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IDRO, domestic companies ink MOU on 10m-ton steel project

TEHRAN— Iran's Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO) signed a memorandum of understanding with a consortium of seven domestic companies on production of 10 million tons of steel in Persian Gulf Mining and Metal Industries Special Economic Zone (PGSEZ) in the southern province of Hormozgan. The MOU was signed at the place of IDRO on Tuesday in the presence of IDRO

Head Khodadad Gharibpour, Hormozgan Province Governor General Feraydoun Hemmati, and the representatives of the companies in the mentioned consortium, IRNA reported. "In addition to boosting the country's annual steel output by 10 million tons, this project creates jobs for 10,000 people", Gharibpour told IRIB on the sidelines of the signing ceremony. → 4

Iranian biopharmaceutical medicines treat patients in Russia, Turkey: VP

TEHRAN— Now patients in Russia, Turkey and other countries in the region are treated with biopharmaceutical medicines produced by Iranian companies, the vice president for science and technology said, Mehr reported on Wednesday. Sourena Sattari made the remarks during a meeting held at the International Industrial Trade Fair (INNOPROM), which is currently

underway in Yekaterinburg, Russia. Iranian medicines can cure four types of life-threatening illnesses using stem cells, which is unique in western Asia, he added. On June 22, the first Iranian pharmaceutical factory in Turkey that produces recombinant protein drugs and biologic medicines was inaugurated. → 11

U.S. says remains open to talks with Iran

TEHRAN— The United States said on Wednesday Iran's breaches of its nuclear deal are an attempt at extortion, while at the same time repeating that Washington is open to talks. "There is no credible reason for Iran to expand its nuclear programme, and there is no way to read this as anything other than a crude and transparent attempt to extort payments from the international community," the U.S. statement to an

emergency International Atomic Energy Agency board meeting said. "We call on Iran to reverse its recent nuclear steps and cease any plans for further advancements in the future. The United States has made clear that we are open to negotiation without preconditions, and that we are offering Iran the possibility of a full normalization of relations," statement added, Reuters reported.

Reducing nuclear commitments 'unchangeable strategy'

ARTICLE
Masoud Hossein
Head of the Sport Desk of the TehranTimes

Do-nothing strategy, the FIVB's best strategy

The U.S. authorities violated the rules after they detained Iranian volleyball team at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, however the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) chose to do nothing but saying sorry to the Iranians.

After the team was detained by the U.S. authorities, some of the players had to answer "nonsensical questions" one by one brought upon by border control - while the Polish team was able to leave the airport immediately, with a smile on their faces and no formalities.

"This is politics. I don't know why they did it. Do our athletes have anything else to do but play sports? Their approach is not logical," said the president of Iran's Volleyball Federation.

Iran and the U.S. have a positive and strong relationship built on years of competition. The U.S. athletes have traveled to Iran for many times without any problem but there have always been problems for the Iranians.

Last year, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) interrogated the Iranian players for hours at a Chicago airport but FIVB did nothing. The mistreatment has been repeated but FIVB will do nothing again.

The international volleyball federation should enforce measures to avoid the interference of politics in sport. "On behalf of the FIVB and entire volleyball family, I would like to apologize to Iran volleyball and we are really ashamed of what has happened in Chicago airport.... We were shocked to find out what happened. I can assure you that the world federation will find a way to prevent "such an incident" in the future," Ary Graça wrote in a letter sent to Iran Volleyball Federation.

According to him, FIVB worked very closely with various stakeholders including the IOC, USOC and USAV to ensure that the Iranian delegation would have a smooth entry procedure.

BUT it seems the world federation cannot prevent interference of politics in sport. It can be harmful for the Iranian team who look for a medal in the 2019 Volleyball Nations League, where they have been drawn in Pool B along with powerhouses Poland and Brazil.

U.S. bans on Hezbollah MPs assault on all of Lebanon: Berri

TEHRAN— Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri has denounced American sanctions on lawmakers from the Hezbollah resistance movement as an "assault" against not only the parliament but the entire Lebanese nation. "It is an assault on the parliament and as a result an assault on all of Lebanon," Berri said in a statement on Wednesday. The remarks came one day after the U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions on two Hezbollah members of Lebanon's parliament and a security official responsible for coordinating between the resistance movement and the country's security agencies. It placed MPs Amin Sherri and Muhammad Hasan Ra'd as well as Wafiq Safa, a top Hezbollah security official, on its blacklist, claiming that the trio had "assisted" Iran in its alleged efforts "to undermine Lebanese sovereignty."

Washington also accused the individuals of

"undermining Lebanese financial institutions to assist Hezbollah and to evade U.S. sanctions against" the resistance group. It was the first time that the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control put Lebanese parliamentarians on its sanctions list. Separately, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that the designations were meant to counter Hezbollah's influence in Lebanon. In response, Lebanese Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil warned that the "unwarranted" U.S. bans "do not serve financial stability." "Lebanon and its banks are committed to all the legislation and there is no justification at all for escalating these sanctions," he added. Moreover, Lebanese lawmaker Ali Fayyad slammed the U.S. move as "a humiliation for the Lebanese people." According to Press TV, Hezbollah was formed following the Israeli regime's invasion of Lebanon

and the ensuing occupation of its southern parts in 1980s, and currently constitutes Lebanon's de facto military power. Since then, the movement has helped the national army retake the occupied regions from Tel Aviv and thwart two Israeli acts of aggression in 2000 and 2006. It has also been playing a significant role in the Syrian army's fight against Takfiri terror groups, including Daesh and Nusra Front, thus preventing the spillover of the war into Lebanon. Some 50 Hezbollah individuals and entities have been blacklisted by the Treasury since 2017. In May 2018, the United States and its partners in the Terrorist Financing and Targeting Center (TFTC), which includes Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and United Arab Emirates, imposed sanctions on Hezbollah leadership, targeting its Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem.

Nigeria police kill two Zakzaky supporters: Islamic group

TEHRAN— Police in Nigeria have killed two supporters of jailed Muslim cleric Sheikh Ibrahim al-Zakzaky, who were demanding his release in the capital, Abuja, according to the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN), an organization that he heads. The two, who were members of the IMN, were shot and killed outside the National Assembly on Tuesday. Clashes erupted there as protesters gathered outside the parliament and then sought to enter to register a demand for the cleric's release. "The security... took our report to go and give the legislators but perhaps they refused to inform the legislators, or the legislators refused to respond. So, we decided to enter and submit it ourselves," said one protester. "But they stopped us and started spraying tear gas and shooting

live bullets sporadically. I saw more than three people collapsing." Police also arrested 40 people during the rally. In a statement, police claimed two officers had been shot and wounded in the legs, and six other officers had been injured. They said they had "used minimum force to disperse the unruly protesters." According to human rights groups, Nigerian forces have killed at least 400 members of the IMN over the past four years. The group regularly organizes protests outside the assembly to demand the release of its leader, whose life is reportedly in danger due to health issues. According to Press TV, Sheikh Zakzaky, who is in his mid-sixties, lost his left eyesight in a 2015 raid by security forces that left more than 300

of his followers and three of his sons dead. His wife also sustained serious wounds. The Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), based in London, said earlier this week that the cleric's health condition has further deteriorated, since he was reportedly poisoned in prison. The cleric's son, Mohammad, told Press TV on Saturday that his father was in dire need of medical treatment, as "large and dangerous quantities of lead and cadmium have been found in his blood." He said that the authorities intended to murder his father since they refuse to take any measures. In 2016, Nigeria's federal high court ordered Zakzaky's unconditional release from jail following a trial, but the government has so far refused to set him free.

ARTICLE
Morteza Khansari
political analyst

A new world order with changes in power balance: Dividing the world into opponents and friends

By withdrawing from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), the United States and Russia finally pulled away the iron curtain of the cold war. Seemingly, the two countries want to change the common defensive methods and are now unveiling their high-tech nuclear weapons and missiles and have started threatening each other with nuclear weapons. With suspension of INF by U.S. and Russia, the world will be officially divided into two opposing military poles. With increasing tensions and development of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on one hand and renovation of Russian missile defense system on the other hand, the world will face bigger security threats than before and will have to yield in to a new order that is based on arms race.

In this new bipolar world, however, Russia has not the power to drag the world into a new cold war because it has no choice but to surrender to the economic and cultural power of western countries.

From now on, the world will no longer be a global community that complies with the international laws and regulations that were set after the cold war, on the contrary, it will become the battle field of the countries that are only thinking about their own national benefits and are not afraid of doing anything to gain their goals, even starting a nuclear war.

After the suspension of INF, the power balance between different countries is starting to change; to make the matters worse, NATO has now adopted a new policy for launching pre-emptive attacks on other countries; in this situation, the world will be divided into two poles of friends and opponents.

Is such a world, only the countries that have nuclear weapons might be able to provide their citizens with partial security; other countries, on the other hand, are pushed to become dependent on big powers in order to protect their national security. → 13



Animation, puppet festival underway in Kermanshah

A group students performs a puppet show during the opening ceremony of the 2nd Iran Animation and TV Puppet Show Festival in the western Iranian city of Kermanshah on July 9, 2019. Puppeteers and animators from across the country are participating in the festival, which is organized every year by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting. The event will come to an end today.

Zarif: 'U.S. has no standing to raise JCPOA issues'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The IAEA board of governors met on Wednesday at the request of the United States as Iran is reducing its commitments in response to the U.S. abrogation of the nuclear deal (JCPOA) and the return of sanctions.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the U.S. is not in a position to talk about the JCPOA.

"The U.S. has no standing to raise JCPOA issues," Zarif tweeted. The Trump administration killed the JCPOA in May 2018 and has imposed the toughest ever sanctions on Iran. Trump has used the worst language against the JCPOA.

Zarif said Iran has been fully committed to the agreement and it has been verified by 15 reports issued by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Zarif added Iran is limiting its commitments based on the paragraph 36 of the JCPOA.

"Iran's actions are lawful under para 36 of accord," Zarif stated. (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 is reducing its commitments to the JCPOA after the passage of a year as the remaining parties to the deal, including the European Union, have failed to shield Iran from the United States' sanctions.

Irony of IAEA Board meeting on US request:
a. US abhors JCPOA, axed & violates it, and punishes all who observe it;

b. US has no standing to raise JCPOA issues;
c. Iran fully complied with JCPOA per 15 IAEA reports;
d. Iran's actions are lawful under para 36 of accord:

Door remains open to diplomacy despite Europeans' failure to fulfill JCPOA obligations: Iran

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry says Tehran is not after fueling tensions and keeps the "door open to diplomacy" despite a failure by the Europeans to stand up to U.S. pressure or uphold their commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal.

In an interview with IRNA published on Wednesday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said Iran remains committed to the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), but at the same time, defends its national rights.



"Although Iran is pursuing this strategy, we have not closed the door to diplomacy and the door is open to talks," he explained.

The remarks came as Emmanuel Bonne, the French president's top diplomatic adviser, held talks in Tehran with Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Shamkhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a bid to salvage the JCPOA and de-escalate the tensions.

Tension resurfaced between Iran and the United States since

the Trump administration quit the JCPOA and ordered sanctions against Iran. The U.S. sanctions, the toughest ever since the 1979 revolution, has been described as an economic war against Tehran. The Trump administration has introduced a total ban on Iran's oil export, which is the main source of the country's income. It has even dispatched warships, fighter jets and troops to the region for a possible attack on Iran.

Iran initially said it would stay in the deal if the other signatories — France, Britain, Germany, Russia and China — manage to fill in for the United States and offset Washington's anti-Iran sanctions.

A year later, after the European sides failed to fulfill their end of the bargain, Iran suspended the implementation of some of its commitments under the deal to hurry the Europeans into meeting Iran's legal demands under the deal.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mousavi stressed that Tehran was not seeking to fan the flames of tensions, and that the European countries should address "the root cause of the tensions" if they really seek to calm the situation.

"The illegal and unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear agreement followed by extensive sanctions — which they (the Americans) call crippling and backbreaking — are examples of the United States' measures against the Iranian nation, which consider as nothing but economic terrorism and economic war," he said, according to Press TV.

Mousavi also welcomed France's efforts to keep the Iran deal in place, but said such efforts are part of Paris' obligations as a party to the JCPOA.

In a statement released on Tuesday, the foreign ministers of France, Germany and Britain, plus the EU's foreign policy chief, called for an urgent meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission for resolving disputes under the agreement.

"These compliance issues must be addressed within the framework of the JCPOA, and a Joint Commission should be convened urgently," read the statement.

On U.S.-requested emergency meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors on Iran, Mousavi said it is "a bitter irony" as Washington had itself blatantly violated the JCPOA.

The event, however, provides Iran with a good opportunity to outline violations of the JCPOA by the Americans and the Europeans themselves, he said.

Separately, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif referred to Iran's retaliatory measures in the face of Washington's exit from the JCPOA, emphasizing that Iran was exercising its right under the JCPOA, but the opposite side was violating the deal.

He said it was up to the European cosignatories to resolve the issues caused by Washington's pullout.

"The problem is the Europeans themselves as they lack the readiness to pay the price for their own security. Their major problem is the U.S., which has withdrawn from the JCPOA. They (the Europeans) should step forward and resolve this problem," he told reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

The top Iranian diplomat further rejected the possibility of negotiations under pressure, saying, "Pressure, economic war and economic terrorism should stop against the Iranian nation, then we will hold talks about the JCPOA."

