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Iran's quarterly non-oil exports at \$11.5b

TEHRAN — Iran exported \$11.5 billion of non-oil commodities during spring, which corresponds to the first quarter of the Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), head of Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced on Sunday.

Mohammadreza Modoudi said that the non-oil exports during spring of this year has not changed compared to the spring of previous year, IRIB reported.

The official put the value of non-oil imports at \$10.2 billion during the first quarter of this year, falling 8.7 percent from that of the same period of time in the previous year.

As previously announced by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the value of Iran's non-oil exports stood at \$44.3 billion in the previous year while \$42.6 billion worth of commodities were shipped into the country. **→4**

Zarif: Iran's nuclear steps reversible only through E3 compliance

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Sunday that Iran's steps in reducing its nuclear commitments are "reversible" only if the three European countries of Britain, France and Germany (E3) honor their commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the official name for the

2015 nuclear agreement.

Zarif's statement came a few hours after Iran officially announced it has started enriching uranium to a higher purity than the current 3.67%, as the Europeans missed a 60-day deadline by Tehran to devise a concrete mechanism to protect the country from the U.S. sanctions. **→2**

Yemeni army, allies attack Saudi Arabia's Jizan airport by drones

TEHRAN — The spokesman for Yemeni Armed Forces says army troopers and allied fighters from Popular Committees have launched a string of airstrikes against hangars in Saudi Arabia's Jizan airport near the border with Yemen, using a squadron of domestically-manufactured Qasef-2K (Striker-2K) combat drones.

Speaking during a press conference in the capital Sana'a on Saturday, Brigadier

General Yahya Saree (pictured below) said the unmanned aerial vehicles struck the designated targets with precision, noting that the operation led to the disruption of air traffic at the airport. Saree reiterated that the Yemeni drone strikes are in line with the right of self-defense, and a legitimate response to the continued Saudi-led military aggression against Yemen and the blockade of the conflict-plagued Arab country. **→13**



EDITORIAL

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UAE evil plots against neighboring countries and the Arab world

United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the name of a country that didn't exist before 1971 when the area was called Emirates of Motesalehe or the Emirates of the Coast of Oman.

This country which appeared on the map of the world on December second 1971, now has taken up a destabilizing role in Middle East and is trying to interfere in the affairs of other Arab countries in the region, both openly and in secret.

UAE's destructive role, especially in suppressing public protests became more evident after the events of September 2011; as UAE and its allies did their best to stop the progress of Arab countries and prevent the public uprisings that were rooted in Islamic reawakening.

On the other hand, Al Nahyan, one of the six ruling families of the UAE, did its best to destroy all resistant groups that were against Zionists such as Hamas and Hezbollah to prepare the ground for normalizing relations between Israel and Arab nations; something that led to creation of the Deal of the Century.

To give an example, Mahmoud al-Mabhouh, who was among top Hamas leaders and was the chief of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades was assassinated in Dubai. Later, Yedioth Ahronoth, Israeli daily newspaper said the assassination was planned by Mossad and was carried out in cooperation with UAE's intelligence service.

There are many similar examples, in another one, we see that UAE's secret service agent enters the Gaza Strip through Egypt, under the cover of a Red Crescent volunteer to spy on Hamas and Palestinian resistant groups in order to give information to the Zionist regime.

Apart from activities against Palestinians, UAE has also tried to sabotage Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan Al-Muslimin) in Egypt through its media channels such as Al-Hayat, Al Youm Al Sabee, and Al-Masry Al-Youm. Furthermore, UAE gave full financial support and security help to certain groups in order to topple Muslim Brotherhood. **→7**

Hamas will continue activities against U.S. deal of century: Official

TEHRAN — A high-ranking official from the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement says his group will continue its activities against U.S. President Donald Trump's controversial proposal for "peace" between the Israeli regime and Palestinians, dubbed "the deal of the century."

Khalil al-Hayya said he believed Palestinians were capable of confronting and thwarting all attempts to liquidate their national cause, emphasizing that Hamas would join forces with all Palestinian parties to frustrate conspiracies targeting their cause.

Hayya went on to say that the U.S.-sponsored Bahrain economic workshop, held late last month, had failed just before it was convened because

the Palestinians had decided to boycott the event.

The senior Hamas official then stressed the importance of Palestinian unity in the face of such conspiracies, lauding official and popular efforts by Arab and Muslim countries against the Bahrain conference.

Meanwhile, Ismail Haniyeh, the head of the Hamas political bureau, expressed his movement's profound gratitude to Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri for his rejection of Trump's much-touted proposal as well as the Bahrain conference. The so-called Peace to Prosperity workshop opened in Bahrain on June 25 and ran through June 26.

The Palestinian leadership boycotted the

meeting, leading critics to question the credibility of the event.

Palestinians staged rallies across the occupied West Bank in protest against the conference and participation of Arab delegations.

Demonstrators gathered in Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jenin, al-Khail, Tulkarm, Salfit, Qalqilyah and Ariha, while a general strike was staged in the besieged and impoverished Gaza Strip.

"Any plan that includes the liquidation of the Palestinian cause ... is rejected by the Palestinians and is not debatable or negotiable," Saeb Erekat, secretary general of the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), said in a statement.

Iraq reiterates 'principled' opposition to Israel

TEHRAN — Iraq has reiterated its firm opposition to Israel's occupation of Palestine as well as Baghdad's refusal to establish ties with the regime.

In a statement issued on Saturday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Ahmad al-Sahaf said, "We reaffirm that Iraq's position on the Palestinian issue is the same as our principled and historical position of rejecting the Israeli occupation of the Arab land."

The statement added that Iraq stands firm in its "rejection of all forms of normalization with this entity," adding that the Arab state remains "committed to the principle of boycott" of the regime.

The clarification came after Fareed Yasseen, the Iraqi ambassador to the United States, was quoted in media reports as hinting that there was potential for relations between

Baghdad and Tel Aviv.

The reports surfaced after a video clip was released on social media earlier this week, showing him speaking with state-run Al-Iraqiya TV.

The envoy said in the video, "There are objective reasons that call for the establishment of relations between Iraq and Israel, including the presence of a significant Iraqi community in Israel," he said in the video released this week.

He, however, said the objective factors are not enough to establish ties with the Israeli regime because there are "moral and legal reasons which Iraqis comply with."

In response to the reports, the Iraqi Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee called on the Foreign Ministry to "ensure the statements of its employees and representatives in the Iraqi diplomatic missions are in line with the foreign policy of the government."



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Razavi Music Festival wraps up

TEHRAN — A group of musicians plays naqarehs and karanas while performing during the closing ceremony of the 4th Razavi Music Festival at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on July 6, 2019.

The instruments are usually used at Naqarekhaneh, a tower situated in parallel with the minarets of the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS).

The festival is part of the 17th edition of the Imam Reza (AS) International Festival, which is currently underway across Iran.

The event is organized over the ten days on the Islamic calendar from the birthdays of Hazrat Masumeh (SA) and her brother, Imam Reza (AS).



ARTICLE

Ebrahim Fallahi
Tehran Times Journalist

EU may be a sweet-talker, but it's full of empty promises

It was more than a year ago when U.S. President Donald Trump formally pulled the United States out of the nuclear deal that was struck between Iran and world powers in July 2015.

Trump decision received waves of criticism from other signatories of the deal, namely China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the European Union.

In January 2019, France, Germany and Britain (known as the E3) introduced an Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) which was meant to facilitate legitimate trade between European economic operators and Iran in order to convince Iran to stay in the 2015 nuclear deal.

Shortly after Europe's announcement, welcoming the idea, on March 20, Central Bank of Iran (CBI)'s Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati announced that a mechanism similar to INSTEX has been registered in Iran, officially called the Special Trade and Finance Institute (STFI).

STFI was established to ease INSTEX implementation and at the time, Iranian government announced that Iran has no problem with getting the Europe's financial instrument operational any time that Europeans decided make INSTEX operational.

Since then, several rounds of talks were held and hundreds of hours of discussion were done on the subject. The Europe claimed many times that "the mechanism will be operational soon", however so far the EU claims have been no more than a bunch of empty promises.

The Europeans' repeated false promises finally worn Iran's patience thin, so that on Sunday, Iran officially announced it will take the second step in reducing its commitments to the JCPOA, as the deadline Tehran set for the Europeans to protect Tehran against the U.S. sanctions ended on July 7.

■ The long road to INSTEX

In the last day of January 2019, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, and British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt introduced the SPV (a special purpose vehicle) also called INSTEX (Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges) in a joint statement. **→4**

MP: Iran needs 90% uranium for maritime propellers

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A senior MP, Mojtaba Zonnur, has said that Iran needs to have 90% uranium to set maritime propellers working.

President Hassan Rouhani in November 2016 ordered the development of a nuclear-propulsion system for vessels, describing the move as a retaliatory response to an extension of sanctions by the U.S. Congress for another ten years.

Rouhani also requested a study of fuel production for the propulsion system and set a three-month deadline for a progress report on both steps.

Iran said back then that the sanctions renewal breached an international nuclear deal finalized between the country and six world powers, including the U.S., a year earlier.

Under the 2015 nuclear agreement, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Tehran accepted limits on its nuclear program in

exchange for termination of Western-led economic and financial sanctions.

Zonnur, the head of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, told Fars news agency on Sunday that besides the need for 90% enriched uranium for propellers, Iran may precipitate the completion of a new reactor and even rebuild an old reactor in Arak which has undergone tone-downs under the 2015 nuclear deal.

Before the deal, Iran was enriching uranium up to 20%, but after, it reduced the limit to 3.67%.

"The other parties [to the deal] have not kept up their side, so we are changing our level of commitment to the JCPOA. So today any level of enrichment is meaningless to the Islamic Republic."

The senior lawmaker was speaking hours after Tehran officially announced that it was leaving the 3.67% limit behind in retaliation for sanctions that have been imposed on Iran despite the deal.

The announcement was made in a joint news conference by Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, government spokesman Ali Rabiei, and Atomic Energy Organization spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi in Tehran.

During the presser, Kamalvandi said Iran starts increasing uranium enrichment from the current 3.67% to a level that fulfills the needs of its power plants.

"This was a measure the Islamic Republic had in mind and also declared previously," he said.

Kamalvandi also said Tehran has not yet decided on the level of enrichment for the Tehran research reactor.

On May 8, Iran's Supreme National Council (SNSC) declared Tehran's exit from "certain" obligations under the landmark agreement and gave a 60-day deadline to the remaining JCPOA signatories to protect Iran's interests against U.S. sanctions, or it will restart high-level uranium enrichment.

It came exactly a year after President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the JCPOA. The exit followed by imposing the harshest ever sanctions on Tehran in a clear violation of the UN Security Council resolution 2231 and pressuring other countries to violate the same resolution by cutting economic ties with Iran.

'Iran's second step in reducing nuclear commitments does not mean quitting JCPOA'

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Deputy Chairman of the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Kamal Dehghani has said that Iran's second step in reducing its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, does not mean quitting the agreement.

Iran's first step was to remove ban on its stockpile of nuclear fuel. Under the agreement Iran was permitted to keep 300 kilograms of uranium.

"The international community is well aware that the Islamic Republic of Iran has abided by its commitments so far, an issue which has been confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency. So, according to international law, Iran has fulfilled its obligations and it is other sides' turn to fulfil their commitments," he told ISNA in an interview published on Sunday.

He noted that Iran's national interests are not being met since the U.S. withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018 and introduced sanctions on Tehran.

"(Majlis) representatives and the people support the government's power and its decision to take the second step which is in line with meeting the people's interests and preventing harms," Dehqani stated.

He added that Iran's action is within the framework of the JCPOA. Iran officially announced on Sunday the start of enriching uranium higher than the current 3.67%, as the remaining JCPOA parties, including Europeans, failed to protect Iran from U.S. sanctions within a 60-day limit.

The announcement was made in a joint press conference by Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, government spokesman Ali Rabiei, and Atomic Energy Organization spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi.

Under the nuclear deal, Iran had agreed to put limits on parts of its nuclear program in exchange for the termination of all economic and financial sanctions.

In an email interview with The New York Times published on Thursday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said, "We will remain committed to the deal as long as the remaining participants (EU, France, Germany, UK, Russia and China) observe the deal."

He said, "Survival or collapse of the JCPOA depends on the ability and willingness of all parties to invest in this undertaking. In a nutshell, a multilateral agreement cannot be implemented unilaterally."

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.

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.

Iran starts enriching uranium higher than 3.67%

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — As the Europeans missed a two-month deadline to devise a concrete economic and financial mechanism to protect Iran from the harsh U.S. sanctions, Iran officially announced on Sunday, July 7, that it is starting to enrich uranium to a higher purity than the 3.67%.

The announcement was made in a joint news conference by Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, government spokesman Ali Rabiei, and Atomic Energy Organization spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi in Tehran.

Iran's chief demand is that Tehran be permitted to export crude oil at the same levels before the U.S. reimposed sanctions.

Under the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the JCPOA, Iran had agreed to put limits on parts of its nuclear activities in exchange for the termination of all economic and financial sanctions.

The special mechanism introduced by Europeans, known as INSTEX, only allows sale of food and medicine to Iran, items which are not subject to sanctions.

The step taken by Iran on Sunday was the second of its kind. In the first step announced on May 8, Iran announced that it will not sell its stockpile of enriched uranium enriched to 3.67 percent.

The JCPOA allowed Iran to keep 300 kilograms of uranium enriched to 3.67%. However, last Monday Iran announced that its stockpile of uranium has exceeded the 300kg limit.

Iran says it is limiting its commitments based on paragraph 36 of the nuclear deal. Paragraph 36 provided a mechanism to resolve disputes and allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of compliance.

"Iran increasing enrichment level to power nuclear plants"

During the presser, Kamalvandi said Iran is increasing uranium enrichment from the current 3.67% to a level that fulfills the needs of its power plants.



"This was a measure the Islamic Republic had in mind and also declared previously," he said. Kamalvandi also said Tehran has not yet decided on the level of enrichment for the Tehran research reactor.

The Tehran reactor is powered by nuclear fuel enriched to a purity of 20 percent.

On May 8, Iran's Supreme National Council (SNSC) declared Tehran's exit from "certain" obligations under the landmark agreement and gave a 60-day deadline to the remaining JCPOA signatories to protect Iran's interests against U.S. sanctions, or it will restart enriching uranium to a higher degree.

It came exactly a year after President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the JCPOA. The exit followed by introducing the harshest ever sanctions on Tehran in a clear violation of the UN Security Council resolution 2231 and pressuring other countries to violate the same resolution by cutting economic ties with Iran.

During the press conference, Rabiei criticized the U.S. revocation of the nuclear deal,

saying, "Today, all those who are adhering to world peace are concerned about the United States' actions."

He said the U.S. aimed to disrupt social order in Iran by exiting the JCPOA. "Therefore, our big solution is social cohesion."

"Saving JCPOA is a principle for Iran, but it depends on other sides' actions"

The government spokesman also said Iran will not remain in the nuclear agreement "at any price".

"Today, any action we take regarding [uranium] enrichment is to save the JCPOA," Rabiei insisted. "Saving the JCPOA is a principle for us, but it depends on the other sides' actions." Araqchi said Iran has reconsidered its commitments regarding the level of uranium enrichment program and "we announce that we no longer adhere to this commitment."

According to Araqchi, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was to send a letter to European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini on Sunday to openly declare the articles of the JCPOA, to which Iran would

no longer adhere.

In a post on his Twitter page on Sunday, Zarif said Iran's steps in reducing nuclear commitments are "reversible" only if the European parties to the nuclear deal (France, Germany and Britain, also called E3) honor their commitments for trade with Iran.

"60-day contingencies"

"We would give another 60-day deadline, after which we will continue reducing our commitments [to the deal]," Araqchi said.

Araqchi told reporters that Tehran would continue its contacts with the European parties to the deal in order to find a solution "otherwise after 60 days we will take the third step as well."

The remaining members of the JCPOA are the four permanent members of the UN Security Council — France, Britain, Russia and China — and Germany, commonly referred to as 4+1.

"The U.S. has withdrawn from the JCPOA and cannot use any of its mechanisms, but it can attend the P4+1 meetings on the said conditions. Our first condition is [the lifting of] oil and banking sanctions," said Araqchi, who was a senior negotiator in the talks that led to the JCPOA.

He also said Iran had planned out 60-day contingencies for every European failure to meet Iranian demands and could potentially ultimately scrap the deal altogether.

On Trump's repeated calls for rewriting the nuclear deal, the senior diplomat underlined that the deal would under no circumstances be renegotiated and that it should be implemented precisely as it is.

"Iran able to redesign Arak reactor"

The deputy foreign minister also noted that Iran was holding talks with Chinese and English officials regarding the redesign of Arak reactor, which the U.S. had originally undertaken to carry out under the JCPOA. He said those talks were proceeding for now but added that Iran has the will and technology to redesign the reactor on its own if the talks failed to produce favorable results.

Russian senator blames U.S. actions against Iran for regional tension

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Russian Senator Frants Klintsevich has said that the U.S. hostile actions against Iran have caused tension in the region.

According to IRNA, Klintsevich said that Iran's second step in reducing its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal - the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action - was expected and is the result of the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement.

"It is obvious that other signatories to the deal may not like this action of Iran. However, Iran defends its own security and I believe that the U.S. threats against Iran in this respect are useless," he said.

On Sunday, Iran officially announced the start of enriching uranium to a higher purity than the current 3.67%. The move came as the Europeans missed the 60-day deadline set by Tehran to protect it from U.S. sanctions.

The announcement was made in a joint news conference by Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, government spokesman Ali Rabiei, and Atomic Energy Organization spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi in Tehran.

Kamalvandi said Iran is increasing uranium enrichment from the current 3.67% to a level that fulfills the needs of its power plants.

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.

Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak

Tulsi Gabbard says war with Iran would be "far more devastating" than Iraq war

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Democratic presidential candidate Tulsi Gabbard believes that war with Iran would be "far more devastating" to the U.S. than the war in Iraq was.

Speaking with CBS News, she said President Donald Trump was "pushing us closer and closer to war with Iran."

Gabbard said that Trump was wrong to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal, which was negotiated by the Obama administration. She said that while she was pushing for a "stronger" deal, that it was better than no deal.

"I think there are some flaws right now with it. But ultimately, when it came down to it, that nuclear agreement prevented war. And that's the danger of what the Trump administration is doing right now, pushing us closer and closer to war with Iran by ripping up that deal," Gabbard said.

Tensions between the U.S. and Iran have escalated in recent months. In June, Iran shot down a U.S. drone after it entered Iran's airspace on the coasts of the Persian Gulf. Reportedly, Trump had approved a strike on Iran, but he said he backed off at the last

minute.

Trump also signed new sanctions against Iran at the end of June, and the Department of Defense has sent thousands of troops to the region.

"Deploying U.S. troops to the region, they basically set the dynamite fuse and lit it, for another war that will be far more devastating [than what] we saw throughout Iraq, the war that I served in," said Gabbard, who served in Iraq as a member of the Hawaii National Guard.

In a new spiral of escalating tensions,

Iran has reportedly announced it is set to increase the level of uranium enrichment beyond the threshold allowed under the 2015 nuclear agreement. July 7 marked the end of the 60-day deadline Iran had set for Europe to deliver on financial incentives contained in the nuclear deal.

Tehran revealed its first instance of surpassing the limits set by the nuclear deal on Monday, announcing it had begun stockpiling low-enriched uranium beyond the 300kg limit allowed, a year after Trump withdrew from the deal and reimposed sanctions.

UN nuclear inspectors will report back on Iran's enrichment move

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), who are in Iran, will report back once they have checked the level of Tehran's enrichment level, the agency said on Sunday.

"We are aware of Iran's announcement related to its uranium enrichment level," a spokesman for the agency said, according to Reuters.

"IAEA inspectors in Iran will report to our headquarters as soon as they verify the announced development," it added.

The IAEA announcement came after Iran on Sunday declared a second step in reduction of its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers by ramping up the level of uranium enrichment to over 3.67 percent.

The formal announcement was made at a press conference in the president's office in Tehran.

The joint press conference was attended by spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Behrouz Kamalvandi, Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Seyed Abbas Araqchi, and government spokesman Ali Rabiei.

Kamalvandi announced that Iran is increasing the level of enrichment to supply fuel for its nuclear power plants.

The enrichment would stand at 5 percent for now, he said,

adding that Iran may begin higher-grade uranium enrichment to produce fuel for the Tehran nuclear reactor in future.

Tehran's new decision to increase the level of uranium enrichment came after the JCPOA parties missed a 60-day deadline to fulfill their undertakings and ensure Iran's economic interests under the agreement.

President Hassan Rouhani had warned on Wednesday that the second step of reducing commitments would take place on Sunday. "On July 7, the level of (uranium) enrichment in Iran will not be 3.67 percent anymore, as we will abandon such a commitment and increase it (enrichment) to any amount that we need."

Days after Tehran's stockpile of the enriched uranium surpassed the limit allowed under the 2015 nuclear deal, the IAEA said on July 5 it would hold a meeting on Iran's nuclear program next week.

The meeting of the IAEA board of governors, which follows an emergency call by the United States, would be held "on 10 July at 14:30," an IAEA spokesman said.

Ironically, the U.S. has repeatedly ignored IAEA reports certifying that Iran was compliant with the terms of the nuclear deal in order to pull out of that deal unilaterally and reimpose sanctions.

"The international community must hold Iran's regime ac-

countable," U.S. Ambassador to International Organizations in Vienna Jackie Wolcott said in a statement. "The United States strongly supports the IAEA and its verification efforts in Iran," the statement continued.

Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's ambassador to the Vienna-based international bodies, called the U.S. request for an IAEA meeting a "sad irony".

"The fact that the U.S. as the prime violator of the JCPOA, has tabled this request, indicates its isolation in contradicting multilateralism and rule of law in international affairs," Gharibabadi tweeted.

"Iran's recent decisions, which are exercised in response to the situation caused by the U.S. including by imposing sanctions on all who want to implement their commitments under the JCPOA, tend to bring about the lost balance of the deal and are fully in line w/ its provisions," Gharibabadi added.

Iran's Vienna mission to the UN also said the actions are not related to the IAEA and are only linked with the agreement's provisions.

The IAEA's monitors Iran's nuclear installations and activities and has repeatedly verified that so far Iran has carried out its obligations under the JCPOA.

Zarif: Iran's nuclear steps reversible only through E3 compliance

1 → Paragraph 36 of the JCPOA provided a mechanism to resolve disputes and allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of compliance.

Iran announced on May 8 a partial

withdrawal from some aspects of the pact, saying that the country would no longer adhere to some of the limits on its nuclear activities. It also threatened to step up uranium enrichment if an agreement is not made within 60 days to protect it from

the sanctions' effects.

In an interview with ABC News on June 2, Zarif labeled the new U.S. sanctions as "economic terrorism" that "targets ordinary Iranian people".

U.S. President Donald Trump with-

drew 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.

Iran unveils new home-made tactical communication system

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps unveiled on Sunday a new tactical communication system named Sepehr 110 in a ceremony at the presence of IRGC chief Major General Hossein Salami.

Speaking during the unveiling ceremony, Salami said Iran has broken the “monopoly” of world powers over electronic warfare and advanced communications technologies.

Sepehr 110 is an advanced communication system which meets all the communication needs of commanders in different strategic, operational, tactical and combat levels in offensive, defensive and security conditions as well as unexpected incidents.

It is equipped with different communication layers for defense and security conditions, including HF, V/UHF, digital, safe, multi band, multi channel, DS and FH and enjoys the ability for network roaming and remote-controlled operation with needed bandwidth to transmit voice, data and image.

Sepehr 110 can be mounted on vehicles and vessels and can be transferred to



highlands and work in any weather conditions.

The U.S. says it carried out cyber-attacks against Iran in late June after Iran shot down a U.S. Global Hawk drone in the

Strait of Hormuz.

Reports say that the system is high speed and flexible to change of environmental conditions. The Sunday announcement showcased Iran’s preparations for any

future attempts by countries to penetrate Tehran’s networks or wreak havoc on its communications systems.

In the past Iran has suffered setbacks in the IT sector when countries sought to slow its nuclear program via cyberattacks.

Iranian experts have made great progress in designing and production of different systems to transmit information.

In a relevant development in April, Iranian researchers produced home-made communication systems to transmit mega data via optical fibers.

One of the products is OTN which was indigenized by the Iranian scientists and can transmit 2 TB of data through optical fibers, said Sajjad Momeni, one of the researchers.

