid labor market that has been providing impetus to a consumption-driven growth cycle.

The economy has been relying on the domestic market for growth as exports weaken. Low interest rates and generous pay hikes have helped boost consumption.

"Overall employment in Germany is now in a lower growth phase, with the service sector providing the bulk of new jobs," Smith said.

Iran, Armenia ink MOU on energy cooperation

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Iran and Armenia signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in Tehran on Tuesday to expand economic cooperation, especially in the field of energy, Tasnim news agency reported.

The MOU was signed by Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian and Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan at the end of the 16th Iran-Armenia Joint Economic Committee meeting.

Based on the MOU, the two sides agreed to complete the construction of Iran's third electricity transmission line to Armenia by 2020 in order to increase the country's electricity exports to Armenia to over 1000 megawatts (MW).

Construction of a 100-MW hydroelectric power plant in Armenia was also agreed in the meeting. The power plant will be funded by Armenia's private sector in collaboration with other interested countries and the produced electricity will be purchased by Iran at a guaranteed price.

The MOU also covers cooperation in a variety of areas including road and railway transportation, customs, standardization, establishing free trade zones as well as industry, mining and trade.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Ardakanian said that the two sides have agreed that quadripartite talks would continue among Iran, Armenia,



Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian (L) and Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan exchange the cooperation documents at the 16th Iran-Armenia Joint Economic Committee meeting in Tehran on Tuesday.

Georgia and Russia regarding electricity exchange under the North-South corridor agreement.

The official further mentioned Iran's gas exports to Armenia, saying that Iran has the capacity to increase its gas exports to Armenia and in this regard the two sides agreed to take necessary measures in order

to provide infrastructure in this regard.

Iran and Armenia use a barter system to exchange gas for electricity and other basic goods.

In the industry, mining and trade sector, it was agreed to form a joint working group and hold meetings every six months in both countries.

"It was decided to hold joint business conferences in accordance with the Eurasian Economic Agreement to discuss trade and identify potential commodities for bartering in order to make necessary arrangements to exchange the two sides' required goods," Ardakanian said.

Regarding customs cooperation, the two sides agreed for installation of systems for electronic data exchange and also to follow up on the previous agreements in this area.

Moreover, the officials underlined the need for holding joint events in their free zones to encourage investment and trade in the two countries.

The two sides also agreed on establishing a joint road transportation committee which also includes representatives of insurance companies from the two countries in order to reduce barriers and facilitate transportation between the two sides.

Held on May 1-2, the 16th Iran-Armenia Joint Economic Committee meeting was attended by senior officials from both sides including Iran's Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan, Iranian Deputy Energy Minister for International Affairs Farhad Yazdandoust, Armenian Deputy Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Infrastructure Hakob Vardanyan, as well as businessmen, entrepreneurs and representatives of the private sector.

IMIDRO to revive 50 mines by March 2020

ECONOMY TEHRAN – The Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) has it on the agenda to revive 50 small-scale mines across the country by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020), IRIB reported on Wednesday, quoting an official with the organization.

According to Somayeh Kholousi, director of IMIDRO's planning and strategic supervision department, reviving small-scale mines is among IMIDRO's top priorities for the current fiscal year.

The official noted that one of the main advantages of small-scale mines is that they are widespread all across the country so they have the potential to create job opportunities in many regions.

"Among other important programs of IMIDRO, comprehensive communication with universities and academic institutions can be mentioned. In this regard, the organization has signed several agreements with universities and research centers," she said.

Last month, the industry, mining and trade ministry announced that increasing exports from the mining sector to the neighboring countries has been put on the ministry's agenda for the current fiscal year.

In this line, IMIDRO announced that the organization was planning to establish a consortium in order to accelerate mining projects.

IMIDRO Head Khodadad Gharibpour has said that based on the mining potentials and research and academic capabilities of

the country, 10 mining regions have been defined in order to manage projects and also utilize the country's academic potentials in this industry.

Gharibpour noted that within the framework of the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021), efficiency, productivity and maximum utilization of capacities of the mining industry have been given great importance and so should be considered in every step from exploration up to the production processes.

In May, Gharibpour said that the country's mining sector requires 18 billion euros of investment.

"The mining sector is one of the country's most profitable areas for investment, so that 30 percent of the profits in the capital market



pertains to the mining and mineral sector," he said.

IMIDRO currently has \$3 billion worth of projects underway and it also intends to renovate 5,000 industrial units using 100 trillion rials (about \$2.38 billion) of investment during the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21).

Global share listings dragged to three-year low by European shortage

Global share listings hit their lowest level in three years in the first half of the year, with a slowdown in Europe counteracting a stronger U.S. showing where tech giants Uber and Pinterest made their debuts.

According to hellenicshippingnews.com, proceeds from global listings fell 31% to \$62.8 billion (£49.6 billion) in the year to date, compared to \$90.5 billion in the same period a year ago, mostly dragged down by a seven-year low in Europe, Refinitiv data shows.

Just \$10.1 billion was raised from European IPOs, a 57% slide compared from a year earlier, while proceeds from U.S.-listed IPOs rose by 4.3% to \$29.8 billion, as investors poured money into companies that use technology to disrupt traditional industries.

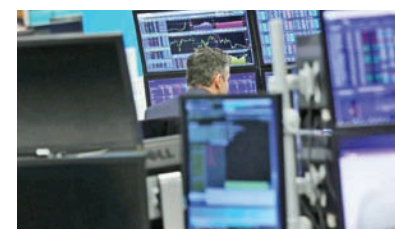
Among the most anticipated share offerings of the year were Silicon Valley's ride hailing apps Uber Technologies and Lyft Inc and image sharing website Pinterest.

Tech startups
At \$79 billion market capitalization, Uber was the biggest of a group of tech startups that have spent years raising money in private rounds at record prices before listing.

"Investors continue to see significant fund flows into the tech sector as they consider it more resilient and less exposed to the economic cycle," said Sam Losada, Head of EMEA Equity Capital Markets at Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

"Most recent tech IPOs show how much investor appetite there is for disruptive equity stories which play into digital transformation trends," Losada added.

While Uber was the biggest, Beyond Meat, a maker of plant-based burgers and sausages, was the most successful. Its shares climbed more than 160 percent on its May 2 market launch.



In contrast in London rail ticketing app Trainline, which went public on June 21, was the one bright spot among generally lackluster performances. Its shares are more than 6% above the IPO price of 400 pence.

Political uncertainty around Britain's departure from the European Union and a slowdown in the euro zone economy have created market turbulence in the first half, discouraging investment flows.

Fintech was Europe's most prolific sector, with a series of payment processing companies, including Italian private equity-owned Nexi and Middle Eastern-focused Network International going public.

Despite an improvement in proceeds from European listings in the second quarter, recently-listed companies including Finabl, Watches of Switzerland and telecoms operator Airtel Africa still trade below their flotation price.

Finabl and Airtel slashed the IPO price to the bottom of their targeted range. Airtel shares fell as much as 15% in a dismal debut last Friday.

Adam Farlow, Head of EMEA Capital Markets at law firm Baker McKenzie, expects "a more conservative pricing, particularly among larger listings" in the second half of the year, as issuers become more concerned that a stock underperformance might negatively impact the valuation of companies.

"Stagnant share prices do create a vicious circle and impact future investment decisions of the buy-side," Farlow said.

EU leaders choose France's Lagarde for ECB after marathon summit

European Union leaders agreed on Tuesday to name France's Christine Lagarde as the new head of the European Central Bank (ECB) and sealed a deal on filling the EU's other top four jobs after marathon talks that have exposed deep divisions in the bloc.

According to reuters.com, three days of summit negotiations that at times looked close to collapse ended with a deal that now must be approved by the European Parliament but was immediately rejected by the socialist bloc.

Leaders hope the decision to nominate two women, Lagarde and German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen, to the top of EU decision-making for the first time will send a positive message and repair damage wrought by such a fractious summit, diplomats said.

The discord echoed a wider fracturing of the EU's political center that was evident in May's European Parliament elections that delivered a more fragmented assembly in which no bloc won a majority and far-right and far-left groups performed strongly.

Under the deal, von der Leyen, a close ally of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, will replace Jean-Claude Juncker as president of the European Commission, the EU's executive arm.

"After all, Europe is a woman," Donald Tusk, the outgoing chair of EU summits, told reporters, referring to the ancient Greek mythical figure of Europa who gave her name to the continent.

Lagarde, once France's first woman finance minister and since 2011 head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is a strong advocate of female empowerment, although she has no direct, active monetary policy experience.

The biggest task for Lagarde
The biggest task for Lagarde, who had previously denied any interest in an



EU job, will be to revive the euro zone economy.

"Christine Lagarde will ... be a perfect president of the European Central Bank," Tusk said. "I am absolutely sure that she will be a very independent president ..."

Von der Leyen, if approved, would run the powerful Commission, which supervises EU states' budgets, acts as the bloc's competition watchdog and conducts trade negotiations with outside countries. Her presidency would shape policy for the world's biggest trade bloc and its 500 million people.

She once had a reputation as a flawless politician, but Brussels-born Von der Leyen has had a scandal-prone run as German defense minister, mainly over right-wing extremism in the armed forces, gaps in military readiness, and the awarding of arms contracts.

With a weakened Merkel facing a rebellion by her center-right European People's Party (EPP) early on in the summit, efforts to push through a deal pre-agreed with French President Emmanuel Macron met stiff resistance from Italy, Poland and others.

It was a clear reminder of the risks the EU faces from populists who officials accuse of trying to weaken the bloc's democratic foundations as it struggles with Brexit and challenges posed by Russia, China, Iran and Donald Trump's United States.

Korea cuts this year's economic growth outlook to between 2.4% and 2.5%

The South Korean government has cut its economic growth forecast this year to between 2.4 and 2.5 percent.

According to airang.co.kr, this is down from its previous forecast in December of between 2.6 percent and 2.7 percent.

When speaking to reporters in Seoul on Wednesday about the economic policy direction for the second half of 2019, Korea's Finance Chief Hong Nam-ki explained the difficulties that the nation is facing.

"Although we have been concentrating our efforts to boost the economy this year, along with shifting the economy's paradigm, an increase in uncertainties such as slower global economic growth and the U.S.-China trade dispute has led to difficulties."

Although the trade talks between the U.S. and China resumed after the G20 summit in Osaka, officials say uncertainties remain.

The fall in chip prices also contributed to the drop in economic growth.

Breaking it down by major economic indicators, almost all growth forecasts for this year fell compared to the previous outlook.

For instance, private consumption is expected to grow this year by 2.4 percent down from its earlier forecast of 2.7 percent.

Without oil deal Instex will not work, Zanganeh says

➔ Zanganeh who visited Vienna to attend the 176th meeting of the Conference of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), on Monday expressed satisfaction with the meeting and said "We achieved what we were seeking from this meeting. Iran was once again exempted from the cuts."

On June 28, the remaining signatories of the nuclear agreement met in the Austrian capital as a last-ditch effort to save the accord after the U.S. withdrew last year.

They announced in a statement that the European Union mechanism for trade with

Iran is up and running.

European Union foreign policy Chief Federica Mogherini has said that INSTEX has become operational and is processing the first transactions. With INSTEX going operational, Iran expects Europe to buy its oil through this mechanism.

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.

Oil prices steady on extended supply cuts, U.S. stocks draw

Oil prices edged higher on Wednesday after a steep fall in the previous session, supported by extended output cuts by OPEC and its allies despite concerns that a slowing global economy could crimp demand.

As per cnbc.com, an expected large draw in U.S. crude oil inventories also underpinned sentiment after a bigger-than-expected stocks fall in a private survey.

Brent crude futures for September delivery were trading up 36 cents, or 0.6%, at \$62.76 a barrel by 0244 GMT.

U.S. crude futures for August were up 29 cents, or 0.5%, at \$56.54 a barrel. Both benchmarks fell more than 4% on Tuesday as worries about a slowing global economy overshadowed OPEC supply cuts.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers such as Russia, a group known as OPEC+, agreed on Tuesday to extend oil supply cuts until March 2020 as members overcame differences to try to prop up prices.

The "OPEC+ meeting showed the members sticking together in tough times, characterized by weakening global demand outlook, aiming for a more balanced oil market, despite clear market share implications," said Amarpreet



Singh, analyst at Barclays Commodities Research in a note.

"This is supportive of oil prices, in our view, even as the market remains squarely focused on weak macro signals."

Ahead of government data due later on Wednesday, industry group the American Petroleum Institute (API) said that U.S. crude inventories fell by 5 million barrels last week, more than the expected decrease of 3 million barrels.

The OPEC+ agreement to extend oil output cuts for nine months should draw down oil inventories in the second half of this year, boosting oil prices, said analysts from Citi Research in a note.

"Keeping cuts through the end of 1Q aims to avoid putting oil into the market during a seasonal low for demand and refinery runs, as well as providing time to assess the impacts of IMO 2020," they said.

Still, signs of a global economic slowdown hitting oil demand growth worried investors after global manufacturing indicators disappointed and the U.S. opened another trade front after threatening the EU with more tariffs to offset government aid to the aviation industry.

Barclays expects demand to grow at its slowest pace since 2011, gaining less than 1 million barrels per day year-on-year this year.

Morgan Stanley, meanwhile, lowered its long-term Brent price forecast on Tuesday to \$60 per barrel from \$65 per barrel, and said the oil market is broadly balanced in 2019.

Crude prices were also capped by signs of a recovery in oil exports from Venezuela in June and growth in oil production in Argentina in May.

More power from renewables than brown coal for the first time ever

By Tim Boyd

Renewable energy supplied more power to the market than brown coal this financial year just ended for the first time ever, however price relief for consumers is still to come as wholesale prices rose since last year.

Brown coal generation fell 13 percent in the second quarter of 2019 compared with the same period a year ago, data compiled by University of Melbourne College of Climate and Energy researcher Dylan McConnell showed.

The 13 percent fall represented 1248 gigawatt hours less output into the market by brown coal, the lowest it has generated since 1993. This meant that the combination of hydro, wind and utility solar put more energy into the market than brown coal over the 2018-19 financial year.

Despite this, hydro power generation fell 21 percent in the second quarter of 2019 compared with 2018, from 4840 gigawatt hours to 3822. Mr. McConnell said this was due to a tough period of drought that reduced the output of hydro power plants.

Wholesale energy prices rose in the second quarter of 2019 to an average of \$91.62, compared with \$85.52 in the second quarter of 2018.

Green Energy Markets director Tristan Edis said he thought wholesale prices would begin to fall before 2021. "I find it hard to believe that we won't see a material reduction in wholesale prices by 2021."

He said incoming new supply, equivalent to that from

two Hazelwood power stations, would force wholesale prices down.

Wholesale price falls would filter through to retail customers within 12 months of falling, according to Mr. Edis, so there was some time to go before consumers would benefit.

■ The black coal generation

The University of Melbourne data showed that black coal generation remained flat from the second quarter of 2018 compared with 2019, and black coal was far and away the biggest source of power generation in the National Energy Market.

The biggest generation increase by volume of gigawatt hours came from wind generation, which grew 28 per cent to 4020 gigawatt hours generated in the second quarter of 2019 compared with 3141 in the second quarter of 2018.

The data showed gas generation fell to its lowest level this financial year since 2006-07, generating well under 20,000 gigawatt hours. Gas generation peaked over 2013 and 2014 and has been falling since, despite a slight bounce in the 2017-18 financial year.

Despite renewables overtaking brown coal, research from Mr. Edis' consultancy firm Green Energy Markets showed that NSW, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia are all expected to fall short of their 2030 renewable investment targets.

The Renewable Energy Index report, released on Tuesday, showed NSW needs to add the most renewable generation



capacity to its arsenal - 5000 megawatts by 2030 - to be on track to hit its target of net zero emissions from its power sector by 2050.

Forecasting from Green Energy Markets showed that NSW was on track for 26 per cent of its overall energy consumption to be from renewables by 2030. To be on track to achieve the 2050 goal, this would need to rise to 46 percent by 2030.

Victoria needed to add 2000 megawatts worth of renewable projects by 2030 if it was to hit its target of 50 percent renewables by 2030.

(Source: afr.com)

Another beneficiary of the OPEC deal emerges

By Tsvetana Paraskova

U.S. shale won't be the only beneficiary of higher oil prices if the commitment of OPEC and its Russia-led allies to extend their oil production cuts into March 2020 manages to draw down excess global inventories and prop up prices.

The UK North Sea as well could profit, as higher Brent Crude prices, possibly returning above \$70 a barrel, could yield more cash flow to operators and the supply chain, industry experts told Energy Voice. Yet, they warned that containing costs as much as possible would be crucial to the North Sea remaining competitive in new investments with other, more attractive, oil and gas basins in the world.

Although OPEC's decision to roll over the cuts was widely expected, the nine-month extension to the end of March 2020 - instead of the original idea to roll over until the end of 2019 - suggests that the cartel is concerned that demand will weaken, while non-OPEC supply, especially U.S. production, will grow at a robust pace.

OPEC's extension was largely factored into the market ahead of time, but a further price upside could come from a possible resolution of the trade dispute between the U.S. and China, which could remove a key uncertainty over global economic and oil demand outlooks.

It's nearly impossible to forecast where oil prices will be - even in the short term - in view of the tense geopolitical picture, but the North Sea oil industry would profit in the short term if Brent prices returned in the \$70-80 range, Marc Gronwald, senior lecturer in



energy economics at Aberdeen University, told Energy Voice. If the industry wants to avoid the next bust cycle, and if they want to keep skittish investors who have just jumped back into the game by throwing cash at North Sea assets, the industry shouldn't let costs run out of control with higher prices, even though cost inflation looks "unavoidable", according to Gronwald.

■ Rising oil prices

UK North Sea operators could potentially get \$348 million (£275 million) a year for very \$1-rise in oil prices, Paul de Leeuw, director of Robert Gordon University's Oil and Gas Institute, told Energy Voice. Yet, he cautioned that the industry needs to pull off a careful balancing act between keeping costs down on the one hand, and ensuring wide enough margins for supply chain contractors, on the other.

Production and operating costs of oil and

gas field operators in the UK North Sea increased by about 2 percent in 2017, the UK Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) said in a report in October 2018. Still, total operating expenditure of North Sea oil and gas companies was still 28 percent lower than costs in 2014 before oil prices collapsed.

Earlier this year, the OGA said that oil production in the UK rose by 8.9 percent on the year to 1.09 million bpd in 2018 - the highest UK oil production rate since 2011.

Despite this production increase, the UK North Sea needs to attract a steady stream of investment if it wants to keep production and the supply chain from collapsing, industry association Oil & Gas UK said in its key Business Outlook 2019 report this year. Total capital investment has dropped by two thirds since 2014, but Oil & Gas UK sees investment stabilizing this year and next, with a potential for a slight increase this year.

(Source: olprice.com)

Climate friend or carbon bomb? Global gas market faces \$1.3t stranded asset risk

By Michael Mazengarb

The global gas market will need to slow the pace of its growth, to avoid both the risk of stranded assets and to prevent further increases to global emissions, a new report from U.S.-based think tank Global Energy Monitor has found.

In the report, Global Energy Monitor has warned that up to \$1.3 trillion in new LNG export and import infrastructure currently under development is at significant risk of becoming stranded, as the world market for gas risks becoming oversupplied, particularly if the United States and Canada play a larger role.

More than 70% of new investment in LNG export terminals, totalling more than \$910 billion, will be located in either the U.S. or Canada, seeing the entry of two new players in a global market for gas that they have otherwise had minimal involvement.