Rouhani says U.S. call for UN nuclear watchdog meeting is 'farcical'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that the U.S. call for an emergency meeting of the UN atomic watchdog on Iran's nuclear actions is a "farcical story".

"They called for an emergency meeting of the Board of Governors to discuss why Iran has abandoned some of its nuclear commitments under the JCPOA which is a farcical story and unprecedented in the world's political history," he said during a cabinet meeting.

Iran announced on Sunday that it has started enriching uranium to a higher purity than the 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.

Reuters reported on Friday that the U.S. has called on the International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-nation Board of Governors to discuss Iran. The meeting was scheduled to be held on July 10.

Rouhani noted that the U.S. has described the JCPOA as a very bad deal and quit it and ironically expresses concern over Iran's moves in reducing its commitments.

"We should be worried about the U.S. who violated the JCPOA as a whole," he added.

He said that the Europeans should be concerned about the U.S. who violated the JCPOA and many other international commitments.



Rouhani said that Iran's nuclear program is for peaceful purposes and the country's act in reducing its obligations is based on the mechanism specified in the JCPOA.

"Our first objective was to preserve the JCPOA and invite others to logic, morality and respect for the international agreements," he noted.

Pointing to the U.S. officials' claims that they seek to negotiate with Iran, Rouhani said such claims are "wrong" and "deceptive".

"If you are honest in what you say, you should remove all the sanctions and apologize to the Iranian people for the wrong

actions you have done and return to your commitments," Rouhani suggested.

■ **'UK action in seizing Iran's oil tanker is disgraceful'**

Rouhani also said that the UK action in seizing the Iranian oil tanker on behalf of the B-Team was "wrong", "disgraceful".

The B-Team includes White House national security advisor John Bolton, Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, and UAE Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Zayed.

Rouhani said, "The British have started insecurity in sea and we hope that they would

stop it and would not repeat it, because repeating it will cause insecurity in the world and is harmful to all."

On July 4, British Royal Marines in Gibraltar stormed the Iran-operated supertanker Grace 1 off the coast of Gibraltar, seizing the 300,000-ton vessel based on the accusation that it was carrying oil to Syria in possible violation of the European Union's sanctions on the war-torn Arab country.

Iran has said the act amounts to piracy. Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that British seizure of the oil tanker in constitutes a concrete example of "piracy" which has been done on behalf of the B-Team.

"UK's unlawful seizure of a tanker with Iranian oil on behalf of #B_Team is piracy, pure and simple," Zarif tweeted.

Britain has claimed it seized the super-tanker because it was carrying oil for Syria in violation of the European Union sanctions.

In response Zarif said, "Iran is neither a member of the EU nor subject to any European oil embargo. Last I checked, EU was against extraterritoriality."

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi on Sunday denied reports that the supertanker was carrying 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," Araqchi told reporters at a news conference in Tehran.

Shamkhani: Reducing nuclear commitments 'unchangeable strategy'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said on Wednesday that Tehran's moves in reducing its nuclear commitments "phase by phase" in retaliation to the return of sanctions is an "unchangeable strategy".

Shamkhani made the remarks during a meeting with Emmanuel Bonne, the special diplomatic advisor to the French president, who visited Tehran in efforts to salvage the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"This path will be continued within the framework of paragraphs 26 and 36 of the JCPOA," Shamkhani said.

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.

Shamkhani said Europe lost one year of opportunity by Tehran to guard Iran against U.S. sanctions and criticized Europe for showing no strong will to counter the United States' "destructive measures" against the JCPOA.

"Given Europe's failure to use the one-year

opportunity by Iran which conducted the deal unilaterally, our country's definite decision in implementing its obligations will be commensurate to the other side's actions," Shamkhani stated.

In addition to China and Russia, France, Britain, Germany and the European Union in large are the remaining parties to the JCPOA.

Under the JCPOA signed in 2015, Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear commitments in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

However, the U.S. withdrew from the agreement on May 8, 2018. Immediately after the U.S. quit the agreement, European companies left Iran and European banks cut ties with Iran.

The Trump administration has imposed the toughest ever sanctions, including a total oil embargo, against Iran, something which is called "economic war".

Iran waited for a year that Europe devise a mechanism to shield the country from sanctions. However, on May 8, exactly one year after the U.S. abandoned the deal, Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) declared Iran's partial suspension of nuclear commitments and gave Europe 60 days to come up with a plan for

economic dividends of the JCPOA, including oil purchases, otherwise Iran will take the next step.

Seeing no tangible action on the part of Europe, on Sunday, July 7, Iran took the second step by deciding to increase the purity of nuclear enrichment capped at 3.67 percent to 4.5 percent. On July 7, Iran again gave Europe another 60-day time to come up with a concrete plan for trade ties unless Iran will take the third step.

Europe has presented a mechanism, called INSTEX, for trade with Iran but it far short of Europe's obligations based on the JCPOA. It only allows sale of medical equipment, medicine and food, items which are not subject to sanctions.

■ **'Defeated strategy'**

The security chief also called the U.S. policy of maximum pressure on Iran a "defeated strategy".

"Iran has proven practically that it has the political, economic and defense capacities to counter tension and challenges. No one can talk to such country with this characteristics with the language of force," Shamkhani asserted.

Elsewhere, he said that the U.S. has taken Europe's independence "hostage, urging the European Union to defend its identity and

independence against the U.S. unilateralism.

■ **French envoy says carries no message from U.S.**

Bonne, for his part, said, "I have not come to Iran as mediator and I carry no message of the U.S. for Iran."

He said that France is aware of Iran's power in resisting sanctions and pressure over the past four decades.

Bonne added that Iran has made remarkable growth over the past 20 years despite U.S. actions.

He said French President Emmanuel Macron seeks a "ceasefire in the U.S. economic war against Iran" which he believes will de-escalate regional tension.

He also said that Paris is interested in talks with Tehran over regional crises given Iran's "undeniable role and influence in the region".

The French envoy also met with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif later on Wednesday.

During the meeting, Zarif and Bonne exchanged views about various topics, including ways to boost relations between Iran and France and the latest regional and international developments.

Zarif: 'Negotiation under pressure is impossible'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — On repeated U.S. calls for negotiations with Iran, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday that Iran will not negotiate under pressure, suggesting that the United States must first stop "economic terrorism" against Iran if it seeks negotiations.

"Negotiation under pressure has never been possible. They must stop pressure and economic terrorism against Iran and after that they can talk about implementing the JCPOA [the 2015 nuclear deal]," Zarif told reporters after a cabinet meeting.

He noted that Iran's move in reducing its nuclear commitments are based on the JCPOA.

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.

Zarif said after the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in May 2018, the paragraph 36 of the deal has become operational.

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



In a post on his Twitter page on Sunday, 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."

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

■ **'Seizure of Iran's oil tanker is violation of JCPOA'**
Zarif also said that the UK action in seizing Iran's oil

tanker is a violation of the JCPOA.

"Britain's recent action is violation of obligations done on behalf of the U.S. and has nothing to do with Syria. Seizure of this tanker is fundamental violation of the JCPOA," he stated.

Zarif said on Monday that the seizure of the tanker constitutes a concrete example of "piracy" which has been done on behalf of the B-Team. "UK's unlawful seizure of a tanker with Iranian oil on behalf of B-Team is piracy, pure and simple," Zarif tweeted.

On July 4, British Royal Marines in Gibraltar stormed the Iran-operated supertanker Grace 1 off the coast of Gibraltar, seizing the 300,000-ton vessel based on the accusation that it was carrying oil to Syria in possible violation of the European Union's sanctions on the war-torn Arab country.

Iran has said the act amounts to piracy.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi on Sunday denied reports that the supertanker was carrying 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," Araqchi told reporters at a news conference in Tehran.

Iran says U.S. has close cooperation with MKO

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iran's permanent representative to the United Nations said on Tuesday that the U.S. has close cooperation with the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO or MEK) in order to harm Iran.

"The MKO which is supported by certain regional and European countries has close cooperation with the U.S. intelligent forces to cause harms to Iran," Majid Takht Ravanchi said at a UN Security Council meeting entitled "Threats to International Peace and Security: Linkage between International Terrorism and Organized Crime".

"Even though terrorists and organized criminals differ in their motives and methods, they are similar to one another concerning the repercussions of their acts, which are total disruption and comprehensive destruction," Press TV quoted Takht Ravanchi as saying.

He added that Iran has been a victim of terrorists and international organized

criminals, and has been a pioneer in the fight against them.

He highlighted that 17,161 Iranian citizens, including President Mohammad Ali Rajaei, Prime Minister Mohammad Javad Bahonar, Supreme Judicial Council chief Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, Deputy Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff Ali Sayyad Shirazi, 27 legislators as well as four nuclear scientists have been killed by terrorists.

"The MKO terrorist group, which bears responsibility for the death of more than 12,000 Iranian civilians, is currently being sponsored by a number of regional countries and several states in Europe. The U.S. has provided its members refuge after removed the group from its list of designated terrorist organizations. The U.S. intelligence service is working closely with them in order to hatch conspiracies of destruction in Iran," Takht Ravanchi noted.

The MKO did numerous terrorist acts in Iran, especially in the early years of the

1979 Islamic Revolution. It also sided with Saddam Hussein's army in the war against Iran in the 1980s.

Saddam also used the extremist group in violent crackdown on the Iraqi Kurds in the north and the Shiites in the south.

In 2012, the U.S. State Department removed the MKO from its list of designated terrorist organizations under intense lobbying by groups associated to Saudi Arabia and other regimes adversarial to Iran.

A few years ago, MKO members were relocated from their Camp Ashraf in Iraq's Diyala Province to Camp Hurriyet (Camp Liberty), a former U.S. military base in Baghdad, and were later sent to Albania.

France hosts annual gathering of the MKO. Maryam Rajavi, who does not tolerate any criticism within her group, has been mockingly portraying herself as the leader of the opposition outside Iran.

Kazem Gharib Abadi, Iran's representative to the Vienna-based international

organizations, said in January that the presence of MKO terrorists in Western countries show double standards in countering terrorism.

In a post on his Twitter page on January 10, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said, "Europeans, including Denmark, Holland and France, harbor MEK — who killed 12000 Iranians and abetted Saddam's crimes against Iraqi Kurds—as well as other terrorists staging murder of innocent Iranians from Europe. Accusing Iran won't absolve Europe of responsibility for harboring terrorists."

Rudy Giuliani, a personal lawyer of U.S. President Donald Trump, spoke at a rally in Warsaw organized by the MKO in February. He has acknowledged receiving payments from the group in the past.

In April 2017, the late U.S. Senator John McCain lauded the MKO, describing it as "an example to everyone in the world that is struggling for freedom."

Europeans 'are not honoring' JCPOA commitments: envoy

POLITICAL TEHRAN — European powers "are not honoring their commitments" under the 2015 nuclear deal, says Iran's permanent representative to the United Nations.

"Apparently, besides the U.S., the Europeans have not been up to the job and have not honored all their commitments up to now," Majid Takht Ravanchi said in an interview with the BBC published on Wednesday.

Takht Ravanchi insisted that the Europeans do more to compensate Tehran for economic losses inflicted by U.S. sanctions, otherwise Iran will continue to exceed limits on its nuclear fuel production.

However, he said Iran would stay in the nuclear accord, officially known as the JCPOA, for now.

He also said there would be consequences if the UK didn't release an Iranian oil tanker it seized recently off the coast of Gibraltar.

Tensions have risen sharply since the U.S. pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal, under which Iran had accepted some restrictions on its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

Tehran took no immediate action after the U.S. re-imposed sanctions last year, but has now begun to take action in small and calculated steps.

Takht Ravanchi said that Iran was not violating the accord, which he was involved in negotiating. He cited what he said were provisions that allowed a rollback on some commitments if other parties were in breach.

"For the time being we are in the deal and we invite others to stay in the deal,"



he said. But Iran would move to the "third phase" of its stepped-up uranium enrichment program unless the Europeans kept promises to uphold the economic benefits of the accord.

He also said reports that Iran may dramatically raise levels of uranium enrichment to 20% purity in "phase 3" were hypothetical. "We have said we are not going to honor the cap of 3.67%," the ambassador said.

Iran would move to the "third phase" of its stepped-up uranium enrichment program unless the Europeans kept promises to uphold the economic benefits of the accord, says Takht Ravanchi who was involved in negotiating the JCPOA.

"What will happen in the third phase we have not said it yet, but if we reach to that point, definitely we will announce beforehand."

Shortly before the interview, a commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) warned that U.S. military bases and aircraft carriers were within range of the country's missiles, warning America against making any "mistakes".

The ambassador said this was not a threat, but a signal that the Iranians would not "sit on their hands" if attacked.

He also denied that the Iranian oil tanker seized by the British was headed to Syria in breach of EU sanctions as alleged, calling the move a "clear case of piracy and violation of international law."

"It is better for the British government to release this ship as soon as possible otherwise there will be consequences," he said.

Takht Ravanchi said he did not think U.S. President Donald Trump wanted a war with Iran but believed his National Security Adviser John Bolton did. Bolton openly called for regime change in Tehran before taking office in the White House.

The ambassador said negotiations with the U.S. could not take place unless the Trump administration lifted sanctions "at the least".

And he also dismissed as an "absurd assumption" any suggestion that Iran's severely depleted oil exports would lead to an economic collapse.

"We have managed under different situations worse than we have today, and I am sure we can manage again," he said, invoking the Iran-Iraq war which lasted eight years.