He added that the next product is named Multiplexer (PDH) which acts as a transmitter in telecommunication systems with the bandwidth of 1.25Gig.

According to Momeni, the third product is optical fiber module (SFP) which turns electrical data into laser or optic.

Macron, Rouhani discuss ways to save nuclear deal

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — French President Emmanuel Macron telephoned his Iranian counterpart on Saturday to explore ways to save the 2015 nuclear deal.

The telephone conversation took place one day before Iran officially announced that it will start enriching uranium to a purity level above the current 3.67 percent from July 7. The measure followed a 60-day deadline to Europe to protect Iran from the U.S. sanctions.

Rouhani told the French leader that if all U.S. sanctions are ended it could open the way for negotiations on the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

“Halting all sanctions can be the start of new movement between Iran and 5+1”, Rouhani said, referring to the signatories of the nuclear agreement.

President Donald Trump ditched the JCPOA in May 2018 and ordered the toughest ever sanctions on Iran. This hap-



pened despite the fact that the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, has endorsed Iran’s full commitment to the JCPOA for 15 times.

Rouhani also asked the European Union to “act to its duties” and “try more than ever to save the JCPOA”.

Rouhani said that Tehran has tried to save nuclear deal through a “strategic patience” despite all sanctions and pressures.

A statement from French presidency also said Macron had expressed his deep concern to Rouhani over any further weakening of the 2015 nuclear deal.

The statement said the two presidents had agreed “to explore by July 15 the conditions for the resumption of dialogue between all parties.”

According to IRNA, the French president also conceded that the European efforts to save the nuclear deal have not been successful and vowed to use all efforts in this regard.

“We admit that European measures for compensating American sanctions have not been effective but we will use all our efforts to compensate it,” the French leader remarked.

Iran: Oil tanker seized by UK not bound for Syria



TEHRAN (Press TV) — Iran says an oil supertanker seized by Britain in Gibraltar was not carrying oil to Syria, denouncing the seizure as “maritime piracy”.

British Royal Marines boarded the Grace 1 on Thursday and seized it over accusations it was breaking sanctions by taking oil to Syria.

“Contrary to Britain’s announcement, the tanker was not bound for Syria, and the port mentioned is not capable of receiving such a tanker,” Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi told reporters at a news conference in Tehran Sunday.

The seized tanker is a 2 million barrel capacity very large crude carrier (VLCC), Araqchi said, adding it could not pass through the Suez Canal and that was why it had to go the extra mile through Gibraltar.

The tanker was in international waters when it was encroached on, he said, disputing London’s claims that Royal Marines boarded the ship off the coast

of the British territory.

Spain has said it planned to lodge a formal complaint about the action, because it considers the sea around Gibraltar to be part of its international waters. Spanish authorities have said the seizure came at the request of the U.S.

“In this regard, the law will take its course. This is a maritime piracy; the tanker was in international waters,” Araqchi said, adding Iran had summoned the British ambassador to Tehran twice in protest.

“We hope the tanker issue will be resolved soon,” he said.

On Friday, a former chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said Iran should consider seizing a British oil tanker in response to the seizure.

“If Iran does not release the Iranian oil tanker, it is the authorities’ duty to seize a British oil tanker,” Mohsen Rezaee said on Twitter.

Majlis studies motion to charge foreign ships in Strait of Hormuz



POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Iranian parliament plans to approve a motion that would allow the country to begin charging foreign ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz for providing their security.

Amirhossein Qazizadeh Hashemi, a member of the parliament’s presiding board, said on Sunday that 10 motions have been proposed by a parliamentary faction, including the motion to charge foreign ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz.

Since Iran is the true provider of security in the region and international waters, the parliament believes that based on international norms and given the U.S. government’s actions, the costs of providing security should be paid by commercial centers and all vessels in the region “in the form of tolls”, Tasnim quoted Qazizadeh Hashemi as saying.

As foreign ships pass through the Strait of Hormuz they enter the Iranian-

controlled waters and therefore Iran should collect tolls from them, the MP added.

Close to one-fifth of the world’s crude oil is supplied by Persian Gulf countries that rely on travel through the Strait of Hormuz, which is twenty-one miles wide at its narrowest point.

The remarks come against the backdrop of increased tensions between Iran and the U.S., since the U.S. withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal last year and ratcheted up pressure on Iran.

Since then, the Trump administration has been trying to reduce Iran’s oil exports to “zero,” and has sent an aircraft carrier strike group, a bomber squad, an amphibious assault ship, F-22 fighter jets and a Patriot missile battery to the Middle East to try to stack up pressure on Tehran.

Iranian officials, however, have dismissed such moves as psychological warfare, saying the country has its own ways of circumventing the American bans and selling crude oil.

U.S. asked Iran’s permission for limited strike to save face: general

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The commander of the Civil Defense Organization said on Sunday that the U.S. has sent a message to Iran saying it wanted to conduct a limited strike against the country in order to save face after Iran shot down its drone.

“After the downing of its intruding drone, the United States told us through diplomatic intermediaries that it wanted to carry out a limited operation in an unimportant and deserted region to save face and asked us to avoid giving them a response, but Iran said it would regard any operation as the initiation of a war,” Mehr quoted Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali as saying.

Jalali censured Washington’s warmongering rhetoric against Tehran, saying any move against the integrity of Iran will be firmly dealt with.

A U.S. Global Hawk spy drone violated Iranian airspace in June, and was downed by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) after it ignored repeated warnings by the Iranian military.

The IRGC said there was another intruding U.S. manned plane beside the Global Hawk but the force “refrained” from targeting it.

After the incident, U.S. President Donald Trump claimed the U.S. military was “cocked and loaded” to retaliate against Iran but decided to call off the mission after he learned 150 Iranians would die as a result of the strike.

In comments made a few hours after the incident, IRGC Chief Major General Hossein Salami said the shooting down of the U.S. drone had a straightforward message that any foreign intrusion into Iranian territories would draw a crushing response.



Police seize 327kg of opium in Yazd

TEHRAN (MNA) — Police forces have seized 327kg of opium in Yazd province.

Ali Afkhami, the police chief of Yazd Province, said on Sunday that forces under his command traced the haul of opium consignment in Yazd province, which was destined for Tehran.

Two smugglers have been arrested in addition to confiscating 327kg of opium during two separate operations, he added.

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

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

The country has spent more than hundreds of millions of dollars on sealing its borders and preventing the transit of narcotics destined for European, Arab and Central Asian countries.



‘Iranian Air Force has disappointed enemies’

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Chief of the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF) Aziz Nasirzadeh said on Sunday that his forces have not let the enemies reach their objectives.

Pointing to the economic, military and strategic importance of the Persian Gulf, Brigadier General Nasirzadeh said the IRIAF has disappointed the enemies with regard to their goals in the region, Mehr reported.



The IRIAF is always ready to protect the country against the enemies’ plots, he added.

Tensions between Tehran and Washington 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 remaining buyers of the Iranian oil, and started beefing up its military presence in the region, particularly in the Persian Gulf.

The tension further escalated on June 20, when the Iranian military shot down an unmanned U.S. surveillance drone after it breached Iran’s airspace. The U.S. drone entered the Iranian airspace from the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force Amir Ali Hajizadeh 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.”

‘Russia understands reason behind Iran’s nuclear steps’

By staff and agency

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia’s permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna, said on Sunday that Moscow understands the reason behind Iran’s steps in reducing commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

“We understand the steps taken [by Iran], the reasons that pushed the Iranians to take them. We call on Iran to refrain from further actions that could complicate the situation with the nuclear deal even more,” he told Sputnik.

Iran officially announced on Sunday it has started enriching uranium to a higher purity than the current 3.67%, as the Europeans missed a 60-day deadline by Tehran to devise a concrete mechanism to protect the country from the U.S. sanctions.

Ulyanov said Iran’s decision to increase uranium enrichment levels was not unexpected as Tehran is acting in a transparent manner.

It will be possible to determine by how much Iran had increased its uranium enrichment limit in a few days, he



added, stressing that a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency on Iran’s uranium enrichment levels may be presented at a special session of the agency’s governing board on July 10.

“In any case, there is space to continue diplomatic efforts,

they will be continued,” Ulyanov noted.

On May 8, Iran’s Supreme National Council (SNSC) declared Tehran’s exit from “certain” obligations under the landmark agreement and gave a 60-day deadline to the remaining JCPOA signatories to protect Iran’s interests against U.S. sanctions, or it will restart high-level uranium enrichment.

In a post on his Twitter page on Sunday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said, “Today, Iran is taking its second round of remedial steps under Para 36 of the JCPOA. We reserve the right to continue to exercise legal remedies within JCPOA to protect our interests in the face of US #EconomicTerrorism. All such steps are reversible only through E3 compliance.”

Paragraph 36 of the JCPOA provided a mechanism to resolve disputes and allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of compliance.

E3 includes the three European countries of Britain, France and Germany which are party to the JCPOA.

| STOCK MARKET | |
|--------------|----------|
| TEDPIX | 246447.4 |
| IFX | 3201.31 |

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

| CURRENCIES | |
|------------|--------------|
| USD | 42,000 rials |
| EUR | 47,168 rials |
| GBP | 52,593 rials |
| AED | 11,437 rials |

Source: cbi.ir

| COMMODITIES | |
|-------------|---------------|
| Brent | \$64.23/b |
| WTI | \$57.51/b |
| OPEC Basket | \$63.43/b |
| Gold | \$1,399.90/oz |
| Silver | \$15.08/oz |
| Platinum | \$813.25/oz |

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

EU may be a sweet-talker, but it’s full of empty promises

➡ A mechanism which was claimed would enable Iran to keep doing business with the rest of the world despite the sanctions imposed by the Trump administration.

Registered in France and run by a German banker, INSTEX was financed jointly by the E3. It is in accordance with E3 resolute commitment and continued efforts to preserve the JCPOA endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 2231.

According to the initial statements, the European side intended to use the channel initially only to sell food, medicine and medical devices in Iran. However, it claimed that it will be possible to expand it in the future.



Immediately after the news on establishment of the INSTEX, the Trump administration warned the European Union against trying to sidestep sanctions on Iran.

In late January, the U.S. State Department said it was “closely following” reports on the European mechanism.

EU Foreign Policy chief Federica Mogherini, on the other hand welcomed the registration of the SPV.

■ Implementation of the mechanism

Nearly six months after the first negotiations on the INSTEX started in Europe, in late June Mogherini announced that 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 (June 28) we also gathered the Joint Commission that works to guarantee the deal’s implementation,” she said in an announcement published on her website on June 29.

In a joint statement earlier on the same day, Austria, Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, also said they were working with the E3 to develop trade mechanisms.

The announcement came after Iran whose two-month ultimatum for the EU was reaching its end, threatened to take new steps in reducing its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal “more strongly”.

In early May, Iran’s Supreme National Council (SNSC) declared Tehran’s exit from “certain” obligations under the landmark 2015 agreement and gave a 60-day deadline to JCPOA signatories to protect Iran’s interests against U.S. sanctions, or it will restart high-level uranium enrichment.

■ All words and no actions

More than a week has passed after the European side of the nuclear deal gathered in Vienna to celebrate the news of INSTEX going operational, but there is still no sign of any real transaction being conducted through INSTEX.

On Sunday, with the 60-day deadline to JCPOA signatories ending, Ali Rabiee, the government’s spokesperson, announced that Iran will take the second step in reducing its commitments to the JCPOA.

“As of today, our uranium enrichment will surpass the current 3.67 percent and enriching to further purity will be based on our needs,” he said in an official statement.

Last week, Kamal Kharrazi, chairman of Iran’s Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, had warned that INSTEX does not go further than a “claim” and Iran would leave the JCPOA if the situation didn’t change.

Kharrazi, who was Iran’s chief diplomat from 1997 to 2005, said there were no definitive assessments of the Vienna meeting, but with only several millions of euros of credit that the Europeans had allocated to INSTEX, business would definitely be impossible.

Clearly the Europe needs far more time than only six months to figure out a way to realize their promises (if they are to be even realized!!).

With Iran’s announcement on Sunday, we should wait and see what the EU’s reaction would be. Would they finally go through with their promises?!

Quarterly non-oil exports at \$11.5b

➡ Iran shares border with fifteen countries, namely the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia, Oman, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kuwait, Qatar, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia.

Based on the data published by TPO, the value of trade with the neighboring countries stood at over \$36.5 billion in the past Iranian calendar year, that is about 41 percent of the country’s total non-oil trade in the mentioned time span.

Iran plans to launch 15 mega export projects to identify more target markets, according to TPO head.

Mohammadreza Modoudi said with the implementation of these projects, which mainly focus on the markets of neighboring countries, identifying professional trade and promoting export of non-oil commodities will be put on agenda, Mehr news agency reported.

The official further referred to the \$1.7 billion positive trade balance in the country’s non-oil trade in the past Iranian calendar



year (ended on March 20, 2019), and said this positive balance was achieved through cooperation with the private sector.

On June 24, Sadeq Najafi, the senior advisor to Iran’s industry, mining and trade minister,

said the ministry has planned that the annual export of commodities and services to Iran’s 15 neighbor countries will reach \$32 billion in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020).

Iran’s 100-day exports to Iraq up 20% yr/yr

ECONOMY d e s k TEHRAN – The value of Iranian exports to Iraq in the past 100 days reached \$2.5 billion, registering a 20 percent increase compared to the last year’s same time span, IRNA reported quoting an official with the knowledge of the matter.

According to Seyyed Hamid Hosseini, the secretary general of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, in the past 100 days Iran has exported \$25 million worth of commodities on a daily basis to the neighboring country.

The official mentioned some of the government’s plans in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020) in order to achieve the \$20 billion trade turnover goal, and said “Signing an agreement to re-export our goods from Iraq, planning to import the country’s necessary items to Iraq and pay for them by the revenues of the exported goods to Iraq in cooperation with the Central Bank of Iraq, and finally using a \$200 million credit line for reconstruction of Iraq, are among our programs for the current year.”

Iran and Iraq have been taking significant steps for boosting economic relations in the past few years.

The two countries are following up plans for increasing their bilateral economic trade to over \$20 billion.

As previously reported by Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO), following an agreement on establishment of an Iran-Iraq trade committee, officials from the two sides held a meeting to discuss the issue in Tehran on May 5.

In early March, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani headed a high-ranking politi-

cal and trade delegation in a visit to Iraq, during which the two sides inked several agreements and emphasized expansion of trade ties.

Less than a month after President Rouhani’s visit to Iraq, an Iraqi delegation visited Tehran to attend an Iran-Iraq business forum which was hosted by Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) on April 7.

The event was attended by several senior officials from both sides including Iran’s First Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri, Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi as well as Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, Iraqi Minister of Electricity Louay Al Khateeb, Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammad Hashim Abdul Majid Jasim, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani, Head of Basra Chamber of Commerce Majed Mozan, and ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie, along with representatives of private companies.

During the business forum, the two sides called for further expansion of the trade ties between the two countries and the officials delivered speeches addressing various trade related issues.

In the forum, Iranian vice president mentioned Rouhani’s visit to Iraq, saying that the visit of Iraqi delegation is an indication of the two sides’ determination for expanding economic ties.

Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi, for his part expressed his country’s eager determination for expansion of relations with Iran in all areas and noted that the two countries should join hands in order to reach a level of development which they deserve.

India complying with all its commitments in Chabahar Port: envoy

ECONOMY d e s k TEHRAN — Indian Ambassador to Tehran Gaddam Dharmendra said India will fulfill all its commitments in Iran’s Chabahar Port despite the economic hurdles, Mehr news agency reported.

The official made the remarks on Saturday during a meeting on exploring investment potentials and opportunities in Chabahar Port.

Dharmendra highlighted the importance of the Iranian port for the Indian government adding that more negotiations are required to be made about the commitments of India in this port.

“Considering the growth in trade between Iran and India, Indian ports as well as Chabahar are very important ports and we will definitely do what we have pledged,” Dharmendra said.

Mentioning the port’s development deal, the official noted that the two sides should consider the credit lines of the short-term and the long-term contracts in the form of a single package.

He also referred to the efforts made by the Indian and Afghan governments to exclude Chabahar Port from the U.S. sanctions, noting that “there are still some banking challenges.”

“I agree that we have lost time and 180 days have passed since the work began,” the official said.

“Chabahar is of great importance to us, given the strategic position of the Indian Ocean and the willingness of Indian state and private sectors for presence in the region,” he added.

The envoy, further underlined the growth in the two countries trade in the recent years,

Making the remarks in a meeting with the members of Iran’s Free Trade Zone Fraction, the official mentioned supporting exports by the production units as another plan of the ministry in this year which is named the Year of Pickup in Production.

In mid-April, Iranian industry, mining and trade minister said the country plans to double its exports to the neighboring countries by the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (which starts in March 2021).

Mentioning the fact that only two percent of the total imports of Iran’s neighbors comes from the Islamic country, Reza Rahmani noted that his ministry is going to focus on developing domestic production and defining new projects to manufacture all the industrial equipment needed inside the country.

The official further pointed to some of the potent areas which could be worked on in order to increase exports including home appliances, apparel industry, petrochemicals, and marine industries, basic metals such as steel, aluminum and copper as well as agriculture.

‘RAI determined to develop transport of goods from ports via railway’

ECONOMY d e s k TEHRAN — The head of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) said development of railways for transport of cargos from ports is a top agenda of RAI’s activities.

Making the remarks in an interview conducted by the news portal of Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO), Saeed Rasouli also announced about the serious will of RAI for expansion of rail transportation.

Last week, the official said that 59 kilometers of railroads are planned to be built for connecting the major cargo hubs in the country to the national railway network by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020).

Rasouli mentioned linking the cargo hubs to the railway network as one of the main priorities of RAI in the current year, Mehr news agency reported.

The official has previously named boosting efficiency of railway fleet and network through benefitting from the most available capacities and supporting domestic production in developing passenger and cargo fleet as two other major priorities of his organization in this year.

He said linking the cargo centers to the rail-



way network has been started and implanting the scheduled plan for the current year is on the agenda, adding that he major cargo centers are planned to be linked to the railway based on a multi-year schedule.

Rasouli announced that his organization and the ministry of industry have come to an agreement on supporting domestic production in the railway sector.

He said that a task force has been set up to follow up the issue, IRNA reported.

The official has also announced that 20 trillion rials (about \$476.1 million) has been allocated to renovation of 1000 passenger and freight wagons and also locomotives through

benefitting from domestic capabilities in the current Iranian calendar year, IRIB reported. Rasouli said this amount has been allocated by the Planning and Budget Organization.

■ Renovating railway fleet

In this year, which is named as the year of “Pickup in Production” by the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, all efforts of RAI are for renovating the railway fleet of the country by relying on domestic producers, the official further stressed.

On June 12, Iran’s transport minister unveiled an Iranian-made freight locomotive on the sidelines of the 7th International Exhibition of Rail Transportation, Related Industries and Equipment, dubbed RAILEXPO 2019.

“This new locomotive can reduce its supply costs to one-sixth while being able to compete with foreign rivals,” IRNA quoted Mohammad Eslami as saying.

Last year, during the same exhibition, Iran unveiled the first ever Iranian-made locomotive engine.

According to the manufacturers, the mentioned engine complies with Euro4 standards for reducing fuel consumption and competes

with the best European engines in terms of quality.

Currently, Iran has 13,000 kilometers of railway laid, and based on the country’s Sixth National Five-Year Development Plan (2016-2021), the railway network is due to expand to more than 16,400 kilometers.

■ Boosting capacity of transporting cargos from/to Shahid Rajaei Port

During the interview conducted by PMO’s portal news, the head of RAI also referred to his recent visit to Shahid Rajaei Port (Iran’s largest container port located at southern Hormozgan Province) and said, “We are trying to expand transportation of cargos from/to this port via railways and in this due some agreements have been achieved between RAI and MPO.”

As announced by Director General of Ports and Maritime Department of Hormozgan Province Allah-Morad Afifipour, over 730,000 tons of basic commodities have been unloaded at Shahid Rajaei Port during the 80-day period from the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 21).

The official said that the goods were unloaded from 24 vessels, IRIB reported.

Iran’s INSTEX mirror company moving into trial phase

ECONOMY d e s k TEHRAN — The managing director of Iran’s Special Trade and Finance Instrument for trade with Europe (STFI), called SATMA in Persian, said the company is moving into the trial phase and is ready to operate in coordination with INSTEX.

As reported by the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), Ali Asghar Nouri said that the company is currently trying to test the export and import payment and transfer channels.

“In the first phase, some traders who are directly exporting to Europe have been asked to conduct their business through SATMA,” he added.

The official further noted that since the establishment of Iran’s mirror company for INSTEX, all necessary measures have been taken for total compliance with international standards.

Last week, Nouri had announced that with the establishment of the coordinating company to INSTEX, now the ball is in Europe’s court to make it operational.

Rejecting the idea that implementation of EU’s trade mechanism has been postponed due to some issues related to the Iranian side, Nouri stressed that according to the agreements, Iran is not in charge of taking measures to implement INSTEX and whatever has been done sought to facilitate the procedure for

the European side and has been an aid to them.

“Iran’s STFI was established to ease INSTEX implementation and if the financial instrument is decided to become operational as of today, there will be no problem with getting it operational in Iran,” he said.

One year ago, U.S. President Donald Trump formally pulled the United States out of the nuclear deal that was struck between Iran on the one side and the U.S., Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany on the other.

Since then, Trump has introduced economic sanctions on Iran and has been increasing pressures on the country’s economic relations with its trade partners.

‘Foreign buyers eager to purchase Iranian oil offered at IRENEX’

ENERGY TEHRAN — National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) representative in Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) said foreign buyers have expressed willingness for purchasing Iranian oil offered at this exchange market, IRNA reported on Sunday.

“Foreign buyers have expressed willingness to engage in oil trades at IRENEX, and we are taking necessary measures to make it possible for them to do so,” Amir Hossein Tebyanian said.

According to the official, in this regard some foreign companies and businessmen have been assigned the Iranian Commercial Code and, some have also referred to the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) for participation in these transactions.

“IRENEX has a mechanism for crude oil deals with foreign entities and we have no limitations in this regard,” Tebyanian said.

“Of course, in the past only companies were able to register for oil purchases at IRENEX, but now it is possible for real persons to also



engage in oil trades at Iran's energy stock exchange,” he added.

Since the U.S.'s withdrew from Iran's nuclear pact in May 2018, vowing to drive Iran's oil exports down to zero, the Islamic Republic has been taking various measures to counter the U.S. actions and to keep its oil exports levels as high as possible.

One of the main strategies that Iran chose to execute to help its oil exports afloat has been trying new ways to diversify the mechanism of oil sales, one of which is offering oil at the country's stock market.

NIOC offered light crude oil at IRENEX first on October 28, 2018 just few days before new U.S. sanctions on Iran's petroleum sector took effect (November 4).

In the first round, NIOC could sell some 280,000 barrels of crude oil at \$74.85 per barrel. With the daily supply amount of one million barrels, the market wrapped up by selling eight 35,000-barrel cargos of oil on the day.

NIOC has so far offered light oil through 12 offerings at the IRENEX.

Efficiency of Iran's power plants to reach 38%

ENERGY TEHRAN — By converting gas power plants into combined cycle plants the efficiency of Iran's power plants will be improved to 38 percent from their current 31 percent, IRIB reported on Sunday, quoting a senior official with the Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH) as saying.

According to Hamid Sardari, by installing steam units in the country's gas power plants, the overall efficiency of the electricity network will also increase by five percent.

Speaking in a press conference, the official noted that currently, with the conversion of some gas power plants into combined cycle plants, the capacity of power generation in the country is increased by 3,000 megawatts (MW).

“Conversion of other power plants would add another 5,500 MW to the country's electricity generation capacity,” he said.

In October 2018, the head of TPPH had unveiled plans for an increase in the efficiency of the country's power plants up to 40 percent.

According to Mohsen Tarzatab, the efficiency improvement program was provisioned following a development initiative foreseen in the country's Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021), according which the average efficiency of the country's power plants was to increase 2.1 percent.

According to the sixth development plan, new power plants in Iran should operate with an efficiency of at least 55 percent.

Iran's nominal electricity generation capacity which stood at 80,311 MW at the beginning of the current Iranian year (March 21, 2019), has currently reached 80,868 MW.

As reported by Tasnim news agency in late June, with 4,827 megawatts (MW) capacity of new power plants going operational by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020), the country's power generation capacity is going to reach 85,695 MW.