Global Energy Monitor found it is likely that there will be significant over-investment in new gas infrastructure, as the continued emergence of lower cost renewable alternatives challenges the need for further gas supplies, creating additional risk to Australia's already strained gas market.



If all LNG infrastructure projects in the development pipeline are completed, the global gas supply would potentially increase three-fold, at a time when the momentum is shifting towards lower emissions sources of energy, including lower cost renewables.

■ Costs of renewables

The findings echo a similar analysis by Bloomberg New Energy Finance that the falling costs of renewables combined with storage were able to complete new gas generation on cost.

Current commitments for further gas infrastructure investments include \$38 billion in new Australian projects, the bulk of which face some degree of risk of becoming stranded assets.

Australia has emerged as one of the world's largest exporters of natural gas, challenging Qatar for top spot after a decade of substantial investment in establishing export terminals across Queensland and Western Australia.

The report called for a moratorium on the development of further LNG export terminals, with citing both the likelihood of the export market becoming oversupplied with gas and the contribution of gas has to global greenhouse gas emissions.

Global Energy Monitor forecast that growth in natural gas use in line with infrastructure investments would make it impossible to achieve the Paris Agreement commitment to limiting warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

"Given the climate mandate that natural gas be scaled back over the next decade, not to mention the risk to investors of stranded assets and financial losses from overbuilding, a sensible approach to the question of LNG terminal expansion would be a moratorium on further construction," Global Energy Monitor said in its report.

The report from Global Energy Monitor also highlighted the fallacy behind claims by Australia's energy and resources ministers, Angus Taylor and Matt Canavan, that Australia should be rewarded for exporting gas to the rest of the world.

Taylor claimed following the delayed release of an update Australia's greenhouse gas accounts that Australia's rising emissions should be considered in the context of Australia's gas exports potentially being used to offset more emissions-intensive fuels overseas.

This contention is challenged by the findings of the Global Energy Monitor report, which shows gas having a similar contribution to global emissions to that of coal.

Global Energy Monitor highlighted that methane, the main component of natural gas, has been responsible for 25 per cent of the global warming observed to date.

Crucially, the report estimated that the emissions contribution of natural gas developments currently underway is equal, or greater than the expansion of coal-fired generation.

The "results of the lifecycle comparison, including fugitive methane emissions, show that current proposals for new LNG terminal capacity, if fully developed, would lock in global warming impacts that are roughly equivalent, when considered on a 100-year horizon, to those of current proposals for new coal-fired power plants," the report said.

■ Environmental benefits of gas

There has been an ongoing reconsideration of the environmental benefits of gas, following greater understanding of the life-cycle emissions of natural gas and particularly in relation to fugitive emissions during extraction and processing.

While natural gas produces fewer emissions during combustion compared to the equivalent amount of coal, when fugitive emissions are taken into account, this benefit may be reduced, if not completely eliminated.

"Because power plant combustion of natural gas produces about 40% less carbon dioxide than combustion of coal, proponents of natural gas have characterized it as a "bridge" from coal to renewables," Global Energy Monitor said.

"However, a full life cycle comparison of both natural gas and coal requires also including the effect of leakages in natural gas production and transportation, since methane (CH₄), the main component of natural gas, is a far more powerful global warming gas than carbon dioxide."

Australia faced a grilling from other countries at a recent round of UN climate talks held in Bonn, with rising emissions from LNG production singled out as an issue requiring an explanation from Australian negotiators.

(Source: australianeconomy.com.au)

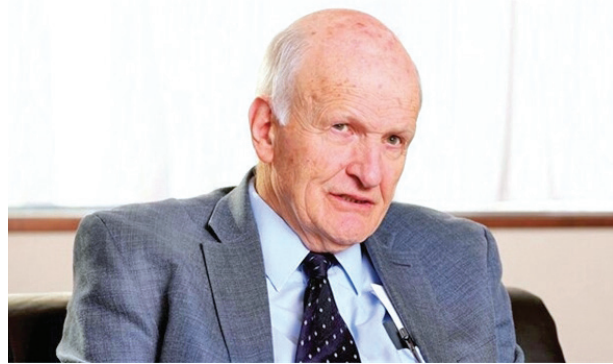
Ex-White House official: Trump administration under pressure to reduce Tensions with Iran

TEHRAN (FNA) — Professor Frank N. von Hippel, former assistant director for national security in the White House Office of Science and Technology says sanctioning the Iranian leader foreign minister would certainly be counterproductive in undermining any possibility for diplomatic talks between Iran and the US.

In an exclusive interview with FNA, the Princeton University professor said, "It is difficult to understand how Trump believed that it would be possible for the US to end its commitments and press the other parties to the deal to do the same without creating the possibility that Iran would end its commitments."

"The Trump Administration is under pressure to reduce the tensions with Iran," he added. Frank von Hippel is a theoretical physicist, and a Professor of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. Prior to working at Princeton, he worked for ten years in the field of theoretical elementary-particle physics.

In the 1980s, as chairman of the Federation of American Scientists, Von Hippel partnered with Evgeniy Velikhov in advising Mikhail Gorbachev on the technical basis for steps to end the nuclear arms race. From 1993 to 1995, he was the Assistant Director for National Security in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.



He now serves on the National Advisory Board of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, the research arm of Council for a Livable World. He is a member of the International Panel on Fissile Materials.

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ The United States recently imposed new sanctions against senior Iranian officials, including the Supreme Leader and some senior Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) commanders. It was announced that Iranian Foreign Secretary Javad Zarif would be hit with the US sanctions later, too. What could be the objective of this move?

A: My guess is that this is an indication that there are few remaining Iranian economic activities that the Trump Administration has not already sanctioned. Sanctioning the Supreme Leader and Foreign Minister would certainly be counterproductive in undermining any possibility for diplomatic talks. This therefore would suggest that the Trump Administration currently has little interest in such diplomatic talks. This is very unfortunate, especially given the currently increasing chances of an unintended war.

■ The sanctions on Iranian officials seem to be a move to buy Trump some reputation and alleviate his pains or grief after Iran shot down an American surveillance drone. How do you evaluate the move?

A: This is possible. I am not sure that "grief" is the right word to use since no loss of human life was involved. He claims that his first impulse was a military response, which could have resulted in war. From that perspective, the announcement of the sanctions was a less dangerous act in the short term, although the signal it sends about a lack of interest in diplomacy increases the danger of war in the longer term.

■ The American Secretary of State recently talked about negotiation with Iran without any preconditions, while he had earlier set a dozen prerequisites for talks with Tehran. Why do you think he has softened tone towards Iran?

A: The Trump Administration is under pressure to reduce the tensions with Iran. It would be a positive development if Secretary Pompeo was seriously willing to talk without preconditions. I hope that Iran will respond that it is willing to talk on that basis. Winston Churchill was claimed to have said that "Jaw, jaw is better than war." Even if he didn't say it, that is right.

■ The United States pretends to be offering talks to Iran while intensifying sanctions on the country. How could one justify such an approach?

A: I don't think that negotiations can accomplish anything if there are not potential benefits for Iran as well as for the US and its allies.

■ How could one explain the western states' complains about modification of the nuclear deal undertakings by Iran that came in a reciprocal move against Washington's full disrespect and violation of the agreement, given the fact that Tehran's new strategy came a year after President Trump withdrew the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)?

A: It is difficult to understand how Trump believed that it would be possible for the US to end its commitments and press the other parties to the deal to do the same without creating the possibility that Iran would end its commitments. That being said, I think that what Iran is doing is very dangerous in that it could provide a pretext for the Trump Administration to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities, claiming that it was necessary to stop Iran from getting the bomb.

India's international trade policy at a crossroads

By Xie Chao

GLOBALTIMES — As an emerging economy that can utilize multiple sources in major power relations, India now stands at a crossroads. It believes that a historical moment has come when China is developing its manufacturing sector, and turbulent trading relations between Beijing and Washington have opened potential markets for other countries.

But US President Donald Trump's doctrine on trade reciprocity may pour water on India's hopes. On economic relations with the US, India is concerned that its economic rise might be scuppered by the Trump administration's obsession with protectionism and unilateralism.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is obliged to protect the country's emerging manufacturing industries from fierce foreign competition and catapult its Make in India campaign to the international stage. But it has also been alarmed by recent trade conflicts and increasing pressure from the US government to ease restrictions on American companies entering the Indian market and lower tariff barriers.

Ahead of the G20 summit in Japan, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited New Delhi. Pompeo said that Washington would consider all policy tools to ensure that India can meet its crude oil needs after being told that New Delhi was hit by debilitating US sanctions on importing Iranian and Venezuelan oil. But such verbal promises



mean nothing if no waiver is given to India.

India is an oil buyer with reasonable hope of diversified sources. The US is an emerging energy supplier and also an uninvited world policeman to the market. This has made India-US trading relations much more complicated. Any attempts at forcing India to buy more gas and oil from the US or its allies will be resented by the Indian government because the diversity of crude oil supply is reduced and might increase India's strategic dependence on the US when mutual trust is low. It is an

established policy of the Modi government to deepen strategic cooperation with the US, but the Trump administration is clearly delinking economic issues from strategic cooperation, forcing India to the trade talks table.

India might have to invest a great deal of strategic assets to engage in security cooperation with the US but at the same time make more concessions on trade. The Indian government is gaining little from the relationship and Pompeo's visit didn't offer any concrete measures to ease concerns. As

far as India-China trade relations go, India is wary of the economic prowess of China, which now is a leading country safeguarding free and open trade. While trade conflicts between China and the US attract attention, it was India that filed most anti-dumping cases against China, and most investigations led to anti-dumping duties.

India doesn't have any bilateral or multilateral free trade agreement with China. This has affected many regional policies of New Delhi, for instance its attitude toward the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership), which, after being signed, will be the largest free trade agreement in the world and bring stability to an otherwise unstable international trading system. The chief concern is that India needs to protect its companies from Chinese competition.

India is also constantly complaining about trade deficit with China and urging it to import more Indian goods. To sum it up, India is neither a solid supporter of free and open trade, nor a net winner in Trump's unilateral attempt to reorganize free trade. India could stand together with China to safeguard multilateralism but its trading relations with China have much scope for improvement.

The good news is that trading issues between India and China are largely handled within existing international principles and both governments are discussing ways to improve trading practices and their trading volume is expected to exceed \$100 billion very soon.

U.S. sanctions are acts of war

TEHRAN (FNA) — In great violation of UN Charter and international law, and with no international accountability, the United States is currently engaged in illegal and comprehensive economic blockades against Iran, North Korea and Venezuela, as well as several lesser blockades against countries such as Cuba and Nicaragua, and an intensifying effort to cut off China's access to technology.

The blockade against North Korea is sanctioned, at least in part, by the UN Security Council. The blockade against Iran is in direct opposition to the Security Council. And the blockade against Venezuela is so far without Security Council engagement for or against.

The US is attempting to isolate the three countries from almost all international trade, causing shortages of food, medicines, energy, and spare parts for basic infrastructure, including the water supply and power grid. This is because they are not on the same page as Washington in regional matters.

The North Korean blockade operates mainly through UN-mandated sanctions, and includes a comprehensive list of exports to North Korea, imports from North Korea, and financial relations with North

Korean entities.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization reports that ten million North Koreans are at risk of hunger, partly owing to sanctions.

The... "negative impact sanctions can have on agricultural production, through both direct and indirect impacts, cannot be ignored," the FAO warns. "The most obvious are restrictions on the importation of certain items that are necessary for agricultural production, in particular fuel, machinery and spare parts for equipment."

The draconian US sanctions on Venezuela have come in two phases. The first, beginning in August 2017, was mainly directed at the state oil company PDVSA, the country's main earner of foreign exchange; the second round of sanctions, imposed in January 2019, was more comprehensive, targeting the Venezuelan government.

A recent detailed analysis of the first round of sanctions shows their devastating impact. The US sanctions gravely exacerbated economic mismanagement, contributing to a catastrophic fall in oil production, hyperinflation, economic collapse, hunger, and rising mortality.

US illegal sanctions against Iran have

been in place more or less continuously since 1979. The most recent and by far most draconian measures, introduced in August 2018 and intensified in the first half of this year, aim to cut Iran off from foreign trade.

The US illegal sanctions are in direct contravention of UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran. The effects have been inhumane.

One might expect that other countries would easily circumvent these illegal sanctions. But the US has threatened to punish foreign companies that violate the sanctions and has used the dollar's global clout as a bludgeon, threatening to sanction foreign banks that finance trade with Iran.

European companies have fallen into line, despite the European Union's political support for the UN resolution and nuclear deal with Iran. The history of the past 40 years shows that over the longer term, more ways will be found to circumvent the sanctions, using renminbi, ruble, or euro financing.

Despite the intense economic pain inflicted on North Korea, Venezuela, and Iran, none of them has succumbed to US demands. In this sense, sanctions have proved to be no

more successful than military intervention.

North Korea has maintained, and most likely is expanding, its nuclear arsenal. The Iranian government rejects US demands concerning its missile program and foreign policies. And Venezuela's President Nicol?z Maduro remains in power.

The US blockades have been carried out by presidential decrees and mostly on the basis of congressional ratifications and oversight. Yet under President Trump, this has been a one-man show, even more so than in the case of president-led wars, which trigger vastly more public scrutiny. Trump realizes that he can impose sanctions abroad with virtually no political or international accountability.

Military blockades are acts of war, and therefore subject to international law, including UN Security Council oversight. America's economic blockades are similar in function and outcome to military blockades, with inhumane consequences for civilian populations, and risk provoking war. It is time for the Security Council to take up the US sanctions regimes and economic terrorism and weigh them against the requirements of international law and peacekeeping

Hannah Smith: Saudi Arabia executed 37 citizens with Trump's blessing

TEHRAN (FNA) — Hanna Smith, British Muslim rights activist, says Saudi Arabia, as the US's "major cash cow" with its growing support for Israel, has become an "invaluable pawn in Zio-American foreign policy", with no fear of being discarded over the human rights of Saudi citizens.

In an exclusive interview with FNA, Ms. Smith also said, "The US always put political economics over ethical foreign policy and have done the same upon hearing of the executions of Shia prisoners... The unsurprising US silence about the unjust executions is confirmation enough of their support for Saudi regime atrocity."

Hannah Elizabeth Smith is the Co-Founder and Director of Initiative for Muslim Community Development, a US-based think tank with its focus on Muslims human rights.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ Saudi Arabia executed 37 people, majority of them Shias. Shias, in Saudi Arabia, are minority in terms of population, but majority when it comes to capital punishment. How do you view it?

A: The Saudi leaders have always responded to demands of the human rights activists and organizations for the improvement of rights conditions with an iron fist. In 2009, the Saudi regime under pressure of the international rights organizations approved the Arab Charter on Human Rights to limit the death penalty to only serious crimes. Over the past years, Saudis have tried to tie the executions to acts of terrorism and drugs smuggling, an effort that has so far failed to convince the home and foreign critics. The Saudi rulers apparently have begun to feel the risks of a popular revolution as the internal dissent is growing, particularly in the predominantly-Shia Eastern Province where the Shia citizens are subjected to tough economic deprivation and political discrimination despite concentration of



the oil reserves in their region. In fact, in the wake of the risk of an outbreak of uprisings in the Arab countries after a wave of recent uprisings in Sudan and Algeria, the Saudi authorities have stepped up the crackdown on the political activism of the opposition. Existence of at least seventy people from Shia minority among those executed sets off the alarm bells about the rise of a new wave of sectarianism and repression of the dissenters.

■ The US Administration neither condemned the Saudi's mass execution, nor Khashoggi's killing. Instead, it praised the regime for its massive oil exports. How do you assess that?

A: The US always put political economics over ethical foreign policy and have done the same upon hearing of the executions of Shia prisoners. The US are more concerned about losing their most important Arab ally,

or should we say puppet, in the region. The unsurprising US silence about the unjust executions is confirmation enough of their support for Saudi regime atrocity. It appears that bin Salman has carried out the executions with Trump's blessings and indeed tacit support. The Saudis are undoubtedly planning further clampdown on the opposition with the green light of Washington and without fear from prosecution of the Western powers.

As the United States major cash cow in the Middle East and with its growing covert and overt support for the Zionist regime in Israel the Saudis are too invaluable a pawn in Zio-American foreign policy globally to be discarded over the human rights of its citizens.

■ Is the mass execution in line with the Crown Prince MbS claims of having planned reforms in the ultra-conservative country?

A: Mohammad bin Salman has unleashed a superficial liberalization agenda at home to create a smokescreen for the barbarity of his actual despotic agenda. However it is true that women are now allowed to drive, a halal gambling venue has opened up and bikini beaches are in the pipeline; all this is just for starters. In a nation that prided itself in implementing the most draconian interpretation of Islam these are gargantuan moves towards an astounding cultural makeover - religion-social engineering, akin to extreme cosmetic surgery, some might say. At the same time the Saudi obsession with erasing all heritage architecture in Mecca and Medina continues unabated, so clearly their 'cultural revolution' hasn't apparently reached the ears of their corporate development departments who have bulldozed Prophetic history and replaced it with... well in the environ of the Holy Ka'aba, the most spiritual place on Earth, a gigantic clock with Las Vegas style shopping and entertainment facilities.

U.S. foreign policy exposed

By Kevin B. Zeese and Margaret Flowers

ANTIWAR—In the last week, the realities of US foreign policy have been exposed by a leaked audio tape, a leak about a US attack on the Russian electrical grid, and US attempts to extradite Julian Assange. All the information points to a foreign policy that violates international law and standards, perpetrates wars and conflict and seeks to undermine press freedom in order to commit its crimes in secret.

This is not new information to those of us who closely follow US foreign policy, but these new exposures are broad and are in the mass media where many millions of people can view them and gain a greater understanding of the realities of US actions around the world. Join the People's Mobilization to Stop the US War Machine this September.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo Exposes Himself To Jewish Leadership

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo gave a foreign policy speech to the presidents of major Jewish organizations. The speech was remarkable because it shows the special attention this group receives. Very sensitive secrets of US foreign policy were provided to the audience. Thankfully, someone in the audience audio-taped the conversation, and as a result, millions of people in the US and around the world now know the truth about some critical US foreign policy issues. Here are some of the topics he discussed:

US Seeks To Stop Jeremy Corbyn Before He Is Elected: The audio includes Pompeo promising to do his "level best" to stop Corbyn from ever being elected as Prime Minister of the UK. Pompeo was responding to a question, "Would you be willing to work with us to take on actions if life becomes very difficult for Jews in the UK?" This was about the false claim that Corbyn is anti-Semitic because he favors the rights of Palestinians and criticizes Israel. Pompeo responded:

"It could be that Mr. Corbyn manages to run the gauntlet and get elected. It's possible. You should know, we won't wait for him to do those things to begin to push back. We will do our level best. It's too risky and too important and too hard once it's already happened."

The Secretary of State describing how the US would attempt to influence British elections comes despite all the claims of Russia allegedly influencing US elections. A Labour spokesman responded: "President Trump and his officials' attempts to decide who will be Britain's next prime minister are an entirely unacceptable interference in the UK's democracy."

US Coup in Venezuela not going well: In another US interference in democracy, Pompeo discussed the US coup in Venezuela. Pompeo described the opposition to Maduro as divided and acting in their own self-interest. He said: "Our conundrum, which is to keep the opposition united, has proven devilishly difficult." Pompeo said in the meeting, the image of unity was really only useful as a "public" facade.