Guardian Council not influenced by political rivalries: Jannati

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The Guardian Council's senior clerics and jurists do not consider political and factional rivalries when doing their duties, the council's secretary Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati said on Wednesday.

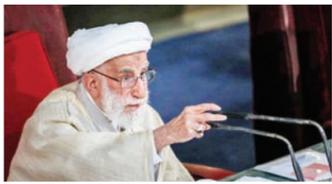
"They do not apply their personal opinions and their criterion is to carry out their legal duty," Fars quoted Jannati as saying.

Under Article 99 of Iran's Constitution, the responsibility to supervise elections lays with the Guardian Council.

The body consists of six theologians appointed by the Supreme Leader and six jurists nominated by the Judiciary and approved by parliament.

Iran's next parliamentary election will be held on February 21, 2020. The candidates will have until December 7, 2019 to register.

In his remarks, Jannati emphasized that the Guardian Council recognizes the



right of disqualified candidates to object to the council.

"The Guardian Council has always paid regard to the three principles of observing the holy religion, law and ethics and has acted according to these principles when supervising elections and will continue to do so," he noted.

The top cleric also said the council acts as guarantor of Islamism and Republicanism of the Islamic Republic and the important task of protecting the law falls to the council.

Defense minister to brief MPs on latest achievements

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami is scheduled to attend a meeting of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee on Sunday to brief the lawmakers about technological progresses in defense industry, according to the committee's spokesman.

Speaking with Tasnim, Hossein Naqavi Hosseini said General Hatami will also brief the committee members on the Defense Ministry's performance.

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

Iranian officials have repeatedly underlined that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities, including its missile power, which are entirely meant for defense,



and that Iran's defense capabilities will be never subject to negotiations.

Back in February 2018, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called for efforts to maintain and boost Iran's defense capabilities, hitting back at the enemies for disputing the country's missile program.

"Without a moment of hesitation, the country must move to acquire whatever is necessary for defense, even if the whole world is opposed to it," Ayatollah Khamenei said at the time.

Europe sided with Obama admin when it breached JCPOA: ex-diplomat

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Hamid Reza Asefi, a former Iranian diplomat, has criticized European countries' lack of commitment to their nuclear deal obligations, saying they were also silent when the Obama administration breached the JCPOA.

"It became apparent back then that the Europeans are with the United States," Asefi said in an interview with Mehr news agency published on Wednesday.

He further said European countries have shown no determination to fulfil their JCPOA obligations since the U.S. withdrawal from the deal.

In May 2018, U.S. 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.



Since the U.S. move, European parties to the deal, namely France, Britain and Germany, have been criticized by Tehran

for their lack of will to directly confront the U.S. sanctions.

The EU announced on June 28 that its special financial mechanism for trade with Iran, known as INSTEX, has gone into effect. However, Iran says the mechanism is far short of its expectation.

"INSTEX is so absurd that even Europeans are ashamed about announcing the categories and amounts of trades that will be conducted with Iran," stated Asefi who also served as Tehran's ambassador to Paris from 1993 to 1998.

The former diplomat argued that the financial mechanism has been a tool to buy time for Europe and silence Iran.

"If the Europeans deem America responsible for the current problems, one can hope that their route would be separated from that of the U.S.," Asefi said.

Anyway, he continued, if they "address Tehran instead of America's hostile policies, it would be clear that nothing has changed and that Europe has become a shield for the U.S."



By staff and agency

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov on Tuesday urged Europe to save the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"The Russian side confirmed that it is necessary to bolster joint efforts of all participants in the JCPOA, including Iran and the EU trio countries in favor of saving the agreements and ensuring their full implementation on the basis of abidance by their commitments by all the involved parties and with due regard for the principle of reciprocity on which the Plan of Action was based initially," Ryabkov said in a meeting with British Ambassador to Russia Laurie Bristow, French Ambassador Sylvie Bermann and Charge d'Affaires ad Interim of the German Embassy in Russia Beate Crzeski.

Russian diplomat urges Europe to save nuclear deal

According to TASS, Ryabkov said, "It was noted that the main challenges preventing an efficient implementation of the JCPOA are systemic violations and subversive actions from the U.S."

Russian Permanent Representative to the European Union Vladimir Chizhov also said on Tuesday that Russia will ignore the U.S. sanctions against Iran and will continue trade with the country without creating any special mechanisms.

"Our colleagues here [in Brussels] sometimes ask why Russia and China do not create their own INSTEX [Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges]. To that we answer with the question: why do we need it? We have already traded and will trade without paying any attention to U.S. sanctions," Sputnik quoted him as saying.

The EU announced on June 28 that its special financial mechanism for trade with Iran, known as INSTEX, has gone into effect.

INSTEX — the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges — is a European special purpose vehicle aimed at facilitating legitimate trade between Europe and Iran.

Tehran says the mechanism is far short of Iran's expectation. Iran insists the mechanism should include Iran's oil purchases.

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

"The current situation of INSTEX does not suffice. This mechanism without money is like a beautiful car without gasoline," he told reporters on June 29.

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

In follow up to that deadline, on July 7 Iran announced that it has started enriching uranium to a higher purity than the 3.67% as the Europeans missed the 60-day deadline to devise a concrete mechanism to protect the country from the U.S. sanctions.

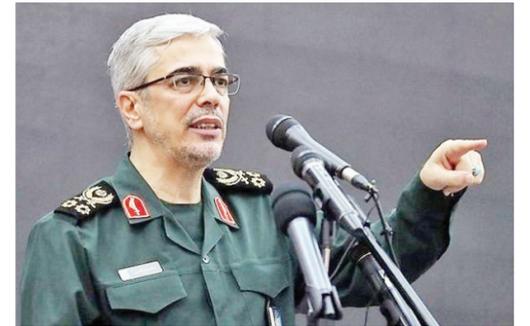
However, Iran has said if the remaining parties take concrete steps to shield the country from sanctions it will reverse its decisions.

In an article published on Monday, Foreign Policy said Iran's announcement of starting enriching uranium to a higher purity has exposed the embarrassing limits of the European Union's foreign policy when it seeks to take sides against the United States.

"For European countries and the EU itself, the slow unraveling of the landmark 2015 accord is a particularly brutal reminder of the bloc's limited ability to chart a truly independent foreign policy," the article said.

Baqeri says crushing response awaiting those threatening Iran's borders

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Major General Mohammad Baqeri, Iran's armed forces chief of staff, said on Wednesday that a crushing response is awaiting those who threaten the security of Iran and its borders.



General Baqeri made the remarks at a local event in Taybad while paying a visit to Iran's northeast border, according to Mehr.

Today, Iran will thwart any plot hatched by the enemies against the sustainable security of this country with the presence of revolutionary scholars, including Sunnis and Shias, as well as the Iranian armed forces, 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 tensions 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).

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.

Zarif: Bolton, Netanyahu lured Trump into killing JCPOA as they did to 2005 Paris agreement

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif of Iran said in a Twitter post on Tuesday that John Bolton and Benjamin Netanyahu lured President Donald Trump into killing the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA) with the "delusion" to deprive Iran of its nuclear enrichment right as they did with the Paris agreement that Iran clinched with the European Union trio — Britain, France, and Germany — in 2005.

However, Zarif said, Iran increased its enrichment capacity "100 fold by 2012".

"Bolton and Netanyahu killed the Paris agreement between E3 and Iran in 2005 by insisting on zero enrichment. Result? Iran increased its enrichment 100 fold by 2012," Zarif tweeted.

Zarif added, "Now they've lured Donald Trump into killing the JCPOA with the same delusion."

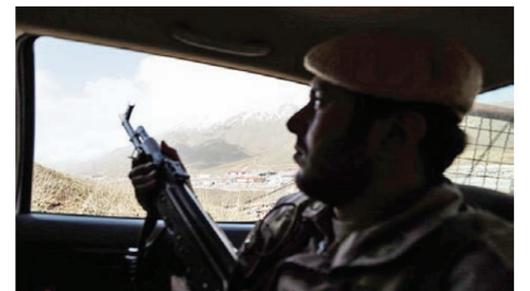
The chief diplomat warned the B-Team has not learned from the mistake of zero enrichment for Iran "but the World Should".

Bolton served in the Bush administration in 2005. Netanyahu was also Israel's prime minister at the time.

The B-Team includes Bolton, Netanyahu and the crown princes of Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Three IRGC forces martyred in terrorist attack in Iran's northwest

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Three forces with the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) were killed in a terrorist attack on the IRGC forces in the northwestern province of West Azarbaijan.



A group of terrorists affiliated with the hegemonic powers attacked a vehicle carrying the forces of Hamzeh Sayyid al-Shohada Base of the IRGC Ground Force at the entrance of Piranshahr on Tuesday evening, the IRGC said in a statement.

The forces were on a mission when the attack was carried out and three IRGC members were martyred and another one was injured, the statement said, Tasnim reported.

Intelligence measures and a manhunt are in progress to capture the terrorists, the statement added.

In July 2018, anti-Islamic Republic terrorists attacked a border post of the Hamzeh Seyed al-Shohada Base in the western province of Kurdistan, killing 11 forces.

The IRGC is tasked with protecting the country's northwestern and southeastern borders.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	249622.1
IFX	3254.64

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,069 rials
GBP	52,303 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$65.56/b
WTI	\$59.11/b
OPEC Basket	\$63.55/b
Gold	\$1,395.95/oz
Silver	\$15.14/oz
Platinum	\$817.90/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Commodities worth over \$1b transited via Kordestan since March

ECONOMY TEHRAN — More than \$1 billion worth of goods has been transited via Bashmaq border crossing of Kordestan Province (in west of Iran) since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019), Director General of Kordestan Province Customs Office Bakhtiar Rahmanipour announced on Tuesday.



He said that the official border of Bashmaq-Marivan is the only transit border crossing in Kordestan and is considered as one of the most important official land borders of the country with Iraqi's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Mehr news agency reported.

Customs office in Kordestan's Bashmaq border is busy active in the field of transiting, importing, exporting goods and also passenger's affairs.

He put the volume of domestic transit of goods from Bashmaq border in the first three months of the current year (March 21 - June 21) at 13,32 tons, valued at \$3,595,953.

In addition, 156,771 tons of goods, valued at \$87,128,892, were exported from Bashmaq border crossing in the same period, Rahmanipour stressed.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the director general pointed to the volume of goods transited from this province and said, "statistics showed that total volume of goods transited from this province has decreased 15 percent in terms of weight as compared to the last year's corresponding period."

Kordestan Province Customs Office has active branches in Sanandaj, Bashmaq border in Marivan, Siranband border crossing in Baneh which are offering quality customs services to economic activists and entrepreneurs, Rahmanipour added.

Turkey is heading for economic collapse, \$85 billion asset manager says

Turkey's economy faces ruin because its government is likely to double down on wrongful policies, Ashmore Group, which manages \$85 billion in emerging market assets, told Bloomberg.

As stated by ahvalnews.com, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sacked Central Bank Governor Murat Cetinkaya at the weekend, the latest of several decisions that have rattled financial markets. Others have included buying Russian S-400 missiles, the detention of a U.S. pastor, dissuading Turks from buying foreign exchange, using state banks for cheap lending and insisting higher interest rates cause inflation.

The "problem is that U-turning back to good policies has very big upfront political costs," Ashmore's head of research Jan Dehn told Bloomberg in emailed comments published on Wednesday. The "longer he (Erdogan) delays, the bigger the cost, which is why politicians who go down the heterodox route rarely change tack and they almost always end in crisis."

As the economic situation worsens, Erdogan is likely to introduce capital controls, nationalization and other policies to stop the non-government sector from protecting its own property, Dehn said. Ashmore is a specialist in investing in emerging markets.

Turkey says that it follows free market principles and will not impose controls on the flow of foreign exchange.

The Turkish economy is reeling from a currency crisis last year sparked by concerns over economic overheating and the detention of U.S. pastor Andrew Brunson on terrorism charges. Erdogan is now seeking to control interest rate policy, has widened the budget deficit three-fold and is risking U.S. economic sanctions for purchasing the Russian S-400 air defense system.

Turkey's government is making the mistake of addressing the symptoms, not the causes of the country's economic ills because it does not want to take the otherwise tough measures required, Dehn said, according to Bloomberg.

The "real problems meanwhile are ignored and get worse," he said. "They include bad monetary policies, increasing interventionism, failure to develop local financing markets, too low savings rates and bad foreign policies."

IDRO, domestic companies ink MOU on 10m-ton steel project

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO) signed a memorandum of understanding with a consortium of seven domestic companies on production of 10 million tons of steel in Persian Gulf Mining and Metal Industries Special Economic Zone (PGSEZ) in the southern province of Hormozgan.

The MOU was signed at the place of IDRO on Tuesday in the presence of IDRO Head Khodadad Gharibpour, Hormozgan Province Governor General Fereydoon Hemmati, and the representatives of the companies in the mentioned consortium, IRNA reported.

"In addition to boosting the country's annual steel output by 10 million tons, this project creates jobs for 10,000 people", Gharibpour told IRIB on the sidelines of the signing ceremony.

He said the project is scheduled to be implemented during five years, and mentioned infrastructures such as ports, as well as existence of iron mines and being close to the international waters as some advantages of PGSEZ for implementation of steel projects.

Two weeks ago, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani said the country has achieved a proper self-reliance in steel industry.