Currently, with a total generation capacity of 25,083 MW (31.2 percent) combined cycle power plants account for the biggest share in the country's total power gener-



ation capacity followed by gas power plants generating 29.9 percent.

The share of hydroelectric power plants is 19.87 percent while hydroelectric plants generate 14.8 percent of the country's total electricity, the share of dispersed generation units is 1.5 percent and finally the renewable power plants account only for 0.79 percent of Iran's total power generation capacity.

OPEC plans move to seize market share from U.S. shale

By Tsvetana Paraskova

In what appeared to be one of the least heated meetings in recent years, OPEC and allies rolled over last week their production cuts into March 2020, signaling that the oil market is still oversupplied and demand growth looks weaker at least for the rest of 2019.

OPEC's mission to draw down excess inventories, if successful, would lead to higher oil prices, which cartel members need to balance their budgets, most of which are overly reliant on oil exports.

Yet, higher oil prices are inadvertently helping U.S. shale production to continue growing, offsetting much of the barrels that OPEC is withholding from the market.

It looks like the cartel aims for higher oil prices now and will think of regaining market share later.

Currently, OPEC and its Russia-led non-OPEC partners in the production cut deal focus on reducing inventories and boosting prices, even if this means ceding market share and having OPEC's share of global oil production drop to below 30 percent for the first time since 1991, according to Bloomberg News estimates.

Reclaiming share from U.S. shale

But OPEC's 'free pass' to U.S. shale will not last long, according to JP Morgan. In the medium term, the cartel and its de facto leader and largest producer Saudi Arabia will reclaim market share from U.S. shale, JP Morgan's head of EMEA oil and gas research Christyan Malek told CNBC this week.

The Saudis and OPEC aim to “support oil while they are effectively pregnant with all this economic growth and capital they have got to deliver. But, having said that, what we are saying to the bulls is: Don't get used to it,” Malek told CNBC's Squawk Box Europe.



The cartel is now “two feet in the value camp” looking to boost oil prices, but the level of ‘acceptable’ price of oil is dropping, Malek said.

The “bar keeps falling, it is just very gradual. In a few years' time I expect \$50 to be an okay oil price, at which point that could see Saudi and OPEC reclaim that market share and then it becomes more competitive,” JP Morgan's executive told CNBC.

“I have no doubt in my mind that U.S. shale will peak, plateau and then decline like every other basin in history,” Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih said in Vienna this week, as reported by Bloomberg.

OPEC may have to wait at least half a decade to a decade for U.S. shale to peak, as many estimates put shale peak at around 2025 or later.

But just waiting for peak shale to come is not sustainable for OPEC — the longer it waits, the harder it

will be to reclaim global oil market share.

While the immediate OPEC goal is clear, analysts question if these cuts could be sustainable in the longer term and what the cartel's endgame is.

OPEC and allies “have no clear endgame other than to push back the inevitable time in which the age of supply abundance can no longer be held back,” Ed Morse, Global Head of Commodities Research at Citi, told CNBC.

Key drivers for OPEC producers

The cuts are a “largely defensive” move, because the key drivers for OPEC+ producers now are their vulnerability to low oil prices and their insufficient revenues, Morse said.

The extension of the OPEC+ cuts should be viewed as constructive, Warren Patterson, Head of Commodities Strategy at ING, said, expecting higher oil prices from here for the rest of the year.

Yet, the market was unimpressed with the rollover of the cuts, to say the least — oil prices reacted in the worst way in years to an OPEC meeting, plunging more than 4 percent, as concerns about demand continue to trump any bullish sentiment.

“Then there is also the issue of how sustainable these cuts will be in the longer term, given that U.S. producers will be more than happy to fill the void left by OPEC+ cuts,” ING's Patterson said.

The higher the price of oil OPEC manages to squeeze from the market through the cuts, the more U.S. shale — encouraged by higher prices — will offset those cuts.

OPEC's endgame may not be clear, but its current goal of rebalancing the market (and propping up prices) comes with ceding ground to rival producers, most of all, to U.S. shale.

(Source: oilprice.com)

LNG tanker makes first summer voyage along Northern Sea Route

The summer season has begun along the Northern Sea Route with a first transit by an LNG tanker carrying Yamal LNG to Asia without the need for icebreaker escort.

According to maritime-executive.com, the Arc7 Vladimir Rusanov left the Sabetta port on June 29, one of 126 tanker shipments made this year from the project which has produced 9.0 million tons of LNG and 0.6 million tons of stable gas condensate so far this year.

All three LNG trains were running above nameplate capacity in the first half of 2019.

Most of the LNG was transhipped from ice-class LNG carriers to conventional vessels in Norway.

From the start of transshipment in November 2018, 123 ship-to-ship transfer operations have been conducted. That will change now, and the seaport in Norway that has handled several million tons of Yamal LNG is now quiet.

The last LNG tanker left Honningsvåg on June 29.



At most, six LNG carriers were simultaneously involved in transshipment outside Honningsvåg, reports the Independent Barents Observer.

The business was handled by Norwegian company Tschudi Shipping, but the company's agreement with Novatek has

now ended.

It was initiated in November 2018 when Yamal LNG's second train came online and Novatek needed more export capacity but lacked sufficient ice-breaking tankers.

Transshipment activities are now being moved to Russian waters, and operations

are expected to start up near Kildin Island, Kola Bay, later this year.

Novatek intends to build a permanent terminal near Murmansk with capacity to handle 20 million tons per year.

Ultimately, Yamal LNG's 17.4 mtpa natural gas liquefaction plant will consist of three LNG trains of 5.5 mtpa each and one LNG train of 900 thousand tons per annum, using the hydrocarbon resources of the South-Tambeyskoye field in the Russian Arctic. The first LNG Train began production in Q4 2017 and Trains 2 and 3 - in July 2018 and November 2018, respectively.

Yamal LNG shareholders include Novatek (50.1 percent), Total (20 percent), CNPC (20 percent), and the Silk Road Fund (9.9 percent).

Novatek is expected to make final investment decision in the Arctic LNG 2 project, near Yamal LNG, soon, after selling stakes to Total and several Chinese and Japanese companies.

NPCC CEO to expand company to downstream, renewable energy sectors

By Carla Sertin

Much like the country in which it is based, the UAE's National Petroleum Construction Company (NPCC) likes to think big: its Abu Dhabi fabrication yard is the largest in the Middle East and North Africa, at 1.3m sqm. Within that yard, it recently launched the largest oilfield platform in the UAE as part of its work for the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company's (ADNOC) Umm Lulu field.

At the launch event for the oilfield platform, banners hung off of the 32,000 ton platform, a maze of interconnected pipes and facilities. The banners boasted that the platform was made in the UAE, for the UAE.

The nation's In-Country Value initiative is pushing companies who hope to do business in the UAE to use local vendors, suppliers and talent as a boost to the local supply chain and oil and gas ecosystem. As such, NPCC CEO Ahmed Al Dhaheri considers the local construction of a platform which is equivalent in weight to three Eiffel Towers, a key milestone for the company.

“This platform marks a new era for NPCC,” Al Dhaheri says in a video interview at his Abu Dhabi office. “It really shows the capabilities and competencies of UAE companies, and how we are able to provide total solutions to the oil and gas sector.”

“It was an excellent opportunity to develop a large pool of our UAE talent, many of whom led different teams during the execution of the project,” he adds.

The platform is just the latest part of NPCC's work on ADNOC's Umm Lulu Package II Full Field Development Project, the total value of which Al Dhaheri estimates at more than \$2.5b.

A remarkable year for the company

Last year was a remarkable year for the company, we achieved around 85% of the total value of our projects from outside of the UAE but he sees potential outside of the UAE's borders.

“Last year was a remarkable year for the company, we achieved around 85% of the total value of our projects from outside of the UAE,” he says. This includes a \$231mn onshore project it won in October 2018 from Kuwait Oil Company, a country in which the company has been inactive for several years. It has also signed a contract with India's ONGC and two memoranda of understanding (MOU) with Egypt's Petrojet and offshore EPC company PMS.

“These MOUs are helping us to understand the potential projects and prospects in Egypt, and we are already succeeding,” he says. “Maybe the (subsea) project we won in the Red Sea is small, but this is the best way to understand the climate of this market.”

Concurrently, NPCC saw a 27% increase in operating profit in 2018, up from \$190m to \$242m, which Al Dhaheri attributes to the company's regional expansion. But this strategy has its complications.

“If we look at the project we are executing in Kuwait, local content is around 30%, so we need to utilize more local suppliers, more subcontractors, we need to develop Kuwaitis,” Al Dhaheri says. “All of these are challenges that any EPC would have to face.”

Every company in the oil and gas sector has to take into consideration different localization requirements across the region. Despite the fact that NPCC already has two engineering centers in India, Al Dhaheri says that the company will have to do more than engineering in India. “I believe that you always need to be agile, especially if you are operating in different markets, because there are new requirements being introduced by NOCs (national oil companies) and IOCs (international oil companies).”

In Saudi Arabia, as part of Saudi Aramco's Long-Term Agreement, which hastens the bidding process for its partners, with a focus on offshore brownfield projects, NPCC has won 10 contracts worth a combined \$2b. It signed an agreement with Saudi Aramco in October 2018 to establish a 500,000sqm integrated fabrication yard worth \$42m in Ras Al Khair. Simply being successful in its Abu Dhabi headquarters is no longer sufficient.

Yes, we have the largest fabrication yard here in Abu Dhabi, but in order to have sustainable operations with Aramco, we need to establish another yard in Saudi Arabia “Yes, we have the largest fabrication yard here in Abu Dhabi, but in order to have sustainable operations with Aramco, we need to establish another yard in Saudi Arabia,” he says. “We are well-positioned for ICV, but when it comes to operating in other countries, like Saudi Arabia which has IKTV (9In-Kingdom Total Value Add program), to maintain or strengthen our position there we need to do things differently.”

That includes investing in technology. As the company looks towards North Africa and Southeast Asia, it will have to face deepsea projects. Al Dhaheri notes that this is why the company has invested heavily in offshore assets that can lay pipes as deep as 2000m.

But he has not overlooked digital technology; NPCC has partnered with industrial software specialist AVEVA and is entering into an agreement with Microsoft Dynamics to work on digital transformation in the back-office.

For a company with complex operations, including its engineering and supply chain management, this could mean savings. “Today, it is all about managing every single activity efficiently, managing resources properly, and controlling costs,” he says.

To Al Dhaheri, growth means more than localizing and digitalizing assets and operations; he ultimately wants NPCC to transform into an EPC major across the energy industry, including both downstream and renewables in addition to its traditional focus on upstream projects.

Looking at renewable energy

We want to expand in downstream and to have a bigger share in executing onshore projects, and we are looking at renewable energy “When I look at the future of the company, we are planning to develop many sectors, many areas,” he says. “We want to expand in downstream and to have a bigger share in executing onshore projects, and we are looking at renewable energy, especially offshore wind farms.”

Al Dhaheri says that NPCC has already acquired a minority stake in a French renewables company, and that the company is currently identifying potential engineering companies to acquire.

Although integration will be a large part of the company's future, NPCC's projects are primarily in the upstream offshore segment, with onshore projects taking around 10% of its total projects. He wants to boost that to 20%. While he aims to continue expanding across the industry and geographies, he admits that in the short term, the company's core markets will continue to generate of NPCC's revenue.

Shifting to an entirely new market segment will come with its own share of challenges. “It requires a completely new mindset,” Al Dhaheri admits, noting that established players already exist in this market. “Working out of our comfort zone is not going to be an easy journey, but with the resources we have, I believe that we can really penetrate this market.” He is developing a dedicated team to focus on renewables, with a set of targets that differs from the rest of the company.

(Source: oilandgasmiddleeast.com)

India’s budget aims to tackle weakening growth

ASIATIMES — The first annual budget of the Modi government in its second term aims for structural reforms to boost investment and salvage sliding growth

Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday presented the first annual budget of the second term of the Narendra Modi government. With the country facing weakening growth and a drop in investment, the minister has said the government will bring in structural reforms to kickstart foreign and domestic investment.

However, the minister’s budget announcements did not find much favor with the markets, as both the Bombay Stock Exchange Sensex and the National Stock Exchange Nifty indices ended on a losing note on Friday due to selling pressure.

A recent report by the Center for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) stated that investment in new projects had plunged to a 15-year low in the quarter ending in June.

Under the proposed budget, the federal government would invite suggestions for further opening up of foreign direct investment in the aviation, media, animation, single-brand retail and insurance sectors in consultation with all stakeholders. The local sourcing norms for FDI are to be eased for the single-brand retailing sector.

To encourage overseas Indians to contribute toward Indian markets, the government would provide non-resident Indians seamless access to India equities, merging the NRI portfolio investment route with the foreign-portfolio investment route.

■ Banking

To shore up the finances of state-owned banks, Sitharaman announced that the government would provide 700 billion rupees (US\$10.2 billion) for credit improvement. She said financially sound non-banking finance companies would continue to get funds from banks and mutual funds.

Global ratings agency Moody’s Investors Service said the recapitalization proposal would support growth by encouraging the flow of credit to the economy, but warned that such a move would add to government debt.

■ Infrastructure

To boost overland connectivity, 125,000 kilometers of road will be upgraded over the next five years at a cost of \$02.5 billion rupees (\$11.7 billion). The government will also undertake a restructuring of the National Highways Program, creating a National Highways Grid. It also plans to use rivers for cargo transport as that would help decongest roads and railways.

The government says it will also launch a railways modernization program this year and the Railways Department will be encouraged to expand suburban networks. Railway infrastructure would need an investment of 50 trillion rupees (\$730 billion) between 2018 and 2030. The government will take the public-private partnership route to bring in faster development and delivery of passenger and freight services.

The government will undertake strategic divestment of state-owned airline Air India and other loss-making state-owned enterprises this financial year. It will also consolidate some of the state-owned enterprises through mergers and raise foreign shareholding limits in them.

However, it should be noted that the government has been struggling to disinvest the ailing Air India for long. All its plans to find a buyer have so far been unsuccessful.

■ Markets

The corporate tax on companies with turnover up to 4 billion rupees (\$58.4 million) has been reduced to 25%. As part of the government’s focus on bringing micro, small and medium enterprises into the formal economy’s fold, a payment platform for MSMEs will be set up.

Going forward, listed companies may need to maintain 35% of minimum public shareholding from the current 25% and market watchdog the Securities and Exchange Board of India will be asked to bring in the changes. While this move will ensure more public investment in equity markets, it will also force corporates to go on a public offering spree.

This announcement spooked the markets. The BSE Sensex plunged 395 points on Friday after the budget proposal of raising the public shareholding threshold stoked fears about liquidity in the market. Similarly, the 50-share NSE Nifty sank 135.60 points or 1.14%, to 11,811.15.

■ Income tax

The income-tax rates for various income segments remain unchanged from the interim budget announced on February 1, but to boost the availability of affordable housing, the government has announced additional an income-tax deduction of 150,000 rupees on interest paid on home loans. This benefit will be available for affordable housing loans until March 2020. This will be applicable for home-loan value up to 4.5 million rupees.

Currently, interest paid on home loans qualify for a 200,000 rupee deduction. The government also announced a 150,000 rupee additional income-tax deduction on interest paid on loans for the purchase of electric vehicles. With an aim to simplify tax administration and bring greater transparency, the finance minister has proposed inter-changeability of the permanent account number of income-tax payers and Aadhaar, the unique identification number issued to Indian citizens. Those who don’t have permanent account numbers can file income-tax returns by quoting their Aadhaar numbers.

■ Welfare measures

The government reiterated its commitment to ensuring India’s water security and providing access to safe drinking water to all sections of the society. It pointed out that 96 million toilets had been constructed since 2014. More than 560,000 Indian villages and 95% of cities have become open defecation free.

Sitharaman stated that the government aimed to achieve housing for all by 2022. It also plans electricity and clean cooking facilities for all Indian families by 2022.

■ Defense

Interestingly, the financial outlay for defense was not mentioned in the finance minister’s speech. In the earlier interim budget, the government allocated a little over 3 trillion rupees (\$43.81 billion) for the defense budget (excluding pensions).

■ Education

The finance minister announced that there will soon be a new education policy and that higher education will be reformed comprehensively to improve outcome drastically. She said the allocation for education for 2019-20 would be more than three times the revised estimates. Efforts will be made to bring in foreign students under a Study in India plan, she said.

She said the government would make renewed efforts to promote research in the country, and announced that the different research grants given will be assimilated going forward. However, this has raised concerns of more centralization and conformism. Journalist Mihir Sharma has tweeted: “All government research grants to come under a single agency. Sounds good? Perhaps not. More centralization, less diversity, and perhaps saffronization....?”

■ ‘No bold steps’

Columnist Swaminathan Aiyar has said there was nothing grand in Nirmala Sitharaman’s first federal budget. He expressed surprise that the finance minister didn’t even mention the fiscal deficit target, which the market was eagerly looking for. “Is there something to hide in it?” Aiyar told Economic Times. He termed it an “incremental Budget.”

“No bold steps. No visionary things. Maybe I should call it a supplementary budget,” he remarked. Moody’s has opined that achieving the “competing budgetary goals” of lower fiscal deficit, higher growth and larger income support to farmers and the other needy sections of the society will be challenging. Despite the income support measures announced in the budget, the Indian economy is likely to grow more slowly and there is an additional risk of the fiscal deficit target of 3.3% being missed if tax collection underperforms.

Resistance against imperialism duty of every nation: Italian analyst

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — A political expert based in Italy highlighted the successful experiences of countries that chose to resist imperialism and world powers’ bullying, saying that any nation who seeks economic and military sovereignty, should adopt the same strategy.

Resistance against Imperialism Duty of Every Nation: Italian Analyst

“International resistance against imperialism (and unbridled capitalism used as an economic weapon) ought to be the duty of every country wishing to guarantee economic and military sovereignty,” Federico Pieraccini, who is based in Milan, said in an interview with the Tasnim News Agency.

“The dawning of the multipolar age bodes well for the future of the resistance axis, representing a fundamental turning point in our era,” he added.

Pieraccini is an independent freelance writer and political expert based in Milan, Italy. He specializes in international affairs, conflicts, politics, and strategies. He has covered conflicts in Ukraine, Libya, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq.

The following is the full text of the interview:

■ International developments are full of examples of how regional and trans-regional countries have successfully adopted strategies of resistance against oppression and unilateralism that have borne good results. As you know, countries like Iran, Syria, Yemen, Venezuela, and Palestine have protected their national sovereignty against foreign threats and have achieved many gains through this strategy. In contrast, some countries have adopted a strategy of appeasement or reconciliation when being hectorated and bullied by world powers. Given the experiences of these resistance countries, what do you think about their approach and the concept of resistance?

A: International resistance against imperialism (and unbridled capitalism used as an economic weapon) ought to be the duty of every country wishing to guarantee economic and military sovereignty. The example of countries in the Middle East and beyond (Venezuela, DPRK) that form the axis of resistance



ought to be an example to countries currently finding themselves under the military and economic dominance of the United States, sometimes improperly referred to as the Atlantic alliance (NATO).

The dawning of the multipolar age bodes well for the future of the resistance axis, representing a fundamental turning point in our era. The military umbrella offered by countries like Russia, helping to ward off possible conflicts, guarantees greater stability in the region, given that the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia know that Russia would be more inclined to help Iran and other allies rather than remain neutral in the event of a conflict. Similarly, Chinese economic aid is essential in supporting the economies of the countries in the axis of resistance as they face illegal sanctions imposed by Washington to crush their economies.

■ Do you think that countries which currently toe the line of major powers like the US ought to emulate these experiences of resistance countries to protect their independence and stand against unilateralism?

A: The multipolar world order in which we live today needs an expansion of centers of power around the globe.

If China, Russia and the United States currently represent three poles of global power, India and the major European powers continue to play a role that is ambiguous and difficult to analyze. New Delhi is trying to gain its strategic autonomy, helped by Washington’s unilateral impositions, which only serve to drive the Modi-led country into full Eurasian integration, as seen at the G20 and the SCO meetings with (Vladimir) Putin and Xi Jinping.

In this respect, imports of oil and gas from Iran should be increased to demonstrate to the rest of the world that Washington’s sanctions and diktats have no effect on great powers in a multipolar world order.

The situation is even more embarrassing for European countries, with little hope that Berlin, Paris and Rome will be able to distance their economic and military policies from those of Atlanticism and the US dollar. Although Trump is a person who inspires fights rather than harmony, Merkel, Macron and Conte do not have the means, will or ability to create strategic distance between European countries and the United States for the purposes of greater economic and military autonomy and freedom.

■ In an op-ed article written for Tasnim, the Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhani, warned the European countries of the risks of inaction regarding the US administration’s unilateral policies, saying the current EU leaders will be held accountable for Europe’s future challenges. Shamkhani criticized Europe for becoming an unimportant and passive actor that accepts humiliation at the hands of the US and has to live with the destructive effects of Washington’s unilateralism that have affected several international treaties. What is your take on that? Isn’t it better for the EU to stand up to US bullying and unilateralism?

A: Washington’s abandonment of the JCPOA (2015 Iran nuclear deal), and its insistence that its European allies not trade with Tehran, has made plain Europe’s subordination, obliged to genuflect before what effectively amounts to their American overlords.

Although Europeans have slowly activated an alternative payment system to that of SWIFT called INSTEX, it is still unlikely to see any European banks bold enough to circumvent the US ban and accept payments from Iran. The likelihood of US retaliation is high, and a fragile European banking system that is tightly linked to the US dollar would suffer a significant blow.

A ban on operating in the US market would be devastating to any European entity, especially a bank, and this weighs heavily on the minds of Europeans when they consider whether to continue trading with Iran. As correctly stated by Shamkhani, history will remember America’s subjugation of Europe, and as a European, I feel responsible for the actions of my government, actions that are certainly not creating a prosperous, free and independent future.

In the long run, sovereign countries like those of the axis of resistance will have more options to choose from in a multipolar environment, being able to act in favor of their own national interest. Whereas we Europeans will continue to be subject to Washington and her interests in exchange for absolutely nothing.

Putting the warriors on terror on trial

By Maj. Danny Sijrsen

ANTIWAR — “It is natural for mankind to set a higher value on courage than timidity, on activity than prudence, on strength than counsel.” ~ Montesquieu, “The Spirit of the Laws”

They are undoubtedly America’s favorite, most lauded shock troops. More, even, than the Marines or the Army’s Green Berets and Rangers, Navy SEALs have captured America’s (and, certainly, Hollywood’s) attention. Despite their small ranks, they are nothing less than the face of the post-9/11 U.S. “war on terror.” It was the Seals, after all, who killed Osama bin Laden, prompting spontaneous, nationwide chants of “USA! USA!” Sure, the Army and Marines do most of the fighting and dying, but there is something romantic in the collective American mind about those Seals.

Yet currently, in the wake of a couple of major scandals and seemingly credible allegations of serious war crimes, it’s as though the entire organization is on trial. Maybe that’s for the best.

What unfolded in the increasingly absurd and always disturbing trial of Special Operations Chief Edward Gallagher was nothing less than a war for the soul of the whole special operations community. Still, the minutiae and singularity of the individual case masked the larger questions and conclusions worth drawing from the entire spectacle: Why is the US fighting abroad? Who, exactly, is doing that fighting? What happens when aggressive, highly trained commandos are repeatedly shipped abroad and given immense leeway and power over foreign lives and deaths?

These, to name only a few, are key queries to consider regarding the Gallagher case and a separate scandal in which another SEAL recently pleaded guilty to a 2017 hazing attack in Mali that resulted in the strangulation death of an Army Green Beret. In the second case, why were these special operators in remote West Africa in the first place? The answer is relevant to the tragic incident itself.

As for Gallagher, he was accused and acquitted of shooting an elderly civilian and a young girl without cause, and of killing a teenage Islamic State prisoner with his knife, then convicted of posing with the captive’s body as a trophy before texting out boastful photos. His war crimes trial increased in absurdity as Gallagher’s SEAL team divided into two camps (for and against the chief) and testified against each other. This marked a rare breach of a kind of special operations team code of silence, one that bears remarkable similarity to the domestic police “blue wall” of silence. That Gallagher was ultimately turned in by fellow Seals, who proceeded to publicly testify against him, is telling, and uncommon, lending, I felt, weight to the prosecution’s case.