Pompeo also admitted that he has been working on the coup in Venezuela "since the day I became CIA director." He explained creating unity among the opposition "was something that was at the center of what



President Trump was trying to do," Pompeo became CIA director on January 23, 2017.

Despite the US saying in public that Juan Guaido was president of Venezuela, he admitted in the audio tape that Maduro was still president and he could not predict the timing of when he would leave, but he assured the audience that the economic war and other actions against the government and against the Venezuelan population would result in his leaving.

Kushner Peace Plan Unlikely, Iran Too Sensitive To Discuss: Pompeo told Jewish leaders that the Trump administration's soon-to-be-released Middle East peace plan will be considered "unworkable," and might not gain traction. Pompeo acknowledged the plan's perceived favoritism to Israel and was not optimistic saying, "It may be rejected. Could be in the end, folks will say, 'It's not particularly original, it doesn't particularly work for me.'"

Pompeo was about to get into other Middle East issues like Iran but expressed concern that someone might be taping the conversation and the information could be too sensitive.

Iran Threats Heat Up Based On Unproven US Allegation

On June 13, two outbound tankers in the Gulf of Oman suffered from explosions on the side facing international waters. Iranian rescuers rushed to assist the two oil tankers, transferring all 44 crew members to Iran's southern shores.

The US is claiming the attacks came from mines placed on the boats by Iran. The president of Kokuka Sangyo Marine, (shipowners), Yutaka Katada, said: "there is no possibility of mine attack as the attack is well above the waterline" and the crew described a flying object hitting the tanker.

The US blaming Iran gives us a "Remember the Maine!" / Gulf of Tonkin feeling, examples of false claims that led to war. The US provided a grainy, hard to understand video of a boat allegedly removing a mine from a tanker hours later. The US claims it was the Iranian Revolutionary Guard removing evidence of Iran's involvement. There are many problems with this theory that raise more questions than answers.

The attack against the Japanese-owned tanker came at the moment that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was meeting with Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah

Khamenei. The meeting was a historic one, the first Japanese leader to visit Iran since its revolution 40 years ago. Would Iran attack an oil tanker and sabotage its own meeting with the Japanese leader? This theory strains credulity. The US accusation against Iran seems designed to undermine Iran-Japanese diplomacy. Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, said in a tweet, "Suspicious doesn't begin to describe what likely transpired this morning."

These attacks seem to be against the interests of Iran as they provide an excuse for escalation against Iran by the US and its allies. Neocons and US armed regimes who oppose Iran, including Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, would all benefit from this attack.

Even though much of the media repeated the allegations, the suspicion that this was a false accusation against Iran was so strong that many media outlets noted the lack of evidence, e.g. the New York Times, CNN, and NPR. The Saudi media immediately amplified the US accusation. US intelligence experts questioned the claim, raised doubts about the video and noted the US history in "ginning up" attacks for political purposes. Japan has asked for more proof, European governments questioned the claim. The lack of evidence for the US claim and the reality of how it makes little sense for Iran to make such an attack seem to be exposing the US more than undermining Iran.

US Cyberattack on Russian Electrical Grid On June 15, the New York Times reported on interviews with military officials over the last three months that showed the US stepping up digital incursions into Russia's electric power grid. The US has deployed computer code into the Russian electrical system for future cyber attacks. The actions are a warning to President Putin and a demonstration of how the Trump administration is using new authorities to deploy cyber tools more aggressively, according to current and former government officials.

The Times reports the US "strategy has shifted more toward offense...with the placement of potentially crippling malware inside the Russian system at a depth and with an aggressiveness that had never been tried before."

Last year, new authorities were granted separately by the White House and Congress to United States Cyber Command, an arm

of the Pentagon, to conduct offensive online operations without receiving presidential approval. The Times reports that Trump has not been briefed on the details of these actions for fear of his reaction. Trump denies the report and accused the Times of "a virtual act of treason."

It is not clear how far the US has gone into the Russian electrical system. Could it cripple Russia's electrical system or shut down its military? This may not be known until it is activated. Attacks on power grids by the US are not new, as shown in the attack on the Venezuelan electrical system in March, but boring into a system in preparation for war seems to be new.

US Behind Conviction Of Lula and others in Brazil

Glenn Greenwald obtained thousands of pages of communications between the people involved in the conviction of Lula da Silva, a popular politician in Brazil. It appears now that Lula was falsely convicted to prevent him from winning the presidency in 2018 and that the US was behind it. Brazilian judges are now calling for the conviction of Lula and many others who were targeted to be thrown out and an investigation into the massive corruption. Greenwald says there is more to come.

The US Hates When The Truth Is Exposed

Officials in the US government and leaders of transnational corporations are well-aware that they are violating or skirting international and domestic laws. When an official is caught on tape in a private meeting, leaks of documents are provided to the media or an off-the-record interview reveals US strategies for war, the government gets upset.

We do not have to look any further to see this than the attempt to extradite Julian Assange to face prosecution in the United States. The US has issued a formal request for the extradition of Assange on 18 charges, 17 of which are violations of the Espionage Act, that could incarcerate him for the rest of his life. The Magistrate's Court scheduled a five-day extradition hearing beginning on February 24, 2020.

The video in this tweet shows the hatred prominent people have for Julian Assange for merely publishing the truth about US war crimes, State Department operations, the Guantanamo Bay Prison and corporate corruption.

The facade is being lifted on US foreign policy. It is no longer possible for the US to get away with its crimes. And global power is shifting. Last week, Russia and China signed two major agreements, thus ending the US as the dominant superpower and creating a multipolar world. Alliances are changing - India may partner with Russia and China.

We are facing a historic crossroad. Will the US continue to try to dominate the world using economic, cyber and military weapons, further isolating itself and wasting resources that are needed to meet human needs and protect the planet, or will the US become a partner in good faith with other great powers? It is up to us to determine which path is taken. Join us this September during the United Nations General Assembly to call for the US to be held accountable in the People's Mobilization to Stop the US War Machine. Click here for more information.

Bahrain conference is a stab in the back to every Palestinian

By Aya Al Ghazawi

ANTIWAR—Palestinian protesters hold posters during a protest against the Bahrain economic workshop, in Khan Younis in the southern of Gaza strip, on June 26, 2019.

Everybody is talking about the two-day Bahrain Conference held in Manama entitled "Peace to Prosperity Workshop" to discuss "prosperous" economic development proposals in Palestine. This conference is said to come as the first stage of the so called the "Deal of the Century." But this is not true. The deal already started when the U.S. moved its embassy to Jerusalem last year after declaring it, all of it, as the capital of the Jewish state of Israel as Israel killed 62 Palestinians participating in the peaceful demonstration of the Great Return March. Moreover, the U.S. declared Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights. And that the West Bank could be annexed to Israel. The "Peace to Prosperity Workshop" simply represents an economic aspect of this slowly unraveling deal.

On the surface, this conference looks exclusively economic but it goes beyond this. The danger of this conference not only manifests in boosting normalization between Arab countries, especially the Gulf, with Israel, but also minimizing the Palestinian struggle into an economic crisis. Meaning, it depoliticizes the Palestinian cause and portrays it as a humanitarian issue in the first place, denying the fact that Palestine suffers from a multi-tiered system of oppression enshrined in Israel and incarnated in occupation, settler-colonialism and Apartheid.

This conference, in fact, is one step in the continual dehumanization of the Palestinian people. It says that the Palestinian cause costs as much as 50 billion dollars as distributed to Palestine (\$28 billion) and surrounding countries like Egypt (\$12 billion), Jordan (\$7 billion) and Lebanon (\$6 billion) within the next 10 years. It says that the blood of the Palestinian martyrs and the people's long suffering can be bargained upon. That money can make up to Palestinians for the ongoing ethnic cleansing which began in 1948. That the incremental genocide inflicted by Israel on Palestinians can be forgotten for crumbs of bread and a trivial sum of money. And most importantly, that

the unquestionable right of Palestinians to return to their usurped homelands and compensation as guaranteed in Resolution 94 can be alienated.

What Kushner wants to convey is that peace can be achieved in the Middle East through building infrastructure in trade, transportation, tourism and digital services, forgetting the fact that Israel is the main reason behind the destruction of this infrastructure. Whatever apolitical projects are proposed will be deficient and unsuccessful, though it may prove the opposite in the short run, because the root of the problem lies in the existence of an apartheid state in Palestine.

Occupying the senior adviser in Trump's current administration and living in a post-colonial America which wouldn't have been the America known today without the genocide against its indigenous population, Jared Kushner insists on giving the impression of doing the Palestinians a favor by bringing "peace" and "prosperity" into their "reactionary" and "poverty-stricken" homeland. This colonial white supremacist mentality asks Palestinians to be the good slave by obeying and cooperating. The good Palestinian is the one who admits total submission to their master. Palestinians are expected to thank the American administration for saving them from themselves. Earlier this month, Kushner expressed racist remarks regarding the incapability of Palestinians to govern themselves. Therefore, Palestinians need a superior side, who are capable and advanced, to take control of them and direct their affairs.

From their side, Palestinians, inside the occupied Palestine and in the diaspora, announced their rejection of Manama conference and, consequently, its outcomes. Palestinians in the West Bank led civil demonstrations in the street condemning this conference, which is an auction in its essence, and those taking part in it. Gaza also has showed its rejection with a general strike. The Palestinian leadership asserted that this conference is empty of meaning as it comes against the will of Palestinians, and opens the gate to undervaluing the Palestinian cause. On the 63rd Friday of the Great Return March, Palestinians went out protesting under the slogan "Land Is not for Sale"

The power remains with the people. The civil society in the participating countries need to protest their governments' participation. Palestinians bank on the conscientious people to heed their call of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

movement, known widely as BDS, which aims at isolating Israel from the world until it ends its violations of human rights and complies with the international law. It is Palestinians who determine the form of solidarity with them as they are the oppressed. Palestinians seek freedom, justice and equality.

Once again, Kushner uses a decorated language to evade the fact that his plan aims at liquidating the Palestinian cause once and for all by obliterating the refugees cause. If the U.S. really had cared a bit about the economic status of the Palestinians, it would not have tried to shut down UN-RWA or halted its aid in the first place! The picture is made even clearer by the Israel's UN ambassador, Danny Danon, asking Palestinians to surrender and yearning for the late Egyptian president Anwar Sadat who officially normalized with Israel in signing the Camp-David treatment in 1978.

This deal is beneficial to Israel only. After all, Trump and Kushner strive to maintain Israel's security as if Israel is the not the real threat in the Middle East. Lately, the US ambassador, David M. Friedman, said that "Israel has the right to remain some, but unlikely all, of the West Bank."

The Oslo Accords evidently constitutes a fertile ground for the "Deal of the Century." When signed in 1993, Oslo implanted the hope of bringing about prosperity in Palestine within 5 years and turning it into Singapore. After half a century of futile and fruitless peace process, the Palestinian situation is worsening. Jerusalem is gone, the West Bank is annexed, and the Gaza Strip has become the biggest concentration camp and largest open-air prison on Earth. And Palestinians annoy the world by not dying in silence. Because they keep banging on the tank!

What Kushner fails to understand is that freedom, justice and equality and dignity are rights that cannot be bought. The great late Egyptian poet Amal Donqol described this case well in his verses

"Do not reconcile even if they give you gold
I wonder
if I were to gouge out your eyes
and replace them with two gems
would you see?
These things are priceless"

Europe should recall its commitment to the Iran deal instead of enabling U.S. hawks

By Reza Nasri

TEHRAN (FNA) — Iran has recently announced that it would gradually scale back its commitments under the nuclear agreement - as permitted by the deal itself - in view of enticing other parties to honour their obligations. In response to Iran's initiative, anti-Iran hawks in Washington are trying to push the remaining parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - or the so-called 'Iran Deal' - to re-impose Security Council sanctions that were lifted as part of the agreement in 2015.

For instance, Senator Ted Cruz just recently issued a statement in which he claims: "[...] it is time to take the next step and invoke the multilateral 'snapback' in United Nations Security Council resolution 2231." But what is the "snapback" mechanism?

The JCPOA is characterised by the fact that it was negotiated in an environment of complete distrust between the parties. This is why the negotiators on both sides devised mechanisms within the deal that would deter the other party from breaching its commitments.

One such mechanism, which was meant to be used by Iran's counterparts, was dubbed the "snapback" mechanism. This rather unusual procedure was meant to allow an aggrieved party to the deal to reinstate previously lifted Security Council sanctions against Iran without a vote on the Council. This means, in the event that one participant to the JCPOA believed in good-faith that Iran is in violation of its commitments in a significant manner, it could submit its concerns to a dispute resolution panel. If those concerns remained unresolved, it could then single-handedly force the re-imposition of prior Security Council sanctions.

But, since in practice, Iran could not resort to this conflict-resolution mechanism without taking the risk of reviving previously lifted Security Council sanctions against itself, another mechanism - or counter leverage - was devised within the deal to allow Tehran, to keep its counterparts in compliance.

The other mechanism is enshrined in Article 36 of the JCPOA. Under this provision, if Iran deems an unresolved issue to constitute "significant non-performance" by its counterparts, it can treat it as ground "to cease performing its commitments under the JCPOA in whole or in part" until others are brought back to order.

This is precisely the mechanism Iran resorted to this month in response to the United States' withdrawal from the deal and the remaining parties' inability (or unwillingness) to compensate and normalise trade and economic relations with the country within a year, as per their obligations.

Indeed, exactly one year after the United States withdrew from the JCPOA, Iran suspended some of its commitments in accordance with the terms of the deal, giving a 60-day moratorium for the rest of the signatories to fulfil their part of the bargain.

The right course of action - in fact, the only course of action - would be for European powers to take their commitments seriously and take decisive steps to normalise trade and economic relations with Iran.

Now, the question is, can the remaining parties to the JCPOA - in practice, the so-called E3 powers (Germany, France and the UK) - trigger the "snapback" mechanism in response to Iran's reaction?

The answer - which Europe and hawks in Washington should bear in mind - is a simple "no" for the following reasons:

Firstly, the "snapback" mechanism was intended to keep Iran - and not the United States or other parties - in check. In other words, the "snapback" provision was solely drafted in anticipation of a situation where Iran would be the initial defector. With US defection in May 2018 and the remaining parties inability to stick to their obligations, Iran can no longer, under any circumstances, be deemed as the initial defector. This means that the US withdrawal - and the remaining parties' inability to compensate it and normalise economic relations with Iran as per their obligations - has effectively rendered the "snapback" provision irrelevant and inoperative for all remaining parties. In other words, the "snapback" was not a mechanism meant to deter Iran from taking lawful measures within the framework of the deal in view of assuring the other parties' compliance; it was meant to deter Iran from initiating a significant violation.

Secondly, even if we assume that the "snapback" mechanism is still relevant, the fact is that in order to trigger the process, the JCPOA provides that a participant must notify the Security Council of "an issue that the JCPOA participant State believes constitutes significant non-performance of commitments" by Iran.

However, the truth is that the remaining parties to the JCPOA would have no good-faith basis for believing Iran to be in "significant non-performance of commitments" if Iran's so-called "non-performance" stems from measures implemented in response to other parties' non-compliance. In other words, if Iran's measures are conducted within the framework of the conflict-resolution mechanism in-built within the deal, they cannot, by any means, be perceived as "significant non-performance."

The fact is that if the remaining parties (i.e. Europe) insist on resorting to the "snapback", they can only do so by going through a compulsory dispute settlement procedure, as laid out by the agreement. At the relevant stage of the dispute settlement procedure, Iran would then simply reiterate that it would reverse its decision and return to the full implementation of the deal only if its counterparts implement their own obligations and operationalise Iran's rightful demands. This reasonable condition would ipso facto prevent Europe from going any further toward triggering the "snapback" mechanism unless it is willing to show an absolute disregard for principle, fairness and procedure. In other words, the fact is that Europe is not entitled to, and cannot in practice, obtain any remedy by resorting to the "snapback" if it does not itself enter the dispute settlement phase with "clean hands."

Indeed, the legal adage, "those seeking equity must do equity," would also apply to the JCPOA's dispute settlement mechanism. Thirdly, it would be a mockery of international law and the United Nations' collective security system for European countries even to try subjecting Iran to Security Council sanctions. By attempting this, Europe would be effectively trying to punish Iran for using a leverage it was duly given by an international agreement in view of compelling other parties to remain in compliance. In fact, if Europe went ahead with triggering the "snapback," it would be the first time the Security Council would have been employed to punish a state for its legal attempts to bring other states into compliance with a multilateral agreement that was endorsed through a unanimous resolution (Res. 2231) by the Council itself.

If Europe were to punish Iran for playing by the rules, it would be no less pernicious to the international legal order - and to the credibility of the Security Council - than the Trump administration. ➔ IS

NASA tests abort system on astronaut capsule built for moon missions

An unmanned full-scale NASA crew capsule blasted off from a Florida launchpad on Tuesday in a successful test of the spacecraft's abort thrusters, an astronaut safety device that will be key as the agency works to return humans to the moon by 2024.

The Orion crew capsule, nearly identical to the model slated to carry astronauts as soon as 2022 atop NASA's Space Launch System, was lofted more than eight miles (13 km) atop a ballistic missile test booster from an Air Force station in Florida at 7 a.m. EDT (1100 GMT) before firing its three abort thrusters, which would be used to jettison astronauts to safety in the event of a rocket failure.

"It looked like a complete mission success to me," said Blake Watters, a launch-abort-system propulsion engineer at Lockheed Martin Corp (LMT.N), Orion's manufacturer. "This is the big check in the box on putting astronauts on board."

Using Orion and NASA's Space Launch System, which is being built for a debut flight in late 2020, the U.S. space agency is aiming to return



humans to the moon by 2024 in an accelerated timeline set in March by the Trump administration. No humans

have launched from U.S. soil since the space shuttle was retired in 2011. The 22,000-pound (9,979-kg) Orion test

vehicle used in Tuesday's abort simulation plunged into the ocean at speeds of 300 miles per hour (483 km per hour) after separating from the booster, without using the parachutes that would be deployed to ensure a crew landed safely.

Engineers intend for launch abort thrusters to be rarely needed, as they would be used only during a rocket failure in flight.

A two-person crew inside Russia's Soyuz capsule, used by the United States to carry its astronauts to the International Space Station, last year used its abort system 31 miles (50 km) above the surface of the Earth when the rocket malfunctioned. That was the first such mishap in over 30 years for the launch system.

NASA has contracted Elon Musk's SpaceX and Boeing Co (BAN) to build separate crew capsule systems capable of carrying astronauts to the space station. SpaceX's Crew Dragon capsule exploded on a test stand in April just before engineers test-fired its abort engines, triggering an investigation that could delay the pod's first crewed flight by several months. (Source: Reuters)

Total solar eclipse: Thousands in Chile and Argentina marvel at 'something supreme'

Hundreds of thousands of tourists scattered across the north Chilean desert on Tuesday to experience a rare and irresistible combination for astronomy buffs: a total eclipse of the sun viewed from beneath the world's clearest skies.

A solar eclipse occurs when the moon passes between the Earth and the sun, plunging the planet into darkness. It happens only rarely in any given spot across the globe.

The best views this time were from Chile's sprawling Atacama Desert north of the coastal city of La Serena, where a lack of humidity and city lights combine to create the world's clearest skies.

The region had not seen an eclipse since 1592, according to the Chilean Astronomy Society. The next one is expected in 2165.