Making the remarks in a meeting with the members of Iran Steel Association at



the place of the ministry, the minister said, "This industry can be still developed and regarding the huge investment made in this sector during the past years, we will soon observe a good balance also in production chain of this product in the country."

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

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

Referring to the sanctions, the official said, "All those who have imposed sanctions against Iran aim to destroy he country's production capabilities; therefore, the

Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade prefer that the steel producers focus first on production and in this due development projects with the physical progress of over 70 percent will also help achieve this target."

On June 15, the official had announced that the country's annual crude steel production is planned to reach 30 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020). He put Iran's crude steel production at 25 million tons in the past year.

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

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

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

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

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

Monthly non-oil exports from PSEEZ up 23% yr/yr

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Non-oil exports from Pars Special Economic Energy Zone (PSEEZ) in Iran's southwestern port city of Assaluyeh exceeded 1.574 million tons in the past Iranian calendar month of Khordad (May 22-June 21), rising 23 percent compared to the same month in the past year, according to a customs official.

According to Ahmad Pour-Heidar, the director general of the PSEEZ's customs office, the exports also raised two percent in terms of value compared to the same period last year, IRNA reported.

The official put the value of non-oil commodities exported from this region during the mentioned month at \$706.573 million.

PSEEZ, which is named Iran's energy hub, is also home to the world's largest gas reserve, South Pars gas field which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf. The zone is the hub of Iran's exports of major non-oil commodities, that are gas condensate and petrochemicals.

Non-oil exports from PSEEZ reached 1.967 million tons in the Iranian calendar month of Ordibehesht (April 21-May 21), registering a 32 percent rise compared to the same month in the past year.

The value of non-oil exports from PSEEZ stood at \$728.9 million during the mentioned month.

Rise in non-oil exports from Pars Special Economic Energy Zone is under the condition that the U.S. has renewed sanctions against Iran.

U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally



ally pulled Washington out of Iran's nuclear deal in May 2018 and ordered re-imposition of sanctions against the Islamic Republic. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran's oil exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4.

According to the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), in total, 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).

Earlier this month, TPO Head Mohammadreza Modoudi said that the non-oil exports during spring of this year has not changed compared to the spring of previous year.

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.

'\$5b of non-oil revenues injected to NIMA since March'

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's non-oil exporters injected \$5 billion of their revenues into the Forex Management Integrated System, locally known as NIMA, since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21), IRNA reported, quoting an official with the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

According to CBI Vice Governor for Foreign Currency Affairs, Gholamreza Panahi, one of the main policies of the CBI is facilitating exports so that the revenues could support the economy.

Iran provides foreign currency for the country's exporters with significantly low exchange rates and the exporters are obliged to return the equivalent of the supplied fund in the form of foreign currency.

NIMA, which seeks to boost transparency, create competitiveness among exchange shops and a secure environment for traders, is a new chance for importers to supply their required foreign currency without specific problems and for exporters to re-inject their earned foreign currency to domestic forex market. It was inaugurated to allow exporters of non-oil commodities to sell their foreign currency earnings to importers of consumer products.

In mid-November last year, CBI issued the instructions on return details of the hard currency earned by exporters back to the domestic financial system.

The instructions, aimed to lead the export revenues from the non-oil exports

back into the country's economy through NIMA, mandate all the exporters of goods and services to guarantee bringing back to the country the foreign currency amount allocated to them by the government at lower prices than the free market.

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

Based on the directive, for the petrochemical sector, the exporters should present at least 60 percent of their foreign currency incomes into the domestic Forex Management Integrated System (locally known as NIMA), and a maximum 10 percent could be injected into the financial system in the form of hard currency and the rest could be used for importing necessary goods.

As for other exporters, at least 50 percent of the total earnings should be presented at the NIMA system and a maximum 20 percent could be distributed in form of hard currency and the rest can be used for imports.

Earlier that month, the CBI Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati had said that "so far the country's exporters have re-injected 60 percent of their total exports revenues in the form of foreign currency into the country's financial system."

According to CBI, last year some \$18.7 billion of foreign currency was returned into the country's financial system by the exporters.

Over \$395m of foreign investment projects ratified in 2 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry has approved 14 new foreign investment projects, worth \$395.868 million during the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-May 21), IRNA reported.

Of the mentioned projects, seven projects worth \$27.190 million are underway and the other seven with \$368.678 million are going through final stages to be operational.

According to the Industry Ministry, four of the above-mentioned projects worth \$11.568 million have been fully funded by foreign investors, and the other ten projects worth \$384.3 million, have been funded by joint ventures. Thirteen of these projects were industrial

projects and only one was related to the business sector.

The Netherlands, Turkey and Germany are the first three investor countries in terms of investment volume in these projects, and food products and beverages, tobacco products, as well as rubber and plastics comprised the first three investment groups in terms of the number of projects.

As reported, in the mentioned period, a total of 28 projects worth \$550.459 million have been approved in all the country's economic sectors.

In late June, Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjpasand said that the government is providing special facilities for foreign investors that bring in over

\$250,000 of investment into the country.

"Following a plan for supporting foreign investment, we have provided facilities for attracting foreign investments over \$250,000, and on this basis we are expected to have a good performance in foreign investment this year," Dejjpasand said in a press conference.

The official noted that in the Q4 of the last Iranian calendar year (December 21, 2018-March 20, 2019), nearly \$4 billion of foreign investment was attracted in various areas while the figure stood at \$1.7 billion in last year's first half (March 21 -September 22, 2018).

Earlier in May, President Hassan Rouhani ordered executive bodies to take immediate steps to remove obstacles to domestic and



foreign investment in the country.

The decisions came as the U.S. has introduced the harshest ever sanctions against Iran in line with the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" on Iran, a policy that analysts and politicians say is intended to strangulate Iran.

'Domestic production opportunities exhibit to support domestic producers'

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The vice chairman of Iranian Parliament (Majlis)'s Faction of Production and Employment said holding exhibition of domestic production opportunities and manufacturing boom is a valuable positive measure supported by Majlis.

Speaking to Shata, Ali Golmoradi said production boom is a necessity in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21) which has been named as the Year of Pickup in Production by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

While holding such exhibitions showcases domestic capabilities and capacities, they support domestic production and producers as well, he underlined.

The first exhibition of domestic production opportunities and manufacturing boom is



due to be held in late current Iranian calendar month of Tir (July 18-21), IRNA reported on Saturday, quoting the board chairman of Iran's Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO) as saying.

According to Mohammad-Baqer Ali, the exhibition is aimed at joining the country's top manufacturers and producers in the industry sector with the academic and knowledge-based

institutions in order to help them reach their great potentials.

"The exhibition is the largest and most suitable national platform for bilateral and multilateral negotiations between the knowledge suppliers and the demand parties in the country's industry for improving production," he said.

Ali further explained that in this exhibition industry parties active in various fields like automotive and spare parts, household appliances, mineral industries, oil, gas and petrochemical industries, telecommunications and marine industries will present their technological or financial needs and requirements and knowledge supply partners such as universities, research centers, knowledge-based companies, investors, entrepreneurs as well as fundraising and supportive organizations

will provide them with their technological, technical or even financial needs and wants.

Inviting the country's major industrial units for attending this exhibition, IDRO's chairman of the board said "Companies and industrial complexes can present their needs for various types of parts and machines at the exhibition, and knowledge-based and technology companies can learn more about the industrial needs of the country."

Since the U.S. reimposed sanctions on Iran to pressure the country's economy, Iran has been taking all necessary measures to mitigate the impact of the sanctions and counter the U.S. actions.

Improving and boosting domestic production has been one of the major strategies that Iran has been following in the past two years in order to increase its independence.

Iran to offer 3-year oil future contracts to foreign buyers

E N E R G Y TEHRAN — Iran is going to offer up to three-year oil future contracts for certain international buyers in an effort to offset the impacts of U.S. sanctions on its oil exports, Shana reported.

Iranian Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri said on Tuesday that "powerful economies" interested in buying Iranian oil will be provided with long term contracts at pre-determined prices.

"Any powerful country that wishes to work with Iran can pre-order Iran's oil for the next two to three years," Jahangiri said.

The second top government official said the measure was part of Iran's efforts to minimize the impacts of U.S. sanctions on the Iranian economy and its oil revenues.

Iran has seen a decline in oil income since the U.S. restored a series of economic sanctions on the country that had been lifted as part of a nuclear agreement in 2015.

Since the U.S.'s withdrawal from Iran's nuclear pact in May 2018, vowing to drive Iran's oil exports down to zero, the Islamic Republic has been taking various measures



to counter the U.S. actions and 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.

Offering future oil contracts is a first of its kind for Iran, a major global supplier which used to earn around \$150 billion a year from oil exports before the sanctions started in November.

That would create an opportunity for buyers who believe oil prices would increase as a result of protectionist policies adopted by the U.S. government.

Jahangiri said major buyers could count on Iran's ability to deliver oil at future dates as the country has maintained its production at three to four million barrels per day (bpd).

A similar mechanism has been proposed to European buyers of Iran's oil as Tehran believes it could provide a credit line for a special company launched by Britain, France and Germany to keep up trade with Iran at the time of U.S. sanctions.

Iran is also exempt from an agreement between major global oil exporters to maintain cuts of 1.2 million bpd until March 2020.

Iran completely self-sufficient in upstream oil equipment

E N E R G Y TEHRAN — Managing director of Iran's Oil Industries Engineering and Construction Company (OIEC) said currently all the necessary equipment for the oil industry's upstream sector are produced inside the country, IRIB reported.

Speaking in a signing ceremony with an Iranian company for providing oil field equipment, Gholamreza Manouchehri noted, "Although currently there is no particular problem in our oil production, and domestic and export needs are being met, we are focusing on increasing recovery factor of our fields in order to protect our interests in shared fields."

Emphasizing the fact that despite the U.S. sanctions, Iran continues its development plans in the oil industry, Manouchehri said, "Beside their economic benefits, such plans will encourage domestic companies and create new job opportunities."

The official further noted that currently Iranian companies are active in a variety of areas in the oil industry, saying "Supported by the Oil Ministry, domestic companies have been also engaged in the upstream sector projects."

The OIEC managing director stated that some of the equipment used in upstream projects are being manufactured

for the first time inside the country, adding that "following this path, I can say we are able to make all the equipment needed by oil industry's upstream sector, inside the country."

In August 2018, Iranian Oil Ministry passed a directive to ban the import of 84 items among oil industry equipment which could be produced inside the country.

"In line with the implementation of the Supreme Leader's policies in supporting Iran-made products and in order to maximize the use of domestic products and services, main companies and their subcontractors (directly or indirectly) are prohibited from purchasing foreign products and equipment listed in the attachment of this notice", the order read.

Wellhead equipment, desalinating packages, anti-corrosions, sulfur recovery catalysts, wellhead control panels and etc. were among the 84 items which are listed as banned items.

In May 2018, Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from an international deal with Iran, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and in November the sanctions were reimposed on the country's oil sector.

Since then, most of the foreign companies and manufacturers of oil industry equipment which were collaborating with Iran, cut their ties threatened by the consequences of



having economic ties with Tehran.

Iranian oil industry, however, has been taking all necessary measures to push through the situation and withstand the pressures imposed by the sanction.

In this regard, moving toward domestic production and constructing all the necessary equipment inside the country has been become a top priority for the Iranian oil ministry in the past few years.

All eyes on the Middle East regarding liquefied natural gas and crude oil exports

With conflict brewing between the U.S. and Iran, some Americans have expressed concerns that sanctions imposed by the U.S. could disrupt liquefied natural gas markets here at home.

According to krystv.com, the "attacks of the tankers coming through the Strait of Hormuz have really kind of spooked the market," Iain Vasey said.

However, District 27 Congressman Michael Cloud said there is no reason to panic.

"We're talking about a hypothetical here

when it comes to Iran," Cloud said. "Iran is known for making big, bold statements and having little action behind it."

Vasey, CEO of the Corpus Christi Regional Economic Development Corporation, said conflicts could result in a global domino effect.

"It's one of the largest natural gas producers in the world and they're shipping most of their product to China and India and South Korea, so there's going to be a knock-on effect with this instability in the Persian Gulf States."

Cloud said the U.S. is keeping a proactive, watchful eye on any reaction from China. The "big deal will be to see is how China will react to this. The big thing to note, though, is that we have more of a demand right now when it comes to LNG, so there's still a great potential for LNG," Cloud said. "It becomes a little bit of a shell game when you try to predict what may happen."

Vasey agreed with Congressman Cloud that the Port of Corpus Christi and overall

South Texas economy could actually have the upper-hand in global affairs moving forward.

"With U.S. produced natural gas through LNG and producers such as Cheniere in our area, it's stable, it's predictable, and it doesn't have to go through the Strait of Hormuz as Qatar natural gas would be," Vasey said. "You want stability, predictability and safety, and that's one of the things that in South Texas, we might be able to take advantage of in the long run."

Total, EDF Renewables to develop 700 MW solar power projects in India

Total, one of the world's major integrated oil & gas company along with French energy group EDF Renewables, will develop 700 MW of solar power projects in India through their joint subsidiary EDEN Renewables India.

As per business-standard.com, in a public statement, Total Eren and EDF Renewables announced signing of four 25-year long term Power Purchase Agreements (PPA), for four solar power projects totaling 716 MWp of

installed capacities in northern India.

These projects have been awarded to EDEN Renewables India, their solar photovoltaic equally owned joint venture in India, it said.