Look, I was a military man — though not a part of special operations tribe — and worked closely with both Green Berets and Seals, particularly while undertaking village stability operations (forming government-friendly village militias, essentially) in Kandahar, Afghanistan. As such, I was perhaps less surprised when the testimony of the Seals and some Marines in the Gallagher trial not only seemed to implicate the chief in war crimes but inadvertently exposed a prevailing culture of poor discipline and indecency among the team — particularly a widespread proclivity to take “cool guy” photos with enemy or civilian corpses. The practice is gruesome, disturbing and highly common — and, though I never partook in that particular morbidity, I’m certain most Iraq and Afghan war combat vets would agree with me regarding its banality.

Had he been convicted, Gallagher would certainly have represented an extreme case, but the fact that so many military comrades and armchair warriors at home backed him demonstrates that the problem runs deep. It raises certain questions, along with some disconcerting answers. For example, Gallagher was on his eighth — count them, eighth — deployment in a 19-year career. Special operators such as he and his team make up just 2% of the US military, but since the troop reductions in Iraq and Afghanistan were enacted in 2011 and 2014, respectively, they increasingly the bear most of the burden for fighting an absurdly unwinnable fight that now stretches from West Africa to Central Asia.

Too many deployments, too much extended action and, critically, too much power have been entrusted to these men. There are bound to be excesses, the sort of wartime criminality that does the “terrorist” recruiting sergeant’s job for him. Just as too many of Gallagher’s — and other special operators’ — leaders turned a blind eye to the inevitable murmurs about wrongdoing, too many folks at home have simply patted US commandos on the back and then ignored what was done in America’s name. In such an atmosphere of citizen apathy and unwarranted military adulation, all during nearly two decades of ill-defined, indecisive wars, it’s amazing that there aren’t more (publicized) incidents of individual cruelty (leaving aside, for a moment, the inherent savagery of waging air and ground combat in unnecessary wars of choice).

Regardless of the verdict in the case, it’s a safe prediction that a shocking portion of the American populace felt a peculiar sympathy with Gallagher and the other accused special operators. That’s because, as Montesquieu astutely noted in the 18th century, mankind relishes warriors more than it should, more than almost any other profession. This military man, at least, thinks it a pity. Nonetheless, I’m in a tiny minority by taking such a position. And perhaps it

should come as little surprise to me. After all, when Lt. William Calley ordered and enthusiastically took part in the massacre of hundreds of Vietnamese civilians in the village of My Lai, a staggering 77% of Americans polled thought he’d been railroaded by the military justice system.

President Trump is unlikely to know many details about the My Lai massacre or the ins and outs of the charges against Gallagher. But make no mistake: Trump and his hawkish cheerleaders have the pulse of the American people on these issues, on the dark side of patriotism. That’s why the president was reportedly considering a pre-conviction pardon for Gallagher. Trump knew he wouldn’t lose any political points defending a military man, even a potential monster. Trump is hardly sophisticated, but he’s got the street con’s intuition that Americans’ sense of exceptionalism and reflexive adulation of the military lacks complexity or nuance. Even an accused war criminal can be sympathetic, so long as he’s American — one of ours.

It is all a consequence of waging forever war; of what happens to the soul of an (ostensible) republic when a select minority — a Praetorian Guard of sorts — is trusted with the management of violence the world over while the populace proverbially sleeps.

This is far from a defense or apology for Gallagher. I’m fairly certain we’d loathe one another. Still, it must be said — the uncomfortable takeaway from all this barbarity: Boys will be boys (although they mostly are men in the special operations community), and they are capable of much evil when unrestrained and perpetually deployed into worldwide combat. Aggressive, highly trained and hypermasculine warriors like the Seals ought to remain metaphorically sealed behind glass labeled “break only in case of emergency,” not utilized, as they have been, as the go-to tool for waging normalized and increasingly mundane global imperial war.

My gut tells me that Gallagher and a sizable portion of other special operators have run off the rails through repeatedly fighting in foreign locales. The SEAL community won’t like me weighing in, but more oversight and control over them seems necessary. What’s more vital is that American policymakers follow a basic adage: Don’t “break the glass” and unleash these highly trained killers unless there’s a damn good reason and a clear end state. Because once they’re unbridled, America owns all that unfolds, and it’s often ugly. It’s certainly far darker than the sanitized military Independence Day parade that Donald Trump has planned.

Only here, too, Trump is betting on a messy truth: that most Americans relish the patriotic spectacle over the dark reality of war and its consequences. And he’s right, once again.

The dispute between the German Chancellor and the French President Merkel and the future of the European Union

By Ali Azimi

TEHRAN — Chancellor of Germany is concerned about the fate of the European Union and the eurozone! It seems that this concern will be further identified in the near future! The EU does not have a quiet time! The activity of the nationalist and extremist groups and movements in Europe has created a lot of concerns among the leaders of the European Union.

In such a situation, people like the French President and German Chancellor are worried about the future of the eurozone and the European Union. This concern increases over time. The occurrence of a variety of security, political, economic and social crises has created many challenges in the European Union and the eurozone.

The emergence of these challenges has led to a sharp decline in the popularity of traditional parties in Europe. In such a way, nationalist parties have been able to increase their popularity with the public. Which side are the European Union and the eurozone really heading to? Will the future of Europe finally be clear these are the questions that concern the mentally ill, such as Merkel and Macron? Here are some of the analyzes on the concerns and concerns of the German Chancellor on the European Union and the Eurozone:

With Brexit just one of EU's headaches, Merkel avoids rocking the boat

As Guardian reported, When the German chancellor was asked this week why she would not railroad Italy and the so-called Visegrád group of countries — Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary — into accepting the former Dutch foreign minister Frans Timmermans, a critic of populist governments, as European commission president, Angela Merkel's answer was telling.

"The Brexit is looming on the horizon," Merkel said in reference to the need to avoid tensions when appointing the next head of the commission. "Other important issues are on the table. I think we need to treat each other with care."

For all the unity it has shown so far in its negotiations with the UK, the EU is straining to keep its many different constituencies onside across a range of other issues. The next five-year term offers more of the same. The divergence in values that threatens to cripple the bloc was neatly highlighted at a summit this month when Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic refused to sign up to a commune that committed to a climate-neutral EU by 2050 — a target that was already seen as too wishy-washy by green lobby groups, given the gravity of the climate emergency.

The UN secretary general, António Guterres, wants to put the world on a path to limiting global warming to 1.5C at a September summit. He had written to Donald Tusk, the outgoing European council president, asking the EU to show leadership on the world stage — and it could not. The three naysayers are seeking extra recompense for making green changes to their economies in the upcoming seven-year budget known as the multiannual financial framework (MFF), but they will face stern challenge from members, such as the Netherlands, which are firmly opposed to the EU being a "transfer union".

Indeed the negotiations over the MFF, optimistically scheduled to have finished in May, are predictably proving to be a major headache, leading the EU budget commissioner, Günther Oettinger, to recently warn: "It's not really five minutes to midnight, it's almost five past midnight already."

The package asks net recipients such as France and Germany to pay more as a trade-off for less being handed over in cohesion funds to the central and eastern European states, and more being invested in scientific research and development. But failure to find agreement by the end of October could lead to the EU being unable to fund the next round of Horizon Europe research and development programmes.

The difficulties in the talks are understandable. The divergence in values is matched by an economic divergence from east to west and north to south that the EU has failed to bridge, despite the almost existential threat it posed during the eurozone crisis, when economies unable to borrow on the market had to come cap in hand to Berlin, only to be put on a humiliating diet of cuts as the price for help. The Guardian view on Europe's top jobs: the good, the bad and the compromise

The French president, Emmanuel Macron, has championed a eurozone budget, to allow the EU to act as a sovereign nation in times of trouble, but there has only yet been agreement on a tiny symbolic pot. No wonder, then, that the populist Italian government has raged at Brussels meddling in its tax and spend plans, which it says is necessary to boost its struggling economy.

But as the new leaders in Brussels — Ursula von der Leyen and Christine Lagarde as the first female presidents of the European commission and European Central Bank respectively, and Charles Michel as European council president — move into their offices this autumn, it will be Brexit that will be sucking up their time and energy.

It is certain that the next British prime minister, likely to be Boris Johnson, will not secure the increasingly outlandish potential concessions being touted by the two candidates in the Tory leadership race.

The battle might then be to deal with the economic costs of a no-deal Brexit and a toxic relationship with London at a time when Donald Trump's White House piles on the pressure through tariffs on trade and China doubles down in its investments in Africa, leaving the EU trailing behind in emerging markets there. Merkel's commitment to avoiding a row over personnel suddenly becomes more understandable.

How Emmanuel Macron won the battle over the EU's top jobs

Also Financial Times reported that

It is rare for any leader to emerge jubilant from a gruelling three-day international summit. But French president Emmanuel Macron could not hide his satisfaction after this week's marathon meeting of EU leaders in Brussels.

Fifty hours of negotiations, including an all-night session, among the EU's prime ministers and presidents had yielded a team of high-calibre politicians to lead the union's institutions for the coming years. It marked a "deep renewal" for the European project, Mr Macron rejoiced, even a new era.



"This agreement is the fruit of a deep Franco-German understanding, and of our ability to work with all the European partners," the French leader added. "This decision is one which means we do not divide Europe — not politically, nor geographically."

Thirty hours earlier, the picture had looked completely different. Then, a visibly angry Mr Macron had emerged from stalled talks to rail against the "divisions" and "hidden agendas" that made it impossible for the bloc to reach decisions. The EU was once again displaying its vacillation at a time when the world around it was in upheaval.

"We give an image of a Europe that is not serious," said the French leader.

The EU's sleep-deprived leaders had, at that stage, just endured a last frantic effort to find a winning package. "It was chaos," says one diplomat. "It got worse hour by hour." Another describes the scene as "crazy".

One prime minister had sounded out colleagues about other leaders standing in earshot. Another proposed a slate of politicians only from Germany and the Benelux. Then, to everyone's relief, the talks were suspended overnight until Tuesday morning.

This was the EU's third attempt to appoint new heads of the European Commission, European Central Bank and European Council as well as a foreign policy chief. It looked like an impossible puzzle but the following evening a deal was struck.

Leaders agreed that Ursula von der Leyen, Germany's defence minister, should become commission president, placing her in charge of the EU's executive arm. France's Christine Lagarde secured the ECB presidency. Belgian prime minister Charles Michel was named as European Council president, meaning he will chair meetings of EU leaders, and Spain's Josep Borrell will lead on foreign policy.

Everyone could claim at least a partial victory. Donald Tusk, the outgoing EU Council president, declared that "it was worth waiting for such an outcome". Yet to many it looked like a typical backroom stitch-up to serve the interests of Europe's ancien regime. France and Germany shared the two most important jobs.

The spoils were confined to the EU's three established political families of conservatives, socialists and liberals — with nothing for the resurgent greens and Eurosceptics — and to the countries of western Europe. It was also a result that allowed the centre-right European People's party to extend its 15-year grip on the commission presidency.

But if the outcome apparently maintained the status quo, the process — a "clash between diplomatic Europe and political Europe", according to Susi Dennison of the European Council on Foreign Relations — revealed the strong undercurrents of change.

It highlighted the shrinking power of German chancellor Angela Merkel, who came under fire from her own colleagues in the centre-right EPP, and the disruptive potential of eastern European governments. It laid bare the sheer complexity of decision-making in an EU of 28 nations, whose parliament has become fragmented and unpredictable after the centre-right and centre-left blocs lost their combined majority for the first time in 40 years.

There was also a split over how much importance should be attached to finding jobs for the main parties' Spitzenkandidaten or "lead candidates" who ran in May's EU elections — a system championed by the European Parliament and some capitals, especially Berlin, as a way to make the union more democratic.

"They tried the Spitzenkandidaten system. It didn't work. They tried to find a new way. That was the old way," says Daniela Schwarzer, director of the German Council on Foreign Relations, a think-tank. "It reflects the fragmentation and political divisions in the EU."

Ms Merkel and Mr Macron had arrived in Brussels on Sunday with a joint plan. The German leader had failed at a summit in June to secure the commission presidency for Manfred Weber, a conservative and the EPP's lead candidate in the elections. His candidacy had encountered a wall of opposition, including from Mr Macron.

Now there was a radically different plan cooked up by the French and German leaders with their Dutch and Spanish counterparts on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Osaka last weekend: Mr Weber would become president of the EU parliament, while Frans Timmermans, a former Dutch foreign minister who led the centre-left campaign, would take the commission.

For Ms Merkel, the approach had the benefit of satisfying her Social Democrat coalition partners at home while hopefully pleasing her own party by finding a prominent role for Mr Weber.

Shortly after arriving in Brussels, Ms Merkel discovered that her own political family saw the deal as a surrender. A

stormy pre-meeting of EPP leaders at the Palais des Académies on Sunday set the stage for what was to follow, as prime ministers including Croatia's Andrej Plenkovic and Latvia's Krisjanis Karins rebelled over a plan that they argued was against the EPP's interests.

Boyko Borisov, the conservative prime minister of Bulgaria, arrived at the summit stony faced, saying: "Merkel is chairman of the CDU. Not the EPP."

Mr Timmermans also faced implacable opposition from the "Visegrad Four" group of Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. The Dutchman has fought battles with the Polish and Hungarian governments in his current role as commission first vice-president charged with preserving the rule of law.

Unwilling to give up on a jobs package that she hoped would shield her from political damage at home, Ms Merkel held last-ditch talks with other EPP leaders in the early hours of Monday that failed to deliver a breakthrough despite what one diplomat describes as "arm twisting".

It set the stage for the chaotic period of negotiations that leaders endured before Mr Tusk suspended the summit.

David-Maria Sassoli elected as president of European Parliament

The package that did eventually emerge after talks resumed on Tuesday bore a clear French imprimatur: Mr Macron had championed the cause of Ms von der Leyen and now added Ms Lagarde for the ECB. He pitched the idea of a package based around the two women to Ms Merkel during a lull in talks.

Mr Timmermans was out and the centre-right would get the commission presidency after all. The impasse was broken and a consensus reached remarkably quickly, despite failing to meet one of the basic criteria EU leaders had set themselves: regional balance. All four of the people chosen are from western Europe, and three are from the EU's six founding countries.

Warsaw and Budapest crowded about toppling Mr Timmermans. But they ended up with Ms von der Leyen, a pro-gay marriage modernising centrist who may turn out to be tougher on democratic backsliding in the east than her predecessor. There was no big job for the region. Diplomats say it reinforced the impression that central and eastern European governments, whose interests often diverge, can be good at wrecking but less so at building.

In a final twist, when it came to a vote by EU leaders on the first German commission president in 50 years, Ms Merkel found herself in the extraordinary position of having to abstain because her Social Democrat allies back in Berlin were furious at her for dropping the lead candidate system. All other leaders voted in favour of the deal.

Recommended
European Union
Christine Lagarde and Ursula von der Leyen: meet the EU's next leaders

This week's events revealed how Ms Merkel's authority is dwindling. She once ruled supreme over the EPP, but this time she faced open revolt. At home, the EU jobs deal has given the SPD a reason to quit the coalition, which would end Ms Merkel's career.

It also illustrated the declining power of the EPP, which for the past two and a half years has held the commission, council and parliament presidencies. The centre of gravity of EPP MEPs has shifted from west to east and towards a conservative-nationalist worldview.

The jobs deal was a blow to the European Parliament and supporters of the lead candidate system. But the legislature is far from cowed. Ms von der Leyen's appointment requires the approval of MEPs at a confirmation vote in mid-July. The numbers could be tight, which means Ms von der Leyen will have to allow MEPs to shape her programme to win confirmation.

"It might appear paradoxical that this unpredictable politics in a fragmented Europe is translating into a very old school, backroom arrangement," says Alberto Alemanno, professor of European law at HEC business school in Paris. "It is paradoxical, but this is not a done deal. Far from it."

Mr Macron was clearly the winner of the week. He may have extended the EPP's tenure at the top of the commission, but he sees Ms von der Leyen as a pro-European open to French ideas on defence and economic integration. He installed Mr Michel, one of his closest allies, in the European Council. And he can count on Ms Lagarde at the ECB doing whatever it takes to defend the eurozone. No wonder he was exultant.

"It is an Act 2 that begins for our Europe," he said. "A new team, profoundly renewed, new faces, a breath of fresh air."

UAE evil plots against neighboring countries and the Arab world

1 → UAE is a big supporter of Egypt's current government. The country keep spending billions of dollars to carry out Zionists' plans in Middle East and suppress any democratic movement in the region that is based on public votes and people's determination.

An example of UAE's interference in Libya is the story of Yusef Mobarak. He was arrested in Al-Aqiq Airport in Tripoli after the intelligence service of Libya's Government of National Accord accused him of taking pictures from high-security centers and foreign embassies in Tripoli. After investigations, it was revealed that Yusef was a main link to Khalifa Haftar, the renegade military commander of Libya, and was particularly supported by UAE and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Egypt's president.

Everyone knows that UAE's army has given modern weapons and high-tech tanks to Khalifa Haftar and has supported the renegade commander against Tripoli. UAE's interference in Libya is aimed at keeping the country entangled in wars and chaos, so that Libya can become a heaven for the intelligence services of the United States, Israel and UAE.

UAE has also been seriously interfering in Tunisia. The country is putting enormous political and economic pressure on Tunisia to expand its control over it and crush all the public movements. They have forced Tunisia to choose between surrendering to UAE and suffering under a security crisis.

Yemen is another country that is crushed by UAE's interference. UAE has done a dirty job in Yemen by destroying Yemen's infrastructures and killing thousands of innocent Yemeni citizens.

The octopus of UAE has extended its claws to Oman as well. Oman intelligence service discovered an Emirati spy network that was supposed to predict and influence what happens in Oman after Sultan Qaboos. The network was trying to make strong bonds with anti-government tribes such as Al Shulub tribe which has close relationships with UAE, especially with Ras al Khaimah emirate.

Another UAE spy network was discovered in Turkey and brought shame to Emirati leaders. According to Turkish media, UAE was trying to support some of the government dissidents and army commanders including Fethullah Gülen. Turkish intelligence service also discovered that Mohammed Dahlan entered Turkey under a fake identity and by using an Emirati passport. In this secret trip, he had meetings with the opponents of Turkish government.

UAE is also trying to expand its reach to the Islamic Republic of Iran as well. The country has already given financial support and intelligence to some terrorist cells that worked against Iran. Once again, UAE's efforts to interfere in Iran was proved when it was revealed that Global Hawk drone was sent to Iran from an Emirati base.

Apart from having a destructive role in Middle Eastern countries, UAE is quickly expanding its relationship with the Zionist regime. Now, Zionists have representative offices in Abu Dhabi and can freely travel to UAE.

All these facts show that Al Nahyan family and specially Mohammed bin Zayed, the Crown Prince of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, are the main causes of war in Arab World and division among Muslims. They are completely abiding by the goals of the Zionist regime; therefore, the Muslim community and Arab world should free itself from the influence of this evil element.

No legal bar for Iran to enrich uranium: Afrasiabi

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Kaveh Afrasiabi, author and political scientist from Boston, said there is no international legal standard prohibiting Iran from enriching uranium.

No Legal Bar for Iran to Enrich Uranium: US-Based Author "...there is no legal bar to Iran resuming 20 percent enrichment. -- this has been a voluntary self-limitation under the JCPOA on a temporary basis and now that the agreement is falling apart due to West's collective failure, Iran is free to exercise its NPT rights in full," Afrasiabi told Tasnim.

Following is the full text of the interview.

■ Iran recently announced that it will begin suspending more nuclear commitments and surpass uranium stockpile limit set by JCPOA from July 7. It means that Tehran will no longer be bound by its commitment to enrich uranium up to 3.67 percent and will begin developing its Arak heavy water reactor based on its pre-JCPOA plans. The West, Washington in particular, has been seeking to create the image that the move by Iran is tantamount to a nuclear breakout. This is while Tehran insists that the steady suspension of commitments is in line with the country's non-military objectives and plans to reach scientific independence. What is your take on this?

A: Iran's decisions are proportionate responses to the other side's failures with respect to JCPOA and should not be misinterpreted as a proliferation concern. Iran's nuclear program is entirely peaceful and the IAEA has unique access to Iran's facilities. But, if the West persists with its unreasonable approach, then it is a sure bet that the agreement will disappear and a new round of nuclear crisis will ensue.

■ Given the fact that the US sanctions have restricted Iran's access to medical and health services, do not you think that Iran reserves the right to return to the 20-percent enrichment and produce radiopharmaceuticals?

A: I agree and like to add that there is no legal bar to Iran resuming 20 percent enrichment. -- this has been a voluntary self-limitation under the JCPOA on a temporary basis and now that the agreement is falling apart due to West's collective failure, Iran is free to exercise its NPT rights in full.

■ US President Donald Trump has repeatedly said that Iran "can't have nuclear weapons". Iranian officials and experts argue that the US's main aim is not to halt the country's nuclear and military programs but to deprive it of nuclear technology and know-how. What are your thoughts on this?

A: A country that sits on thousands of nuclear warheads and openly renounces disarmament goals of the NPT has no right to preach non-proliferation to other countries. Trump is presently enabling a nascent Saudi proliferation drive while simultaneously giving hegemonic Riyadh a carte blanche in the region and selling billions of US arms under the veneer of Iran threat. His foreign policy indeed leaves a lot to be desired, is imbalanced and consumed by Iranophobia. A restructuring of US policy toward Iran is called for on the basis of mutual respect and national interests of both countries. That would mean a US respect for Iran's nuclear rights as well, which is sadly missing at the moment.

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The rules of gravity could be intrinsically linked with building quantum computers

Quantum computing promises to revolutionize the power and scale of our computing systems, if only we can figure out how to harness it. Now scientists have made a discovery about how optimal quantum computation might be achieved – and gravity may be the key.

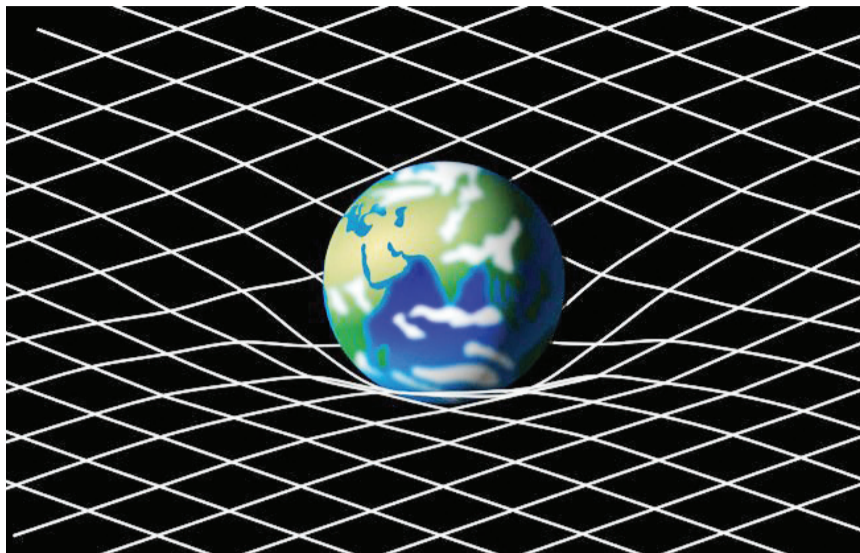
More specifically, the geometric rules for finding the shortest distance between two points on a curved surface, with regard to gravity in general relativity, could also find the most efficient way to process information in a quantum computer.

These points of shortest travel – whether across a spherical planet or inside a quantum computing system – are known as geodesics. The researchers behind the new study say they could unlock the fastest possible calculations in one particular branch of quantum computing, conformal field theory.

“Finding the minimal length on the complexity geometry, in our setup, is equivalent to solving the equations of gravity,” physicist Paweł Caputa from Kyoto University in Japan told Lisa Zyga at Phys.org.

“This is what we meant by gravity setting rules for optimal computations in 2D conformal field theories.”

Fitting the potential of quantum



computing into something physical and practical is one of the biggest challenges that scientists face. Cutting out error rates and reducing interference is going to be key if we're ever going to develop quantum computers that can be used outside a lab.

The new study builds on previous work looking at the link between quantum computing and geometry, but goes further

by settling on a universal description of complexity – that means previously undiscovered connections between complexity and gravity begin to show up.

For the time being, this applies to a specific set of quantum computing conditions, but the findings could eventually be applied more widely.

“We showed that, in two-dimensional

conformal field theories with quantum gates given by the energy-momentum tensor, the length of such geodesics is computed by the action of two-dimensional gravity,” Caputa told Phys.org.