La Serena, a city of some 200,000 people, saw the arrival of more than 300,000 visitors, forcing the local water company to increase output and service gas stations to store extra fuel. Police and health services were also reinforced.

Office workers poured from buildings late in the afternoon to catch a glimpse of the phenomenon and a run on special "eclipse-viewing" glasses downtown had led to a shortage in many stores, with street vendors charging as much as \$10 for a pair of the disposable, cardboard-framed lenses.

Northern Chile is known for clear skies and some of the largest, most powerful telescopes on Earth are being



built in the area, turning the South American country into a global astronomy hub.

"In the past 50 years we've only had two eclipses going over observatories. So when it happens and an observatory lies in the path of a totality, it really is special for us," said Elyar Sedaghati, an astronomer working as a fellow at the European Southern Observatory in Paranal, Chile.

"We can finally use our toys during the day because it's always at night that we use them."

The town of La Higuera was also plunged into total darkness. "We hope this milestone will transform [our town] into a

tourist attraction, so that visitors ... can come to La Higuera and take a picture where there once was a total sun eclipse," Mayor Yerko Galleguillos said.

Town officials distributed more than 2,000 cardboard-frame protective eyeglasses at local schools and community centres while workers built statues of huge sunglasses and a darkened sun on a local square.

The total eclipse could also be seen in the Argentine town of Chascomús, where dozens braved near-freezing temperatures and strong winds and claimed a spot at a pier in a lagoon, hoping to catch a glimpse of the eclipse.

"I've been looking at the sky since my youth. My first telescope when I was a kid was made out of cardboard," said Ricardo Rumie, a 68-year-old veteran eclipse-watcher, who set up his camera with a tripod and a telescope with a sun filter along the banks of the lagoon.

"I've seen other eclipses but never like this one. I just couldn't miss it. For me it's something supreme."

"This is something that they say won't repeat itself for like 300 years, so we wanted to bring our son," said Maximiliano Giannobile, who arrived at the pier with 18-month-old Vitto wrapped in a puffy jacket and several layers of clothes.

The Earth's next total solar eclipse will be 14 December, 2020, and it also will cross Chile and Argentina, though on a different path. (Source: The Guardian)

Night King: Australia bee fly named after Game of Thrones villain



A new species of bee fly in Australia has been named after Game of Thrones villain the Night King.

Paramonovius nightking was given its name because it thrives in winter, has a crown of spine-like hairs and turns other insects into «zombies», researchers said. It is about 1cm long (0.3 inches) and can be found during the winter in a small area of Western Australia.

Some 230 new wildlife species have been named in Australia in the past year. Paramonovius nightking was originally discovered in 2012 by a pair of «citizen scientists» in Wandoo National Park. Years later, Xuankun Li, a PhD student at Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO), confirmed that it was a new species.

CSIRO entomologist Dr Bryan Lessard said the decision to name the species after the villain from the hit HBO series came easily.

«Xuankun is a huge Game of Thrones fan, and wanted to thank the show for the hours of entertainment it's given him,» he told the BBC.

«The bee fly has many similarities with the Game of Thrones character; they both are only found in winter and have a crown of thorn-like spines on their head. Female bee flies lay their eggs on other insects, which hatch and eat that insect from the inside out, turning them into walking zombies, just like the real Night King.»

«If it's happened on a sci-fi or fantasy show, chances are that nature has done it first,» Dr Lessard added. Paramonovius nightking is part of a group of flies that look like bees. Scientists believe they have developed this way to avoid being eaten by birds, which know that bees' sting.

There are more than 5,200 known species of bee flies around the world, but Dr Lessard says there are likely to be «many more» that are currently undocumented. (Source: BBC)

Relationship found between ordinary, dark matter in galaxy clusters



Scientists have discovered a fairly consistent relationship between the mass of ordinary matter and hot gas, and the mass of dark matter in galaxy clusters.

Researchers used a combination of complex statistical models and algorithms to analyze data collected by the Local Cluster Substructure Survey and tease out relationships between the three main components that make up galaxy clusters -- dark matter, hot gas and stars.

The data used for the analysis represented 41 different galaxy clusters. The observations were collected over a period of 12 years by a variety of telescopes, including the Chandra and XMM-Newton satellites, Subaru telescope, United Kingdom Infrared Telescope and the Planck satellite.

When scientists crunched the numbers, their models showed a consistent relationship between ordinary and dark matter. In each cluster, the mass of stars and hot gas totaled roughly the same fraction of dark matter mass.

"This validates the predictions of the

prevailing cold dark matter theory," Arya Farahi, who helped conduct the study while a doctoral student at the University of Michigan, said in a news release. "Everything is consistent with our current understanding of the universe."

Scientists expect the new findings, published Tuesday in the journal Nature Communications, to offer insights into the physics of galaxy cluster formation and evolution.

"A certain amount of material within the universe collapses to form galaxy clusters," said Graham Smith, astrophysicist at the University of Birmingham. "But once they are formed, these clusters are 'closed boxes.' The hot gas has either formed stars, or still remains as gas, but the overall quantity remains constant."

In addition to revealing the internal mechanics of galaxy clusters, the new research could help cosmologists better understand how the universe continues to evolve and expand. (Source: UPI)

An abandoned 'ghost base' is doing science deep in Antarctica without any humans

In the extreme cold and dark of an Antarctic winter, a remote research base seemingly cut off from the world is still running as normal -- even though scientists were forced to evacuate it months ago.

The Halley VI Research Station, located on Antarctica's Brunt Ice Shelf, is designed for year-round habitation by scientists, but in recent years, fears over cracks in the shelf have led to closures during the Antarctic winter.

For Halley VI, these annual abandonments are only a temporary safety measure for research staff stationed at the

facility, but evacuated or not, it doesn't mean the important science conducted here comes to a stop.

Last week, researchers from the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) announced that for the first time ever during one of these winter shutdowns, Halley VI kept successfully running its climate, ozone, and space weather measurements -- even though a human hasn't set foot in the station since February.

"We were confident we had a good design, but Antarctic winter conditions are brutal, so you never know exactly what might happen," says BAS atmospheric scientist Thomas Barningham.

"So far the systems have operated in temperatures as low as -43°C and withstood wind speeds of up to 43 knots."

Barningham leads the Halley Automation Project: a complex engineering effort designed to make Halley VI run entirely by itself when unoccupied during the long dark winter months.

During these closures, the evacuated facility -- evocatively described as a 'ghost base' by Live Science -- keeps operational thanks to an autonomous power system that delivers electricity to the station's scientific instruments. (Source: sciencealert.com)

Hubble, Spitzer telescopes conduct chemical survey of mid-size exoplanet

For the first time, scientists, with the help of a pair of NASA space telescopes, have identified the chemical signature of the atmosphere surrounding a mid-sized exoplanet.

In size, mass and composition, Gliese 3470 b is like a cross between Earth and Neptune -- a rocky core surrounded by a thick layer of gas. The exoplanet weighs 12.6 Earth masses. Neptune by comparison, weighs 17 Earth masses.

Mid-sized planets like Gliese 3470 b are common in other planetary systems, but are absent in our own solar system. Despite their ubiquity, researchers have been unable to confirm the chemical composition of a mini-Neptune exoplanet.

By characterizing the makeup of Gliese 3470 b's atmosphere, scientists may be able to determine how medium-sized planets form.

"This is a big discovery from the planet-formation perspective. The planet orbits very close to the star and is far less massive than Jupiter -- 318 times Earth's mass -- but has managed to accrete the primordial hydrogen/helium atmosphere that is largely 'unpolluted' by heavier elements," Björn Benneke, researcher at the University of Montreal in Canada, said in a news release. "We don't have anything like this in the solar system, and that's what makes it striking."

Using NASA's Hubble and Spitzer space telescopes, scientists successfully measured changes in the spectral signature of the host star's light as the planet passed across. By observing which wavelengths were absorbed as the planet made its transits, scientists confirmed the dominance of hydrogen and helium in the exoplanet's atmosphere.

"For the first time we have a spectroscopic signature of such a world," said Benneke. "We expected an atmosphere strongly enriched in heavier elements like oxygen and carbon, which are forming abundant water vapor and methane gas, similar to what we see on Neptune. Instead, we found an atmosphere that is so poor in heavy elements that its composition resembles the hydrogen/helium-rich composition of the sun."

Unlike large planets like hot Jupiters, which scientists estimate form far away and then migrate closer to their host stars, researchers suggest Gliese 3470 b was formed close to its red dwarf sun.

Benneke estimates the alien world started as a rocky core and slowly accreted gas from the protoplanetary disk to form its atmosphere.

"We're seeing an object that was able to accrete hydrogen from the protoplanetary disk but didn't run away to become a hot Jupiter," said Benneke. "This is an intriguing regime."

It's possible the disk of gas and dust dispersed before the sub-Neptune could get any bigger.

"The planet got stuck being a sub-Neptune," said Benneke. (Source: UPI)

Mystery of bizarre salt crystals in the Dead Sea could finally be solved

For thousands of years, humans have flocked to the Dead Sea to immerse themselves in one of the saltiest bodies of water in the world.

Amazingly enough, the Dead Sea -- which is actually a hypersaline lake cut off from the ocean waters of the Mediterranean Sea -- is actually getting saltier with time, even though it's already nearly 10 times saltier than seawater.

Mostly this transition is driven by human activity, with freshwater from the Jordan River -- which traditionally fed the Dead Sea -- being diverted in recent decades for other purposes in the region, including agriculture, mining, and drinking water.

With that freshwater no longer coming in, the salty Dead Sea's water content is slowly evaporating away, leaving only crusty salt crystals in its wake.

But there's something about those salt crystals -- and the way they seem to move within what remains of the Dead Sea -- that has confused scientists for decades.

Specifically, after freshwater started being diverted away from the hypersaline lake, researchers observed that salt crystals were precipitating out of the top layer of water, almost as if they were snowing down through the water, and piling up at the bottom of the lake.

This phenomenon in general is called salt fingering -- but scientists didn't understand how it was taking place in the Dead Sea, since it's not known to take place in any other hypersaline water bodies.

"Initially you form these tiny fingers that are too small to observe... but quickly they interact with each other as they move down, and form larger and larger structures," says mechanical engineer Raphael Ouilion from the University of California Santa Barbara.

In new research, Ouilion and his team studied this 'snowing' phenomenon in the Dead Sea, and figured out what makes it happen.

When sunlight shines upon the Dead Sea, the top layer of the lake gets warmer than the cooler waters underneath, and water evaporates at this heated surface, meaning the top layer of the water becomes the saltiest overall.

So how do the salt crystals produced by evaporation begin their journey down into the depths of the Dead Sea? In 2016, some of the members proposed a possible explanation, and the new research is the first test of this hypothesis.

Before now, what researchers didn't understand about salt fingering in the Dead Sea was how salt could become displaced from the top layer of the lake, since the warm and cooler waters ordinarily wouldn't mix easily.

In the new research, Ouilion and his team simulated how it could be possible, if waves or other sources of motion could push small parcels of warm water downwards to mix with the cooler water.

When this happens, the heated water gets cooled, which makes it offload its salt content; that content then begins its snow-like descent to the bottom of the lake.

"The net result is a strong, downward salinity flux that leads to the undersaturation of the epilimnion [upper layer], while the hypolimnion [lower, cooler layer] becomes oversaturated and precipitates halite," the authors write, noting that the same phenomenon might also explain the buildup of other massive salt formations found in the geological record.

"We know that many places around the world have thick salt deposits in the Earth's crust, and these deposits can be up to a kilometre thick," one of the team, fluid dynamics researcher Eckart Meiburg, explains.

"But we're uncertain how these salt deposits were generated throughout geological history."

Now, we're one step closer to understanding why, thanks to the Dead Sea -- which sadly may not be long for this world. (Source: sciencealert.com)

Iran joins UNESCO World Heritage Committee session in Baku

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A delegation from Iran arrived in the Azerbaijani capital Baku late on Monday to attend the 43rd session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.



Comprising seven members, the delegation acting Secretary General of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO Hojjatollah Ayoubi, Deputy Chairman of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization Mohammad-Hassan Talebian, Mehr reported.

Representatives of about 180 countries are attending the event, which will be running through July 10 at Heydar Aliyev Center, to assess 36 nominees, including Iran's Hyrcanian Forest, for possible inscription on the World Heritage list.

Organizers say that the overall aim of the forum is to highlight key opportunities and challenges of heritage management in the twenty-first century. Accompanied by local and international experts, and through a variety of site visits, presentations and roundtables, the participants will gain insights into the processes and working practices of the 1972 World Heritage Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

The panels discuss and gain in-depth knowledge of the global concepts of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda, while also having the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the local Azerbaijani heritage and its management.

Ancient Dara gains reputation as a "must-see"

The ancient city of Dara, established by the Eastern Roman Empire to protect its border against the Persians, has been rushed by tourists since the arrival of summer.

The ancient settlement - featuring remains of ancient churches, palaces, bazaars, dungeons and an armory and water dam - in the eastern Anatolian province of Mardin is poised to become the "second Ephesus" in Turkey, said Ozgur Azad Gurgor, president of Mardin Tourism and Hoteliers Association.

Dara, dating back 2,300 years, is known as the "Ephesus of Anatolia" due to its resemblance to the ancient city in Izmir province.

"Dara is a place where people of every religion - Assyrians, Muslims, Yazidis and Christians - can relate to themselves. In that respect, we want everyone to come here and explore it," Gurgor said.

The number of visitors to Dara has quintupled over the past five years, according to statistics from the Turkish Culture and Tourism Ministry.

"This year, tourists coming to Mardin has created serious potential. One of the most interesting historical areas in the region is Dara," he said.

Gastroway organizer Gokmen Sozen, who brought tourists to Dara within the scope of the Gastroway organization under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, said that Dara should be introduced to the world.

(Source: Hurriyet Daily News)

Worldwide Armenians to reunion at St. Thaddeus

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN — Hundreds of Christian worshippers are getting prepared to head for St. Thaddeus to observe a religious ceremony passed down from generation to generation.

For the 65th consecutive year, pilgrims from Iran, Armenia, Syria, Lebanon, the Netherlands, France, Austria, Germany, Canada and some other countries get together, this year from July 25 to 27, to observe a ceremony called Badarak in one of the world's oldest monasteries.

Attendees commemorate the martyrdom of St. Thaddeus, one of the twelve disciples killed while he was preaching the Gospel. The legend says, a church dedicated to him was first built in 68 CE where Qareh Klise is standing.

The festivity is of high importance for Iranian-Armenians who mostly come from the cities of Tabriz, Urmia, Tehran, Isfahan and Qazvin, to stage the reunion in groups and families. It also provides them opportunity to go on holiday and visit distant relatives.

Baptism of children and youngsters along with performances of traditional songs and dances are amongst highlights the event.



Also known as the Qareh Klise ("the Black Church"), the church is one of the oldest surviving Christian monuments in the country. It is situated in West Azarbaijan province, some 20 kilometers from Maku, adjacent to the borders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey.

The ancient Church shows off elaborate bas-reliefs of flowers, animals and human figures on its facade and exterior walls. It bears verses of Old and New Testament in Armenian calligraphy as well.

Together with St. Stepanos Monastery and the Chapel of Dzordzor, Qareh Klise was placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2008 under the name "Armenian Monastic Ensembles of Iran".

All the three sites are located in West Azarbaijan and are of high significance from historical and cultural perspectives. They bear credible testimony to interchanges with the ancient regional societies in particular the Byzantine, Orthodox and Persian.

UNESCO says that the churches bear examples of outstanding universal value of the Armenian architectural and decorative traditions.

"Tabriz event establishes synergy between tourism and handicrafts"



TOURISM TEHRAN — The Iranian city of Tabriz is concurrently playing host to the 9th National Handicrafts Exhibition and the 1st Tourism Exhibition which is described by the deputy tourism chief as a "synergetic" approach to link traveling with souvenirs and handicrafts.

"One of the advantages of the Tabriz exhibition is that two important issues of tourism and handicrafts are being taken into account simultaneously and we are witnessing a good synergy in this regard," Pouya Mahmoudian said on Tuesday, CHTN reported.

"It has been proved that the synergy between handicrafts and tourism can contribute to sustainable development and economic growth of the country," she said during her visit to the exhibit.

"Some 295 fields of handicrafts are currently being practiced across Iran, many of which are considered

as significant."

Running through June 6, the event features 210 stalls, set up by nationwide artisans and craftspeople, and 50 pavilions that's are presented by tour operators, travel agents and hospitality associates.

The ancient country welcomed some 7.8 million foreign nationals in the past Iranian year 1397 (ended March 20), an increase of 52.5 percent compared to the year before.

According to the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, Iran's exports of handicrafts fetched some \$289 million in 1397, showing three percent growth year on year.

Capital of East Azarbaijan province, Tabriz, which is well-soaked in history and culture for millennia, embraces several historical and religious sites, including Jameh Mosque of Tabriz and Arg of Tabriz, and UNESCO-registered Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex to name a few.

Atmospheric caravanserai being restored to former glory

HERITAGE TEHRAN — The third round of a restoration work has recently been commenced on Hojaib caravanserai with the aim of bringing the atmospheric inn to its former glory.

The Safavid-era (1501-1736) caravanserai is situated on north-west of a village of the same name in Buin Zahra county, Qazvin province.

Restoration projects involve repairing damaged arcades of the southeastern side, leveling the slopes, fixing drainage gradient of the roofs and landscape, downspouts, and tile bonding under supervision of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, IRNA reported.

The famed Safavid king, Shah Abbas I (1571-1629), is credited with building a net-



work of caravanserais across Persia (Iran) during the much later Safavid dynasty.

Caravanserais, or most commonly known as caravansara in today's Iran, is a compound word combining "caravan" with "sara". The first stand for a group of travelers and sara means the building.

The earliest caravanserais in the county were built in Achaemenid era (circa 550 -330 BC), being thrived upon the development of road systems and the increase in the number of travelers and merchants.

The ancient country is home to many mansions, caravanserais, bathhouses, madrasas, and other massive monuments, which can buttress its budding tourism and hospitality sectors if managed appropriately and refurbished properly.

Destination trouble: Can overtourism be stopped in its tracks?

We first hear about these places when we're kids. Famous destinations full of wondrous architecture, spectacular scenery or ancient mysteries that fire our imaginations and fill us with yearning.

We dream, we grow, we save up all our money and one day we finally get to visit -- only to discover that everyone else is visiting at the same time.

Overtourism is fast becoming one of the most hotly debated issues in the modern age of travel. Thanks to cheaper air fares, rising incomes and social media's ability to laser focus attention on specific destinations, more travelers than ever before are descending on places that can no longer cope with their own popularity.

In the past few years, the number of destinations raising the alarm over this has steadily increased. In 2018, the Oxford English Dictionary made "overtourism," one of its words of the year -- it's defined as an excessive number of visitors heading to famous locations, damaging the environment and having a detrimental impact on resident's lives.

Countless headlines have followed as cities that have become reliant on tourism dollars undergo an identity crisis, wondering if they can start turning away such important sources of income.

For travelers it's also been time for some soul searching. Is it time to abandon those dreams? Is it possible to travel responsibly? Or should they simply brace themselves for the crowds and go see these places while they still can.

"Tourism is like any other industry: it needs to be regulated and managed locally to prevent negative impacts," says Justin Francis, CEO of UK-based tour operator Responsible Travel, which has produced its own guide to the issue of overtourism.

The situation could be poised to get worse. The World Tourism and Travel Council says that of 1.4 billion international tourist trips in 2018, more than 36%, or half a billion, involved a visit to one of the planet's 300 most popular cities, a trend that's set to continue upwards.