With a planned production of nearly 1,200 GWh per year, these solar PV projects will generate the energy required to meet the annual electricity needs of 1.1 million Indian households. The construction is due to start

by the end of this year and commissioning is expected towards the end of 2020, said the company.

"These large-scale projects are a lever for local economic development, they enable us to strengthen our presence in India and consider new projects in this country which represents a strategic market for EDF Renewables. These landmark projects fit perfectly with the EDF Group's Cap 2030

strategy of doubling its renewable energy capacity in operation between 2015 and 2030 in France and worldwide," said Frederic Bello, Executive Vice President, International Operations at EDF Renewables.

EDEN Renewables India has been building and operating solar projects jointly owned by the two partners in India since 2016. It currently has 207 MW of projects in Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh.

Increasingly weak demand outlook caps oil prices

By Nick Cunningham

Oil demand continues to soften, which could result in a supply surplus in the second half of this year.

In its latest Short-Term Energy Outlook, the EIA downgraded its forecast for global oil demand growth to just 1.1 million barrels per day (mb/d) this year, down from the 1.2 mb/d the agency forecasted last month and from 1.4 mb/d in May.

The "increasingly weak outlook" for demand could upend global balances. In June, the EIA thought that global inventories would decline by a rather significant 0.3 mb/d in 2019, as OPEC+ cuts and still robust consumption tightened up the oil market.

What a difference a month makes. The souring economic picture now means that inventories could actually increase by 0.1 mb/d, the agency said in its latest report. In other words, even with the OPEC+ cuts extended, the oil market could remain in a state of surplus throughout this year and next.

The IEA and OPEC report their versions of the monthly oil market report later this week, both of which could contain some downward revisions in demand. "While the IEA reduced its 2019 demand growth forecast by 120kb/d to 1.18mb/d in its June report, it increased its forecast for H2-2019 y/y growth by 130kb/d to 1.64mb/d," Standard Chartered wrote in a recent report. "We expect to see that forecast scaled back in coming months."

The top energy forecasters

The top energy forecasters may also be a bit too optimistic on 2020 figures as well. The "IEA expects U.S. oil demand growth to accelerate to 350kb/d in 2020 from 180kb/d in 2019; we think this runs counter to the trend of most forecasts



for the US economy," Standard Chartered added.

But, the supply side of the equation is also bearish. The growth of U.S. oil production alone could exceed the increase in total worldwide consumption. While the world will consume an additional 1.1 mb/d this year, the U.S. could add 1.4 mb/d, with most of the growth coming from the Permian. Texas and New Mexico will add more barrels to the global market than all of the world's consumers can handle.

That is an impressive feat for shale drillers, but as has been exhaustively chronicled in recent months and years, record production doesn't necessarily add up to profits for the industry.

In fact, despite the lofty projections for shale growth by the EIA, the industry is facing financial pressure with oil prices at their current levels. The rig count continues to fall.

Standard Chartered noted that there has been a pronounced drop off in drilling activity in Oklahoma, where companies are growing disillusioned with the SCOOP and STACK plays.

The shale plays were once thought of as sort of the "next Permian," but drilling results have proved disappointing. The rock formations have turned out to be more complex

than previously thought, the output less than hoped for, and as a result, the financial returns have been poor.

Rigs fall in U.S. drilling

The "(year-on-year) fall in Oklahoma's oil drilling is 41 (31.1%), which together with the 54 rigs y/y in fall Texas (11.1%) more than fully accounts for the 75 rigs fall in total U.S. oil drilling," Standard Chartered pointed out.

The next near-term catalyst for the oil market will be decisions made by the U.S. Federal Reserve. Evidence of a mounting economic slowdown are widely expected to result in interest rate cuts, although how far the central bank will roll back recent hikes remains to be seen. On Wednesday and Thursday, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell will testify before Congress, which will likely offer more clues into the bank's plans.

A rate cut could provide a jolt to crude prices, both because lower interest rates are likely to extend the economic expansion and because lower rates tend to drag down the dollar, which would make crude more affordable to many people around the globe. However, with all of that said, a rate cut is already somewhat factored into oil prices, which would reduce the impact when the Fed announces the move.

One uncertainty is the extent to which the latest strong jobs report undercuts the rationale for rate cuts. The dollar gained strength after the U.S. government reported unexpectedly strong employment growth in June, suggesting that traders began to price in smaller interest rate cuts.

"In the bigger picture, oil prices are stuck between the positive impact of the trade war ceasefire and OPEC+ cuts, and the negative impact of a higher dollar and weak global macroeconomic data," Jens Naervig Pedersen, a senior analyst at Danske Bank A/S, told Bloomberg.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Oil gains after U.S. stockpiles drop, rigs evacuated

Oil prices rose on Wednesday after industry data showed U.S. stockpiles fell far more than expected, alleviating concerns about oversupply, while major U.S. producers evacuated rigs in the Gulf of Mexico ahead of a brewing storm.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude Clc1 had climbed 93 cents, or 1.6%, to \$58.76 by 0652 GMT, having earlier risen to \$58.84. Brent LCOc1 was up 70 cents, or 1.1%, at \$64.86, after earlier touching \$64.95.

The U.S. and global benchmarks have gained this year as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and big producers such as Russia have curbed output to bolster prices.

However, ongoing trade tensions have raised fears about weaker demand, and investors have been on the lookout for signs that rapidly increasing U.S. production is being consumed.

U.S. crude stockpiles fell more than forecast last week, while gasoline inventories decreased and distillate stocks built, data from industry group the American Petroleum Institute (API) showed on Tuesday.

Crude inventories dropped by 8.1 million barrels in the week to July 5 to 461.4 million, compared with analyst expectations for a decrease of 3.1 million barrels, according to the data.

Official figures from the government's Energy Information Administration (EIA) are due later on Wednesday.

"Prices are finely balanced right now as investors await fresh stimulus," said Fawad Razaqada, technical analyst at FOREX.com. "The stimulus could come in the form of a sharp change in U.S. crude oil inventories."

U.S. oil was also supported as major producers began evacuating and shutting in production in the Gulf of Mexico as a tropical disturbance may become a storm later on Wednesday or Thursday.

Oil prices have been under pressure from concerns about global economic growth amid growing signs of harm from the U.S.-China trade war that has rumbled on over the last year. Lower economic growth typically means reduced demand for commodities such as oil.

"Global economic growth remains under pressure, with the latest manufacturing surveys weakening," NAB said in a note.

"This is likely to impact demand for commodities, although stimulus measures may in some cases support commodity demand," NAB said, citing China as an example.

Still, U.S. crude oil production is forecast to rise to a record of 12.36 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2019 from the high of 10.96 million bpd last year, the EIA's Short Term Energy Outlook said on Tuesday.

OPEC and allied producers led by Russia agreed last week to extend their supply-cutting deal until March 2020. Brent has risen nearly 20% in 2019, supported by the pact and tensions in the Middle East, especially the row over Iran's nuclear program.

Wind energy market growth probability, key vendors and future scenario

The global wind energy market report also includes qualitative insights of the market such as drivers, restrains, value chain, regulatory framework and trade statistics. The value chain has been analyzed in detail covering key stages of market.

Global Wind Energy Market Size by Installation Type (Onshore Installations, Offshore Installations), by Turbine Size (Small Wind, Large Wind), by Turbine Type (Horizontal Axis, Vertical Axis), by Region and Forecast 2019 to 2025. The market report also includes qualitative insights of the market such as drivers, restrains, value chain, regulatory framework and trade statistics. The value chain has been analyzed in detail covering key stages of the market.

Wind power is obtained by harnessing the kinetic energy created by the air in motion and then transforming it into electrical energy. This is done using wind turbines or wind energy conversion systems. The global energy system is disrupted by renewable energy sources assisted by the tremendous fall in the cost of generation of electricity from these sources.

Wind Energy Market: Key Players are Acciona, Enel Green Power, ENGIE, Vattenfall, Ørsted A/S, and NRG Energy, Inc. These players own large wind farms and invest heavily in setting up new wind farms or acquiring a stake in local wind farms with a view to increasing their power generation capacity.

The Wind Energy Market growth is primarily accelerated by the rising number of wind farm installation both offshore and onshore. The global Market analysis indicates the dominance of onshore capacity installation and also estimates the sustained dominance during the forecast period. Wind farms installed with several wind turbines generate electric energy by converting the kinetic energy in the wind. Utility scale turbines ranging from 100 kilowatts to as large as several megawatts are grouped together in the wind farms.

Global onshore wind energy installations stood at over 90% in 2017, as the cost reduction for every doubling of cumulative capacity is estimated to be around 21%. This cost advantage has prompted heavy investment into the onshore wind installation projects. However, during the forecast period, the offshore wind installation are expected to maintain a higher CAGR owing to the Wind Energy Market policy support, technology advances and a rapidly maturing supply chain. This is turning offshore wind an increasingly viable option for harnessing the more consistent and higher wind speeds available offshore.

Adroit Market Research is an India-based business analytics and consulting company. Our target audience is a wide range of corporations, manufacturing companies, product/technology development institutions and industry associations that require understanding of a market's size, key trends, participants and future outlook of an industry. We intend to become our clients' knowledge partner and provide them with valuable market insights to help create opportunities that increase their revenues. We follow a code— Explore, Learn and Transform. At our core, we are curious people who love to identify and understand industry patterns, create an insightful study around our findings and churn out money-making roadmaps.

(Source: Consumerreportsreview.com)

Trump-Kushner plan trying to impose one-sided Israeli victory: Ex-UN official

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – A former official at the United Nations and professor of international law said the so-called peace plan developed by US President Donald Trump and his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, is seeking “a one-sided Israeli victory” and treats the conflict as resolved.

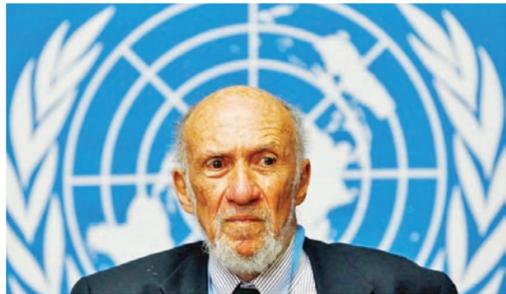
Trump-Kushner Plan Trying to Impose One-Sided Israeli Victory: Ex-UN Official

“The Trump/Kushner ‘plan’ is not looking toward genuine diplomatic negotiations,” Professor Richard A. Falk said in an interview with the Tasnim News Agency.

“It is trying to impose a one-sided Israeli victory, and treat the conflict as resolved,” he said, adding, “This overlooks the robustness of Palestinian resistance, dramatized by the Great March of Return in Gaza, and by the growing global solidarity movement, as featuring the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) Campaign.”

Professor Richard Anderson Falk is the author or co-author of 20 books and the editor or co-editor of another 20 volumes. In 2008, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) appointed him to a six-year term as a United Nations Special Rapporteur on “the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967”.

The following is the full text of the interview:



■ Bahrain hosted the so-called “Peace to Prosperity” conference to discuss what the US has described as the economic part of President Donald Trump’s “deal of the century”, a plan which aims to consign the Palestinian cause to oblivion. The Palestinian leadership boycotted the meeting on June 25 and 26 in Manama, leading critics to question the credibility of the event. In your opinion, what goals are the US and Israel pursuing by holding the conference? Would they reach their goals?

A: It needs to be kept in mind that the purpose of ‘Peace to Prosperity’ is neither peace nor prosperity, but securing an Israeli ‘victory’ and a Palestinian surrender with respect to the political agenda of achieving basic national rights, especially the right of self-determination. Thus, the Manama meeting is a success to the extent it made the proposed bargain of economic normalization in exchange for political defeat seem of material benefit to the governments of the region. The reactions to the event seem very subdued suggesting that the Kushner/Trump initiative has had very little, if any, political impact so far. The secondary objective is one of public relations, being able to blame the anticipated failure to achieve ‘the deal of the century’ on the Palestinians. I fear the Western mainstream media will lend some support to this outrageous claim, which confuses the rejection of American ultimatum, preceded by a series of pro-Israel policy moves (Jerusalem, settlements, UNRWA funding, PLO offices in America, Golan annexations) hostile to the Palestinians as signaling the Trump shift from pro-Israeli partisanship of the Obama era to pro-Israeli coercive diplomacy currently practiced by Washington.

■ Some analysts say that the Trump administration’s focus on an economic plan, led by his son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner, is a strategic mistake that could stymie the peace negotiations even before they begin. What is your assessment of the US approach to the conflict and the future of the plan? Is it practical at all?

A: The Trump/Kushner ‘plan’ is not looking toward genuine diplomatic negotiations. It is trying to impose a one-sided Israeli victory, and treat the conflict as resolved. This overlooks the robustness of Palestinian resistance, dramatized by the Great March of Return in Gaza, and by the growing global solidarity movement, as featuring the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) Campaign. It should be appreciated that such a campaign managed over time to delegitimize South Africa’s apartheid regime to such an extent that it collapses. Such a soft power Palestinian victory can still be anticipated if this combination of resistance, solidarity, and patience persist in a manner that imposes sufficient costs on Israel for its reliance on an apartheid structure to achieve its ‘security’ at the expense of Palestinian basic rights, to lead Israeli leaders and citizens to recalculate their interests so as to accept a political compromise based on the equality of rights of the two peoples coexisting in historic Palestine. Remember that all of the anti-colonial victories of the 20th century were achieved by the weaker side militarily.