Quantum computing is based around the concept of qubits – a unit of information that can represent several states at once, rather than the hard 1 or 0 that a classical computer bit must be programmed as.

But managing those qubits is incredibly tricky. In recent years we've seen physicists make progress in shrinking down the space needed to store them, as well as improving qubit accuracy – after all, we need to be able to trust the results our quantum computers are coming up with.

We're starting to see primitive quantum computers carry more qubits and keep those qubits in a quantum state for longer as well.

Each time a little part of the overall problem gets solved, we get another step further towards realizing the promise of quantum computing – and the geometric rules that define gravity could help us unlock more of its potential.

“We showed that there are families of quantum systems where the complexity of certain universal tasks is well estimated using classical gravity,” Caputa told Phys.org.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Neural nets to simulate molecular motion cast

New work from Los Alamos National Laboratory, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the University of Florida is showing that artificial neural nets can be trained to encode quantum mechanical laws to describe the motions of molecules, supercharging simulations potentially across a broad range of fields.

“This means we can now model materials and molecular dynamics billions of times faster compared to conventional quantum methods, while retaining the same level of accuracy,” said Justin Smith, Los Alamos physicist and Metropolis Fellow in the laboratory's Theoretical Division.

Understanding how molecules move is critical to tapping their potential value for drug development, protein simulations and reactive chemistry, for example, and both quantum mechanics and experimental (empirical) methods feed into the simulations.

The new technique, called the ANI-1ccx potential, promises to advance the capabilities of researchers in many fields and improve the accuracy of machine learning-based potentials in future studies of metal alloys and detonation physics.

Quantum mechanical (QM) algorithms, used on classical

computers, can accurately describe the mechanical motions of a compound in its operational environment. But QM scales very poorly with varying molecular sizes, severely limiting the scope of possible simulations. Even a slight increase in molecular size within a simulation can dramatically increase the computational burden. So practitioners often resort to using empirical information, which describes the motion of atoms in terms of classical physics and Newton's Laws, enabling simulations that scale to billions of atoms or millions of chemical compounds.

(Source: Science Daily)

East Asians may have been reshaping their skulls 12,000 years ago



Ancient tombs in China have produced what may be some of the oldest known human skulls to be intentionally reshaped.

At a site called Houtaomuga, scientists unearthed 25 skeletons dating to between around 12,000 years ago and 5,000 years ago. Of those, 11 featured skulls with artificially elongated braincases and flattened bones at the front and back of the head, says a team led by bioarchaeologist Quanchao Zhang and paleoanthropologist Qian Wang.

Skull modification occurred over a longer stretch of time at the site than at any other archaeological dig, the researchers report online June 25 in the American Journal of Physical Anthropology.

Permanent reshaping of a skull early in life, when cranial bones are soft, can be achieved by compressing an infant's head with one's hands. Binding the head with hard, flat surfaces such as boards or tightly wrapping the head in cloth similarly remodels immature cranial bones. Specific head modifications may have been used as signs of social status.

Oddly shaped, intentionally modified skulls have been found in many parts of the world. Claims from the 1980s that two roughly 45,000-year-old Neanderthal skulls had been reshaped early in life have been dismissed by many researchers. The earliest skulls with generally accepted signs of cranial modification date to between around 13,000 and 10,000 years ago in western Asia, southeastern Australia and now, East Asia. In the Americas, this practice began more than 8,000 years ago.

“It is too early to tell whether intentional cranial modification first emerged in East Asia and spread elsewhere or originated independently in different places,” says Wang, of Texas A&M University in Dallas.

Houtaomuga was excavated from 2011 to 2015. A man's skeleton with a modified skull was found in a tomb dating to between 13,000 and 11,000 years ago, based on styles of pottery found in the same sediment layer. Radiocarbon dating of the skeleton

placed it at around 12,000 years old. Two sediment layers dating to between 6,300 and 5,000 years old contained 10 skeletons with reshaped skulls.

Of five modified adult skulls, four came from men and one from a woman. Estimated ages at death for the 11 Houtaomuga individuals range from around 3 to 40.

Signs of skull reshaping as a practice reserved for high-status individuals or certain families appeared at the site, Zhang, of Jilin University in Changchun, China, Wang and colleagues report. A 3-year-old child with a reshaped braincase was buried with large amounts of pottery and other artifacts, suggesting the youngster came from a rich family. Numerous shell ornaments placed on a woman with an elongated skull likely denoted her high status. And an adult and adolescent with modified skulls were buried together, suggesting that the two may have come from the same family.

While those individuals clearly had modified skulls, the oldest Houtaomuga skull displays a slightly elongated braincase that probably wasn't intentionally modified, says paleoanthropologist Xijun Ni of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing. That cranial shape characterizes some Asians today, Ni contends. The tops of such skulls often include a slight depression near the back, as on the 12,000-year-old Houtaomuga skull, he adds.

Solid evidence of cranial reshaping at Houtaomuga goes back only about 6,000 years, Ni says. But Wang disagrees. The extent of bone flattening on the 12,000-year-old Houtaomuga braincase exceeds any naturally occurring variations in skull shape, Wang argues.

A human skull discovered by workers at an underwater sand mine in northeastern China displays intentionally flattened bones at the front and back of the braincase, a team led by Ni reported January 26 at bioRxiv.org. Radiocarbon dating puts that skull between 11,245 and 11,200 years old. (Source: sciencenews.org)

Scientists attempting to open portal to a parallel universe



Could 2019 be the year humans open the first portal to a shadowy dimension which mirrors our own world?

Scientists in Oak Ridge National Laboratory in eastern Tennessee hope so, and have completed building equipment they are to test this summer which may allow us the first glimpse of a parallel universe which could be identical in many ways to our own, with mirror particles, mirror planets and possibly even mirror life.

That is according to Leah Broussard, the physicist behind the project, who described the attempt to reveal a hidden shadow world as “pretty wacky” in an interview with NBC last week.

The discovery of a concealed mirror world may sound like science fiction from the Stranger Things series, but it has been repeatedly suggested by physicists as a tempting means of explaining anomalous results. However, as yet, hard evidence such a realm exists has refused to manifest itself.

One set of anomalous results, and the ones which inspired the research, date back to the 1990s, when particle physicists were measuring the time it took for neutron particles to break down into protons once they were removed from an atom's nucleus.

Two separate experiments saw the neutrons broke down at differing rates, instead of decaying and becoming protons at exactly the same rate, as was expected.

In one, the free neutrons were captured by magnetic fields and herded into laboratory bottle traps, and in the other they were detected by the subsequent appearance of proton particles from a nuclear reactor stream.

Those particles fired out in the stream from the nuclear reactor lived on average for 14 minutes and 48 seconds – nine seconds longer than those from the bottle traps.

It may sound like a small difference, but it has troubled scientists.

But the existence of a mirror world offers a credible explanation: That there are two separate neutron lifetimes, and it could be that around 1 per cent of neutrons could

be crossing the divide between our reality and the mirror world before crossing back and then emitting a detectable proton.

The new experiment will fire a beam of neutrons at an impenetrable wall. On the other side of the wall, a neutron detector will be set up, which normally would expect to detect nothing.

But if the detector does register the presence of neutrons, the theory is that they may have gone through the wall by “oscillating” into the mirror world – becoming mirror neutrons – and reappearing in this universe, and more specifically the lab in Tennessee.

“Only the ones that can oscillate and then come back into our universe can be detected,” Ms Broussard told the New Scientist in June.

Furthermore, the team will set up magnetic fields on either side of the wall, which they can alter in strength. It is hoped certain strengths may assist the oscillation of the particles.

Despite the tidy theory, the team is playing down the chances of revealing reality's shadowy twin.

“I fully expect to measure zero,” Ms Broussard said of the initial tests.

But if they do detect a neutron on the far side of the wall, it could have profound implications. “If you discover something new like that, the game totally changes,” Ms Broussard told NBC.

The existence of a mirror world could also explain our universe's lack of the isotope Lithium 7, which physicists believe doesn't match the quantities the Big Bang would have created.

The detection of high-energy cosmic rays which come from beyond our galaxy could also be explained by the existence of the mirror world.

They are too powerful to have travelled only through the observed universe, but if they had oscillated into the mirror realm and then back out again, it could explain why that is the case.

(Source: The Independent)

Everyone's going back to the moon. But why?

At 2.51am on Monday 15 July, engineers at India's national spaceport at Sriharikota will blast their Chandrayaan-2 probe into orbit around the Earth. It will be the most ambitious space mission the nation has attempted. For several days, the four-tone spacecraft will be maneuvered above our planet before a final injection burn of its engines will send it hurtling towards its destination: the moon.

Exactly 50 years after the astronauts of Apollo 11 made their historic voyage to the Sea of Tranquility, Chandrayaan-2 will repeat that journey – though on a slightly different trajectory. After the robot craft enters lunar orbit, it will gently drop a lander, named Vikram, on to the moon's surface near its south pole. A robot rover, Pragyan, will then be dispatched and, for the next two weeks, trundle across the local terrain, analyzing the chemical composition of soil and rocks.

The Indian spaceship will not be alone on the lunar surface, however. China's Chang'e-4 has been operating flawlessly since it landed on the far side of the moon in January. Its arrival was later followed by the appearance of Beresheet, a probe built by the Israeli non-profit organization SpaceIL. It reached the moon in April but crash-landed. SpaceIL has since announced that it intends to have another shot.

At the same time, the US has pledged to set up lunar laboratories in the near future, while Europe and Russia have also revealed plans to launch complex missions. Suddenly, everyone's going to the moon.

But why? What has suddenly made Earth's main satellite so popular? After Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin's historic mission in July 1969, public and political interest in future human space flight evaporated rapidly. Already bogged down in a vastly expensive war in Vietnam, the US government abandoned its Apollo program.

The decision disappointed scientists but, given that Apollo was costing 4% of the US federal budget at the time, the cancellation was not surprising. Since then there have been only a handful of robot missions to the moon, and human ventures have been restricted to missions in low Earth orbit, with special attention being given to the International Space Station. However, that focus now appears to be changing to more distant goals.

One reason for this shift is that the moon's exploitation has simply reached a stage that mirrors past explorations on Earth, says David Parker, director of human and robotic exploration for the European Space Agency. He sees particular parallels with our conquest of the South Pole.

“The timetable of the exploration of Antarctica mirrors that of the moon in an uncannily close manner,” Parker says. “At the beginning of the century, there was a race to reach the South Pole and then no one went back for 50 years – just like the moon in the 60s. Then we started building bases in Antarctica. We are now approaching that stage with our exploitation of the moon.”

Antarctica was opened up by technological advances – motorized vehicles, air transport, radio, and other developments – that are mirrored in the new sciences of machine learning, sensor technology and robotics. These promise to transform lunar colonization in one crucially important way: by reducing the need for the continual presence of humans in hostile environments.

“There is a huge cost gap between manned and unmanned missions, and it is increasing all the time,” says Britain's astronomer royal, Martin Rees. “With each advance in robots and miniaturization there is less need to put a man or woman into space or on to the moon, and that saves money.” For a space agency like NASA, which has to manage on a budget that is little more than 10% of funding in its heyday that is certainly a key issue.

And the success of China's Chang'e-4 probe provides an example of what can be achieved without human involvement. It is the first vehicle ever to alight on the moon's far side, and has continued to operate without problems, despite having to survive prolonged periods when temperatures have plummeted to below minus 180C during lunar nights. (These last for 14 Earth days. Apollo schedules were planned to make sure astronauts landed only during daytime on the moon.)

Exploiting these advances in robotics to aid human activity on the moon will form the backbone of the forthcoming US Lunar Gateway project. NASA plans to use America's giant Space Launch System rockets and Orion crew-carrying capsules – both in the final stages of development – to build a smaller version of the International Space Station that would orbit the moon. Partners from Europe, Canada, Japan and other countries have been invited to take part in Gateway, which would be constructed over the next decade.

Gateway would be used by astronauts to operate robots working on the lunar surface a few dozen kilometers below them. These automated machines would be used to set up radio telescopes, to harvest minerals, to search for ice and water and to study how lunar rocks could be used as building materials for a lunar colony. Ultimately a craft would one day carry humans down to work on the moon in colonies prepared for them by robots.

“And that is good news for Europe,” adds Parker. The European Space Agency is collaborating with NASA over Gateway's construction – by providing the propulsion units for the Orion spaceships that will ferry astronauts to the Gateway station in lunar orbit. “We should therefore be in a strong position to have a European astronaut taken to the moon,” he says.

The scientific gains from studying the moon from missions such as Gateway would be considerable, adds Jeffrey Kargel, at the Planetary Science Institute in Tucson, Arizona – a scientist who is particularly keen to exploit the moon's geological history. On Earth, tectonic processes have wiped out rock records before 3.8 billion years ago. “But on the moon we already know that Earth-derived meteorites [rocks blasted out from an impact with Earth] are preserved in accessible samples gathered by Apollo astronauts,” Kargel says. “From early Earth meteorites we could learn about the origins of our planet's continents, the first traces of an ocean on Earth, the composition of the primordial atmosphere – and the origin of life.”

Parker is equally enthusiastic about the moon's potential for study. “It has lain virtually undisturbed for the last 4.5 billion years,” he says. “It is a museum of the history of the solar system.” He argues that the potential rewards from such a lunar outpost mirror those already gained from bases set up in Antarctica. “The hole in Earth's ozone layer was discovered by polar scientists who are also doing crucial work on the impact of climate change and global warming on our planet. That is the kind of return we could get from setting up Gateway.”

There are other reasons to return to the moon, however. For many space enthusiasts, its exploration and exploitation is necessary if we are to make the next giant step in space: sending people to Mars. “That is the real goal for humanity,” says Parker. “However, getting humans there safely is going to be an incredibly difficult undertaking. We will have to learn first how to conquer the moon.”

(Source: The Guardian)

The Netherlands' national airline is encouraging people not to fly

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines has an unusual message for its customers: Maybe don't take that flight.

In a June 29 open letter from its CEO, Pieter Elbers, the airline invited air travelers to make "responsible decisions about flying," and encouraged customers to invest in the airline's carbon offsetting scheme, CO2ZERO.

We're in this together. We work hard to get things right, but all parties involved need to join forces to create a sustainable future. All stakeholders in the aviation industry, all corporations in any industry. And yes, all air travelers too. What can you do, in addition to carefully considering your travel plans?



It's all part of KLM's new "Fly Responsibly" campaign, which includes a website with information on its commitment to sustainable fuel and practices. A short video poses three questions to customers: Do meetings always have to take place face-to-face? Could you take the train instead? And could you contribute by compensating your CO2 emissions or packing light? "We all have to fly every now and again," it concludes. "But next time, think about flying responsibly."

KLM is already among the world's more fuel efficient airlines, according to the International Council on Clean Transportation (pdf), due in part to its cabin layout. Airlines with more business- and first-class seats, for instance, have a greater carbon footprint, relative to the number of people they are able to transport.

Environmentally conscious customers, especially in Europe, are increasingly opting out of flying, which contributes about 2.5% of global emissions. (Few personal actions are quite so harmful for the environment.) They may be following in the footsteps of climate campaigners such as Greta Thunberg: The Swedish teenager and activist will only travel by rail or bus, and is considering taking a cargo ship to attend the UN's special climate change meeting in New York in September.

At the same time, governments across Europe are pressuring airlines to be more accountable: The French government recently called for EU executives to end a global tax exemption for jet fuel to reduce air travel and, in turn, emissions. Lawmakers have also previously proposed banning short domestic and international flight routes, which are often only marginally quicker than high-speed trains.

Of course, KLM isn't planning to hang up its flying goggles just yet. "It is our business and we want to stay in business," it said, in a statement following Elbers' letter. "We are stepping up to speed up progress towards a sustainable future, but we are a company that needs to make profit to survive and to continue to invest in sustainable solutions. We want to still be around when we have succeeded in our efforts to make aviation sustainable."

Some Dutch politicians have already dismissed the campaign as simple greenwashing. For now, the airline is only offering gentle encouragement to fly less, and has not imposed more drastic solutions, such as making its carbon-offsetting scheme compulsory for consumers, or reducing its short-haul legs.

(Source: qz.com)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Lushan National Park

A UNESCO World Heritage, Mount Lushan, in Jiangxi, is one of the spiritual centers of Chinese civilization.

Buddhist and Taoist temples, along with landmarks of Confucianism, where the most eminent masters taught, blend effortlessly into a strikingly beautiful landscape which has inspired countless artists who developed the aesthetic approach to nature found in Chinese culture.



More than 200 historic buildings are located in the Lushan National Park; complexes of prayer halls that have been rebuilt and extended many times to create an ongoing center for study and religion.

Mount Lushan has an important place in Chinese history and culture. It is an outstanding representative of Chinese landscape culture, as well as a remarkable model of Chinese academy-based education, and a focal point for the integration of Chinese and Western cultures, once acting as the cultural center of southern China. The significant cultural developments and political events occurring over the course of Lushan's history have influenced the course of Chinese history.

The natural beauty of Lushan is perfectly integrated with its historic buildings and features, creating a unique cultural landscape which embodies outstanding aesthetic value powerfully associated with Chinese spiritual and cultural life. Combining nature and culture, Mount Lushan represents the Chinese national spirit and epitomizes its cultural life.

The property area of Lushan National Park covers 30,200 hectares, and the buffer zone is 50,000 hectares.

(Source: UNESCO)

Foreign rail passengers to Mashhad on the rise

TOURISM DESK TEHRAN — The number of foreign visitors traveling to the northeastern city of Mashhad by train saw an increase of 5% during the first three months of the current Iranian year (March 21-June 21) compared to the same period last year.

During the three-month period, Mashhad hosted a total of 28,184 rail passengers and pilgrims who came from Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, India and Persian Gulf littoral states, IRNA reported.

Back in June, Gholamabbas Arbakhales, the head of Foreign Ministry's

Mission in East and North Iran, announced that the arrival of foreign tourists to Mashhad increase by 15-20% annually, according to [the number of] visas on arrival that are issued by the mission.

Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province, attracts thousands of domestic pilgrims each day. The raison d'être is the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam.

The metropolis embraces dozens of five-star hotels, hotel apartments and hostels. It has the highest concentration of water parks in the country, and it is



also home to a variety of cultural and historical sites, which are generally crowded.

International travelers spent some \$11.8 billion in Iran over the past Iranian calendar year (1397), according to data

compiled by the Central Bank of Iran.

The number of international tourists visiting the Islamic Republic surged 52.5 percent in 1397 from a year earlier, according to the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization.

Remains of a Neanderthal-era horse found in Iran

HERITAGE DESK TEHRAN — Archaeologists have discovered remains of a horse, which they believe to be hunted by Neanderthals in a cave that is now situated in Qazvin province.

Senior archaeologist Hamed Vahdatinasab said on Saturday that the animal remains dates back to [some] 45,000 years, adding they have found evidence that suggests the horse was hunted by Neanderthals, ILNA reported on Sunday.

Supervised by the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage & Tourism, the survey is being carried out by a team of Iranian and French experts in Qal-e Kord Cave in Avaj

county. It is scheduled to come to an end on July 22.

Last November, the first season of the joint Iran-France archaeological exploration led to the discovery of over 6,000 cultural pieces in the area from two boreholes which were under study. It yielded bone remains of horse, deer, bear and many stone tools belonging to the Middle Paleolithic period (between 200,000 up to 40,000 years ago).

The provincial capital, which has the same name, is a major tourist destination with a wonderfully restored caravanserai-turned-arts precinct, some quirky museums and a handful of decent eating options.

Persian domes: Embodiment of fine art, engineering marvels

A phenomenal architectural innovation in human history, the design of Persian domes has for thousands of years embodied the combination of sustainable engineering marvels and sublime artistic heritage.

The Persian tradition of dome-building dates back to the earliest Mesopotamian architecture (3,000 BC) when domes became an integral part of buildings due to the scarcity of wood in many areas of the Iranian plateau.

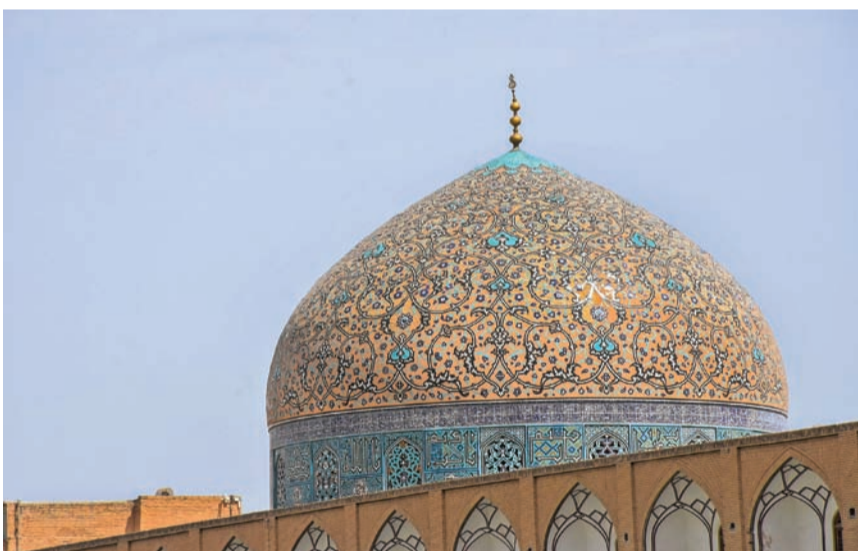
In Ancient Persia, domes were associated with the divine side of life, as their circular shape represented perfection, eternity and the heavens.

The Persian domes then became the inspiration for the domed baldachin of Roman and Byzantine practice, after Alexander the Great conquered the Achaemenid Empire.

Domes moved to the forefront of Persian architecture during the Sasanian period (224 to 651 CE) and they evolved through different eras until the Safavid dynasty (1501-1732) when the last generation of Persian domes were characterized by a distinctive bulbous profile and astonishing tilework.

In the Persian urban designing, domes in places of worship and public places, including traditional bazars, caravansaries, schools and baths, are designed in such a way that can be seen from different parts of urban or rural areas.

The domes are normally double-shelled.



A view of the dome of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque in the central Iranian city of Isfahan.

While the interior shell is designed to carry the weight of the structure, the exterior shell serves as both a decorative element and as insulation against the elements. The aerodynamic shape of the domes also makes the structures more sustainable.

In Isfahan's Imam Mosque, due to its unique architectural design, if somebody makes a small sound exactly under the dome, the sound strongly resonates throughout the entire vast hall of the grand mosque. The quality has turned

the mosque into one of the wonders among outstanding Iranian monuments. The UNESCO World Heritage mosque is a hub for many tourists from different parts of the world who are eager to directly witness the phenomenon at the site.

Domes also make the warm weather inside the building move up, allowing fresh air to flow inside the structure. The symmetric geometric design of the domes also makes the buildings resistant against seismic activities and other pressures on the structure.

The use of decorative ornaments in Persian domes blossomed in the Islamic period and it reached its zenith during the Safavid period, especially in the 16th century.

While bricks, tileworks and gold coating or a combination of them are used for the exterior shell of the domes, Persian artists also use breathtaking mirror works to decorate the interior shell which also serves as the ceiling of the structure.

The principle colors used in tileworks are blue, yellow, black, turquoise, pink, aubergine and green, mainly referred to as haft rang - which literally means "seven colors."

Mosaic patterns include imaginative and creative geometric patterns, including triangles, semi-circles and circles in harmony with the structures they are placed on. The patterns later evolved into design of natural subjects, such as plants, trees, animals and human beings, combined with calligraphy works of famous maestros.

The interior shell of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque in the central Iranian city of Isfahan, which is considered as one of the most famous architectural masterpieces in Iran, includes the pattern of peafowl feathers.

Mirror works at the domes of Imam Reza shrine in the northeastern city of Mashhad are also viewed as other examples of glorious artistic creations in Persian architecture.

(Source: Pess TV)

Hong Kong tourism facing bleak prospects in aftermath of protests

Hong Kong's tourism industry may be headed for a rough patch following anti-extradition Bill protests that have rocked the city, industry leaders warned.

Future prospects are bleak and Hong Kong may suffer further economic losses if the unrest continues, they said, adding that rational discussions are needed to resolve the controversy.

The assessment followed Monday's (July 1) violent storming of the Legislative Council Complex in Admiralty, which left the building's structure and facilities extensively damaged.

Yiu Si-wing, a lawmaker representing the tourism sector, said the number of tour groups arriving in the city has been falling since mid-June, when the protests first took place. The hotel, catering and exhibition sectors have suffered, he said.