Familiar overtouristed destinations could soon be joined by others, with the WTTC identifying cities such as Delhi, Cairo, Manila, Bangkok and Moscow as unprepared for the surge in travelers expected in the next decade.

The good news is that many destinations, governments and tour operators are now tackling the issue head on. With

goodwill, proper planning and some bold decision making, those at the forefront of the problem may yet find a way to balance tourist demand with the needs of local communities.

Here's how some of the world's most famous tourist hotspots are trying to get on top of the problem:

■ Machu Picchu, Peru

Visitor numbers to Peru's most famous attraction rocketed in 2018, with 1,578,030 people heading to the ruins of 15th century Incan citadel, a jump of 12% on the previous year.

With an average of 4,300 tourists crowding its narrow walkways every day, officials took bold action, introducing a strict new ticketing system in January 2019. Tickets are now time limited, with slots lasting four hours and no re-entry allowed.

The aim is to spread the number of visitors, encouraging tourists to come in less popular afternoon slots.

"The new ticketing system at Machu Picchu has not reduced the number of visitors each day, but has been very effective in managing the flow of visitor numbers entering the citadel," says Sarah Miginiac, General Manager for Peru at G Adventures.

"This has significantly improved overcrowding both inside and outside the citadel."

Plans for a new airport in nearby Chinchero have raised concerns that visitor numbers could jump further still, but Miginiac suggests this may not be an issue for Machu Picchu itself.

"As it stands, the number of visitors to Machu Picchu are restricted and there has been no announcement that these numbers will be increased should the new airport be approved," she adds.

■ Amsterdam, Netherlands

The Dutch capital has taken bold steps to ease the chronic tourist overcrowding of its narrow streets.

With visitor numbers forecast to rise from 18 million in 2018 to 42 million by 2030, the city's tourist board has simply decided to stop advertising.

In its Perspective 2030 report, the Netherlands tourist board said it was now engaged in "destination management" rather than "destination promotion", with efforts being made to switch tourists' attention to other cities in the country.

Responsible Travel's Francis has praised Amsterdam's attempts to "de-marketize" itself, suggesting it could be a blueprint for other cities around the world.

The city has also attempted to introduce a 30-day short term rental limit on Airbnb properties, but has found itself in dispute with the world's biggest private rental firm over its plans for more stringent rules.

■ Venice, Italy

Venice has long been at the forefront of overtourism and once again hit the headlines in June 2019 after a cruise ship hit a tourist boat in the Giudecca canal.

Cruise liners have been at the center of local concerns about high tourist numbers for years.

Local demands to prevent them passing through the Giudecca are allied with growing disquiet that day trippers do not spend money at local businesses.

"The main problem is 'mordi e fuggi' tourism, day trip tourism," says Guido Moltedo, Editor in Chief of Ytali, who claims this accounts for two thirds of visitors.

The city has introduced a new levy on day trippers, which starts at three euros. By 2020, this fee will range from three to 10 euros, depending on the time of year and the amount of visitors in the area.

However, Moltedo says "the real problem is not getting more money, but reducing the impact of tourism."

Food blogger and tour guide Monica Cesarato says she has noticed a major shift away from visitors coming to stay for a longer period and exploring the city's unknown corners.

"I have seen a huge decrease on requests and bookings compared to the past," she says. "People who come for one night do not have time to take a long walking tour."

Iris Lorendana, who runs the La Venessiana blog, says locals have started to take the problem into their own hands.

"Today, Venetians are dealing with mass tourism by addressing tourists directly and giving clear directions. It usually works in nine cases out of 10."

However, she stresses that can't fix wider issues caused by soaring visitor numbers, such as high rents and the demise of local shops.

Major locations such as St. Mark's Basilica, the Clock Tower and Doge's Palace have introduced limits on sightseers.

Turnstiles have also been installed to limit the flow of tourists in certain areas of the city.

While this approach has its benefits, Moltedo doesn't feel a wholly defensive attitude can stem the tide.

(Source: CNN)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Changdeokgung Palace Complex

A World Heritage, the Changdeokgung Palace Complex occupies a 57.9 ha site in Jongno-gu, in northern Seoul, South Korea at the foot of Ungbong Peak of Mount Baegaksan.

Changdeokgung is an exceptional example of official and residential buildings that were integrated into and harmonized with their natural setting. The complex was constructed in the 15th century during the Joseon Dynasty. It was originally built as a secondary palace to the main palace of Gyeongbokgung, differentiated from it in its purpose and spatial layout within the capital.



Situated at the foot of a mountain range, it was designed to embrace the topography in accordance with pungsu principles, by placing the palace structures to the south and incorporating an extensive rear garden to the north called Biwon, the Secret Garden.

The official and residential buildings that make up the complex were designed in accordance with traditional palace layout principles.

Changdeokgung was used as the secondary palace to Gyeongbokgung for 200 years, but after the palaces were burnt down during the Japanese invasion in the late 16th century, it was the first to be reconstructed and since then served as the main seat of the dynasty for 250 years.

The property had a great influence on the development of Korean architecture, garden and landscape planning, and related arts, for many centuries. It reflects sophisticated architectural values, harmonized with beautiful surroundings.

(Source: UNESCO)

Stem cell council focused on cell therapy, gene therapy and tissue engineering

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN – The Council for Stem Cell Sciences and Technologies is focused on new technologies like cell therapy, gene therapy and tissue engineering, the council's director Amir Ali Hamidieh announced, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

Supporting different organizations could accelerate manufacturing and marketing of knowledge-based stem cell products, he said.

The council, which is affiliated to the vice presidency for science and technology, seeks to

support stem cell activities of knowledge-based companies, he added.

"Food and Drug Administration of Iran is one of the main organizations related to this field in Iran."

The council plans to establish a strategic committee in the field of stem cell in order to support knowledge-based companies, he said.

According to the Royan Institute for stem cell biology and technology, Iran is one of the most pioneering countries in the world and the second country in the



region in terms of stem cell knowledge and technology.

According to ncbi.com, stem cell technology is a rapidly developing field that

combines the efforts of cell biologists, geneticists, and clinicians and offers hope of effective treatment for a variety of malignant and non-malignant diseases.

Talking about achievements of young generation is glorious: ICT minister

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN – Talking about achievements of Iranian young generation is glorious. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi wrote on his Instagram account on Tuesday.

"I attended a scientific session during the Annual Meeting of the New Champions (AMNC) in Dalian and pointed to the impressive achievements of startups in Iran and the growth of information and communication technology infrastructures."

He said that he was planned to hold meetings with the Chinese minister of industry and information technology



Miao Wei and the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO) secretary general Li Xinjun on Wednesday.

More than 1,800 leaders from government, business, civil society, academia and the arts attended AMNC which was held in the city of Dalian from July 1 to 3.

AI bootcamp to be held in Tehran

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN – Artificial Intelligence (AI) bootcamp will be held on June 4 and 5 in Tehran.

Supported by the Iranian Research Institute for Information Science and Technology, the event focuses on trading, AI as a service, smart city, fintech, healthcare, IOT, fraud detection, image recognition, NLP, Farsi spam detection.

AI services marketing, mentoring entrepreneur teams in order to be active in the field of IA, development of AI platforms and learning new methods for AI are amongst other aims of the bootcamp.

Information Technology boot camps, or IT boot camps, have taken off in popularity in recent years as a way for employees to advance



their careers and prospective employees to earn new jobs by gaining key programming skills in a short but often very intensive timeframe.

A few of the best known and most reputable IT boot camps include App Academy, Hack Reactor, Hackbright Academy, General Assembly, Coding House, Dev Bootcamp, and Bloc.

In the future, your room service will be delivered by a robot butler

Alina lives in Times Square, where she works 24 hours a day for the Luma Hotel, fetching guests' shampoo, towels and keys. When she isn't working, she settles into her spot of honor behind the front desk, where passersby can gawk at her. After all, Alina is a robot.

Alina, who debuted in 2017, looks like a trash can with a touchscreen for a face. She was one of America's first robot butlers, and she won't be the last.

"Children love Alina," said Kate Martin, Luma Hotel manager. "They've written her hundreds of love notes." The hotel has even manufactured a stuffed version of her to give out.

On a quest to bring guests some extra shampoo, Alina takes the elevator solo. Guests instinctively step aside when they see her. Post delivery, if her service is rated five stars, she performs a happy dance. Then she leaves sans tip, because robo-butlers don't need money.

Alina has 79 robotic siblings in hotels worldwide, as well as seven in hospitals, where they discreetly deliver everything from blood specimens to chemotherapy. They're monitored 24/7 by their parent company, Savioke, which was founded in 2013 by Steve Cousins, former CEO of the now defunct robotics research lab Willow Garage. By 2014, they had manufactured a beta version of the robot, which they called Relay, first marketed to hotels, then restaurants, offices and hospitals.

The Westin in Buffalo, New York, was the first New York State hotel to host a robo-butler. "We created a contest where people could vote on a name for the robot," said Russ Papia, director of Sales and Marketing at the Westin. The name "Chip" won, and now a white-gloved Chip stands behind the front desk. "I feel like he's part of my team," said Papia.



But while Alina and Chip might be a whole lot cheaper than human employees, even with the cost of maintenance factored in, "she could never replace an employee," said Martin, the Luma manager. Still, Martin acknowledged said she wouldn't mind having more Alinas roaming her halls. "I imagine when robots get cheaper, budget hotels will have quite a few of these," she added.

While it's hard to find reliable statistics for what growth is expected to be in the robot-butler industry, Savioke isn't having trouble funding its future endeavors. It announced in 2018 that it had secured nearly \$35 million in funding. Investors like Mori Trust, Brain Corp and Swisslog were all sinking money into Savioke, seeing a future in autonomous delivery systems with a long battery life.

"Hotels are a decent test bed for robots that interact with the public," said Dr. Charles Hofacker of Florida State University, who has written papers on how robots could

affect the hospitality world. "Most of the chains are relatively standardized, the rooms are similar, the tasks are repetitive."

But Hofacker compared the possibility of a future robot influx to a frustrating phone conversation he had with his cable company. "If you've interacted with a big corporation that has automated their help, you know it's pretty easy to fall between the cracks," said Hofacker. "Maybe our future lives will just be bouncing from one robot misunderstanding to another."

Yet Savioke doesn't want its customers thinking in terms of robot misunderstandings. They want their customers to personalize the robots, gendering them and giving them nicknames. "We encourage hotels to use a pronoun for the robot," said Lauren Shechtman, Vice President Of Marketing at Savioke. "We ask hotels to say he or she, but not it." Giving the Relay robot a nickname, like Chip or Alina, helps employees consider the robot part of the team, according to Shechtman.

The Relay is leased to hotels for three-year periods, for \$2,000 a month. Competitors have sprung up, all angling for those lucrative hotel contracts, but Savioke's secret sauce is its relationship with the elevator companies. "Relay is smoothly integrated with elevators," said Shechtman. "It can communicate via Wi-Fi to select a floor."

Relay's design, which tips its hat to Star Wars, was crucial to its success. "R2D2 sets the standard for us for robots that have been loved," said Shechtman. Savioke hired psychologists to humanize Relay, and now when Relay gets in an elevator it turns and looks to the front of the elevator, just like a human would.

(Source: msn.com)

Tehran faculty, ITU to hold joint workshop on digital economy

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN – The Faculty of Applied Science of Post and Telecommunication in Iran and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) will jointly hold a workshop on Capacity Building and Skill Development for Digital Transformation in Digital Economy, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

The workshop will be held from July 6 to 10 with the participation of 60 representatives from Iranian and foreign companies, the faculty's dean Sadeq Abbasi Shakhkouh said.

Representatives from 16 Asian countries and three prominent ITU counsellors will attend the event, he explained.



The workshop is composed of 24 professional meetings on different issues related to digital economy, he added.

Digital economy refers to an economy that is based on digital computing technologies. It is also sometimes called the Internet Economy, New Economy, or Web Economy.

Digital economy is one of the main sources for job creation in different countries and Iran is not an exception and the workshop paves the way for the faculty to start activities in this field, Abbasi Shakhkouh explained.

According to the faculty's website, the main objectives of this face-to-face workshop are to inform and create awareness of the use of telecommunications or ICT in support of the digital economy and society; share international best practices on Digital Transformation; and build capacity and skills development in the digital era through digital transformation.

The headline topics of the event are the role of innovation and new technologies for achieving SDGs, digital transformation and the digital economy, fostering innovation in the workplace and the community, modern design processes and methodologies, technology skill development for employment and business growth and introduction to mobile app development.

AI powers 'self-healing' technology

Companies are tapping artificial intelligence to automate the care of their operations and information-technology infrastructure, finding that AI can identify and fix problems more quickly than humans.

Called "self-healing" or "self-driving" IT, the innovation has been made possible by advanced algorithms, more data about networks and IT infrastructure, and increased computing power.

Software company Adobe Inc. uses an AI-based program to automate about 25 core IT tasks that were previously done by employees.

The company spent about nine months developing the program using open-source technology, said Chief Information Officer Cynthia Stoddard. It has been in use for about a year.

"We wanted to look at issues that we could automate and get the human element out," Ms. Stoddard said.

One thing the new system does: It automatically fixes failures in data-batching. The method is an efficient way to process and transfer large amounts of data, but it often results in errors. Adobe's self-healing software was able to reduce the average time to correct a data-batching failure to about three minutes from 30 minutes, Ms. Stoddard said.



The software can also detect whether a specific business application an employee is using is close to crashing and automatically increase the computing or storage capacity so the application continues to run. "It not only shortens the time to fix [a problem] but proactively fixes it," Ms. Stoddard said.

Renée Lahti, chief information officer at data-storage firm Hitachi Vantara, a subsidiary of Hitachi Ltd., said the company launched a project last year that leverages AI, real-time analytics and sensors to monitor, analyze and self-correct temperature and airflow in data centers. She said the initiative has saved 38% in annual data center costs, on average, while boosting storage capacities.

Within three to five years, AI-enabled networks are predicted to become mainstream at big companies, said Rohit Mehra, vice president of network infrastructure at research firm International Data Corp.

AI will be integral to company networks in the future, Mr. Mehra said, as they continue to expand with the influx of the Internet of Things, virtual reality, and fifth-generation wireless technology.

Networks are critical to companies because they make it possible for employees to access critical applications and exchange information in real time. But they can break down as they get bigger because of increased traffic related to emails, file transfers, videos and business applications.

About half of IT staff surveyed recently said the most important thing an AI-enabled network would bring is improving the availability and performance of applications, which would help improve user experience. The IDC survey released in February polled 301 IT professionals from medium and large businesses.

International Business Machines Corp. sells IT automation tools to customers under its AI OpenScale suite of software products. The company is now researching AI algorithms that can proactively monitor networks, predict a network failure or performance issue, and fix it automatically.

This will be especially important for "mission critical" applications, which could be at risk of going down for as many as four hours until IT staff can fix the issue, said Ruchir Puri, chief scientist at IBM Research. (Source: wsj.com)

Synthetic skin made with nanotechnology may aid wound healing

Artificial skin produced using nanoscale technology could improve wound recovery for patients with burns or skin grafts.

Engineers have devised a fabric dressing whose thickness and elasticity can be custom-matched to specific areas of the body. The material is able to be absorbed by the skin's own tissue as it heals.

Two synthetic materials are blended to produce nanometre-sized fibres – thousands of times thinner than a hair – which can be fabricated in minutes.

Researchers at the University of Edinburgh produced their custom fabric using a recently developed method, known as nozzle-free electrospinning.

Their device comprises a rotating cylinder above a pool of solution containing the two components of the fabric. As the cylinder spins under high voltage and temperature, tiny fibres are quickly produced from the liquid and spun onto an adjacent hot surface. As the fibres cool, the fabric is formed.

The component mixture can be altered to produce dressings of varied thicknesses and elasticity. It incorporates a recently discovered material, known as polyglycerol sebacate, which is stretchy and compatible with human tissue.

Tests with skin cells showed that the material's small scale fibres provide a scaffold on which newly formed skin can grow.



Research will now focus on further developing and testing the material for medical use, which the team expects may take about four years. The study was published in Medical Engineering & Physics.

Dr Norbert Radacsi of the University of Edinburgh's School of Engineering, who led the study, said: "Our technique is a cost-effective way of making artificial skin adapted for all areas of body, to accelerate the wound healing process."

Antonios Keirouz of the University of Edinburgh's School of Engineering, who performed the experiments in the study, said: "Dressings made from this new fabric would be absorbed by the body, reducing the need for frequent changes." (Source: deadlinenews.co.uk)

AI invents more effective flu vaccine in world first, Adelaide researchers say

A "turbocharged" flu vaccine created by a computer with artificial intelligence in South Australia is set to be trialled in the United States.

Flinders University Professor Nikolai Petrovsky has told the ABC the computer running a program called Sam invented the new drug on its own, in what he claimed was a world first.

"[Sam] has theoretical ability to acquire knowledge and then make new ideas," Professor Petrovsky said.

"Obviously you have to train it or teach it."

"We took existing drugs that we know work, we took examples of drugs that don't work or have failed."

"We essentially showed all of that to the AI program called Sam and then Sam came up with its own suggestion of what might be an effective adjuvant, which we then took and tested, and sure enough, it worked."

Professor Petrovsky said a 12-month clinical trial of the vaccine was about to get underway in the US.

"Essentially, we have developed a technology that when added to existing flu vaccines makes them more effective," he said.

Each year's regular flu vaccine is an inoculation against four strains of the virus.

The chosen strains are decided by the World Health Organisation, according to which ones were prevalent in the previous northern or southern hemisphere

flu seasons.

This year's Australian vaccine for people aged over 65 contains a component in it which boosts their immune system.

It comes amid an unusually early start to the flu season in Australia, which has seen 116,000 cases recorded and claimed more than 220 lives this year.

Many people are wondering if it's worth getting vaccinated against influenza and if so, when. Here's what you need to know.

Australian chief medical officer Professor Brendan Murphy said this year's season began in summer.

"We had a very low flu season last year, then a high what we call 'inter-seasonal flu' during summer, which has then morphed into an early flu season, which is really the earliest we've ever seen," Professor Murphy said.

"What we don't know is whether this season will fade out early and not be a very big season, or whether it'll continue at its current level with another strain becoming predominant."

"It's very hard to predict."

Professor Murphy said he was unaware of the Flinders University program, but he welcomed the development.

"The complexity of drug and receptor interactions is so huge that it's very definitely enhanced by IT systems and AI systems," he said.

"So I think in general principles, it's a very promising area to look at."

(Source: abc.net.au)

Studies on wetlands water right to complete in month

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — The results of a survey on granting the water right of the wetlands will be announced by the next month, Ahmad Lahijan-zadeh, deputy director of the Department (DOE) of Environment for marine environment affairs has said.



"According to the law, the DOE is supposed to determine the wetlands' water right, which is mostly done by scientific studies," he added, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

The DOE has started surveys to discover the amount of water required by a wetland to prevent it from dryness, the results of which will be announced within a month, he stated.

He went on to note that the DOE must report the results to the Ministry of Energy which is the responsible body for providing the water to reservoirs.

Several other projects for reviving the wetlands are being prepared, he concluded.

Cockroaches could soon be almost impossible to kill with pesticides

Cockroaches have become harder to kill and could soon be "almost impossible" to control using pesticides alone, according to a study funded by the United States housing department.