■ Israeli occupation forces have killed 84 Palestinians during the first half of 2019, including eight women and 19 children, according to local media reports. On Friday, Israeli forces once again opened fire on Palestinians taking part in the peaceful “Great March of Return” protests, along the separation fence between the besieged Gaza Strip and occupied territories. According to media reports, more than 270 people, including 52 children, have been killed since the demonstrations began in March 2018. Most of the dead and the thousands wounded were unarmed civilians against whom Israel was using excessive force. Why has the international community, particularly the Western mainstream media, made a muted response to the Tel Aviv regime’s crimes against Palestinians so far?

A: Israel reliance on excessive force and collective punishment to deal with the Great March of Return, and its grievances and lawful demands, should be treated as violations of the international humanitarian law of a severity that amounts to crimes against humanity. It is a shocking reflection of media bias that it accords massive attention to human rights violations in Turkey of a relatively lesser character while ignoring and even rationalizing much more serious violations by Israel. Although Western liberals have counseled Palestinians to rely on nonviolence in their opposition to Israel, such reliance as in the Great March has been consistently met with brutal force by Israel and by virtual silence in the world media, by the governments of the world, and even by the United Nations. It is a case of geopolitics eclipsing moral and legal accountability exposing the lack of political will to protect the innocent and vulnerable from abuse by the vindictive and militarily powerful.

American electoral rigors become more serious

Biden vs. Harris and Trump!

TEHRAN — In recent days, American media have focused on three presidential candidates: Joe Biden, Donald Trump and Kamala Harris!

An overview of the latest news and polls in the United States can be remarkable in this regard:

Biden Remains By Far the Strongest Candidate Against Trump

Josh Marshall wrote in “talkingpoints-memo” that When we think about politics all of us are prone to meld together things we support with things that are viable, possible, popular. With this in mind I want to flag to your attention one part of the WaPo/ABC news poll that came out over the weekend. One headline out of this poll is that Trump’s approval rating is the highest ever recorded for this particular poll. We shouldn’t draw too much from that data point since it’s only slightly higher than the average for this poll and to date other polls show no significant strengthening.

But I want to draw your attention to this finding.

I want to separate here what you may think of Joe Biden and his candidacy and fairly extensive data we have on his relative strength vs Trump. There are a lot of people out there insisting that Biden will be a general election trainwreck for the Democrats. He’s too old-fashioned, has too much baggage, is too undisciplined a campaigner, is too out of touch with the causes and issues that animate a younger and more diverse generation of voters. Each claim has a litany of evidence behind it. I mean, just a couple days ago he was saying he’d be open to renominating the 66 year old Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court.

Many argue that nominating Biden would encourage third party runs of the Jill Stein or Ralph Nader variety which, as I’ve argued, is almost a prerequisite for Trump’s reelection. I worry about this a great deal. But look at the other/neither/don’t know number. These are pretty small differences. But at least this poll provides little evidence for this.

Again, these critiques make a lot of sense. But you simply cannot make this claim about Biden being a weak general election candidate without grappling with the fact that basically every poll for months shows that he is significantly stronger than every other Democrat up against Trump.

As noted, this is a relatively good poll for Trump. So this poll shows Biden with a 10 point margin while the rest are basically tied. Most polls show something slightly different. They show Biden with similar or stronger leads and the others maybe two or three points better. A Quinnipiac poll from early June showed Biden with a 13 point advantage but Harris was up 8 points, Warren 7, Sanders 9, etc. But the pattern is universal.

Obviously, this could change. I’ve been expecting it to change, partly in negative terms for Biden and more in positive movement



for Harris and Warren especially. (Sanders is a known quantity and has near universal name recognition. I don’t expect his numbers to change.) So far though it hasn’t.

A final point. Readers sometimes say these leads are about perceptions of electability. That’s wrong. Primary polls are heavily driven by perceptions of electability. There’s a crowd effect and people really, really want to beat Trump. But the up for grab voters in general election polls are people deciding between the two parties and to a lesser extent voting or not voting. By definition people who float between Republicans and Democrats aren’t picking Democrats because of their electability versus Republicans.

To state the obvious, none of this means Democrats have to support Biden. Even this relatively negative poll shows the others very much in contention. But wishful thinking won’t change the fact that the evidence we have to date shows Biden, whatever his faults, is the strongest challenger.

Jill Biden on Kamala Harris’ attack: The American people ‘didn’t buy it’

CNN reported that Jill Biden says California Sen. Kamala Harris implied her husband Joe Biden is racist with her attack on the former vice president during the first Democratic presidential debate.

In an exclusive interview with CNN’s Chris Cuomo airing on Monday, Jill Biden called Harris’ criticism of Biden over race and segregation “the biggest surprise” to her in the party’s 2020 race so far -- but said voters “didn’t buy it.”

Her comments come as Biden and Harris battle to win over black voters, a crucial constituency in the Democratic nominating contest. Biden has pointed to his time as former President Barack Obama’s vice president as well as his own legacy on civil rights to defend himself, while Harris has taken aim at elements of Biden’s earlier career in the Senate.

In the late-June debate, Harris criticized Biden’s comments at a private fundraiser earlier in the month about the “civility” of

the Senate during an era in which he worked with segregationists in the chamber. She also lambasted his early-career opposition to federally mandated busing.

“I think that they were looking at the past. I mean, the one thing you cannot say about Joe is that he’s a racist. I mean, he got into politics because of his commitment to civil rights. And then to be elected with Barack Obama, and then someone is saying, you know, you’re a racist?” she said.

Cuomo responded that Harris had begun her criticism of Biden by saying she does not believe he is racist.

“I know, but as soon as I heard those words, I thought, ‘uh oh, what’s coming next,’” Jill Biden said.

She added: “The American people know Joe Biden. They know his values. They know what he stands for. And they didn’t buy it.”

Joe Biden, meanwhile, said he’s been most surprised that the attacks have come from Democrats who know him.

“I’ve been surprised, not about the attacks, but I’ve been surprised at the intentions sometimes of the attacks, coming from people who know me,” the former vice president said.

“It doesn’t make me second-guess, but it makes me decide that -- look, this race is about the future, man,” he said. “And we can go back and pick everybody’s record apart, if you want to go back 20, 30, 40 years, and take it out of context, because no one knows the context of the moment. And so it’s really easy to distort. It just surprised me a little bit, some of the stuff that’s come out, in terms of the attack lines. But I’m not going to go there.”

In the interview, the Bidens also praised Hunter Biden for opening up in a recent interview with The New Yorker about his struggle with addiction.

“Look, everybody faces pain,” Hunter Biden said in the interview. “Everybody has trauma. There’s addiction in every family. I was in that darkness. I was in that tunnel -- it’s a never-ending tunnel. You don’t get rid of it. You figure out how to deal with it.”

The youngest Biden son, whose older brother, Beau, died after a battle with brain cancer in 2015, has been in and out of rehab several times. In 2014, he was discharged from the Navy Reserve after testing positive for cocaine.

“We’ve seen the struggle, and we know that most American families are dealing with some sort of struggle like we are,” Jill Biden said. “And I think they can relate to us, you know, as parents who are hopeful and are supportive of our son, and we will continue to be supportive. And I think that makes us more empathetic about helping other Americans.”

“He will beat this. This kid, I’m telling you -- you know, knew Beau. Beau’s my soul. Hunter’s my heart,” Joe Biden said. “And Hunter’s been through some tough times, but he’s fighting. He’s fighting. He’s never given up. He’s the most honorable, decent person I know.”

Here’s why Donald Trump can totally win in 2020!

But also CNN reported that Electability, many liberal Democrats will tell you this cycle, is a farce. It doesn’t really exist. It’s simply a scare tactic used by establishment, centrist Democrats to keep voters from choosing a true-blue liberal for the nomination to run against President Donald Trump in 2020.

And there’s some evidence to suggest they’re right -- namely Trump himself. Trump’s GOP opponents in the 2016 race spent the entire campaign insisting that in nominating the controversial billionaire the party would be forgoing its chances of beating Hillary Clinton in the general election. Then, Trump won. So long, electability!

Except that in a new Washington Post-ABC News poll there’s at least the suggestion that who Democrats nominate could make a difference in whether Trump wins a second term or not. Former Vice President Joe Biden leads Trump 53%-43% in that national survey. But Biden is the only Democrat with a statistically significant edge over the incumbent. California Sen. Kamala Harris took 48% to Trump’s 46%, while Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders stood at 49% to Trump’s 48%. Trump was tied with both Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren and South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg.

Biden’s lead over Trump is explained, somewhat, by the fact that Biden is a wholly known commodity on the national stage -- the result of eight years as Barack Obama’s vice president and more than three decades of service in the Senate. Biden is also known -- even by independents and lean-Republicans -- as a centrist, unlike, say, Sanders, who has unapologetically embraced every imaginable tenet of liberalism.

While the next eight months(ish) will decide the electability question vis-a-vis Biden, the takeaway from the Post-ABC poll -- or at least one of the takeaways -- should be that Trump isn’t going to be a pushover in November 2020.

Reconciliation doesn’t work in face of imperialist powers: U.S. Analyst

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – An American political commentator defended the resistance policy adopted by countries like Iran and Venezuela and said the strategy of reconciliation does not work in the face of “imperialist powers”.

Reconciliation Doesn’t Work in Face of Imperialist Powers: US Analyst

“I think the imperialist powers fear nothing quite so much as countries that retain their independence,” John Stepling, who is based in Norway, told Tasnim in an interview. “But Iran of course, too, is viewed (by the powers) as incalculant -- and the US under the current administration is having tantrums in frustration,” he said, adding, “There is no reconciliation; it doesn’t work, period.”

Stepling is a well-known author, playwright and an original founding member of the Padua Hills Playwrights Festival, a two-time NEA recipient, Rockefeller Fellow in theater, and PEN-West winner for playwrighting. He is also a regular political commentator for a number of media outlets around the world.

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 hounded 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: I think the imperialist powers fear nothing quite so much as countries that retain their independence. Leaders such as Gaddafi and Chavez, Assad or even Evo Morales, are going to be targeted by the US. If one looks at Castro’s longevity it is clear that his refusal to ever compromise with the Imperialist West was the right strategy. Qaddafi was killed, of course, for also harboring pan Arab designs and a pan African currency. Such things are not allowed to the leadership in Washington. Each case is different, of course, Palestinians face a unique set of difficulties and are faced with a very limited menu of choices compared to Maduro, say, or even Assad. But Iran of course, too, is viewed as incalculant -- and the US under the current administration is having tantrums in frustration. There is no reconciliation; it doesn’t work, period.

■ 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: Of course. For smaller countries, especially in Africa, I think, where recolonization is escalating, the realization that the Western financial establishment is not needed would be a huge bonus. Those countries must look to the example of Fidel and Morales and read and study the anti-imperialist literature that is out there. When you think of the Sandinistas (in Nicaragua) and imagine the giant US hegemony so scared of the ideology they represented that they had sent the military, the CIA and destroy(ed) the country, you realize the power of that refusal. The reason the US wants to destroy Maduro and the Chavistas is not because they want oil, though that is a nice bonus, but because the ideology

terrifies them.

■ In an op-ed article written for Tasnim, Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani warned the European countries against the risks of inaction on the US administration’s unilateral policies, saying the current EU leaders will be held accountable for the future challenges in Europe. Shamkhani criticized Europe for becoming an unimportant and passive actor despite being humiliated by the US and being faced with the destructive impacts of Washington’s unilateralism, which he said have affected several international treaties. What is your take on that? Is it not better for the EU to stand against US bullying and unilateralism?

A: This is a very timely topic. Europe is frustrated. Germany is losing money with the sanctions against Iran. France is frustrated. But they loathe to do anything to anger Washington and additionally they have such a long history of obedience to their lord and master, a history that has formed not just their consciousness but even affected the very structure of finance and trade that they have a hard time thinking independently. But the EU is in crises. The EU has been a failure for the most part and I think many leaders, from the left and right, recognize that Washington never has anyone’s interests in mind except their own. But all it takes is one... perhaps an Italy or Hungary, one of the new quasi-fascist governments, will decide to impress their constituency and make a stand... or one of the more left-leaning. Or Scandinavia even, who are offended in general with US behavior. Not policy so much, but just the vulgarity and ignorance of Trump and Pompeo et al. But clearly, Washington is a force for unrest globally. The more countries can find it in themselves to resist that, the better.

America's National Security Advisor's ambiguous destiny

Will Bolton be ousted?