According to Mr Yiu, the number of tour groups from South-east Asian countries slipped 20 to 30 per cent year on year in the past month, while hotels suffered an average 10 per cent decline in revenue, with those in Wan Chai and Admiralty bearing the brunt.

He expected the tourism market's prospects this month to be "relatively gloomy" if protests spread beyond Hong Kong Island.

Demonstrators planned to march on Sunday from Tsim Sha Tsui's Salisbury Garden, which is within walking distance of the popular tourist attraction, Avenue of Stars, to the West Kowloon terminus of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong

Express Rail Link.

He reckoned that Hong Kong's economic growth this year may slow down as the tourism industry is a major pillar of the local economy and is closely linked to various businesses.

Mr Chui urged the community to calm down and give the government more room to improve its work.

A manager of a major tourism agency in Hong Kong, who preferred to stay anonymous, told China Daily his company's operations, so far, have not been too badly affected by the protests, most of which had taken place around Admiralty on Hong Kong Island.

But, he warned that the consequences would be more severe if the demonstrations spread to more tourist attractions in the city.

The Federation of Hong Kong Trade Unions in Tourism said on Thursday it's "shocking" to see some people calling for a protest in Tsim Sha Tsui, one of Hong Kong's prime shopping districts with many tourist attractions.

It warned that protests along the area's narrow streets may have a direct impact on residents, tourism and businesses, and paralyze traffic. It said innocent people could be hurt if violence breaks out.

The federation urged protesters to stop harming the tourism business and people's livelihood, and called for rational discussions with the government to resolve the dispute.

(Source: The Jakarta post)



Forest of skyscrapers: A general view from Victoria Peak shows Victoria Harbour and the skylines of the Kowloon district (background) and Hong Kong Island (foreground).

Can mindfulness improve the quality of life for cancer patients?

HEALTH DESK **TEHRAN** — A new study investigated the effects of mindfulness on the quality of life of women who live with breast cancer.

Mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing one's attention to experiences occurring in the present moment which one can develop through the practice of meditation and through other trainings.

The study was carried out by AJA University of Medical Sciences and Baqiyatallah University of Medical Sciences, ISNA reported on Saturday.

The research examined the results of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy on the quality of life of women who were diagnosed with breast cancer.

The participants were women between the ages of 30 to 55. They were in stage one, two or three of breast cancer and their disease was diagnosed a month ago.

According to Psychology Today, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)



is a modified form of cognitive therapy that incorporates mindfulness practices such as

meditation and breathing exercises. Using these tools, MBCT therapists teach clients

how to break away from negative thought patterns that can cause a downward spiral into a depressed state so they will be able to fight off depression before it takes hold.

The study revealed that the mental health of participants were lower than other aspects of their life, but the women who received Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy had experienced improvement in the quality of their lives after taking part in the program.

According to Dr. Parviz Dabbaghi, the member of Clinical Psychology Department in AJA University of Medical Sciences, the main goal of the research was to help people live with cancer.

According to him, it is important that people who have cancer can manage their personal, family and social life without facing major problems and can build their life based on their own abilities. Also, the family members can help this process as they are the closest and most important support group for the patients.

Too much tablet, iPad harms children's vision, expert warns

HEALTH DESK **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Society of Optometry has warned parents that excessive use of digital screens including iPads and tablets could be harmful for children's eyes, Mehr reported on Sunday.

Inappropriate use of digital screens leads to health damage for people including kids, the head of the society Ali Mirzajani said.

Parents are worried about using of glasses by children but this is not the only problem that may be caused by digital screens, he added.

Extra use of digital screens can even affect the processing of images in brain, he noted.

"Preschool children can use digital screens for 30 minutes daily. If they use them more than this time, they may face vision problems," he warned.

Digital screens damage eye muscles and cause dry eye syndrome, he explained.



According to slate.com, some research does, however, suggest that screens could contribute to the onset of

problems including near-sightedness and astigmatism. In a study published in November, researchers in Italy recruited 320 3-to-10-year-olds and examined their vision in various ways. They also tracked how long the kids spent in front of screens each day.

They found that kids who spent more than 30 minutes a day playing video games were more likely than other kids to suffer headaches, eyelid tics, double vision, and dizziness. And 90 percent of the frequent video game players had refractive vision problems such as near- or far-sightedness, particularly in their dominant eyes, compared with only half of the less-frequent gamers. When the researchers looked at overall screen use, they found similar patterns: Kids who used screens for more than three hours a day were much more likely to be far-sighted and have astigmatism than kids who used screens less than that.

Soy's heart benefits hold steady over time



The U.S. Food and Drug Administration might soon revoke soy's longstanding claim to boost cardiovascular health.

But now comes long-term research that appears to bolster the notion that soy does indeed do a heart good.

Canadian researchers pored over the results of 46 separate trials. Their conclusion: "These data strongly support the rationale behind the original FDA heart health claim for soy," said study lead author David Jenkins, a professor of nutritional sciences and of medicine at the University of Toronto.

Co-author John Sievenpiper, also a professor of nutritional sciences at the university, stressed that the overall benefit of soy for heart health wasn't major -- just an average 5% reduction in cholesterol levels.

However, "if you put that together with other plant-based foods in a portfolio you get a much stronger effect," he said in a university news release.

The team's findings come as the FDA mulls possibly removing the right to a labeling claim that soy "may reduce the risk of heart disease," first approved by the agency in 1999.

In an announcement issued in October 2017, the agency said it was considering revoking the claim, "based on our review of the totality of publicly available scientific evidence currently available."

The FDA said that evidence "does not support our previous determination that there is significant scientific agreement among qualified experts for a health claim regarding the relationship between soy protein and reduced risk of coronary heart disease."

It's thought that the FDA will make a decision on the issue this summer.

But the Toronto researchers say their review shows a consistent and long-term cardiovascular benefit.

They looked at the same 46 trials the FDA cited in its 2017 announcement, and found reductions in LDL ("bad") cholesterol and total cholesterol among people who ate lots of soy. The benefit appeared steady across all 46 trials, they added.

That consistency is important, Sievenpiper said.

In some data reviews, "analyses with small studies produce big effects that diminish over time as sample sizes increase and results get more precise. We saw that with fish oil, for example," he said. "But in this case, nothing has changed."

In Jenkins' view, "these data strongly support the rationale behind the original [supportive] FDA heart health claim for soy."

The new analysis received no direct funding from the soy industry. However, a university news release states that "Jenkins and Sievenpiper have received support from government, nonprofit and industry funding sources, some of which include companies and industry groups that produce or promote soy and other plant-based foods."

Two nutrition experts had varying views on the new data.

Michelle Milgrim is a registered dietitian who directs employee wellness at Northwell Health in Lake Success, N.Y. Reading over the findings, she said soy probably has a "modest" benefit to heart health.

"The bottom line: soy protein can still be enjoyed as part of an overall healthy diet, but you may want to consider additional actions to help reduce your risk for heart disease -- exercise, smoking cessation, stress reduction, maintaining a healthy weight, and routine visits with your doctor," Milgrim said.

Nutritionist Katrina Hartog said the new review has some flaws, however.

In fact, the "limitations of this study would be similar to limitations associated with the proposed FDA soy health claim reversal," she said. These limitations include "the fact that some studies included in the analysis compared soy with a variety of alternative foods, and other studies used soy flour, added to high-temperature foods, which can possible damage the soy protein structure and thus reduce the effectiveness of soy protein."

(Source: Health Day News)

How fast do we feel pain? Study overturns previous notions



New research overturns the widespread notion that humans, unlike other mammals, process pain more slowly than touch. The findings may have significant implications for the diagnosis and treatment of pain.

Pain signals may travel just as quickly as touch signals in humans, new research suggests.

Until now, the scientific consensus has been that in humans, the nerve signals that "communicate" touch to the brain are faster than those that relay pain.

This difference in speed, researchers believed, was due to the fact that touch signals travel through nerves with a thick coat of myelin -- the insulating layer of lipids that forms a protective sheath around the nerves. Myelin helps the nerves conduct signals more quickly.

In contrast, pain signals travel through nerves that either do not have myelin at all or have only a very thin layer.

Other mammals have so-called ultra-fast nociceptors (pain receptors), that is, afferent neurons with a thick coat of myelin to convey pain signals as fast as possible. But, is the same true for humans?

Saad Nagi, a principal research engineer in the Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine and the Center for Social and Affective Neuroscience at Linköping University in Sweden, recently led a team of researchers looking to answer this question.

"The ability to feel pain is vital to our survival," explains Nagi, "so why should our pain-signaling system be so much slower than the system used for touch and so much slower than it could be?"

To find out, the scientists applied a technique called microneurography, which allowed them to visualize and track the neural traffic from "peripheral nerves leading to muscle and skin."

Nagi and team applied this technique to 100 healthy study participants and published the findings in the journal Science Advances.

■ Pain travels just as rapidly as touch

The technique of microneurography, or

"single-unit axonal recordings," enabled the researchers to track pain and touch signals in the nerve fibers of a single neuron.

Nagi and team looked for neurons that carried signals as quickly as touch but also behaved like nociceptors.

The study revealed that 12% of the neurons with a thick myelin coat had the same properties as nociceptors, in that they could detect and convey "noxious stimuli," such as coarse brush stroking or pinching.

Pain receptors do not react to soft touch, and neither did these neurons, which the researchers tested by applying soft brush strokes. Finally, these nerve cells conducted pain signals just as quickly as touch-sensitive neurons.

New research explores the neurological explanation for why mindfulness eases pain.

To check that the function of these super-fast nerve cells was indeed to convey pain, the researchers used measurement electrodes to apply short, precise electric bursts that targeted individual nerve cells. As a result, the study participants reported feeling sharp pinprick sensations.

"When we activated an individual nerve cell, it caused a perception of pain, so we conclude that these nerve cells are connected to pain centers in the brain," says Nagi.

Nagi and colleagues also examined people who had experienced nerve damage that caused them to lose thickly myelinated nerve cells but did not affect their thinly myelinated nerve cells. As a result of the damage, these participants cannot feel light touch.

Nagi's team hypothesized that losing myelinated nerve fibers would also affect the newly discovered superfast network of nociceptors. The researchers found that these individuals could not experience mechanical pain.

The findings, explain the scientists, may help doctors diagnose pain-related conditions and provide better care for people who experience this symptom.

(Source: Medical News Today)

Hepatitis C is cured by Iranian medicine: expert

HEALTH DESK **TEHRAN** — Hepatitis C is cured by Iranian medicine over the course of 3 to 4 months, a member of the Iran Hepatitis Network, Mehdi Saberi Firouzi, said, Mehr reported on Sunday.

The Iranian-made medicine for Hepatitis C is covered by the insurance, he added.

Hepatitis types B and C are prevailing in Iran and considered as chronic diseases which may result in cirrhosis of the liver and liver cancer, he explained.

"We have several plans for eradication of Hepatitis C in Iran. The disease is curable by using a pill for 3 to 6 months."

Saberi Firouzi said that complete eradication of the disease needs coordination between related organizations and allocation of adequate budget.



Referring to the World Hepatitis Day, which is held annually on July 28 in Iran, he said since the Iranian calendar year 1372 (March 1993-March 1994), newborns in the country have been receiving Hepatitis B vaccine.

Held by Iran Hepatitis Network, the event is an opportunity to introduce recent achievements about hepatitis.

In July 2018, the Iran Hepatitis Network announced that Hepatitis C has been eradicated in patients with hemophilia in three provinces of Lorestan, South Khorasan, and Gilan, respectively west, east, and north of the country.

According to World Health Organization hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus. The virus can cause both acute and chronic hepatitis, ranging in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a serious, lifelong illness.

The hepatitis C virus is a blood borne virus and the most common modes of infection are through exposure to small quantities of blood. This may happen through injection drug use, unsafe injection practices, unsafe health care, and the transfusion of unscreened blood and blood products.

Globally, an estimated 71 million people have chronic hepatitis C infection and a significant number of those who are chronically infected will develop cirrhosis or liver cancer.

Approximately 399 000 people die each year from hepatitis C, mostly from cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma.

Antiviral medicines can cure more than 95 percent of persons with hepatitis C infection, thereby reducing the risk of death from liver cancer and cirrhosis, but access to diagnosis and treatment is low.

There is currently no vaccine for hepatitis C; however research in this area is ongoing.

Eat well, exercise more: New global guidelines to reduce risk of dementia

There's no effective treatment for dementia, which affects 50 million people worldwide, but the World Health Organization says there's much can be done to delay or slow the onset and progression of the disease.

In guidelines released Tuesday, WHO issued its first recommendations to reduce the risk of dementia globally. They include regular physical exercise, not using tobacco, drinking less alcohol, maintaining healthy blood pressure and eating a healthy diet -- particularly a Mediterranean one.

The international health body also warned against taking dietary supplements such as vitamins B and E in an effort to combat cognitive decline and dementia.

"While some people are unlucky and inherit a combination of genes that makes it highly likely they will develop dementia, many people have the opportunity to substantially reduce their risk by living a healthy lifestyle," professor Tara Spire-Jones, UK Dementia Research Institute program lead and deputy director of the Centre for Discovery Brain Sciences at the University of Edinburgh, told the Science Media Center.

"The WHO has looked at the available evidence and made recommendations that some lifestyle changes, in particular increasing exercise before any cognitive symptoms are present, can reduce dementia risk," she added.

"Other recommendations have a less strong evidence base but may have evidence that they do not increase risk or harm and can therefore be recommended safely, although their impact on risk is less certain."

WHO said there are 10 million new cases of dementia every year, and this figure is set to triple by 2050. The disease is a major cause of disability and dependency among older people and "can devastate the lives of affected individuals, their carers and families," the organization said.

The disease also exacts a heavy economic toll, with the cost of caring for people with dementia estimated to rise to \$2 trillion annually by 2030, according to WHO.

■ What will and won't help

The 78-page report outlined what WHO believes will -- and won't -- help reduce the risk of dementia, which has been described by campaigners as the biggest health challenge of our generation.

It recommended physical activity, stopping smoking and a healthy, balanced diet. In particular, it says that committing to a Mediterranean diet (simple plant-based cooking, little meat and a heavy emphasis on olive oil) could help.

"The Mediterranean diet is the most extensively studied dietary approach, in general as well as in relation to cognitive function," the report said. "Several systematic reviews of observational studies have concluded that high adherence to the Mediterranean diet is associated with decreased risk of mild cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's Disease, but modest adherence is not."

The report recommended proper management of weight, hypertension, diabetes and dyslipidemia -- unhealthy or unbalanced cholesterol levels -- as measures that could potentially reduce the risk of dementia and cognitive decline.

Although the report stressed that social participation and social support are strongly connected to good health and individual well-being, it said there was insufficient evidence linking social activity with a reduced risk of dementia.

Similarly, it said cognitive training could be offered to older adults but the evidence linking it to a lower risk of dementia was "very low to low."

(Source: cnn.com)

FAO Food Price Index steady in June

Global food prices declined marginally in June, as lower prices of dairy products and vegetable oils more than offset a significant jump in maize quotations, and are now very close to their level of a year ago, according to a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations released today.

The FAO Food Price Index, which tracks monthly changes in the international prices of commonly traded food commodities, averaged 173 points in June, down 0.3 percent from May.



The FAO Cereal Price Index rose 6.7 percent in June, as expectations of much tighter maize export suppliers from the United States of America pushed quotations up for maize and, as a spillover, also for wheat. Rice prices were broadly stable.

The FAO Sugar Price Index in June was up 4.2 percent from the previous month, strongly influenced by the Brazilian Real's appreciation against the U.S. dollar.

By contrast, the FAO Dairy Price Index decreased by 11.9 percent, marking its first decline in five months, led by frail demand for cheese and butter.

The FAO Vegetable Price Index declined 1.6 percent during the month, with palm oil and soy oil prices both down on the back of sluggish global import demand and expectations of ample global supplies, respectively.

The FAO Meat Price Index increased by 1.5 percent from its revised value for May, driven by strong import demand from East Asia for ovine, pig and poultry meats to offset domestic production shortfalls due to the spread of African Swine Fever.

■ New cereals forecasts

FAO also released the Cereal Supply and Demand Brief today, keeping its forecast for worldwide production in 2019 unchanged from June at 2 685 million tonnes. That would mark a 1.2 percent increase from 2018, with the bulk of this year's growth expected to come from higher production of wheat.

Worldwide wheat production should rise by 5.6 percent in 2019 to reach nearly 771 million tonnes, buoyed by record output in India. By contrast, global production of coarse grains is expected to decline to 1 398 million tonnes this year, due to weak prospects in parts of Africa, China, and especially the United States of America. World rice output is forecast at 516 million tonnes, close to the high level of 2018.

World cereal utilization in 2019/20 is expected to exceed 2 708 million tonnes, a 1.0 percent increase from the previous year, with wheat and rice utilization growing faster than that of maize.

FAO lowered its forecast for world cereal stocks at the close of the 2020 seasons to 828 million tonnes, some 3.2 percent below their opening level. The decline is driven by an expected 12.4 percent contraction in maize inventories, with most of the reduction concentrated in China and the United States. Global wheat stocks are set to expand by 4.5 percent. Overall, the stock-to-use ratio for cereals should remain at a relatively high level of 29.6 percent for the 2019/20 period.

World trade in cereals is now expected to rise by 2.0 percent to 415 million tonnes, with wheat trade expanding at nearly twice the pace.

(Source: FAO)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Embryo Research in Great Britain

(December 21, 2000)

The British government approved new laws allowing medical research using cells from human embryos. This could lead to new treatments for diseases. We heard from Greg Clovis, Executive Director of the organization Human Life International, and Michael Wilks, head of the ethics committee of the British Medical Association.

My objection **primarily** is that we can never do evil **that** good might come of it. We can never use human persons and this is **precisely** what we're doing. We're **using other human persons as objects for our benefits**. That is the **crux** of the matter.

It does have the **potential** for helping a lot of patients with quite common diseases like diabetes, but until we've done the research on **stem cells** and understand a lot more about how stem cells can be persuaded to become more specialized **tissue** we won't know exactly how much potential there is.

■ Words

primarily: the most important reason for not approving of the research

that: here, 'that' means 'so that'

precisely: exactly

using other human persons as objects for our benefits: using other people like objects for our own good

crux: the crux of a problem is the most important part

potential: if something has potential, it is capable of being useful in the future

stem cells: a cell is the smallest independent part of an animal or a plant. A stem cell is a kind of cell which is present at the very early stages of development

tissue: in animals and plants, tissue consists of cells that are similar in appearance and function



Without water,
everything
withers

Bakhtegan wetland shrinking, flamingo chicks in danger

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** – Flamingo chicks being born in shallow waters of Bakhtegan wetland in Fars province are threatened to death due to the drying up wetland; while only the Ministry of Energy can help them survive granting Bakhtegan water right, IRNA reported on Sunday.

Bakhtegan Lake is a salt lake with a surface area of 3,500 square kilometers it was once Iran's second-largest lake. It was fed by the Kor River. Several dams on the river had significantly reduced water flow into the lake, increasing its salinity and endangering the lake's populations of flamingos and other migratory birds.

With heavy rainfall raising Bakhtegan wetland level by 30 percent, flocks of flamingos migrated to the wetland nesting and laying eggs, however, temperature raise along with high evaporation resulted in drainage of the wetland which put the life of many flamingo hatchlings at risk.

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), Fars province recorded 367 millimeters of rainfall compared to 132.9 millimeters in the previous water year, demonstrating a 176.2 percent rise. The amount also raised in comparison to the long-term average of 296.5 mm, amounting to 23.8



percent.

This is while, the Department of Environment has determined the wetland water right, and announced to the Ministry of Energy, which so far has not taken even a single step to provide its water right.

Water right of Bakhtegan and Tashk wetlands have been designated due to their seasonal and climatic conditions, which is about 1.2 billion cubic meters in case of high precipitation and 342 million cubic meters in drought spells and 700

million cubic meters in normal conditions, which must be provided by the Ministry of Energy, the deputy environment chief for the wetlands said.

"We called on the Ministry to provide the water rights preventing the wetlands being dried affected by evaporation, but so far, no water has been released," Masoud Baqerzadeh lamented.

However, the Ministry has released 120 million cubic meters of water for agricultural sector, he added.

The water rights must be provided

9,000-meter bike lane to be set up around Azadi Stadium

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — A bike lane stretching to 9,300 meters will be built around Tehran's Azadi Stadium, and will be inaugurated in the next year (starting on March 21, 2020), the mayor of District 22 has said.

Ali Nozarpour made the remarks during a ceremony held on Saturday to inaugurate an exclusive bikeway for women located in District 22, northwestern part of the capital.

The bike track for women is as long as 2,500 meters, he noted.

Covered with many green spaces and trees, including Chitgar Lake stretching to 130 hectares, and being near

Alborz Mountains, District 22 is an important area which must be the center of attraction and recreational places, he explained.

"We are coordinating to expand public transportation fleet in the areas, and facilitate movement of the citizens to the city center," he explained.

Except for metro and bus transport, pedestrians and bicycle lanes should also be expanded, he said, adding, currently, on-road bike paths in the area amounts to 12,200 meters, and there are 18,300 meters of protected bike lanes.

It is planned to set up a 9,000-meter bike lane around Azadi Stadium to facilitate movement to different parts of the football stadium, he concluded.

DOE plans to conserve Lake Urmia islands ecosystem

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** – The Department of Environment (DOE) will implement four plans on reviving the endangered ecosystem and wildlife of the Lake Urmia islands, Hamid Zohrabi, DOE deputy chief for natural environment and biodiversity directorate, announced.

Two islands of Ashk and Kaboodan burdened the direct consequences of drying Lake Urmia, loosing many of their wildlife species, he regretted.

He went on to say that these islands were the main habitats for two herbivorous species of Persian fallow deer and Armenian mouflon, which have been endangered due to the lake's improper conditions in recent years.

"We are currently implementing four projects aimed at revitalizing the islands' ecosystems and preserving the wildlife, namely, managing the population of Persian fallow deer in Ashk island and managing the population of Armenian mouflon in

the islands of Lake Urmia," he explained.

Expanding vegetation cover in the islands and the National Park of Lake Urmia and ecological conservation of the southeast side of the Lake are among the plans, he added.

The plans are being carried out in a collaborative initiative between the DOE's natural environment and biodiversity directorate, the Lake Urmia conservation program and the West Azarbaijan department of environment, he concluded.

Shared between West Azarbaijan and East Azarbaijan provinces in northwestern Iran, Lake Urmia, was once the largest salt-water lake in the Middle East. It was a home to many migratory and indigenous animals including flamingos, pelicans, egrets and ducks and attracted hundreds of tourists every year who had bathed in the water to take advantage of the therapeutic properties of the lake.

However, decades of long-standing drought spells and elevated hot summer



temperatures that speed up evaporation as well as increased water demands in agriculture sector shrank the lake drastically. In 1999 the volume of water which was at 30 billion cubic meters drastically decreased to half a billion cubic meters in 2013. Moreover, the lake surface area of

5,000 square kilometers in 1997 shrunk to one tenth of that to 500 square kilometers in 2013.

Kiumars Daneshjoo, CEO of West Azarbaijan regional water company, said in May that owing to the substantial precipitations received in the lake catchment area since the beginning of the current year (March 21) some 1.5 billion cubic meters of water has been released to the lake and now the volume of water at "the turquoise solitaire of Azarbaijan" has increased by almost 3 billion cubic meters compared to the same period last year. Additionally, water is now covering some 3,200 square kilometers of the lakebed.

Lake Urmia had approximately 102 islands; Shahi island was historically the lake's largest. However, it became a peninsula connected to the eastern shore when the lake level dropped. Some of the islands have a rich ecosystem due to being out of reach.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

50bcm of groundwater withdrawn annually in Iran

An annual amount of 50 billion cubic meters of groundwater resources are withdrawn to supply agricultural, industrial as well as drinking water in Iran, a researcher in the field of water resources has stated. The amount is 10 times greater than the water covering Lake Urmia, amounting to 5 billion cubic meters, ISNA quoted Mohammad Reza Goldansaz as saying on Sunday.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“dis-, di-, dif-”

■ **Meaning:** away or negative

■ **For example:** It is a proven fact of life that goats **dislike** turtles.

PHRASAL VERB

Order somebody around

■ **Meaning:** to give someone orders in an annoying or threatening way

■ **For example:** How dare he order her around like that?