Researchers from Purdue University in Indiana spent six months trying to eradicate German cockroaches (*Blattella germanica* L.), one of the most common species of household cockroach in the US, Australia and Europe, from three low-rise apartment buildings in Illinois and Indiana.

The results were published in the scientific journal Nature last month.

The study used three different professional-grade pesticide mixes: a rotation of three different insecticides, changing every month for six months; a mix of two insecticides sprayed monthly; and abamectin gel baits applied once a month in an area where the cockroaches had been tested and showed a low resistance to abamectin.

Of the three, only the abamectin gel baits succeeded in reducing the cockroach population, and then only in populations which had a low-resistance. In another area where 10% of the cockroach population was resistant to the chemical, populations grew.

Cockroach populations in the building treated with three rotating pesticides remained flat, and populations in the building treated with the mixed spray "flourished".

Populations were surveyed using glue traps before testing began and once a month thereafter, just before the next round of pesticide treatment.

"If you have the ability to test the roaches first and pick an insecticide that has low resistance, that ups the odds," the study's lead author Michael Scharf said in a press statement from the university. "But even then, we had trouble controlling populations."

Subsequent laboratory tests showed that cockroaches were able to develop a "cross resistance" to multiple types of pesticide, meaning that those which survived the spraying would go on to survive other eradication attempts even if a different class of pesticide was used.

Previously, it was believed that cockroaches only developed a resistance to one class of pesticide following exposure.

"We would see resistance increase four- or six-fold in just one generation," Scharf said. "We didn't have a clue that something like that could happen this fast."

Rapid breeding rates — a female German cockroach can have 50 offspring every three months, expanding out to up to 10 million descendants over four generations within 12 months — mean that chemical pesticides can swiftly become ineffective.

(Source: The Guardian)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

World Climate Conference warning

(November 23, 2000)

The British deputy prime minister, John Prescott, warned of the need to take action against global warming. He was speaking at the World Climate Change Conference in The Hague. Tim Hirsch of the BBC's environment staff reported.

Mr. Prescott's speech comes as ministers from around the world struggle to overcome complex arguments about how the **Kyoto agreement on cutting greenhouse gas emissions** should work. He said the devastating floods in recent weeks had provided a **wake-up call** in Britain — people knew that something was wrong, he said, and that **climate change** was now affecting them. Things would get much worse, said Mr. Prescott, if the world failed to act.

Unless governments joined together in agreement at The Hague, he said they would be throwing away **the opportunity of a lifetime**. He added that **behind the scenes** there were positive signs of **movement** towards a deal. Politicians would not be forgiven, he said, if they failed to **settle their differences** at this conference.

Words

Kyoto agreement: the decision reached by countries in the Japanese city of Kyoto
greenhouse gas emissions: the release of gases such as carbon dioxide which trap the heat from the sun and cause the earth's temperature to rise

wake-up call: literally, a shout that someone asleep should wake up. Here, a warning that something must be done

climate change: changes in the climate that may be caused by global warming and may cause flooding or drought

the opportunity of a lifetime: an opportunity is a situation — here, one that is extremely rare — in which it is possible for governments to do something that they want to do

behind the scenes: if something is done behind the scenes, it is done so the general public does not know about it

movement: here, movement refers to a change in the views of some of those taking part

to settle their differences: to end the disagreements that they had previously had

Does economic growth worth degrading the environment?

1 → Road construction also is another way of development which is at loggerheads with nature, which mainly results in many irreparable damages including road surface erosion and sediment yield, slope failures and mass movement, direct loss of habitat (by the conversion of the original land cover into an artificial surface) and indirect loss of habitat (by the fragmentation of an ecosystem into smaller and more isolated patches).

The chief of provincial department of environment Ebrahim Fallahi said in September 2018 that long stretches of roads being under construction in Savadkuh forest, northern province of Mazandaran.

Moreover, excessive groundwater withdrawal, damn construction, water transfer projects, land use changes and wildfires are also the fallouts of unplanned industrial expansion which bring environmental damages, and if thinking deeply it can be realized that they can also cause immeasurable financial losses in the long run.

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

How growth even affects air we breathe?



When it comes to air pollution the situation even gets more complex, as car manufacturing companies produce more cars without scrapping emitting clunker ones for generating profit and responsible devices not improving fuel quality, in addition to not preparing proper plan to curb the emissions.

Deputy interior minister for urban and rural development, Mehdi Jamalinejad, said that some 22,000 busses are operating in the country's public transport fleet, 16,000 of which are clunkers, accounting for 70 percent of the volume of bus transport system.

Ali Mohammadi, an official with traffic police, said in early January that the scrapping of clunker vehicles has decreased by 65 percent in the current Iranian calendar year (starting on March 21, 2018) compared to a year earlier.

While last year some 140,000 vehicles were scrapped this year only 50,000 old vehicles were discarded, he added.

Environment should not be destroyed for sake of growth

Homayoun Yousefi, member of the parliament said that economic growth is not worth of environmental degradation, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

He further lamented that environmental protection has decreased in Western Asia, which is mostly due to decision making is based on personal tastes not environmental assessment.

"Iran's climate being arid is fragile, so development should be done in light of the fragility and low capacity of the country's environment," he highlighted, regretting, nature seems to be less considered in some development plans.

An important factor for countries' power is a sustainable environment, and we also need to focus more on the environment in this regard, he added.

Toward economic growth while safeguarding environment

Green production is likely to become the center of attention globally in the near future due to the proven importance of environment, however, economic and industrial expansion resulting in urbanization are a reality that is inevitable specially in developing countries, so, we must never lose sight of the need to safeguard the environment.

Every country regarding the resources each have, has an important opportunity to make policies or take steps in line with regulations which can guide it to developmental goals. By considering environmental issues and planning for appropriate confrontation measures wherever necessary, we can even set a role model for other countries to follow.

Japan supports WHO aid to 160k vulnerable people affected by 2019 floods in Iran

TEHRAN -- The World Health Organization (WHO) by receiving a donation from the Government of Japan intensifies its current supports with essential and life-saving medicines, equipment, and health services to more than 160,000 most vulnerable people affected by devastating floods in March and April 2019.

The donation of the Government of Japan that counts for 700,000 U.S. Dollar will assist WHO in providing life-saving medical supplies to existing health facilities, temporary health facilities, and mobile clinics of the country, in addition to strengthening the existing disease surveillance system, and support the establishing of new sentinel reporting sites.

WHO in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME) of the Islamic Republic of Iran through the fund will provide vaccines to prevent diseases such as Hepatitis A, cholera and other vaccine-preventable diseases. The donation of Japan will also help to train Rapid Response Teams to effectively prevent, detect and respond to possible outbreak of epidemic-prone diseases.

Dr. Christoph Hamelmann, WHO Representative in the Islamic Republic of Iran during an official visit to the Embassy of Japan in Tehran appreciated the Just-in-time support of people of Japan when it is urgently needed



WHO Representative in Iran Christoph Hamelmann, (left) and ambassador of Japan to Iran Mitsugu Saito

and said: "the floods have not only damaged homes and infrastructure in the 17 most severely affected provinces, but also damaged a significant number of health facilities, many of which are now only partially functional or completely non-functional. This situation leaves patients with limited access to essential and life-saving health services".

"The support of the Japanese nation to WHO and the Iranian people, will contribute effectively to increasing and enhancing health services during this critical time" he added.

H. E. Mr. Mitsugu SAITO, Ambassador of Japan to the Islamic Republic of Iran also reiterated that the government of Japan is looking forward to the successful implementation of the project which will provide support to the emergency and recovery efforts of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In mid-March 2019, floods hit vast parts of Iran, leaving more than 10 million people in need of humanitarian aid. Of these, more than 2 million people are in need of health aid, including 161,000 people who are most vulnerable.

In April 2019, WHO in a rapid emergency response airlifted essential medical supplies to the Islamic Republic of Iran for addressing the growing health needs of thousands of people who had been displaced as a result of heavy flooding in many provinces in the country. The supplies included trauma, health, cholera and non-communicable disease kits and other commodities requested by the MoHME.

(Source: WHO)

Water transfer system to Shadegan wetland inaugurated

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — A water transfer system has been established to transfer water from Karun river to Shadegan wetland in order to revive the international wetland, Mehr news agency reported on Tuesday.

Shadegan wetland covers 530,000 hectares of Khuzestan province, 400,000 hectares of which has been designated as a Ramsar site (defined by the Ramsar Convention for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, recognizing the fundamental ecological functions of wetlands and their economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational value).

The wetland feed on Marun and Karun rivers both crossing Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahamd province, but after dam construction over the Karun river the wetland went dry not receiving its water right.

A plan on transferring water to the wetland was proposed about 6 years ago, and was completed in the last months of last year



and finally exploited.

To implement the project, a 6-kilometer pipeline was built and 6 high pressure

pumps were installed to transfer water from the Karun River to the Shadegan wetland. With inauguration of the project, the wet-

land will once again revive and no longer suffers water scarcity due to low rainfall or not receiving its water right.

The system releases water amounting to 5 cubic meters per second into the wetland, the report added.

Earlier in June, Ahmad Lahijan-zadeh, head of marine environment affairs at the Department of Environment said that after the torrential rains and flooding started on March 19, the wetland has been fully filled.

Based on the latest data published by National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center affiliated to Iran's Meteorological Organization, since the current crop year (September 23, 2018), precipitation in Khuzestan province increased to 523.3 millimeters from 204.1 millimeters in the previous water year, demonstrating a 156.4 percent rise. The amount also raised in comparison to the long-term average of 319.3 mm, amounting to 63.9 percent.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → چ

11m ha of plains require aquifer, watershed management

Some 11 million hectares of the country's plains need watershed and aquifer management plans, so they must be prepared in this regard, director of watershed management at Forests, Rangelands, and Watershed Management Organization has said.

Over the past 10 years, the country experienced 11 millimeters of rainfall decline while evaporation rate increased by 54 millimeters, ISNA quoted Khoshroo Shahbazi as saying on Thursday.

یازده میلیون هکتار از دشت‌های کشور نیازمند آبخوانداری است

معاون آبخیزداری، مراتع و بیابان سازمان جنگلها و مراتع و آبخیزداری، گفت: یازده میلیون هکتار از دشت‌های کشور نیازمند اجرای طرح‌های آبخیزداری و آبخوانداری است.

به گزارش ایسنا، خسرو شهبازی گفت: طی ۱۰ سال گذشته به طور متوسط در کشور ۱۱ میلیمتر کاهش بارندگی و ۵۴ میلیمتر افزایش تبخیر و تعریق را شاهد بودیم.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“bi-, bin-, bis-”

■ **Meaning:** two or twice

■ **For example:** *Biscuit* comes from the French meaning twice-cooked.

PHRASAL VERB

Opt in

■ **Explanation:** to decide to join a group or system
■ **For example:** Employees have the choice to opt in to the scheme.

IDIOM

Cross your mind

■ **Explanation:** If an idea or thought crosses your mind, you suddenly think of it
■ **For example:** It just crossed my mind that the shops are closed today.

UN expert urges world powers to reconsider G20 Riyadh summit

→1 The G20 is an international leaders' forum comprising 19 countries and the European Union. Collectively, the grouping represents more than 80 percent of the world's economic output and two-thirds of its people. Its primary aim is to promote international financial stability.

West selling rogue theory

The UN rapporteur said it was crucial to recognise that a state carried out the killing of Khashoggi, who was strangled and dismembered shortly after he entered the Saudi consulate in the Turkish city of Istanbul in October last year to handle wedding paperwork.

Saudi Arabia has repeatedly denied the involvement of MBS.

According to Al Jazeera, Saudi officials initially denied Khashoggi's killing at the consulate, saying he had left the premises. The kingdom changed its narrative several times before later acknowledging he was killed, blaming "rogue" security agents.



The Saudi public prosecutor indicted 11 unnamed suspects in November, including five who could face the death penalty on charges of ordering and committing the crime. Referring to the Saudi contention that

out-of-control agents were responsible, Callamard said: "So far the Western governments that have adopted individualised targeted sanctions - which, by the way, are good - are also selling the 'rogue' theory by so doing."

"So it's really important to insist on what we do vis-a-vis the state of Saudi Arabia, not some 15, 17 individuals," she added.

Callamard also called for sanctions to restrict Saudi access to surveillance technology, saying the government has shown it "cannot be trusted" with it.

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has slapped sanctions on individuals but vowed to preserve warm ties with Saudi Arabia due in part to its purchases of U.S. weapons and its hostility to Iran.

Meeting MBS at the last G20 on Saturday in Osaka, Trump said Prince Mohammed was doing a "spectacular job".

Callamard said she had not "yet" held talks at the White House during her visit to Washington, DC.

Russia: Israel's Syria strikes menace regional stability

TEHRAN—Russia takes serious issue with Israeli military aggression against Syria, a day after Israeli strikes claim four lives in the Arab country.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said Russia was concerned about the aerial attacks launched by the occupying regime against Syria.

Moscow believes that the assaults could pose a threat to regional stability, the statement added.

Israeli warplanes fired missiles at areas inside Damascus and the city's countryside as well as the western province of Homs from the Lebanese airspace, according to Syria's Foreign Ministry.

The fatalities included a baby. The missiles also injured 21 others, most of them women and children.

This is not the first time Tel Aviv triggers a warning message from Moscow by engaging in direct and deadly incursion against Syria.

During the foreign-backed militancy

that began gripping Syria in 2011 -- before largely subsiding over the past several years -- Israel would regularly attack Syria's defenses and targets belonging to its allies, which were helping it contain the violence.

Last September, a Russian Il-20 reconnaissance aircraft was shot down and all the 15 servicemen on board it killed during Israeli airstrikes in the northwestern Syrian province of Latakia.

According to Press TV, Moscow said Tel Aviv was fully responsible for the incident, as Israeli aircraft were using the Russian plane as a shield at the time, prompting Syrian defenses to bring it down by mistake.

The Israeli regime also touts a history of aiding the militants fleeing the Syrian military's operations.

Also last year, it facilitated the evacuation out of Syria of several hundred "civil defense workers" known as White Helmets, whom Damascus and Moscow blame for staging false-flag chemical operations in the Arab country.

No technocrat, Lagarde brings listening, diplomacy to ECB table

TEHRAN—Christine Lagarde will raise the profile of the European Central Bank, making it a more politically-savvy institution that takes its message directly to the people. However policy innovation, the trademark of her predecessor, may be relegated.

In return, Lagarde may be able to use her considerable diplomatic skills to persuade Germany to help temper a euro zone slow-down by raising its spending levels -- a feat outgoing ECB chief Mario Draghi failed to achieve.

Facing a protracted crisis, Draghi and his team of highly-trained monetary policy-makers have essentially devised the world's biggest experiment in unconventional policy over the last five years. Weak growth suggests the stimulus path must be pursued, even as the limits of its existing tools are nearing.

With little training or experience in monetary policy, Lagarde, who takes over from Mario Draghi on Nov 1, will

be the arbiter and not the driver of the policy innovation that is now needed, putting a greater burden on Philip Lane, the ECB's new chief economist, and the bank's staff.

"The question is whether the monetary policy brain drain with the departures of (former chief economist) Peter Praet, (former vice president) Vitor Constancio and Mario Draghi will be equally replaced or whether Philip Lane might soon be the last pragmatic monetary economist standing in the ECB's Executive Board," ING economist Carsten Brzeski said.

Draghi, himself a PhD economist who wrote a dissertation at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) on economic theory and its application, has in contrast been the head of the ECB's brain trust, surrounding himself with some of the euro zone's best minds while ultimately making the big calls himself. Reuters reported.

Spectacular progress, says Taliban as U.S. talks enter fifth day

TEHRAN—The ongoing seventh round of negotiations between Taliban representatives and U.S. officials in Qatar has made "spectacular progress" on a draft agreement aimed at ending the 18-year-long conflict in Afghanistan, a spokesperson for the armed group has said.

Speaking to Al Jazeera on Wednesday, Suhail Shaheen, the Taliban's political spokesman in Doha, said that "80-90 percent work on the peace agreement is finished".

"Spectacular progress made in this round. The meeting will continue today as well," he added, without giving further details.

The talks in Doha, which began on June 29, are aimed at finalising a draft agreement on the potential withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan.

The United States has said it will not agree to the withdrawal of troops until the Taliban put in place security guarantees, implement a ceasefire across the country and commit to an "intra-Afghan" dialogue with the Kabul government.

But the Taliban insists that the precondition of any agreement is the timeline for the withdrawal of the troops.

The group also refuses to talk to the Afghan government,

calling them a "puppet" of the West.

There are about 17,000 foreign troops in Afghanistan, including a contingent of some 14,000 U.S. soldiers, as part of a Washington-led NATO mission to train, assist and advise Afghan forces.

Some U.S. forces also carry out "counterterrorism" operations.

In an interview with Fox News on Monday, U.S. President Donald Trump said that Afghanistan was a "lab for terrorists" and that even if the U.S. did pull out its troops, it would leave a "very strong intelligence" presence in the country.

On Saturday, as talks were ongoing in Doha, Taliban fighters killed at least 19 people in an attack on a government office in Maruf district of southern Kandahar province.

In a devastating attack on Monday, the Taliban detonated a powerful car bomb in a Kabul area housing military and government buildings, as well as schools and shops, killing at least 16 people and wounding 105, including 51 children.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. envoy heading the negotiations in Doha, condemned the attack in a Twitter post.



"The photos of innocent Afghan children, scared & hurt, drive home a sense of profound urgency to resolve remaining issues here in Doha. Afghan people deserve an end to the violence," he said.

At least 44 killed as air strike hits Libya migrant detention center: UN

TEHRAN—An air strike hit a detention center for mainly African migrants in a suburb of the Libyan capital Tripoli late on Tuesday, killing at least 44 people and

wounding more than 130, the United Nations said.

It was the highest publicly reported toll from an air strike or shelling since eastern

forces under Khalifa Haftar launched a ground and aerial offensive three months ago to take Tripoli, the base of Libya's internationally recognized government.

United Nations Libya envoy Ghassan Salame condemned the strike, saying it "clearly amounts to the level of a war crime", Reuters reported.

Biden's support from black voters cut in half after debate: Reuters/Ipsos poll

TEHRAN—Former Vice President Joe Biden, the early front-runner for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, has lost support among African-Americans after taking heat on racial issues during the party's first debate, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll.

The survey, conducted from Friday to Monday in the days following the debate in Miami, found 22 percent of adults who identify as Democrats or independents said they supported Biden, down 8 percentage points from a similar poll conducted earlier in June.

Support for Biden among blacks, a critical Democratic voting bloc, was cut in half, with about two out of 10 saying they backed President Barack Obama's former vice president, compared with four out of 10 in the June poll.

African-Americans largely supported Biden when he entered the race for the right to challenge Republican President Donald Trump in the November 2020 election. But they appeared to be looking elsewhere after Kamala



Harris, a U.S. senator from California also seeking the presidency, criticized Biden for opposing mandatory busing to

integrate schools in the 1970s and for his cooperation with segregationists while he was a young senator.

The dramatic exchange became a defining moment of the debate and has reverberated in the race. Biden has defended his civil rights record and said Harris mischaracterized his positions.

Harris, the daughter of a black father from Jamaica and an Indian mother, appears to have benefited from her debate performance. Her support rose 4 percentage points to 10 percent in the poll released on Wednesday - the most of any of the more than 20 candidates seeking the nomination.