By Ali Azimi

TEHRAN — US National Security Advisor still has a dilemma! John Bolton is aware of the possibility of his dismissal by Donald Trump. Many traditional Republicans have urged President Donald Trump to remove Bolton from power before the 2020 presidential election. In George W. Bush's presidency, people like Dick Cheney and John Bolton have become the messengers of the White House's defeat in the world. This time Bolton has also become a messenger for defeating Trump and the US in the world. The US National Security Adviser is having difficult days. John Bolton has not been able to achieve his goals toward the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Bolton's story is a sad story for American citizens! He is today a symbol of the embarrassment of all Americans. Bolton was one of the influential officials in the country since the start of the war in Iraq in 2003, by the George Walker Bush administration until 2008 (when the neocons in the US were at the head of the political and executive equations of the country). Bolton and his entourage have repeatedly become the symbol of the failure of the US in the West Asia region. However, Bolton's defeat in the US is now far broader! John Bolton, the US National Security Adviser, continues his anti-Iranian negotiations in various fields. In recent months, he has been busy discussing the presence of Iran in Syria and, on the other hand, engaging in negotiations with other countries over Iran's sanctions. But the existing evidence suggest that the US National Security Adviser is not going to succeed in this regard. Here are some new analyses on Bolton's situation at the White House:

Trump couldn't ignore the contradictions of his foreign policy any longer

The Atlantic reported that yacheslav Molotov served in senior positions in the Soviet Union for more than a quarter century, including 10 years as Stalin's foreign minister. He was dismissed in 1949 when he fell out of favor with Stalin, but he found his way back in to the Foreign Ministry after the dictator's death in 1953. Over the next four years, he fought with the new Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev. According to Molotov's biographer, Geoffrey Roberts, Khrushchev "accused Molotov of being a dogmatist whose actions as foreign minister had united the USSR's imperialist enemies." The Soviet plenum passed a resolution that charged Molotov with opposing measures "to reduce international tension and strengthen world peace." Molotov was dismissed from his post and named ambassador to Outer Mongolia (what is now independent Mongolia). This role wasn't unimportant, and his fate was sweeter than those of Khrushchev's other party rivals—Georgy Malenkov was made to manage a power station in Kazakhstan and Lazar Kaganovich a potash factory in the Urals. Even so, Molotov was far, far from the action. Banished to Outer Mongolia quickly entered the English lexicon.

On June 30, another mustachioed foreign-policy chief found himself in Outer Mongolia. John Bolton was sent to the capital, Ulaanbaatar, while President Donald Trump stepped into North Korea to meet Kim Jong Un. Trump was accompanied by loyalists—Mike Pompeo, Mick Mulvaney, Jared and Ivanka Trump—and a new adviser, Fox News's Tucker Carlson, who is credited with talking the president out of striking Iran as his Cabinet had recommended. Trump invited Kim to the White House, and reports swirled that the United States would settle for a nuclear freeze by North Korea instead of denuclearization. In response, Bolton tweeted, "Neither the NSC staff or I have discussed or heard of any desire to 'settle for a nuclear freeze by North Korea.' This was a reprehensible attempt by someone to box in the President. There should be consequences." The words NSC staff or I were doing a lot of work, implying that others in the administration were behind the move. We now know that Stephen Biegun, the State Department's special envoy to North Korea, briefed reporters on Pompeo's plane back from Korea that the administration was considering a "complete freeze" to unlock the talks.

Trump's foreign policy has been full of twists and turns, but it has also followed a clear narrative arc. The 10-day period from June 20—when Trump reversed himself on Iran strikes—to the DMZ visit was among the most significant of his presidency, as he was forced to come to terms with the consequences and contradictions of his own decisions. Over the course of three decades, Trump has carefully nurtured two images of himself—as a dealmaker, and as a militarist. Bolton did all he could to encourage the latter. But even from faraway Ulaanbaatar this past weekend, it was clear that, when made to choose, Trump would opt for the former.

To understand where we are and where we are going, we must first understand where we have been. Trump became president with a set of deeply rooted visceral instincts about the world—hostility to alliances, skepticism of free trade, and support for authoritarian strongmen—but little idea about how to convert these beliefs into policy. He had few advisers qualified for high office who believed what he



believed. He was insecure. And so he turned to a number of highly experienced businessmen and former military officers to fill key national-security and foreign-policy positions—John Kelly, James Mattis, H. R. McMaster, Gary Cohn, and Rex Tillerson. These men saw their role as constraining the president, not empowering him. They measured their success by what they prevented from happening, rather than by what they made happen. In the Trump epoch, this was the age of constraint.

The president did not always listen to the "axis of adults." In fact, he took pleasure in defying them on occasion, but he usually returned to the fold under pressure. While delivering a speech at the new NATO headquarters in May 2017, Trump raised doubts about his commitment to the alliance when he took out a sentence endorsing Article 5, the mutual-defense clause of the NATO charter. After the ensuing uproar, he was persuaded to state his support for Article 5 at a press conference with the Romanian president and in a subsequent speech in Poland. Under the leadership of the axis of adults, the administration produced strategic documents reflecting the views of the establishment.

The president grew weary of the adult supervision and he gradually realized that he was the president. He could order his Cabinet members to do what he wished, even if they all objected. We can identify precisely when the age of constraint reached its peak and when it ended. The peak came on July 17, 2017, when the president sat in an interagency meeting to discuss the Iran nuclear deal—specifically the question of whether to recertify Iran's compliance, an assessment that the United States was required to make every six months. Trump's team presented him with three options, none of which involved leaving the deal. Trump was furious—he approved a recertification but promised that it would be the last one. By the next deadline, he wanted the option to leave. Bolton immediately began auditioning for the job as Trump's top security adviser, writing an article in National Review that laid out a plan to leave the Iran deal.

For the next few months, it was clear that Trump was intent on a change. He forced out the axis of adults, replacing Tillerson, Cohn, and McMaster with individuals who placed loyalty to the president over their own independent judgment. This ushered in the second phase of his presidency—the age of action. Trump now acted more freely, pursuing his instincts even when they conflicted with the advice of his officials. He announced talks with Kim Jong Un without consulting his Cabinet. He moved the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. He pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal. He imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum. He had a summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki. He started a trade war with China. His national security adviser, Bolton, effectively abolished the interagency process through which the Pentagon, State Department, CIA, and other entities have formal seats at the table where decisions are made. The removal of constraints was complete when Mattis resigned in December 2018 following Trump's promise to withdraw troops from Syria.

For Trump, the age of action was exhilarating. It fulfilled his expectations of what it meant to be president. But it couldn't last forever. His actions were always focused on the short term. They were frequently riven with contradictions. There never was an end goal or a strategy for how to get there. The United States is a very powerful country. It can make mistakes for some time without incurring the costs that normal powers would experience if they pursued the

same path. But it cannot do so indefinitely.

The age of reckoning finally arrived on June 21, when Trump ordered air strikes on Iran and then changed his mind. At this moment, the contradictions in his Iran policy were laid bare. Trump wanted to shred the Iran nuclear deal and impose maximum pressure on the Iranian regime. He also wanted to avoid embroiling America in a new conflict in the Middle East. He could not have both. But for more than a year, he pretended as if these two goals were not in conflict. Perhaps he believed the Iranians would surrender without a fight. Or that they would come to the negotiating table from a position of weakness. Or perhaps he did not think about the endgame at all until he had to.

For all his own flaws, Trump was not well served by his national security team. The axis of adults manipulated Trump by delaying, blocking, or blunting his requests. Bolton manipulated him by advocating for the most extreme options—such as imposing secondary sanctions on European countries to truly destroy the Iran nuclear deal, and pulling out of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty—when more modest ones would have sufficed. Bolton's priority has always been to advance his unilateralist theory of international law, and he seems unable to think strategically about America's interests.

It has been obvious for months that Trump did not want war with Iran, but Bolton kept the president from hearing from officials who would offer a contrary view to the hawks. Never one for protocol, Trump decided to go outside normal channels and started talking with Carlson, who now appears to be a confidant. It says a lot about Bolton's own insecurity that he would prefer to put his boss in the position of relying on a talk-show host rather than allow an interagency meeting where a diversity of views might be raised.

As during the previous twist in the narrative, Trump now finds himself with a national-security team out of sync with his preferences. Changes are inevitable. Pompeo will likely survive. He is nothing if not adaptable. After the Iran decision, he and Vice President Mike Pence let it be known that although they supported military action, they were equally enthusiastic about the president's U-turn. It's hard to see how Bolton can stay. Trump has long known that Bolton wants war more than he does. He sidelined him on North Korea and overruled him on Iran. For his part, Bolton has privately attacked Pompeo, long a Trump favorite, as falling captive to the State Department bureaucracy and has predicted that the North Korea policy will fail.

Bolton has given an unusually large number of interviews to reporters and has been rewarded with positive profiles lauding his influence and bureaucratic prowess. Those of us who predicted that he would cling to the post of national security adviser, as it would be the last job he'd ever get, may have been wrong. In fact, Bolton looks and sounds as if he is preparing to exit on his own terms. Better that than being sent on a never-ending tour of the world's most obscure places. For Bolton, leaving because he's too tough for Trump is the perfect way to save face. Otherwise, he may be remembered as the man who presided over one of the weakest national-security teams in modern American history and someone whose myopic obsessions—such as international treaties and communism in Venezuela—meant the United States lost precious time in preparing for the national-security challenges of the future.

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 hectored 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.

Yousef Alhelou: Increased range of Palestinian rockets forces Israel to accept ceasefire

TEHRAN (FNA) — Yousef Alhelou, Palestinian journalist, says Palestinians rockets which reach deep inside the occupied territories inflict casualties and cause panic among Israelis, warning them that they cannot impose their rules terms over Gazans.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with FNA, Yousef Alhelou commented on how Israel was paralyzed by the fear of cooperation between Palestinians resistance groups, saying, "Israel cannot underestimate the strength and preparations of Palestinian resistance groups, especially after they formed a chamber of joint operations and worked together."

Israel and Palestine reached a ceasefire agreement to stop the recent Israeli attacks. The ceasefire came after three days of Israeli attacks on the besieged Gaza enclave. Israeli warplanes targeted some 180 sites in the Gaza Strip, but it was responded by around 700 rockets fired at the occupied lands. The

conflict left at least 25 Palestinians, including civilians, dead. Four Israeli forces were killed in the conflict. Tensions erupted following the killing of four Palestinians, with the Israeli forces' live fire at anti-occupation protesters near a fence separating the Gaza Strip from the occupied territories.

Yousef Alhelou is a Palestinian journalist and political analyst based in London. He has been covering the Palestinian-Israeli affairs since 2005 and reported on the Israeli wars on Gaza in 2008 and 2012. Below is the full text of the interview:

■ Israel accepted truce in a matter of only a few days, why?

A: I think it is because the Palestinian resistance can also set the rules of engagement after it has improved its capabilities and was able to strike in the Israeli depth. Israel knows very well that it no longer can impose its terms on the Palestinians

of Gaza under Hamas's rule. This point of view was also supported by other political analysts. Casualties fell in Israel and damage was caused. Panic and fear prevailed amongst Israelis. Indeed the increase in range of Palestinian rockets forced Israel to accept ceasefire agreement mediated by Egypt, Qatar and the UN.

■ Israel targets Gazans by its warplanes, but receives some 700 Palestinian rockets in two to three days. Is that indicative of Israel's miscalculation regarding Gaza's military capabilities?

A: I think now Israel cannot underestimate the strength and preparations of the Palestinian resistance groups, especially after they formed a chamber of joint operations and worked together, evaluating the stages of the battle. The recorded video messages released by the resistance as well as filming targeted military armored vehicles sent wor-

rying messages to Israel. Hamas and Islamic Jihad political and military leaders warned that they have surprises, referring to new range of projectiles and home-made rockets. Psychological warfare against Israel was exercised by the resistance factions.

■ Israel's "Iron Dome" intercepted only 240 out of 700 rockets fired from Gaza. Does "Iron Dome" work effectively? Or the rockets fired from Gaza are too advanced to be intercepted by the dome?

A: Tel Aviv has confessed Israel's Iron Dome Defense System was not able to shoot down all Palestinian rockets; neither the home-made rockets nor advanced projectiles. It was partially due to the fact that the rockets were fired far-off from different locations, and they were fired at the same time into different locations. In turn, this caused the system to be confused. Non-Israeli military experts echoed the same reason.

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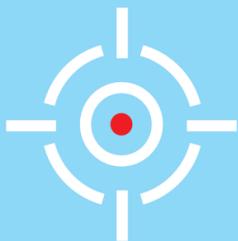
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Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic prepares to go public

The billionaire space race has reached a new frontier after Sir Richard Branson announced plans to list Virgin Galactic as a public company on the New York stock exchange.

The Virgin tycoon is vying with SpaceX, founded by Tesla chief executive Elon Musk, and Blue Origin, owned by Amazon boss Jeff Bezos, to be the first business to provide commercial passenger flights in space.

Silicon Valley's status as a 21st-century Houston was at the fore again on Tuesday, as Branson announced a tie-up with Chamath Palihapitiya, a billionaire tech investor and former Facebook executive.

It will also further raise hopes that Virgin Galactic is, after numerous delays including a fatal accident on a test flight, genuinely on the brink of operations that have long been proclaimed by Branson to be not far away.

More than 600 people from 60 countries have spent an average £100,000 each – a total of £60m – to secure a spot on one of Branson's first space flights.

The deposits represent half the total fare price, which is \$250,000 (£200,000). The deep-pocketed dreamers hoping to take a 90-minute flight that will only for a brief few moments escape the Earth's atmosphere include celebrities Justin Bieber and Leonardo DiCaprio. The flights would allow passengers to experience weightlessness and see the planet's rim from space.

Last October Branson, 68, said he hoped to be onboard an early Virgin Galactic flight "in months not years", with passengers flying



"not too long after that".

Branson said the deal would "open space to more investors and thousands of new astronauts". The British firm he founded, majority owned by the Virgin group, will sell a 49% stake and merge with Social Capital Hedosophia Holdings, a shell company set up by Palihapitiya and listed in New York.

Palihapitiya, who will chair Virgin Galactic and has pledged a further \$100m investment when the deal is completed, said he was confident the firm was "light years ahead of the competition".

He said the "risk-reward is really compelling", comparable to software

companies right at the start of their growth, adding: "We have 2,500 people on the waiting list who want to be customers. There are many more people who want to go to space than there is room to fly them."