IDIOM

At cross purposes

■ **Explanation:** If two people are at cross purposes, there is a misunderstanding as to what each one is talking about

■ **For example:** Look, we seem to be at cross purposes. You're talking about 'sailing' boats, but I'm talking about 'selling' boats.

سالی ۵۰ میلیارد متر مکعب از آب‌های زیرزمینی برداشت می‌شود

یک پژوهشگر حوزه منابع آب با اشاره به اینکه سالانه ۵۰ میلیارد متر مکعب از منابع آب زیرزمینی برای مصارف خانگی، صنعت و مصارف کشاورزی برداشت می‌شود.

محمدرضا گلدانساز در گفت و گو با ایسنا اظهار داشت: این مقدار به اندازه حجم ۱۰ دریاچه ارومیه است.

Yemeni army, allies attack Saudi Arabia's Jizan airport by drones



Scores of Saudi mercs slain in Yemeni army attacks

Meanwhile, scores of Saudi-sponsored militiamen loyal to Yemen's former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi lost their lives when Yemeni army soldiers and Popular Committees fighters launched separate offensives against their positions across the country.

An unnamed Yemeni military source told the media bureau of the Houthi Ansarullah movement that Yemeni troops and their allies launched a drone strike against a gathering of Saudi mercenaries in Qaniyeh area of the country's central province of al-Bayda on Saturday, leaving many of them dead or injured.

According to Press TV, Yemeni soldiers and fighters from Popular Committees also dealt a heavy blow to Saudi-backed militia forces in the al-Wazi'yah district of the southern province of Ta'izz, when they struck their fortifications with a number of domestically-manufactured ballistic missiles.

Elsewhere in the northern Yemeni prov-



ince of al-Jawf, Saudi mercenaries suffered a major setback when Yemeni soldiers and their allies targeted their military camps

in Sabrin area of the Khabb wa ash Sha'af district.

Also on Saturday, a civilian lost his life and

seven others, mostly women and children, sustained injuries when Saudi-paid militiamen targeted residential neighborhoods in the western coastal city of Hudaydah.

A civilian was killed after Saudi-sponsored forces launched a barrage of mortar shells at Sawiq area in the al-Tuhayta district of Hudaydah province.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched a devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing the government of Hadi back to power and crushing the Ansarullah movement.

The U.S.-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a non-profit conflict-research organization, estimates that the Saudi-led war has claimed the lives of over 60,000 Yemenis since January 2016.

The war has also taken a heavy toll on the country's infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories. The UN says over 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme levels of hunger.

Washington wants German troops in Syria to help fill gap left by departing Americans

TEHRAN — The U.S. wants Germany to send troops to Syria to partially backfill the diminishing American presence there — even though Berlin rules out any intervention in that war and Damascus sees Western forces there as “invaders.”

Washington has formally asked Berlin to take its place in the Syrian conflict, replacing a certain portion of the U.S. contingent, Special Representative for Syria Engagement James Jeffrey told Die Welt's Sunday edition and DPA news agency, adding that he awaits a response from the German government this month. He said the request directly related to the ongoing U.S. drawdown on Syrian soil.

Washington is currently reaching out to coalition members that are against ISIL (ISIS) and are willing to send military personnel to Syria, the diplomat explained. He then sang Germany's praises, calling the country an important partner in the fight against ISIL that is able to throw its weight behind the U.S.

Jeffrey didn't ask for a specific number of troops, only making it clear that German personnel would not have to take direct part in hostilities. A German contribution could take forms such as providing air support, logistics, training, and technical assistance, the diplomat hinted.

Berlin joined the U.S.-led anti-ISIL campaign in 2015,

but stopped just short of sending boots on the ground. Their contribution was limited to providing air reconnaissance and in-flight refueling for other Western nations' flying sorties in Iraq and Syria. Separately, German Navy ships saw occasional deployments in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Germany has generally been wary of a direct intervention in the Syrian crisis. In May of last year, Chancellor Angela Merkel assured the public that the Bundeswehr “will not participate in possible military actions” although it is ready to assist other allies. Over time, that stance has not changed much.

However, the U.S. continued to pile pressure on Germany by year's end, tasking Ambassador Jeffrey — a fluent German speaker and a career State Department official — with securing Berlin's consent to engage in the Syrian war.

Last month, he said that several coalition members will soon announce their decisions to backfill U.S. ground troops leaving Syria. “There's something pending to look forward to. Very pending,” he told Defense One.

The diplomat did not reveal which countries he expected would provide the troops, but said some of them may choose to participate “quietly,” and “that's fine by us.”

The U.S. has a limited number of troops in Syria, where



they entered without the consent of the government or a UN authorization. Most of them are occupying the 55-kilometer zone in southern Syria which at times lay close to ISIL-infiltrated parts of the country. Damascus has always maintained that the Western military presence in Syria is illegitimate, pledging to liberate “every inch” of the country from uninvited foreign troops.

Omani foreign minister makes rare visit to Syria

TEHRAN — Oman's foreign minister has made a rare visit to Damascus to discuss with President Bashar Assad ways of restoring stability and security in the region.

Oman is one of few Arab countries that kept normal relations with Damascus after Syria was suspended from the Arab League in 2011 months after the country's crisis began, AP reported.

The Syrian Presidency said Assad

discussed Sunday with Oman's Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi regional and international affairs as well as “economic and political challenges imposed on the region.”

Oman's Foreign Ministry tweeted that Alawi delivered a message from the Sultan of Oman and talked about boosting efforts “to restore stability and security in the region.”

In March 2018, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem visited Oman.

Iraqi forces begin operation against Daesh along Syrian border

TEHRAN — Iraq's security and paramilitary forces have begun a military operation along the border with Syria aiming to clear the area of Daesh (ISIL) terrorist group.

The Iraqi military said the operation that began at sunrise Sunday is being carried out by Iraqi troops and members of the Popular Mobilization Forces that largely consist of Iran-backed militias.

It said the operation that will last several

days is the first phase of the Will of Victory Operation that aims to secure wide areas of the western province of Anbar and the central and northern regions of Salahuddin and Nineveh.

Although Iraq declared victory against Daesh in July 2017, the extremists have turned into an insurgency and have carried out deadly attacks in the country, AP reported.

‘Nelson Mandela’s grandson slams ‘Israeli apartheid

TEHRAN — The grandson of anti-apartheid hero Nelson Mandela has delivered a damning condemnation of “Israeli apartheid”, in a high-profile expression of solidarity between South Africans and Palestinians.

Zweliwele Mandela, an MP of the ruling African National Congress (ANC), made the comments at the Palestine Expo, an annual event in London aimed at showcasing Palestinian history, heritage and culture. Last year, it attracted 15,000 visitors.

Addressing a large audience, Mandela said that the Nation-State Law passed in 2018 declaring Israel to be the historical homeland of the Jewish people “confirmed what we have always known to be the true character and reality of Israel: Israel is an apartheid state”.

According to Al Jazeera, he also outlined what had constituted apartheid for black South Africans - from the creation of bantustan reservations to land expropriation and the daily assault on dignity.

“All these characteristics were present in apartheid Israel since its inception but have now been codified and given a constitutional status and expression by the Nation-State Law.

“Apartheid Israel perpetuates statutory discrimination through the very definition by the law as a Jewish state; by doing so it renders non-Jews as second-class citizens, alternately as foreigners in the land of their birth.”



Intra-Afghan summit for talks with Taliban under way in Qatar

TEHRAN — Dozens of high-profile Afghan politicians and civil society activists, including women, are meeting with the Taliban in the Qatari capital for an intra-Afghan summit that seeks to find lasting peace in war-torn Afghanistan.

The two-day summit, sponsored by Qatar and Germany, began early on Sunday and is being attended by a delegation of about 50 high-profile Afghan citizens.

“The meeting is aimed at further pushing the intra-Afghan negotiations for peace,” former Afghan envoy to Pakistan, Omar Zakhilwal, who is attending the summit, told Al Jazeera. Zakhilwal said the summit “complements” the ongoing United States-Taliban talks, also being held in Doha.

As the meeting was under way, Taliban fighters on Sunday killed at least eight people

and wounded more than 50 civilians in a car bomb attack in Afghanistan's Ghazni province.

The Taliban, which has repeatedly refused to negotiate with the West-backed government of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, agreed to join the summit on the condition that the attendees will do so in a personal capacity.

“Taliban does not want to sit with the

Afghan government because it thinks that peace talks with the government will affect the morale of its fighters in the battlefield,” political analyst Hashim Wahdatyar, who is a director at the Institute of Current World Affairs in Washington, told Al Jazeera.

“Since the Taliban come from a position of strength, the group thinks it controls both war and peace.”

evolution, there's a step backward, and even more women are dying today.”

In an interview with weekly Journal du Dimanche, French Gender Equality Minister Marlene Schiappa said the government in September will launch a broad consultation to draft new measures to prevent femicides. The consultation will involve the interior and justice ministers, advocacy groups and other NGOs. She said the government will also launch campaigns to make sure domestic violence cases are reported, Reuters reported.

Hundreds protest in Paris against deadly domestic violence

TEHRAN — Hundreds of protesters gathered in central Paris to raise awareness and demand tougher action on femicides in France.

Yelling “Enough” and carrying signs reading “Stop femicides” or “The planet needs women alive”, the crowd took to the Place de la Republique square as part of the demonstration organized by various women's rights NGOs to protest the rate of femicides, the killing of a woman by a man because of her gender.

The women of all ages and a few men also observed 74 seconds of silence in tribute to the 74 women allegedly

killed in France so far this year, according to data collected by Facebook group “Femicides par compagnons ou ex” (Femicides by partners or exes). It said four were killed this week.

According to Interior Ministry figures, 130 women were allegedly killed in 2017 by their husband or partner, up from 123 in 2016.

“It's a massacre,” Julie Gayet, a French actress and partner of former French President Francois Hollande, said at the protest. “We need to raise awareness on what's happening today, which means that despite society's

Cables from UK's ambassador to the U.S. blast Trump as ‘inept,’ ‘incompetent’

TEHRAN — Diplomatic cables sent from the United Kingdom's ambassador to the United States back to London describe President Donald Trump as “inept,” “insecure” and “incompetent,” a UK government official confirmed to CNN.

The leak could cause serious diplomatic damage between the two “special relationship” allies.

While foreign envoys of all nations are often candid in classified dispatches back home, there are periodic episodes when such assessments leak, causing great political embarrassment. Months of efforts by the ambassador, Kim Darroch and his diplomats to build ties and trust with Trump and his political acolytes will be undermined.

The cables were leaked to and first published by the Daily Mail.

Darroch used secret cables and briefing notes to warn the UK government that Trump's “career could end in disgrace,” and described conflicts within the White House as “knife fights,” according to the Daily Mail.

A UK government source told CNN the memos described in the Daily Mail story are genuine.

The Daily Mail says the memos span the period between 2017 to present day, covering everything from Trump's foreign policy to his 2020 reelection plans.

The leaked cables come at a sensitive time in UK politics with Conservative Party members currently electing a new prime minister to succeed Theresa May, who was effectively toppled by her own members of Parliament for failing to deliver on her country's 2016 vote to leave the European Union.

Pope calls for ‘humanitarian corridors’ for migrant rescues

TEHRAN — Pope Francis Sunday called for “humanitarian corridors” to help rescue migrants in response to an air strike last week that killed dozens in a Libya detention center.

“The international community cannot accept such grave incidents,” the pope said during a Sunday address at St. Peter's square. “I hope that humanitarian corridors will be organized in a concerted way for those migrants most in need.”

At least 53 migrants were killed Tuesday night in the air raid on the detention center in the Tripoli suburb of Tajoura, held by forces loyal to the UN-recognized government.

Tripoli has blamed the strike on forces loyal to Libya commander Khalifa Haftar who controls eastern Libya and who in April launched an offensive to capture the capital.

UN agencies and humanitarian groups have repeatedly voiced concern over the plight of thousands of migrants and refugees held in detention centers near combat zones in the Libyan capital, AFP reported.

Afghanistan: Several killed in Taliban car bomb attack in Ghazni

TEHRAN — Taliban fighters have killed at least eight security personnel and six civilians in a car bomb attack in Afghanistan's Ghazni province, according to government officials and the Taliban.

The suicide attack on Sunday came as an all-Afghan peace conference, which includes the Taliban, began in Qatar in an effort to end years of violence and build trust between Afghan civilians and the armed group.

Afghan officials said the bomb targeted the country's main intelligence unit, National Directorate of Security (NDS).

Health officials in Ghazni said 13 adults, including eight NDS members, and a child were killed. At least 60 children who were attending classes in a private school situated near the blast site were among the 180 people wounded.

“The casualty figures may rise as this is not the last report of those injured in the powerful blast,” said Zaher Shah Nekmal, a health director in Ghazni province.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.

“Dozens of NDS officers were killed or wounded,” the group's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement.

The blast in a crowded area of Ghazni city was the latest in a wave of near-daily attacks by the Taliban, who now hold sway over about half of Afghanistan and continue to intensify attacks on Afghan forces despite increased United States efforts towards a peace agreement to end the 18-year war, Al Jazeera reported.

Trump reaches career-high approval, yet faces a range of reelection risks: poll

TEHRAN — A new poll shows that U.S. President Donald Trump is facing a range of reelection risks despite reaching the highest job approval rating of his tenure.

According to the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll, not many approved of Trump's personal and professional measures, meaning he will be vulnerable in the upcoming presidential election in 2020.

While 53 percent disapproved of his overall job performance, only 44 percent approved, resulting in him being at majority disapproval continuously for his first two and a half years in office, which marks a record for any president in modern polling.

About Trump's handling of the economy, 51 percent said they liked his performance, although more disapproved of the way he handled other issues, ranging from taxes to global warming.

In addition, 65 percent said Trump “has acted in a way that's unpresidential” since he took office, whereas only 28 percent said his behavior was “fitting and proper” for a president.

On support for his impeachment, 37 percent favored the move, which is the same percentage as it was in April.

Another poll showed last month that Trump would likely lose in the 2020 election to several leading Democratic presidential candidates, including former Vice President Joe Biden.

According to Press TV, Biden, the current front-runner in the Democratic primary race, held a 13 percentage-point lead over Trump, 53-40 percent, according to the national poll by Quinnipiac University.

Egypt sack coach after exit from Cup of Nations

Egypt coach Javier Aguirre became the first casualty of the Africa Cup of Nations as he was sacked just hours after the hosts were bundled out of the tournament by South Africa in the round of 16.

Hosts Egypt lost 1-0 to an 85th minute goal from Themebinkosi Lorch on Saturday at the end of a lacklustre display in which their talisman Mohamed Salah looked out of sorts and they produced few goalscoring chances.

Egypt Football Association president Hany Abo Rida announced the firing of the Mexican coach, and his own resignation, less than three hours after the game as a stunned host nation digested the defeat.

Abo Rida also called on his board members to step down, calling his resignation a "moral obligation, although the football association had given the national team full material and moral support".

Aguirre told reporters after Saturday's defeat that he took sole responsibility but was proud of all of his players.

"The game was open and saw many chances. The only difference was that South Africa managed to score," he said.

Aguirre, 60, departs after less than a year in the job but not before setting a unique record by coaching at four different continental championships.

He won the Concacaf Gold Cup with his native Mexico in 2009, took them to the final of the Copa America and was in charge of Japan four years ago when they went out in the Asian Cup quarter-finals.

(Source: Reuters)

Manchester United now negotiating for Pogba as they hunt replacement

What only a few days ago was a flat out no has now turned into a request for patience in Manchester United's stance towards a summer exit for star midfielder Paul Pogba.

The Frenchman has reiterated his desire to leave to both directors and coach Ole Gunnar Solsjkaer, who helped him to rediscover his best form last season.

Pogba has already told his teammates that he expects to leave and his most likely destination is Real Madrid, although he has also fielded calls from his former club Juventus.

The Italian club are pushing hard to persuade him to consider a return to Turin, aided by new tax laws in Italy.

Both Pogba and his agent Mino Raiola have decided that three years is enough at Old Trafford, with the player keen for a new sporting project, while Raiola looks for better financial terms.

The decision has been taken and is not up for debate, so Manchester United have asked Pogba for time as they search for a replacement and have requested that he join the team for pre-season training and a tour of Australia.

Sergej Milinkovic-Savic is the target that the Red Devils are after, though Lazio are complicating matters by demanding 120 million euros for his services, which the English club believe to be excessive.

Real Madrid have now contacted Manchester United twice over Pogba and expect negotiations to begin, but they are reluctant to rupture what they believe to be a good relationship with another of the world's biggest clubs.

(Source: Marca)

James Rodríguez stalling on Napoli with Atlético in mind

James Rodríguez is reportedly cooling on the idea of a reunion with his former Real Madrid boss Carlo Ancelotti at Napoli amid interest from Atlético Madrid.

According to Colombian broadcaster Gol Caracol, the midfielder has been made aware of interest in his services from across the Spanish capital and is waiting to see if that morphs into a concrete offer before making any decision on a move to Serie A, despite Napoli's very public courting of the Real Madrid player and offer of Maradona's number 10 shirt as a sweetener.

James remains under contract at the Bernabéu after Bayern Munich opted not to take up a purchase option of 42 million euros on the 27-year-old, but his relationship with Zinedine Zidane is far from cordial and the summer splurge at the Bernabéu leaves Florentino Pérez needing to cash in on the Frenchman's unwanted squad players to balance the books.

Real have made just short of 100m euros in sales so far this summer, which covers the acquisition of Eden Hazard from Chelsea, but still have plenty of deadwood to shift before Zidane and his squad get their pre-season underway.

Atlético have made a statement in the market already with the signing of Benfica sensation Joao Félix for a fee of 126m but expect to pocket the same amount for Antoine Griezmann when the France striker's painfully protracted move to Barcelona finally goes through.

(Source: AS)

Double triumph for dominant Marquez brothers in Germany

Honda rider Marc Marquez tightened his grip on a possible sixth world title with a seventh consecutive victory at the German MotoGP on Sunday.

The 26-year-old Spaniard, who had earlier seen his younger brother Alex win the Moto2 race, led from start to finish to cross the line over four seconds ahead of the Yamaha of Maverick Vinales and Cal Crutchlow on another Honda.

It is Marquez' fifth victory in nine races this season which takes him to 185 points in the championship standings, 69 clear of the Italian Andrea Dovizioso, who took fifth.

"The race went to plan, I was riding out in front and enjoying myself," said Marquez.

"At the end I was thinking about my brother. I am very happy with this victory and very happy to have the summer break in these conditions." It was a ruthless performance from Marquez who has now won at each of his last 10 races at Sachsenring.

He first won here in 2010 in the 125cc race and followed that in 2011 and 2012 with wins in Moto2. He has won every MotoGP in Germany since 2013.

Vinales followed up his win in Assen last week with a feisty battle with Crutchlow which only ended when the Briton eased off near the end.

(Source: Mirror)

Tour de Impossible? Pakistan hosts 'world's toughest cycle race'

Finishing nearly 5,000 meters above sea level after hundreds of kilometers winding past blackened glaciers and snow-capped peaks: a new Pakistani race presents a world-class challenge for cyclists -- climbing towards the "Roof of the World".

The Tour de Khunjerab -- its name a homage to its more famous French counterpart, which began on Saturday -- is still many years away from being another Big Loop, but with a solid claim to being the highest cycling race in the world, it has a lot to offer a certain type of athlete.

In the last week of June, some 88 cyclists, including two teams from Afghanistan and Sri Lanka as well as solo participants from Spain and Switzerland, took part in its second edition.

Less than half completed it within the allotted time.

The four stages -- three ranging from 68 to 94 kilometers (42 to 58 miles) plus a shorter time trial -- are much shorter than many other cycling events.

But there is one fundamental difference: the Pakistani Tour starts at 1,500 meters above sea level, and never stops climbing.

The final day of this year's event sums up the challenge.

Starting at 2,800 meters -- higher than the Iseran Pass, the summit of the Tour de France -- it ends at 4,700 meters, just over 100 meters short of Mont Blanc, Europe's



highest mountain.

The Khunjerab Tour must become "an attraction... for the most daring and adventurous cyclists in the world", said Usman Ahmed, the top official for the northern Gilgit region, home to some of the planet's tallest peaks and where the race was held.

The cyclists' tyres swallow up the asphalt of the Karakoram Highway, one of the highest

paved roads in the world.

Named after the Karakoram mountain range -- just one of the ranges in Gilgit -- the road passes through an extraordinary landscape.

Soaring, jagged peaks contrast with vertiginous ravines, glaciers driving a chill wind, and tumbling aquamarine rivers. Landslides are common.

Guardrails are a flimsy suggestion of pro-

tection from steep falls of hundreds of feet.

"There is no place in the world that offers all these things," said Ahmed.

"No doubt it is the toughest cycle race in the world. We are aiming to make it our trademark," said Haroon General, president of the Pakistan Cycling Federation.

"The most difficult part of the race is the final stage where cyclists face shortage of oxygen and there is risk of heart issues... At such an altitude a person falls down (faints) after running for 200 meters, but our cyclists travelled for almost 59 kilometers," he said.

Five ambulances were on standby in case of emergencies in the final stage, he said, adding: "A majority of the cyclists made it but the support staff needed ambulances."

The winner of the event, Najeeb Ullah -- a Pakistani from a hilltop village in the southwestern province of Balochistan who won three of the four stages -- told AFP that breathing was a "problem" for him in the final climb.

"I had to face a lot of difficulties while reaching the finishing line," located at the Khunjerab Pass, the border between Pakistan and China, he said.

Especially since altitude was not the only obstacle: On the final day, fierce winds drove snowflakes into the cyclists' faces, forcing some already struggling to catch their breath to dismount.

(Source: AFP)

Egyptian press slam 'embarrassing', 'still-born' Pharaohs



Egypt's usually tame press did not hold back after the national team's exit from the Africa Cup of Nations on home soil, branding the side "embarrassing" after a "still-born performance".

The record seven-time champions were dumped out in the last 16 by South Africa on Saturday with a 1-0 defeat at the Cairo International Stadium.

"You embarrassed us... Our national squad disappoints millions and bows out of the African Cup of Nations," Al-Akhbar, one of Egypt's main newspapers, splashed on its Sunday front page.

In a country where the press is rarely critical of official institutions, there was plenty of blame thrown around.

Al-Akhbar lambasted "the absurdities" of Mexican coach Javier Aguirre's tactics and "the still-born performance of the players".

A photo of star forward Mohamed Salah on the verge of tears accompanied the front-page article.

Meanwhile, state mouthpiece Al-Ahram declared the loss as "one of the biggest surprises of the 2019 AFCON".

Egypt, with most of their team playing in Europe's top leagues, were the pre-tournament favourites.

"Egyptian football paid the price for the coaching staff who chose players unfit to play at an international level," the paper said.

"Coach Javier Aguirre is the number one man responsible for this humiliating exit."

The Egyptian Football Association (EFA) sacked Aguirre just hours after the loss along with the entire coaching staff.

EFA president Hani Abou Rida also tendered his resignation. Papers wary of fans' swelling anger shied away from criticising the association directly as it is politically loyal and backed by the authorities.

In Al-Watan, one of the biggest tabloids close to the security services, the devastating loss was summed up with: "The dream goes up in smoke."

It also went after Aguirre for making "catastrophic" errors throughout the tournament, leading to a national "failure".

Previously praised in this competition, rising star Mahmoud Trezeguet "wasted every single opportunity" he was given to put South Africa away, Al-Watan said.

Popular football website Yalla Kora questioned whether "this generation will ever reach the next World Cup in 2022". Even beloved national icon Salah was caught in the crosshairs of criticism.

Several reasons were given for the disappointing exit, including how the Liverpool star had "imposed" his will by demanding the return of his teammate Amr Warda.

The controversial player was initially kicked out of the squad following sexual harassment allegations surfacing online, but was then brought back into the fold after an outcry by the players supporting him.

Many fans actually welcomed the defeat of the Pharaohs on social media, with the "National Team of Harassers" trending last night.

They felt the loss was punishment for players defending the inclusion of Warda.

(Source: Eurosport)

Federer, Nadal, Djokovic star on 'Manic Monday'



Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic, with 14 Wimbledon titles between them, dominate 'Manic Monday' at the All England Club with the 'Big Three' still standing while weary rivals have again flattered to deceive.

Eight-time champion Federer, four-time winner Djokovic and Nadal, a double champion, all play last 16 ties against opponents who have never progressed this far before.

Federer, the second seed, tackles Italy's world number 20 Matteo Berrettini in what will be the Swiss great's record 17th fourth round appearance at the All England Club.