The poll found Harris now the third most popular candidate for the Democratic nomination, behind Biden and U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, who was backed by about 16 percent of Democrats and independents. Support for Harris, who was fourth in the previous poll, rose with black voters, as well as among women and people who make at least \$100,000 a year.

Maduro says peace will come by year-end

In a televised speech on Tuesday, Maduro said, "I am sure that in 2019, we will reach a great agreement on mutual understanding and peace, dialog, and democracy for Venezuela."

He also said his government was ready to continue talks with the opposition in

Norway toward "creating a permanent mechanism for talks and [to] search for solutions."

"That process is going well," the Venezuelan president said. "There will be good news in the coming weeks about how well the contact, negotiation, and pre-agreement

processes are going." He did not elaborate.

Both Maduro and Guaido had sent representatives to a round of talks in Norway, which started mediating between the two sides, in May.

The two sides failed to bridge their differences then, however.

Europe should recall its commitment to the Iran deal instead of enabling U.S. hawks

→7 Fourth, European powers' attempt to reinstate Security Council resolutions against Iran -- which would not just be unlawful -- would most certainly escalate tensions to a whole new level, dealing a fatal blow to the international non-proliferation regime and embolden those in Washington that are relentlessly pursuing military confrontation with Iran. A hostile act like this would most likely prompt Iran to leave the JCPOA altogether, withdraw from the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and abandon the "maximum restraint" policy it is currently pursuing.

By misusing the Security Council mechanism, Europe would also give people like John Bolton a new tool to exploit in order to advance their case for war. European leaders are fully aware that the current US administration is comprised of people who invoked a decade-old expired Security Council resolution to justify military action against Iraq. Therefore, it would not be difficult for them to imagine what this crew would do if they were given half a dozen resolutions to misinterpret and exploit. Europe should know that by enabling the hawkish elements within the Trump administration, it must own the consequences of their actions.

Fifth, in order to accuse Iran of a "wrongful act" and take measures accordingly, Europe must first establish Iran's "ill intention" or at least show a semblance of a mens rea. However, European leaders, like the rest of the international community, know full well that such ill intention doesn't exist. In fact, they are fully cognisant of the fact that, by taking lawful measures, Iran's sole intention is to keep their mutual agreement alive. Penalising Iran for attempting to push other parties to honour a Security Council-endorsed agreement would leave a stain on Europe's image and moral authority -- and render any future diplomatic engagements much more difficult.

With all this in mind, Europe should refrain from taking any action that would make Iran pay the cost of the other parties' transgressions. On the other hand, Europeans should also know that they cannot be entitled to the fruits of the United States' unlawful acts and their own lack of resolve in fulfilling their own part of the bargain.

European powers should recall that their commitment was to make Iran fully benefit from the tangible dividends of the lifting of sanctions lifting, not to merely observe the administrative formalities and then disengage. So, the right course of action -- in fact, the only course of action -- would be for European powers to take their commitments seriously and take decisive steps to normalise trade and economic relations with Iran. Going down any other path would only make matters worse.

EU leaders pick Germany's Ursula von der Leyen to lead European Commission

TEHRAN—The European Council proposed German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen to become European Commission president, European Council President Donald Tusk said.



Von der Leyen, a member of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives (CDU/CSU), would be the first female Commission president if confirmed by the European Parliament. Her nomination needs an absolute majority of the chamber's 751 members to be ratified.

Tusk welcomed the gender balance in the nominations for the four top EU jobs: "First and foremost, we have chosen two women and two men for the four key positions. A perfect gender balance. I am really happy about it."

All four top jobs need to be confirmed by the European Parliament.

Picks for key posts

As part of a package deal:

* Charles Michel was nominated European Council president. He is currently serving as acting Belgian premier.

* Christine Lagarde was nominated for European Central Bank president. She previously served as France's finance minister and is currently the managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

* Josep Borrell Fontelles was nominated for High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. He is currently serving as Spanish foreign minister, DW reported.

Putin signs law suspending INF disarmament treaty

TEHRAN—Russian President Vladimir Putin signed legislation suspending a 1987 nuclear missile treaty, according to the law published Wednesday on an official government website.

The United States is set to pull out of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) on Aug 2 citing Russia's development of a missile that breaks the accord, Reuters reported.

Italian social democrat elected new European Parliament president

TEHRAN—Italian social democrat MEP David Sassoli won a vote Wednesday to become the new president of the European Parliament, completing the roster of top EU jobs.

The 63-year-old former journalist won 345 votes on the second round of voting, an absolute majority of ballots cast by MEPs in Strasbourg, the outgoing president Antonio Tajani announced, AFP reported.

England's World Cup heartbreak attracts 11.7 million viewers

England's dramatic women's World Cup semi-final defeat to the United States was the most watched television event of the year so far in the United Kingdom, attracting a peak audience of 11.7 million.

The Lionesses bowed out at the last four for the third consecutive major tournament after missing a late penalty and seeing a goal marginally ruled out for offside in a 2-1 loss to the world champions.

Viewing figures released by BBC showed that the match in Lyon grabbed a peak share of the TV audience of over 50 percent.

It was the fourth time this tournament that the record UK TV audience for a women's match had been broken.

"It's moved from being an interesting Olympic-type sport to an absolute mainstream sport," former Football Association chief executive Martin Glenn told the BBC.

"The importance of that is that adds attraction, it pulls girls and women into playing.

"At the top end, what will make the product of the Women's Super League more attractive is getting more exposure in the millions - so being on terrestrial TV is important - making sure the games are played in the elite stadiums that the men play in, and continuing to improve the quality of the football."

The England men's team's defeat to Croatia in the World Cup semi-final last year attracted a peak audience of 26.5 million.

(Source: Mirror)

Tokyo Olympic stadium 90% finished, to open in December

With the start of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics a little over a year away, the National Stadium, set to be the centrepiece of the Games, is 90% completed and will open its doors for the first time in December.

Media were shown inside the \$1.25 billion stadium on Wednesday, 387 days before the opening ceremony will be held at the same venue.

The 60,000 capacity stadium, which will also host the athletics and soccer events during the Games, was designed by Japanese architect Kengo Kuma and aims to embody Japan's connection with nature.

Wood collected from all of Japan's 47 prefectures has been used to build the stadium's iconic slated roof, and the seats, 45,000 of which have been installed, are a mix of green, brown and white to reflect trees growing.

The final preparations are being completed before an inauguration event in front of the public on Dec. 21.

"The work for this stadium has been going on for three years and we have five months to go," said National Stadium Development Director Takeo Takahashi.

"About 90% of the construction work has been completed and, as you can see, almost all the buildings have been completed.

"We are now working on the interior and facility equipment inside the stadium.

"The grass and track have yet to be laid but this is expected to be completed in the next month.

The Olympic Stadium is one of eight new venues to be used at Tokyo 2020, all of which are on schedule for completion.

The Musashino Forest Sports Plaza, a venue to be used at Tokyo 2020 but not built specifically for the Games, was opened in November 2017 while the newly-built archery and rowing venues have recently opened.

(Source: Reuters)

Adidas investigating after company shares racist tweets

Adidas has said it is carrying out an investigation after a Twitter campaign to promote its new Arsenal kit was inadvertently used to send racist and anti-Semitic messages to its followers.

The ad campaign allowed users to have their Twitter handle generated onto an image of the back of the new shirt by sharing or liking the promotional tweet. Adidas UK then shared the personalised images to their 832,000 followers.

The controversial issue arose when some users changed their handles to offensive phrases such as "Innocent Hitler. Welcome to the squad."

Adidas has since removed the tweets while many of the Twitter users who used the campaign to send abusive messages have subsequently been suspended.

"As part of our partnership launch with Arsenal we have been made aware of the abuse of a Twitter personalization mechanic created to allow excited fans to get their name on the back of the new jersey," the sports apparel maker said in a statement provided to several news outlets.

"Due to a small minority creating offensive versions of this we have immediately turned off the functionality and the Twitter team will be investigating."

As CNN has reported, this is not the first time such an automated ad campaign has been hijacked by trolls on Twitter.

A similar campaign run by New England Patriots in 2014 also led to offensive names being generated on the back of the NFL team's shirt.

(Source: Marca)

Juve sacrifice Dybala for Pogba?

Juventus are reportedly willing to sacrifice Paulo Dybala for Paul Pogba, but Manchester United continue to hold out for €150m.

According to Gazzetta dello Sport's Nicolo Schira, Juve remain in contact with agent Mino Raiola over Pogba's return.

Schira explains sporting director Fabio Paratici is 'ready' to offer €60-70m plus Dybala for the midfielder.

The forward's future should be decided soon after Argentina exited Copa America, and United have long been linked.

However, the Red Devils would not be budging on their €150m valuation of the Frenchman.

The Gazzetta journalist adds Real Madrid are also serious about signing the 26-year-old and 'want to close' a deal soon.

United begin their preseason tour on July 13 with a friendly against Australian side Perth Glory.

(Source: Football Italia)

Messi and Argentina a marriage of inconvenience



The greatest of all time... it is the eternal question and one that can only be measured in a subjective way. Was Pelé simply the finest footballer the world has ever seen, or the scorer of 1,000-odd goals in friendlies? Was Maradona the most skillful player ever to balance a ball on his foot or would George Best have showed him up had they lived in the age of freestyle?

For present-day fans, tangible is king. A player can only wear the crown if he drags his side single-handed to glory, as Maradona did in 1986 and Cristiano Ronaldo would probably have no issue with claiming he managed at Euro 2016, from the touchline if needs be. So where does that leave Leo Messi, the perennial international bridesmaid, after Argentina's latest failure to add to their laurels at the Copa América?

Brazil's 2-0 victory prevented the Albiceleste going through the final of the Copa for the 29th time and may just prove to be the straw that breaks the back of Messi's international career. The Barcelona star is accustomed to success at club level - often dragging his team to victory on his diminutive frame - but he simply cannot repeat the trick on the international stage as his predecessor in the number 10 shirt did in Mexico, with a little helping hand from God.

The problem may lie with the Argentine Football Association, which has come in for its fair share of flak as the national side, as

powerful a religion as exists in Argentina, lurch from one disaster to another. Argentina were woeful at the last World Cup and not much better in Brazil this summer. Messi had a reasonable game against Brazil, hitting a post and providing the driving force for much of Argentina's attacking intent. But it was not enough. It never is. And to think he could have played for Spain during the golden era from 2008 to 2012: two European Championships and a World Cup would do the trick.

Messi to retire from Argentina duty again?

Messi has now participated in four World Cups and five Copas América. On four occasions Argentina have contested the final (World Cup 2014 and Copa América 2007, 2015 and 2016). After the most recent, the Copa América Centenario when Argentina were beaten by Chile on penalties, Messi missing his spot-kick in the shoot-out, the Barça star retired.

"I tried my hardest. It has been four

finals, I want more than anyone to win a title with the national team, but unfortunately, it did not happen... I think this is best for everyone, firstly for me and for a lot of people that wish this. The team has ended for me, a decision made."

A decision then revoked, after a personal plea from Argentinean President Mauricio Macri, the unveiling of a statue in Buenos Aires and an outpouring of public grief. But this latest disappointment may be the true end. Not because Messi cannot save Argentina, but because Argentina appear incapable of saving themselves. Even without star player Neymar, Brazil can function as a unit. That Argentina have whittled through nine coaches during Messi's career tells its own story.

There is hope, for Messi and for Argentina. With the Copa América format having undergone almost as many changes as Argentina's coaching staff in recent years, there will be a fourth Copa in five years in 2020. The host nations will be Argentina and Colombia. Messi may not make Qatar 2022. He almost certainly won't be in Ecuador in 2024. Next year may represent the last chance for Messi to add a senior international trophy to the greatest of all time debate. If he does it on his own, Maradona's mantle might finally at least be shared. Given the current state of Argentinean football, he'll probably have to.

(Source: AS)

Body of Swiss player Ismaili found after swimming accident



The body of Swiss footballer Florijana Ismaili has been found, days after vanishing following a swimming accident at Lake Como in Italy.

The 24-year-old was declared missing on Saturday after jumping into the lake from a boat and failing to resurface.

Italian rescue services said her body was found at a depth of 204 metres on Tuesday.

"I am deeply saddened and shaken. It's hard to accept that Flori is gone," said Swiss women's boss Nils Nielsen.

Ismaili, who made her international debut in 2014, was the captain of BSC Young Boys.

"We are very upset and deeply affected," her club said.

She was capped 33 times by her country.

Liverpool's Swiss international forward Xherdan Shaqiri said he was "deeply shocked" by the news.

National women's team coach Nielsen added: "She always had a smile on her face and inspired us with her happy nature. She was someone who faced every challenge and set the example. I can only imagine what it must be like for all those who knew Flori longer and closer than me. But my thoughts are with them in these difficult times."

International team-mate Lia Wälti, who plays in the WSL for Arsenal, said: "Until the last moment, I still had hoped for a miracle and wished in my heart that everything was just a bad dream."

"The news has hit me deeply and you can

not find any right words at such a moment. I just hope very much that Flori did not have to suffer."

Another team-mate, Lara Dickmann, said: "We are all incredibly sad and shocked. It is inconceivable that Flori is no longer with us."

"In the sky a star has gone out. We are very, very sad," said Swiss men's team national coach Vladimir Petkovic.

Ismaili was named in the Swiss league's team of year for four successive seasons, and the Swiss Association of Football Players (SAFP), which runs the vote, said she "deserves to receive this award when she is again voted one of the top 11 in Switzerland by team-mates" for the 2018-19 season.

SAFP president Lucien W Valloni said the player "was a very loyal member of SAFP, who has worked to improve conditions in women's football."

"SAFP will like to remember Florijana as a wonderful person and great player."

Gianni Infantino, the president of world football's governing body Fifa, also paid tribute saying: "This is an extremely sad moment for all the football community, particularly at a time when we gather at the Fifa Women's World Cup."

Uefa president Aleksander Ceferin added: "Uefa and the European football community is deeply shocked and saddened by the death of Florijana Ismaili."

"We extend our deepest sympathy to her family and friends at this sad moment."

(Source: BBC)

Maria Sharapova retires from Wimbledon first round with yet another injury



Maria Sharapova retired for the first time in her grand slam career at Wimbledon but suggested she isn't about to quit the game for good after a series of demoralizing injuries.

Sharapova stopped with a left forearm issue while trailing France's Pauline Parmentier 6-4 6-7 (4-7) 0-5 in the first round after initially leading by a set and 5-2.

"I think the easy way would be just for me to maybe do other things because I've set up the opportunities for myself," said Sharapova, who made her breakthrough by winning Wimbledon in 2004.

"This is far from easy. I've never taken the easy route. I've always worked, committed, focused. These moments are hard, but I love what I do. I still have a lot of passion for it."

The five-time grand slam winner received treatment from the trainer but couldn't continue a year after she also lost from holding a set and 5-2 advantage on the same court -- Court 2 -- against fellow Russian Vitalia Diatchenko.

Sharapova's outside interests include candy company Sugarpova and she was long the richest female athlete in the world but has always spoken of her fondness for the sport and competing.

But the season has been difficult on the health front.

Sharapova underwent a surgical procedure to her right shoulder early in 2019 -- a decade ago she suffered a career-threatening shoulder injury -- which kept her sidelined for roughly four and a half months.

Upon her return last month, she lost to last year's Wimbledon champion Angelique Kerber in the second round in Mallorca.

■ **One injury setback after another**

Wimbledon was the second occasion in her mere five events this year that the 32-year-old was forced to quit, a thigh injury preventing her from finishing a quarterfinal against Aryna Sabalenka in Shenzhen at the start of the campaign.

The limited activity has seen her ranking slide to 80th.

She had shut down her 2018 season after the US Open to rehabilitate the shoulder and deal with left arm and thigh problems a year earlier when making her comeback to the tour following an 18-month drug suspension.

The comeback certainly hasn't been what she'd envisaged or hoped for although the signs were promising when she ousted defending champion Caroline Wozniacki at the Australian Open.

Sharapova found it difficult to strike backhands in the latter stages against the 88th-ranked Parmentier, a Frenchwoman who had lost six straight Wimbledon encounters, and said she had already had a scan on the injury.

"I've had a history of a tendon in my left forearm flaring up," said Sharapova. "It happened today in the second set."

"It's very rare that I withdraw from a match in the middle of the match. That certainly means that it's painful."

(Source: CNN)

Murray, Serena form Wimbledon mixed doubles dream team



Andy Murray and Serena Williams will form a mixed doubles dream team at Wimbledon, his management announced Tuesday, as he gradually returns to tennis following career-saving surgery.

Murray, who is easing his way back into the sport following a radical hip resurfacing, will join forces with Williams in an all-star partnership when the draw is announced on Wednesday.

The Scot is already entered into the men's doubles at Wimbledon where he is playing alongside France's Pierre-Hugues Herbert.

The two-time Wimbledon champion's partnership with seven-time winner Williams will make them instant favourites for the title.

"We're a lot alike on the court. I've always liked that about him," Williams said of her fellow former world number one.

"His work ethic is just honestly off the charts. That's something I've always respected about him. His fitness, everything."

"To do what he's done in an era where there's so many other great male tennis players, so much competition, to rise above it, not many people have done it. He's actually one of the few. There's so many things to be admired."

She added: "Above all, he really stands out, he really speaks up about women's issues no matter what. You can tell he has a really strong woman in his life. I think above all that is just fantastic."

Murray had been searching for a mixed doubles partner but had complained that he had been turned down by a number of players.

"I do want to play," the 32-year-old said on Saturday at a pre-Wimbledon media day.

"We've had a number of conversations with a few players. Yeah, the plan's definitely to play."

"Conditions look like it's supposed to be good for the fortnight, which is a positive thing."

"I was speaking to some of the doubles guys, asking them why they don't play mixed. It was for the reason that they had some years where they've been backed up. Sometimes the mixed is not the priority to get on the court."

Murray played mixed doubles at Wimbledon in 2006 where he teamed with Belgium's Kirsten Flipkens and reached the second round.

He was also a silver medallist with Laura Robson in the London 2012 Olympics which were played at the All England Club.

Serena is a two-time mixed doubles champion at the Slams. In 1998, she partnered with Max Mirnyi to win Wimbledon and the US Open.

Some 64 pairings compete in the mixed doubles, which is disputed over the best of three sets.

(Source: Guardian)

Marc Wilmots looks for new challenge with Iran

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Belgian coach Marc Wilmots is looking for a new challenge with Iran national football team.

The former was named as new head coach of Iran national football team in May.

The former Belgium and Ivory Coast coach, who replaced Carlos Queiroz in Team Melli, wants to make a surprise with the Iranian football team.

«There is a lot of talent here. I have a goalkeeper in my team who could play at any top club in Europe. I also let an 18-year-old attacker to make his debut. He had already scored twice against Germany in the 2017 FIFA U17 World Cup. In the match against Syria, Allahyar Sayyadmanesh came off the bench and immediately scored a goal. And I am convinced that there are so many talents and we must find them. As a national coach, I like to look for the different ingredients to make a delicious soup.» Wilmots said in an interview with Sporza.be.

«And the question remains: How we want to play? Of course, you can't change everything in three training sessions,



but in the friendly match against South Korea we created 16 scoring chances.

Iran were not afraid of playing attacking football. The younger players need to

adopt the new philosophy.» he said.

The Belgian coach believes that the ambition with Iran is not the same as before with Belgium.

«With the Red Devils I always thought we were going to win that tournament. Now, that is different. But you can also surprise with Iran. Iran have not advanced to a World Cup knockout stage so far and it will be a good challenge for me.» he added.