"I don't know him very well, so that makes it a bit more tricky," said Federer, chasing a 21st Grand Slam title.

"I saw him play a little bit in Halle (where he made the semi-finals). Saw his run, of course, in Stuttgart (which Berrettini won).

"Now he's backing it up here again. That's not easy to do, especially when you're sort of newer on the tour."

Nadal, the champion in 2008 and 2010, also has an unexpected opponent in the shape of world number 69 Joao Sousa, the first Portuguese player to reach the fourth round at Wimbledon.

Nadal has a 2-0 career advantage over the 30-year-old Sousa, with both wins coming on clay.

"He's a super dangerous opponent against everybody. He is very quick, has a very good physical performance," said Nadal, looking to back up his 12th Roland Garros title last month with a third Wimbledon.

Djokovic insists he will not be complacent about his chances of reaching the final for the sixth time.

The highest seed that the world number one can face before the final is number 15 Milos Raonic, the 2016 runner-up from Canada.

But first up for the defending champion and 16-time major winner is 21-year-old Ugo Humbert from France who is playing in his first Wimbledon.

"There were a lot of top seeds that went out in early rounds in Wimbledon," said Djokovic.

"That's why these kind of tournaments are regarded as the most important events where you always come out with your best game."

Until this year, world number 66 Humbert had never played a grass court match on grass either as a junior or professional.

However, he has knocked out two seeds to get this far.

He saw off compatriot Gael Monfils, the 16th seed, through a first round retirement and then 19th seeded Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime in straight sets in the last 32.

Should Djokovic emerge triumphant, he would face either Belgian 21st seed David Goffin or Spanish veteran Fernando Verdasco in what would be his 11th quarter-final at the tournament.

Raonic, beaten by Andy Murray in the 2016 final, has made the quarter-finals in the last two years.

(Source: France 24)

Angry Messi cites 'corruption' after Copa red card

An angry Lionel Messi skipped the Copa America medal ceremony and accused referees of corruption following Argentina's failure to win the tournament and his rare red card in Saturday's 2-1, third-place, playoff victory over Chile in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

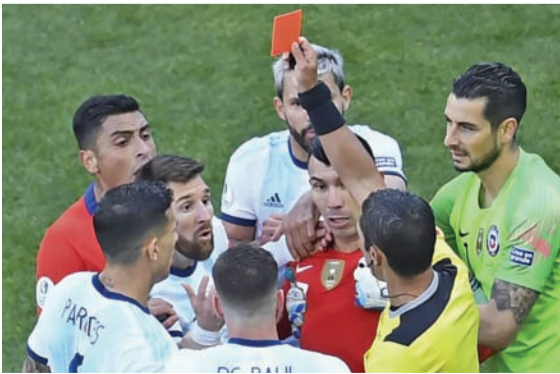
Minutes before half-time, Messi clashed with Gary Medel after the Chile defender had shepherded the ball out of play near his goal. The two players aggressively bumped chests a number of times before match referee Mauro Diaz de Vivar intervened and immediately flashed red cards for both.

The straight red marked the first time the Barcelona forward had been sent off in a senior game for club or country since a red in his debut with the national team against Hungary in 2005.

After the match, Messi, who didn't collect his third-place medal with his teammates, tore into the officiating at the tournament, suggesting his red card was a result of his harsh criticism of officials following the semifinal loss against Brazil in which Argentina saw two penalty claims denied.

"It's a play that happens a lot. [Medel] always plays to the limit. I think the referee overreacted. With a yellow card for both of us, everything would be over," he said.

"I feel lot of anger because I think I did not deserve that



red card because I think we were playing a very good game. We were ahead, but, as I said recently, unfortunately there is a lot of corruption, the referees. ... We leave with the feeling that they did not allow us to be in the final, that we were ready for better. Brazil's match and today's match were our two best performances, but then when you are sincere, you say things and these things happen."

Asked directly if his red card was a result of his previous complaints, Messi said: "Yes, unfortunately, yes. You cannot be honest, and you cannot say how things should be done."

As a result of the expulsion, Messi faces a suspension for Argentina's opening World Cup qualifier in March. He said he was not concerned about an additional ban for his strong postmatch comments.

"They can do whatever they want. The truth must be said," he said. "I leave calmly and with the head high and proud of this group that gave everything and that was growing through the tournament."

"I hope that this group is respected and that people support them because they have a lot to give, as they showed in these games."

CONMEBOL released a statement late on Saturday, denouncing Messi's accusations as "unfounded and untrue."

"In football, sometimes you lose and sometimes you win. One of the fundamental pillars of fair play is to accept the results with respect," the statement read. "The same applies for the refereeing decisions which are human and can always be improved."

(Source: ESPN)

Iran announce beach soccer squad for Qatar 2019

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran beach soccer team will participate at this year's Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) World Beach Games.

Iran coach Abbas Hashempour has invited 16 players to the team for the competition.

The competition will be held in Doha from October 12-16.

ANOC World Beach Games Qatar 2019 and commonly known as Qatar 2019, is an inaugural international beach multi-sport event organized by the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC).

The Games had been due to be held in San Diego from October 10 to 15 but ANOC announced that it would relocate the event from the American city after Californian organizers proved unable to raise the necessary money to fund it.

ANOC said it had received financial guarantees from the Government in



Qatar, which is also hosting this year's International Association of Athletics Federations World Championships from September 28 to October 6 and is due to stage the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Competitors from more than 70 countries had already qualified to compete in 14 sports at the Games and ANOC said the process would have no impact on qualification.

All of the events in this edition are non-Olympic events different from the Summer Olympic program and are gender equal.

Iran squad:

Peyman Hosseini, Hamid Behzadpour, Mohammad Ahmadzadeh, Mohammad Moradi, Ali Darwish, Amirhossein Akbari, Hadi Farahmand, Saeid Piramoon, Mohammadali Mokhtari, Mehdi Shirmohammadi, Ali Nazem, Moslem Mesigar, Mostafa Kiani, Mohammad Masoumizadeh, Ali Mirshekari, Hassan Abdollahi

Ali Moradi remains Iran weightlifting president



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Ali Moradi has been re-elected as president of Iran Weightlifting Federation on Sunday.

Moradi will serve for another four years as president after securing 22 out of 43 votes available in the elections held in Iran's Olympic Academy, located in Tehran.

The general assembly was headed by Iran's Deputy Sports Minister Moham-

mad Reza Davarzani

Sajjad Anoushiravani and Mohammadreza Akhoundi came second and third with 11 and eight votes, respectively.

"I would first like to thank everyone for giving me to serve as president of weightlifting federation for more four years. We are looking for positive actions and sustainable development. This is my last four-year in the federation and I want to do my best in the post," Moradi said.

Olympic medal winner Parviz Jalayer passes away



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Former Iran weightlifter Parviz Jalayer died at the age of 80 on Saturday.

He was suffering from digestive problems.

Parviz Jalayer competed at the 1964 and 1968 Olympics and won a silver medal in 1968 in Mexico City.

He snatched a gold medal in the 1966 Asian Games in Bangkok and

claimed a bronze at the 1966 World Weightlifting Championships in Berlin.

The following year he set a world record in the clean and jerk. After retiring from competitions he worked as a weightlifting coach.

Jalayer will be buried in Tehran's Behesht-e Zahra cemetery on Monday.

The Tehran Times staff offer heartfelt condolences to his bereaved family.

Iran freestyle team win 2019 Cadet Asian Championship



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran freestyle team claimed the title of the 2019 Cadet Asian Wrestling Championship on Sunday in Nur-Sultan in Kazakhstan.

Iran claimed the championship with 212 points, winning seven gold medals, one silver and one bronze.

India and Kazakhstan finished in second and third place with 157 and 145 points, respectively.

Ali Arab (45kg), Rahman Amoozad Khalili (48kg), Ali Gholizadegan (51kg), Amirhossein Motaghi (60kg), Amirhossein Firoozpour (80kg), Soheil Yousefi (92kg) and Salar Habibi (110kg) took seven gold medals.

Erfan Elahi claimed a silver at 60kg and Mehdi Veisi seized a bronze medal at 55kg.

Iran Greco-Roman wrestling team had already won the title in the competition.

Saudi free diving champ drowns



Rescue teams found the body of Saudi free diving champion Bassam Bakheet more than a day after he had gone missing during training, Saudi media reported on Saturday.

Bakheet was reported missing on Thursday when he went to the sea, training for a diving competition off the beach of Abhar in the Saudi western city of Jeddah, the Makkah region authorities said.

Search for him was suspended late Thursday and resumed on Friday when his body was found. The border guards and volunteer searchers took part in the search operation.

The body was found and recovered at the depth of nearly 80 meters in the area, spokesman for the Makkah border guards Faris Al Maliki said.

Bakheet's body was buried early Saturday after a funeral prayer was performed for him in Jeddah.

An investigation will be opened into the incident to determine the cause of his death, according to the Saudi newspaper Okaz.

Bakheet set Saudi and Persian Gulf records in free diving.

"I met Bassam two years ago at a Ramadan gathering for divers. During these two years, our friendship grew stronger, especially during recent times," Hamza Siam, a doctor and a free-diving instructor who worked closely with Bakheet, told Arab News.

"We were working on a business project and I'd gotten to know him more. He became a very dear friend of mine," Siam said. (Source: arabnews.com)

Al Ittihad in Manchester for tune-up



Jose Luis Sierra's Al Ittihad have begun their training camp in Manchester, England with focus on the 2019 AFC Champions League Round of 16 tie against Islamic Republic of Iran's Zob Ahan FC in August.

Luis Sierra, who took over from Slaven Bilic in February, steered the club out of the relegation zone to finish 10th in the domestic league but the Saudi Arabia club have performed especially well on the continental front.

The Tigers advanced into the knockout rounds of the 2019 AFC Champions League when they took second spot in Group B behind United Arab Emirates' Al Wahda, to book a Round of 16 clash against Zob Ahan FC.

The team travelled to Manchester on

Thursday for centralized training before resuming 2019 AFC Champions League duties in the first week of August.

Al Ittihad have bolstered their team with summer signings of Abdullah Al Malki, Hamdan Al Shammari and Abdulrahman Al-Obood.

Having last tasted continental glory in 2005, the two-time AFC Champions League winners will be aiming to relive past highs when they face an undefeated Zob Ahan in the first leg of the Round of 16 on August 5 with the return leg a week later.

The winners of the tie will go on to face either Al Ahli or Al Hilal, who clash in an all-Saudi Round of 16 tie, in the quarter-finals.

(Source: theaafc)

American player Jaeschke excited to see Iranians in Chicago

Chicago-born outside hitter Thomas Jaeschke is really excited about Chicago hosting the Men's Finals of the 2019 FIVB Volleyball Nations League.

The Final Round will be held from July 10-14 in Chicago, USA.

USA has been drawn in Pool A along with France and Russia, while Iran is pitted against Poland and Brazil in Pool B.



"It's been an interesting VNL for us, because we know we're hosting. We've had a couple of injuries here and there, myself included, so we've been swinging guys in and out, which is nice to have the luxury to do. But we're still finding our groove," Jaeschke said in an interview with fivb.org.

"To get two wins last weekend was good for us, especially against Iran who has been playing super well. To end it like this is really good for us. The VNL has been interesting, especially for me, because I'm coming back from an ACL injury and I'm doing my best to help the team," he added.

"I'm really excited! I grew up in Chicago. That's where I'm from originally. I have family there... It'll be interesting because I don't remember if we have ever hosted the finals of a big volleyball tournament, besides the Olympics," the 2016 Olympics bronze winner said.

"It'll be really, really fun. It will be interesting to see the crowd, because Poland qualified and Chicago has one of the biggest Polish populations in the world, after Warsaw. Iran also travels really well and there are a lot of Iranians in Chicago I believe. It will be interesting to see how we feel," Jaeschke stated.

(Source: fivb.org)

Former Esteghlal coach Schafer appointed Baniyas coach

TASNIM — Emirati football club Baniyas announced the signing of German coach Winfried Schafer.

The German coach has a great experience in general and in the Persian Gulf region in particular, where he has previously trained Al Shabab, Al Ahli and won the title of the league and also trained Al Ain Club and won the title of Etisalat Cup.

At the international level, the coach's many achievements include winning the African Nations Cup with Cameroon, training Thailand and qualifying for the World Cup with many other achievements.

The Emirati football team will travel to Spain next week to hold a training camp.

Schafer was dismissed as Iran's Esteghlal coach in late April.

Azmoun nets brace as Zenit lose to Lokomotiv in Super Cup

MOSCOW (AP) — Lokomotiv Moscow got a good start to the Russian season by beating Zenit St. Petersburg 3-2 in the Super Cup on Saturday.

Two goals in the space of three minutes from Alexei Miranchuk in the 78th and 81st minutes turned the game around for Lokomotiv, which followed up its Russian Cup win last season by beating league champion Zenit in the season opener.

Lokomotiv took an early lead through Fyodor Smolov in the sixth minute but the St. Petersburg team hit back through two goals from Iranian striker Sardar Azmoun either side of half-time. Zenit had Magomed Ozdov sent off for a second yellow card in extra time.

Lokomotiv had lost the last two Super Cup games in 2017 and 2018 to Spartak Moscow and CSKA Moscow, respectively.

Thailand's new era begins under Naruephon

Life after FIFA Women's World Cup France 2019 has begun for Thailand, with Kaenson Naurephon appointed as head coach for the women's national team.

Replacing two-time World Cup boss Nuengrutai Srathongvian, Naurephon will guide the Chaba Kaew in their AFF Women's Championship title defence on home soil in Chonburi in August.

The 47-year-old coach takes the reins of the senior squad after leading the Thai U-15 women's team to a Southeast Asian title in May, as well steering the national U-16 side to four wins from four qualifiers for the AFC U-16 Women's Championship, which Thailand is also set to host in September.

Naurephon will be joined by new team manager Sirima Panichewa, a director of Thai League 1 outfit Samut Prakan City, who replaces long-term national team director Nualphan Lamsam.

Nuengrutai and Lamsam stepped down from their respective roles after their largely successful tenures ended with three successive defeats and group stage elimination at France 2019.

The new leadership team will look to hit the ground running, with a 36-strong playing contingent to assemble in Bangkok on Monday to begin preparations for the AFF Women's Championship, which begins on August 15.

Drawn alongside Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Timor-Leste at the competition, Thailand will look to add to the regional titles they claimed in past three editions of the tournament in 2015, 2016 and 2018.

Thailand are also among the eight Asian sides still in the qualification race for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, with the continent's final two participants at the Games to be confirmed next March.

(Source: the-afc)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

He who does not know his own worth, is
ruining his own life.

Imam Ali (AS)

Afghan writers criticize disregard of children’s literature in Iran, Afghanistan

A R T TEHRAN — A number of Iran-based Afghan writers have criticized official negligence in children’s literature in Iran and Afghanistan.

They made the remarks in a meeting titled “Sympathy and Compassion” held in Tehran on Saturday at the Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Youth.



Afghan writer Mohammad-Kazem Kazemi speaks during a meeting at the Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Youth in Tehran on July 6, 2019. (ISNA)

Afghan writer and poet Mohammad-Kazem Kazemi said, “Poetry and stories have always been at the service of the adults, and children’s literature has rarely been seen in works by writers and poets.”

“We did not even have any children’s writers and poets over the past 20 years, and children’s books and magazines were hard to find. Of course, children’s books and magazines were sent to Afghanistan from Iran in very limited quantities in those years, and we used to know some of the Iranian children’s literary figures from older times,” he added.

Kazemi has authored many books on Persian literature and Afghan poetry. His book “Window” published in Iran is considered to be a famous poetry anthology.

Writer Mohammad-Sarvar Rajai who is also the deputy director of the Afghanistan Literature House in Tehran praised the meeting for providing an opportunity for Iranian and Afghan writers to exchange views.

“I launched the magazine ‘Bagh’ for children in 2012 and I have always said that the magazine is my childhood regret. I didn’t want Afghan children in Iran to feel sorry over why there is no magazine for them in their native language,” he said.

“We have been living in Iran for the past 40 years, but media haven’t paid due attention to Afghan children’s literature. We have 400,000 Afghan students in Iran but no Iranian writer or poet has written a story or poetry about them. Not even a five-minute cultural program has been made about these students. Of course, some programs have been made which rather add more to our pains,” he noted.

Rajai is the author of “From Leili Desert to Majnun Island”, a book carrying the memories of the Afghans who volunteered to fight for Iran during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

The book has been published by the Study Center of the Islamic Revolution Cultural Front.

Rajai had spent 10 years collecting the volunteers’ memories of the war.

He is also the author of “In the Arms of Hearts”, the memoirs of a number of Afghan people about Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic.

A number of Iranian writers, including Farhad Hassanzadeh and Mehdi Hajvani, were also in attendance at the meeting.

Still-life painting looted by Nazis to return to Florence

MILAN (Reuters) — A still-life painting by the Dutch master Jan van Huysum which was looted by retreating Nazi troops in World War Two will be returned to Florence, the Italian government said on Saturday.

The “Vase of Flowers” oil painting, worth millions of dollars, was originally put on display in Florence in 1824 after it was bought by Grande Duke Leopoldo II for his art collection.

It hung in the city’s Pitti Palace until 1940, when it was evacuated to a nearby village following the outbreak of war.

Three years later, the painting was seized by German troops and eventually taken to Germany where it only resurfaced following German reunification in 1991 in the hands of a family.

“At long last (the artwork) comes home after 75 years. The battle was tough, today is a great victory for the whole of Italy,” said Eike Schmidt, head of Italy’s Uffizi Galleries.

Schmidt, himself a German, has been calling for the return of the artwork to Florence.

Art houses to screen behind the scenes film on Iranian new wave drama “The Cow”

CULTURE TEHRAN — A movie featuring behind the scenes views on Iranian new wave film “The Cow” will be screened at the Art and Experience Cinema halls on Wednesday in Tehran, Shiraz and Isfahan.

The screening program has been organized to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the movie directed by Dariush Mehrjui in 1969.

Hall 1 at Tehran’s Charsu Cineplex will screen the movie at 8 pm and critics Hushang Golmakani and Alireza Mahmudi will attend a review session.

Honare Shahre Aftab Cineplex in Shiraz and Isfahan City Center Cineplex will also screen the movie at the same time.

“The Cow”, a forerunner of the Iranian new wave cinema, is about Masht Hassan, who owns the only cow in a remote and desolate village.

While he is away, his cow, whom he treats as his own child, dies. Knowing the relationship between Masht Hassan and his cow, the villagers hastily dispose of the corpse, and when Masht Hassan returns, they tell him that his cow ran away. Devastated by the news, Masht Hassan starts to spend all his time in the barn eating hay and slowly begins to believe that he has become the cow.

The film won the International Federation of Film Critics (FIPRESCI) Prize of the Venice Film Festival in 1971. It was the first award the Iranian motion picture industry ever received in an international event.

The 34th Fajr International Film Festival screened a restored version of the movie in 2016.



Ezzatollah Entezami acts in a scene from “The Cow”.

Iran’s “Sara and Aida” competing in Russian film festival



A scene from Iranian director Maziar Miri’s movie “Sara and Aida”.

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Maziar Miri’s drama “Sara and Aida” has been selected to be screened in the official competition of the 14th In Family Circle, an international family film festival that is currently underway in the Russian city of Yaroslavl.

The film is about two close friends. The reputation of one of them is in danger, so they need to figure out how to resolve this issue with each other’s help.

“Sara and Aida” won the best Asian film award at the 10th Jaipur International Film Festival in India in January 2018.

The film is competing with eight other films, including “The Pig” by Dragomir Sholev from Romania, “All Square” by John Hyams from the U.S. and “Let Me Introduce You to Sofia” by Guido Chiesa from Italy.

“Chuskit” by Priya Ramasubban from India, “Saf” by Ali Vatansever from Turkey, “Happy Sad” by Ibon Cormenzana from Spain and “Little Secret” by David Schurmann from Brazil are also among the films.

The festival, which is dedicated to screening films with the main idea of chastity, love and loyalty in family relationships, will run until July 13.

“Neruda’s Postman” to go on stage in Tehran



A poster for Iranian director Alireza Kushk- Jalali’s stage adaptation of Antonio Skarmeta’s novel “Neruda’s Postman”.

A R T TEHRAN — The Cologne-based Iranian director Alireza Kushk-Jalali plans to stage an adaptation of Chilean writer Antonio Skarmeta’s novel “Neruda’s Postman”, also known as “The Postman”, at Tehran’s Nazerzadeh Kermani Hall of the Iranshahr Theater Complex on July 26.

The novel tells the story of a fictional postman, Mario Jimenez, in revolution-era Chile, who befriends the real-life poet Pablo Neruda.

The only regular delivery of Mario,

who works on a beautiful island just off the Italian mainland, is to the house of the only literate resident, Pablo Neruda, who is famous for his passionate love poems.

Mario begs Neruda for advice on how to seduce Beatriz, the girl of his dreams.

English filmmaker Michael Radford and Italian director Massimo Troisi jointly made “Il Postino” a screen adaptation of the novel, in 1994.

The film received five nominations and one Oscar for the best music at the 68th Academy Awards.

Brazilian musician João Gilberto, founder of bossa nova, dies in Rio

SAO PAULO (Reuters) — Brazilian musician João Gilberto, 88, who developed bossa nova music and helped turn the style into a worldwide craze, died on Saturday afternoon in his house in Rio de Janeiro, relatives confirmed through messages in social media.

His son Marcelo Gilberto said on Facebook “his fight was noble and he tried to maintain dignity”. His daughter in law wrote: “Deep sadness. All he wanted was to be with

us and to play with his granddaughter”.

The family did not disclose the cause of death.

Brazilian artists paid tribute to one of the country’s most well-known artists. Singer Gal Costa said Brazil lost “its biggest music genius. His legacy is huge to Brazil and the world”. Critic Zuza Homem de Mello told GloboNews TV station that Gilberto was the responsible for making Brazilian music known worldwide.

Sculpture symposium on Iranian luminaries underway in Tehran



Sculptor Mahnaz Noruzi works on a bust of actor Ali Nasirian (R) during a sculpture symposium at the Einoddoleh House in Tehran on July 5, 2019.

A R T TEHRAN — The Tehran Municipality’s Beautification Organization is holding a sculpture symposium whose participants are creating busts of a number of contemporary Iranian luminaries.

The symposium is currently underway at the Einoddoleh House, a Qajar building in northeastern Tehran.

26 sculptors are working on busts of 26 well-known cultural personalities, the organization has announced in a press release published on Sunday.

The sculptors are making the primary busts with a kind of sculpting clay, after which the busts will be molded with lasting

substances and will be later be placed across the city after the symposium ends on Tuesday.

The symposium aims to bring young and talented sculptors together with the veterans to exchange experience and views.

Graphic designer Qobad Shiva, actors Ali Nasirian, Mohammad-Ali Keshavarz, and Davud Rashidi, painters Ali-Akbar Sadeqi and Parviz Kalantari, filmmakers Ali Hatami and Abbas Kiarostami, sculptor Parviz Tanavoli and musician Majid Entezami are among figures whose busts are being made.

Sara Azizi, Fardin Esfandiari, Ata Sahrai, Sara Tagavi, Ali Etebar, Enayat Sahrai and Yasser Hosseini are among the sculptors participating in this symposium.

Hiroshima hosts Iran Love and Peace Film Festival



Iranian and Japanese cineastes pose on the closing day of the 6th Iran Love and Peace Film Festival in Hiroshima, Japan on June 30, 2019.

A R T TEHRAN — A lineup of six movies went on screen at the 6th edition of the Iran Love and Peace Film Festival, which was held in Hiroshima from June 24 to 30.

“The Lost Strait” by Bahram Tavakkoli, “The 23” by Mehdi Jafari, “Leili Is with Me” by Kamal Tabrizi and “Don’t Be Embarrassed” by Reza Maqsudi were among the films, the organizers have announced.

“Istanbul Junction” by Mostafa Kiai and “Axing” by Behruz Shoeibi were also screened.

Moreover, Japanese anime “Junod”

by Shinichiro Kimura was reviewed at the event.

An Iranian delegation composed of actors Parviz Parastui and Shabnam Moqaddami, directors Mehdi Jafari and Behruz Shoeibi and producer Habib Valinejad attended the festival to hold meetings and workshops.

The Iran Love and Peace Film Festival is dedicated to screening films about the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war and familiarizing the world with the injuries Iranian soldiers have suffered after the war and its consequences for the next generations.