«I love discovering new countries. I am curious. I was already working in Europe and Africa and now I am getting to know Asia. I have been in Tehran since coaching the team and what I noticed that everything is very clean. You see flowers everywhere. I think it's a European city, it's really formidable. And our training center is a magical place, with the mountains in the background.» the Belgian coach went on to say.

«I don't want to make any comment on politics, because I am here for sports. But I have noticed that Iran is a safe country. It's safe here, perhaps your life might be safer in Iran than Europe. Everything is clear here,» Wilmots concluded.

Iran reveal slogan for FIBA World Cup 2019

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran will take part at the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2019 with «For Iran, For Basketball» slogan.

Team Melli have been drawn with world's second-ranked Spain, Puerto Rico and Tunisia in Group C.

Ivory Coast, Poland, Venezuela and hosts China are in Group A.

Group B consists of Russia, Argentina, South Korea and Nigeria.

Serbia have been drawn along with the Philippines, Italy and Angola.

The U.S., world's No. 1-ranked team by FIBA, are pitted against Turkey, Czech Republic and Japan.

Greece are in Group F along with New Zealand, Brazil and Montenegro.

France, Germany, Jordan and Dominican Republic are in Group G and Canada have been drawn in



Group H along with Senegal, Lithuania and Australia. The competition will be held in China from 31 Aug. to 15 Sept.

The 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup will be the 18th tournament of the FIBA Basketball World Cup for men's national basketball teams.

Rescheduled from 2018 to 2019, this edition will be the first FIBA Basketball World Cup since 1967 that will not occur in the same year as the FIFA World Cup, but a year following the latter.

Also, the group stage will expand from 24 to 32 teams. The top eight teams, including Japan as the hosts of the 2020 Summer Olympics (and the top two teams from each of the Americas and Europe; and the top team from each of Africa, Asia and Oceania) in this competition will qualify for the men's basketball event in the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Both the Czech Republic and Montenegro will make their first appearances in the FIBA World Cup as debutants.

Avramovic returns to Singapore as Home United head coach



2018 AFC Cup ASEAN Zonal champions Home United have announced the appointment of Radojko Avramovic as head coach of the club.

The 69-year-old Serbian, affectionately known as «Raddy», was famously coach of the Singapore national team from 2003 to 2012; a golden period for Singaporean football.

In his nine-year stint at the helm, Avramovic won three AFF Cups (2004, 2007 and 2012) with the Singapore Lions and was named the AFF Coach of the Year in 2013.

«I feel that I never left Singapore, everything is what I know from before,» said Avramovic, who stepped down as national coach in December 2012.

«The good thing is that I know a lot of Home United players. Some of

them played for the national team and some were selected for the youth team.

«It's nice to see that there is progression with the players and that they are playing regularly with Home United.»

Avramovic takes over from interim head coach Noh Rahman, who has been in charge of the Protectors for a month. Noh Rahman will continue with his original role in the club as assistant coach.

«I am also happy that I have trained Noh Rahman as a player before and now I have the opportunity to guide him as a coach too,» said Avramovic.

Since he left his role with the Singapore national team, Avramovic has had spells as national coach of Myanmar and Kuwait.

(Source: the-afc)

Yoon ends Korea Republic women's national team stint



Seoul: Yoon Duk-yeo has stepped down as the Korea Republic women's national team head coach after six years.

The Korea Football Association (KFA) announced on Tuesday Yoon had offered to resign on June 19, two days after Korea Republic were eliminated in the group stage of the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup France.

Yoon's contract expired at the end of June and Yoon told Kim Pan-gon, general manager of the women's team, that he wasn't interested in signing an extension.

Kim, who also serves as head of the KFA's national team competitiveness enhancement committee, chaired a meeting on Yoon's status and decided to accept his offer of resignation.

Yoon, 58, took over the Taeguk Ladies in December 2013, and his crowning achievement was reaching the FIFA World

Cup knockout stage for the first time in 2015 in Canada.

Korea Republic hadn't qualified for the quadrennial event since 2003. And in 2015, they earned their first FIFA Women's World Cup victory over Spain in the group stage and advanced to the Round of 16, where they lost to France.

On Yoon's watch, Korea Republic competed in their second straight FIFA Women's World Cup last month in France, but lost all three group matches.

Korea Republic won back-to-back bronze medals at the Asian Games in 2014 and 2018 under Yoon, and finished second to DPR Korea at the 2015 East Asian Football Federation Women's East Asian Cup.

Yoon's record as head coach ends at 48 wins, 14 draws and 38 losses.

(Source: Yonhap)

Zenit's reported Rogic interest could give Celtic a golden chance to sign Azmoun

Russian Premier League winner Sardar Azmoun has been linked with Scottish Premiership champions Celtic since 2017.

Celtic might just have been handed the best chance they will ever get to finally bring Sardar Azmoun to Glasgow.

The Mirror (22 April, page 48) reported last year that The Hoops were eyeing an ambitious swoop for a player who's «Iranian Messi» moniker has followed him around for as long as memory will allow. That came approximately 12 months after Celtic first expressed their interest in Azmoun, who's £10 million price-tag would have made him the Premiership champions' all-time record signing.

But if this long-awaited switch is ever going to happen, it's now.



According to The Herald, Zenit St Petersburg are planning a £9 million bid for Celtic's enigmatic midfielder Tom Rogic.

The Russian champions will have to do a lot better than that however, with Celtic demanding closer to £15 million for the former Central Coast Mariners starlet.

Offering Azmoun as part of the deal, however, might be enough to twist Celtic's arm.

The 24-year-old enjoyed the best season of his career after swapping Rubin Kazan for Zenit, netting 17 times in all competitions including three in four Europa League matches.

A clinical finisher with a fearsome leap, Azmoun looks every inch the natural-born goalscorer Celtic have needed since Moussa Dembele left for Lyon. If Zenit are willing to offer Azmoun for Rogic, the Hoops might just have to bite their hands off.

(Source: HITC)

Iran table football team grab silver medal in Spain

IRNA — Iranian national table football players received a silver medal in Leg 2 field which is underway in Mallorca, Spain.

In the final match, Iran were overpowered by Italian rival 30-25 and ranked second.



The event will be underway until July 6 in Spain. Table football or table soccer, foosball in North America, is a table-top game that is loosely based on football.

The aim of the game is to use the control knobs to move the ball into the opponent's goal. There are no unified rules for playing the game, in the sense that rules vary in different countries and even in cities, and sometimes between different clubs in the same city.

Iran U-23 football team to play Croatia in late October

TASNIM — Iran U-23 football team will play two friendly matches with Croatia during the last weekend of October.

Hamid Estili, technical manager of the team, has confirmed the news.

Farhad Majidi's team are preparing for the 2020 AFC U-23 Championship which will be held in Thailand from January 8 to 26.

The competition will act as the AFC qualifiers for the Olympic football tournament.

The top three teams of the tournament will qualify for the 2020 Summer Olympics men's football tournament in Japan as the AFC representatives.

Iran have not qualified for the Olympics since the 1976 games in Munich.

Persepolis eye Ruben Kazan midfielder Shekari

Persian Football — Persepolis football club are going to sign Ruben Kazan Iranian attacking midfielder Reza Shekari.

Shekari made a name for himself four year ago when he scored his first professional goal in a 2-0 victory against Persepolis in Hazfi Cup.

The 21-year-old player joined Rubin Kazan U-21 team in 2017 and made his Russian Premier League debut in April 2018 in a game against FC Akhmat Grozny.

Persepolis have recently signed Argentine coach Gabriel Calderon and are going to win Iran Professional League (IPL) title for the fourth time in a row with the coach.

Brazilian striker Kiros Stanley linked with Tractor Sazi

TASNIM — Brazilian striker Kiros Stanley has been linked with a move to Iranian top-flight football club Tractor Sazi.

Kiros Stanley was a member of Sepahan football team last season but his contract ran out at the end of the season.

Now, Tractor Sazi football team are going to sign the 31-year-old forward.

The Tabriz-based football team, headed by Mustafa Denizli, also want to hire ex-Persepolis midfielder Vahid Amiri.

Trabzonspor midfielder Amiri has been reportedly deemed as surplus to requirements in the Turkish football club.

Al Duhail head to Portugal ahead of Al Sadd face-off

With the 2019 AFC Champions League Round of 16 clash with Al Sadd and the 2019-20 Qatar Stars League (QSL) season fast approaching, Al Duhail have set up base in the Portuguese city of Porto Mayo for a training camp.

Al Duhail, whose reign as QSL champions was ended by Al Sadd last season, ended the campaign brightly by winning the Amir Cup with a 4-1 triumph in the final over their domestic rivals.

The 2019 AFC Champions League is also a target for the Doha-based club and head coach Rui Faria wants his squad fully prepared for the showdown with domestic rivals Al Sadd.

The first leg of the Round of 16 tie will be played on August 6 and the return leg a week later.

That will be followed by the curtain raiser to the 2019-20 QSL season as both teams will face-off again in the Sheikh Jassim Cup on August 17.

Al Duhail advanced to the AFC Champions League knockout stage after finishing second behind Al Hilal SFC of Saudi Arabia in Group C.

The winners will advance to a quarter-final matchup against either Al Nassr of Saudi Arabia or Al Wahda of the UAE.

The other West 2019 AFC Champions League quarter-final will see the winners of the Al Ittihad (Saudi Arabia) and Zobahan (Islamic Republic of Iran) Round of 16 tie pitted against the victors of the match-up between Saudi Arabia clubs Al Ahli and Al Hilal.

The East quarter-finals will see defending champions Kashima Antlers of Japan facing two-time AFC Champions League winners Guangzhou Evergrande FC from China PR and Japan's Urawa Red Diamonds, champions in 2007 and 2017, locking horns with China PR's Shanghai SIPG.

(Source: the-afc)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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▶ Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
▶ www.eshtarak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
▶ Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
▶ Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737

Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimesdaily

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

It is enough that death is a guard waiting for everyone.

Imam Ali (AS)

1st Kurdish Elites Congress held in Sanandaj

A R T TEHRAN — Sanandaj, the capital of the western Iranian province of Kordestan, played host to the 1st Kurdish Elites Congress on Tuesday and Wednesday. The congress organized at the University of Kordestan was attended by Iranian presidential advisor for ethnic and religious minorities Ali Yunesi, president of Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government Nechirvan Barzani, and Governor General of Kordestan Province Bahman Moradnia.

A number of Iranian artists, including vocalists Shahram Nazeri and Seddiq Tarif and musician Bijan Kamkar, also were in attendance at the meeting. The congress, which opened with a message from President Hassan Rouhani, aimed at honoring Kurdish elites from all over the world such as Mazhar Khaleghi, an Iranian Kurdish singer who lives in England.

About 30 Kurdish scholars in various categories including art, culture, literature, medicine, science and agriculture were commemorated for their achievements during the event. Shahram Nazeri, Adel Naderi, Bijan Kamkar and Sadun Kakei also gave performances of Kurdish music on the sidelines of the event. A book fair and calligraphy and photo exhibitions were also organized.

"Zer", a movie by Turkish Kurdish filmmaker Kazim Oz, was also on screen. The film is about a young man's journey into his roots, and his exploration of a song originating in a village removed from history.

TV series nominees for Hafez Awards unveiled

A R T TEHRAN — Five TV series are competing in the 19th edition of the Hafez Awards as the nominees for this category were announced on Wednesday. "The Lady of the Mansion", directed by Azizollah Hamidnejad about a Qajar prince who marries a young girl and brings her to his mansion full of dark secrets, is one of the nominees.



This combination photo shows scenes from Hafez Awards nominees in the TV series category.

"Father", by Behrang Tofiqi about two young university students who fall in love despite their different families and backgrounds, has also received a nomination.

"The Lovers" by Manuchehr Hadi about a middle-aged woman who lost his husband and son in an incident, "Around Autumn" by Hossein Namazi about the Mina tragedy in which thousands of pilgrims lost their lives in Saudi Arabia in September 2015 have also been shortlisted for the award.

The filmmakers are also competing for an award for best director. "The Forbidden" by Amir Purkian, about three generations of a family and an underground gang named Forbidden, has also been nominated for the best series award and its screenwriters Ali Asghari and Mehrdad Kuroshnia received nominations for the best screenwriter award.

Homayun Asadian received a nomination for the best director award for his popular series "Twilight Moment", which is about the lives of four siblings over 30 years.

The nominees for best screenwriter award are Ehsan Javanmard for "The Lady of the Mansion", Hamed Anqa and Hossein Amirjahani for "Father", and Mehdi Mohammadnejadian and Babak Kaidan for "The Lovers".

The Hafez Awards, Iran's first and only private awards event in the film industry and TV productions, will announce winners in Tehran on July 12.

Imam Reza (AS) Intl. Festival to open in Qom

CULTURE TEHRAN — The 17th edition of the Imam Reza (AS) International Festival will open today with the birthday celebration of Hazrat Masumeh (SA), the sister of the Imam (AS), at her holy shrine in Qom.

The ten-day festival is scheduled to offer a wide variety of programs in different Iranian provinces, the director of Imam Reza (AS) International Art and Cultural Foundation, Mahmudreza Barazesh, said in a press conference held on Tuesday.

The programs include theater performances, book fairs, art exhibitions and cultural seminars. Exhibitions of rare Persian and Arabic manuscripts and documents will also be organized.

Cities in the provinces of Hamedan, Bushehr, Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari, North Khorasan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, and Markazi will host sessions on religious pomes.

The Razavi Theater Festival, an event dedicated to plays on religious themes, will be held during the festival in East Azarbaijan.

A number of musical performances will also be held in Tehran while several calligraphy exhibits will be organized in South Khorasan Province.

Sistan-Baluchestan will host an exhibition of graphic designs, and Isfahan will showcase a collection book illustrations in an exhibit during the festival.

The organizers also plan to hold special programs and performances at religious sites.

Seminars are also scheduled to be held on Imam Reza (AS) in Ardebil, Kermanshah, Yazd and several other cities.

The festival will also be held in several countries in collaboration with Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, the Ahl-ul-Bait World Assembly, and several other organizations.

A large collection of cultural products will be put on display at the Razavi Permanent Exhibit in Mashhad, where the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) is situated.

The festival will come to an end in Mashhad on July 14 that marks the birthday of Imam Reza (AS).



A view of the holy shrine of Hazrat Masumeh (SA), the sister of Imam Reza (AS), in Qom. (Mehr/)

Istvan Orkeny's "Tot Family" coming to Tehran theater



A poster for "The Fly", which will be performed based on "The Tot Family", a play by Hungarian writer Istvan Orkeny, at the Sayeh Hall of Tehran's City Theater Complex on July 14.

A R T TEHRAN — "The Tot Family", a play by Hungarian writer Istvan Orkeny, who is renowned for his satiric view and creation of grotesque situations, will be staged at the Sayeh Hall of Tehran's City Theater Complex on July 14.

Speaking to the Persian service of MNA on Wednesday, Iranian director Tohid Masumi said that due to the play's main character's highly annoying habit of importunity, he has renamed it "The Fly".

The dramaturgy of the Persian version of the play translated by Kamal Zaheri has been carried out by Ayyub Aqakhani.

"The story of the play is set in Hungary during World War II and it is about a rural family that invites an army major who is the commander of their son at the front into their home," Masumi stated.

"By their warm reception, the family plans to lure the commander

to send their son to the rear, but the story doesn't go on the path the family wants," he added.

The mad army major terrorizes the family, forcing them to cut and fold endless quantities of cardboard packing boxes every night until dawn.

Published in 1967, "The Tot Family" gained recognition for Orkeny as a playwright, American scholar Felicia Hardison Londré wrote in her book "Words at Play".

"Critical reaction was mixed, some hailed that play as the first genuine product of the Hungarian theater of the grotesque," she added.

Earlier in November 2007, the play was also staged by Iranian actor and director Maedeh Tahmasebi at Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center.

A cast composed of Farhad Aiish, Fereshteh Sadr-Orafaii, Leili Rashidi, Ahmad Mehranfar and Ramin Nasser-Nasir performed the play for about one month.

Kiarostami foundation restores movies for worldwide screenings



Abbas Kiarostami in an undated photo.

A R T TEHRAN — The Abbas Kiarostami Foundation announced on Wednesday that it has completed the restoration of a large lineup of his films for screening worldwide.

The lineup includes all the short films he made for the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults and his other features and documentaries. Kiarostami's son, Ahmad, who is also the director of the foundation, said in a press release.

The restoration took two years to accomplish at MK2, an independent film company in France, Janus Films, an American film distribution company, and the Criterion Collection, an American home video distribution company, he added.

Janus Films will organize an Abbas Kiarostami retrospective at the IFC Center in New York in August, he said, and noted that his rare shorts and documentaries restored by the Criterion Collection and Mk2 will be screened.

"The Koker Trilogy", which is composed of the filmmaker's acclaimed feature films "Where Is the Friend's House?", "Life and

Nothing More" and "Under the Olive Trees" will also be screened at the IFC.

The retrospective will also showcase his features "The Experience", "The Traveler", "A Wedding Suit", "Fellow Citizen", "First Graders", "Homework", "Close-up", "Taste of Cherry".

In addition, the Centre George Pompidou in Paris, in collaboration with the foundation and MK2, will be holding a retrospective of the filmmaker in April 2020. His films will be reviewed during the exhibition, which also will showcase his paintings, books and photos.

The Criterion Collection has recently released Kiarostami's final movie "24 Frames" in Blu-ray format. "The Koker Trilogy" is scheduled to be released by the company next month.

Kiarostami died of cancer on July 5, 2016 at the age of 76. His family and fans are scheduled to come together in Tork Mazraeh Cemetery in Lavasan, where he is buried, to commemorate the third anniversary of his death.

"Knockout" to hit silver screens in Iranian cities



A scene from "Knockout" by Iranian director Gholamreza Ramezani.

A R T TEHRAN — "Knockout" so he goes to Bijan and asks him to lose against Amir. Produced in 2018, "Knockout" won the Golden Butterfly Awards for best film and best screenplay and the Special Golden Butterfly of Zaven Ghokasian at the 31st International Film Festival for Children and Youth in Isfahan last September.

The film will also go on screen in the Generator +13 section of the 49th Giffoni International Film Festival, which will be held in the Italian city from July 19 to 27.

suffering from a very serious disease, so he goes to Bijan and asks him to lose against Amir.

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Durban festival picks "The Underwater Cypress" from Iran



Actor Babak Hamidian acts in a scene from "The Underwater Cypress" by Mohammad-Ali Bashe-Ahangar.

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Mohammad-Ali Bashe-Ahangar's drama "The Underwater Cypress" about soldiers from the Iranian religious minority who are still listed as missing in action will be screened at the 40th Durban International Film Festival (DIFF) in South Africa, Iran's Art Bureau announced on Wednesday.

DIFF will open this year on July 18 with "Knuckle City" by celebrated South African director Jahmil X.T. Qubeka.

"Love Runs Out" by Roger Young from the U.S., "Back of the Moon" by Angus Gibson from South Africa, "Cronofobia" by Francesco Rizzi from Switzerland and "Divine Love" by Gabriel Mascaro from Brazil will be screened in the official competition.

A number of documentaries, including "Buddha in Africa" by Nicole Schaefer from South Africa, "Anbessa" by Mo Scarpelli from Italy and the U.S., "In My Blood It Runs" by Maya Newell from Australia and "A Haunted Past" by Fatma Riahi from Qatar, have also been selected to compete in the festival, which will end on July 28.