The fate of his other transport ventures suggest Branson's eyes are fixed firmly on the heavens: Virgin's UK train operations, a fixture since rail privatization, are set to vanish by autumn, and Branson has sold his controlling stake in the Virgin Atlantic airline.

Branson will retain the largest share in Virgin Galactic, whose troubled ascent towards being a viable venture included the loss of a test spaceship, which crashed in the Mojave desert

in California in 2014, killing its pilot Michael Alsbury. A potential billion-dollar investment from Saudi Arabia was also suspended after the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Turkey.

In December, Virgin Galactic's SpaceShipTwo craft reached the edge of space for the first time, and a test flight in February carried a first passenger – Beth Moses, formerly of NASA and now Virgin's chief astronaut instructor.

Branson said the flotation could allow Virgin to invest in more craft, stealing a further march on the tech billionaires also in the space race – albeit ones who are aiming to go further into the final frontier. Blue Origin is targeting the moon for passenger trips by 2024.

Meanwhile, Musk has Mars in his sights, with SpaceX planning its first cargo mission to the red planet in 2022, with a crewed mission to follow two years later.

Musk's rockets already supply the International Space Station, a destination some way beyond the altitude of Branson's space flights. SpaceX is also planning a passenger flight around the moon in 2023.

A long history of false starts might deter the cautious investor before rushing to buy shares in Virgin Galactic, which could be trading by the end of the year.

However, with a commercial spaceport now at the ready in New Mexico, Branson's step into space appears to him, as ever, to be just around the corner. He told Sky News: "Next year I'll be going up."

(Source: The Guardian)

New method may resolve difficulty in measuring universe's expansion

Astronomers using National Science Foundation (NSF) radio telescopes have demonstrated how a combination of gravitational-wave and radio observations, along with theoretical modeling, can turn the mergers of pairs of neutron stars into a "cosmic ruler" capable of measuring the expansion of the Universe and resolving an outstanding question over its rate.

The astronomers used the NSF's Very Long Baseline Array (VLBA), the Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array (VLA) and the Robert C. Byrd Green Bank Telescope (GBT) to study the aftermath of the collision of two neutron stars that produced gravitational waves detected in 2017. This event offered a new way to measure the expansion rate of the Universe, known by scientists as the Hubble Constant. The expansion rate of the Universe can be used to determine its size and age, as well as serve as an essential tool for interpreting observations of objects elsewhere in the Universe.

Two leading methods of determining the Hubble Constant use the characteristics of the Cosmic Microwave Background, the leftover radiation from the Big Bang, or a specific type of supernova explosions, called Type Ia, in the distant Universe. However, these two methods give different results.

"The neutron star merger gives us a new way of measuring the Hubble Constant, and hopefully of resolving the problem," said Kunal Mooley, of the National Radio Astronomy

Observatory (NRAO) and Caltech.

The technique is similar to that using the supernova explosions. Type Ia supernova explosions are thought to all have an intrinsic brightness which can be calculated based on the speed at which they brighten and then fade away. Measuring the brightness as seen from Earth then tells the distance to the supernova explosion. Measuring the Doppler shift of the light from the supernova's host galaxy indicates the speed at which the galaxy is receding from Earth. The speed divided by the distance yields the Hubble Constant. To get an accurate figure, many such measurements must be made at different distances.

When two massive neutron stars collide, they produce an explosion and a burst of gravitational waves. The shape of the gravitational-wave signal tells scientists how "bright" that burst of gravitational waves was. Measuring the "brightness," or intensity of the gravitational waves as received at Earth can yield the distance.

"This is a completely independent means of measurement that we hope can clarify what the true value of the Hubble Constant is," Mooley said.

However, there's a twist. The intensity of the gravitational waves varies with their orientation with respect to the orbital plane of the two neutron stars. The gravitational waves are stronger in the direction perpendicular to the orbital plane,

and weaker if the orbital plane is edge-on as seen from Earth.

"In order to use the gravitational waves to measure the distance, we needed to know that orientation," said Adam Deller, of Swinburne University of Technology in Australia.

Over a period of months, the astronomers used the radio telescopes to measure the movement of a superfast jet of material ejected from the explosion. "We used these measurements along with detailed hydrodynamical simulations to determine the orientation angle, thus allowing use of the gravitational waves to determine the distance," said Ehud Nakar from Tel Aviv University.

This single measurement, of an event some 130 million light-years from Earth, is not yet sufficient to resolve the uncertainty, the scientists said, but the technique now can be applied to future neutron-star mergers detected with gravitational waves.

"We think that 15 more such events that can be observed both with gravitational waves and in great detail with radio telescopes, may be able to solve the problem," said Kenta Hotokezaka, of Princeton University. "This would be an important advance in our understanding of one of the most important aspects of the Universe," he added.

The international scientific team led by Hotokezaka is reporting its results in the journal Nature Astronomy.

(Source: Science Daily)

Nickelodeon, Goodyear among firms sending cargo to space station



The next SpaceX rocket cargo mission from Florida to the International Space Station will carry a record number of payloads from private companies.

Among them are Goodyear, Nickelodeon, drugmaker AstraZeneca and nScript, an Orlando firm that is sending a 3D printer to space to make human tissue.

Nickelodeon, the first American television network for children, plans to send its play slime to the orbiting lab to educate students on the basic principles of fluid flow in low gravity versus normal gravity on Earth.

Most of the experiments headed to the space station are aimed at taking advantage of so-called weightless conditions.

"The demand for space-based research and development continues to increase as companies look to take advantage of the unique environment on board the space station," said Kenneth Shields, International Space Station National Lab chief operating officer. "Payloads on this mission include investigations from Fortune 500 companies, startups and academic institutions."

The Falcon 9 rocket is scheduled for liftoff at 7:32 p.m. on July 21. It will be the 18th operational mission for the SpaceX Dragon capsule to the station, known as CRS-18. It will carry 2,500 pounds of supplies and experiments on the way up,

and 1,300 pounds on its return.

Better tires is the goal of Goodyear's experiment, which will explore ways to improve tire manufacturing and performance by creating silica fillers in microgravity, potentially yielding results not possible on Earth, according to NASA's mission description.

AstraZeneca is sending its second payload to the space station, this time studying therapies to treat cancer and immune diseases.

There's even a soccer ball going up for athletic apparel and equipment company Adidas -- to spin it and test its aerodynamics.

The tissue printer is a collaboration between Orlando-based nScript and Indiana-based Techshot. Bones or cartilage have been easier to print using 3D devices than soft tissue like tiny veins in flesh because gravity immediately forces the tissue to collapse.

Equipment known as a BioFabrication Facility will be sent to the station to form the tissue and allow it to solidify before shipping it back to Earth.

According to NASA's mission description, the experiment "could serve as a first step toward achieving the ability to fabricate entire human organs in space."

(Source: UPI)

Scientists want to use gravitational waves to find faraway exoplanets



The more than 4,000 exoplanets so far discovered by astronomers have been spotted through the analysis of electromagnetic radiation. Now, a group of researchers claim gravitational waves can help astronomers find even more hard-to-spot exoplanets -- smaller alien worlds, far far away.

"We propose a method which uses gravitational waves to find exoplanets that orbit binary white dwarf stars," Nicola Tamanini, a researcher with the Albert Einstein Institute at the Max Planck Institute for Gravitational Physics, said in a news release.

White dwarfs are stellar core remnants, the dense, cool remains of aging sun-like stars. The soon-to-be-launched Laser Interferometer Space Antenna, developed by the European Space Agency, will help scientists study these unique stars and their gravitational wave emissions, disturbances in the curvature of spacetime.

"LISA will measure gravitational waves from thousands of white dwarf binaries," Tamanini said. "When a planet is orbiting such a pair of white dwarfs, the observed gravitational-wave pattern will look different compared to the one of a binary without a planet. This characteristic change in the gravitational wave forms

will enable us to discover exoplanets."

According to the new study, published this week in the journal Nature Communications, exoplanets orbiting white dwarfs should cause a Doppler shift modulation -- a slight wobble -- in the star system's gravitational-wave signal.

Stellar activity can interfere with search methods that rely on electromagnetic radiation, but gravitational wave techniques are immune to such interference.

In the newly published paper, scientists claim LISA will be able to locate exoplanets with Jupiter-level mass around white dwarf binaries anywhere in the Milky Way galaxy. LISA's observations could even help astronomers find the first exoplanet outside the Milky Way, in a neighboring galaxy.

"LISA is going to target an exoplanet population yet completely unprobed," said Tamanini. "From a theoretical perspective nothing prevents the presence of exoplanets around compact binary white dwarfs."

While the prospect of finding an exoplanet in another galaxy is exciting, astronomers will have to make due with exoplanet discovery methods that use electromagnetic radiation for a while longer. LISA isn't scheduled to launch until 2034.

(Source: UPI)

Cockatoo choreographs his own dance moves, researchers believe

When Snowball the sulphur-crested cockatoo revealed his first dance moves a decade ago he became an instant sensation. The foot-tapping, head-bobbing bird boogied his way on to TV talk shows and commercials and won an impressive internet audience.

But that was merely the start. A new study of the prancing parrot points to a bird at the peak of his creative powers. In performances conducted from the back of an armchair, Snowball pulled 14 distinct moves – a repertoire that would put many humans to shame.

Footage of Snowball in action shows him smashing Another One Bites the Dust by Queen and Cyndi Lauper's Girls Just Wanna Have Fun with a dazzling routine of head-bobs, foot-lifts, body-rolls, poses and headbanging. In one move, named the Vogue, Snowball moves his head from one side of a lifted foot to another.

"We were amazed," said Aniruddh Patel, a psychology professor at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. "There are moves in there, like the Madonna Vogue move, that I just can't believe."

"It seems that dancing to music isn't purely a product of human culture. The fact that we see this in another animal suggests that if you have a brain with certain cognitive and neural capacities, you are predisposed to dance," he added.

It all started, as some things must, with the Backstreet Boys. In 2008, Patel, who has long studied the origins of musicality, watched a video on the internet of Snowball dancing in time to the band's track Everybody. He contacted Irena Schulz, who owned the bird shelter where Snowball lived, and with her soon launched a study of Snowball's dancing prowess.

While some animals can be trained to move in response to music, Patel suspected that anticipating the beat and moving in time was a skill unique to "vocal learners". Unlike cats, dogs and monkeys, which are born with innate sounds, vocal learners such as parrots, dolphins and elephants, can learn an array of sounds based on what they hear in the environment.

Not all vocal learners are destined to be dancers, however. Patel suspects a number of factors have to come together for an animal to get into the groove, including an ability to learn complex sequences of actions and form long-term social bonds. Dolphins are a good contender, but Patel is not overly optimistic. "They may not spend enough time bonding with dancing humans to develop dancing themselves," he said.

The first study showed that Snowball indeed anticipated the beat, bobbing his head and stomping his feet in time to the music. He kept on the beat when the music was slowed down and speeded up, his only encouragement being verbal praise from the sidelines.

After the research, Schulz noticed that Snowball was experimenting with new moves. That piqued Patel's interest: it suggested that the beat was not simply triggering Snowball to make stock moves, but that he was choosing which moves to make.

Writing in Current Biology, the scientists describe how they filmed Snowball dancing to the Queen and Cyndi Lauper tracks three times. Joanne Jao Keen, a cognitive neuroscientist and trained dancer on the team, then used frame-by-frame analysis to note all the moves he made. While Snowball had danced to the tracks with his owner before, her style is apparently rather limited, suggesting the parrot may have drawn on his own interpretation of the music.

"He has this incredible repertoire. His movements to music are amazingly diverse," Patel said.

"His owner dances – and she is the first to admit it – by nodding her head and waving her arms, so it's quite plausible that some of these moves are things he came up with himself."

As impressive as the display was, Snowball didn't always hit the beat with some of his more elaborate moves. But Patel suspects there is good reason for that. "He seemed to be trying out all these moves, so synchronization perhaps wasn't his initial concern."

With Snowball living in a bird shelter, Patel concedes that there's a chance an enthusiastic dancer paid a visit and influenced the parrot's creative process. But even that would be an impressive feat for a parrot, Patel said. "It's either imitation, which is sophisticated enough or its actual creativity, which is incredibly interesting."

The researchers are now exposing Snowball to Billy Idol's Dancing With Myself to see if he dances when there is no one in the room to offer encouragement. "We are testing that now," Patel said. "People are fine listening to music on their own, but when it comes to dancing, people want to do that with friends rather than put music on in their living room and dance by themselves. We'll see if Snowball is the same."

(Source: The Guardian)

Jet takes off from Florida to attempt global flight records

A jet took off from Florida's Kennedy Space Center on Tuesday morning in an attempt to break world records for flying around the Earth over the North and South poles.

Retired astronaut Terry Virts and a team of pilots from British company Action Aviation will fly an executive jet for about 48 hours with the briefest of stops to refuel in Kazakhstan, Mauritius and Chile. A live stream video that was expected to show jet's interior was working sporadically in the first hour of the flight.

"Just crossed into Canada - 2 minutes ahead of schedule," Virts tweeted about 11:38 a.m., more than two hours into the flight.

The mission's progress can be tracked via radar signal at FlightRadar24.com.

The Gulfstream G650ER is owned by a subsidiary of Qatar Airways. The pilots will attempt to shave hours off a record that's gone unchallenged since 2008, according to a news release from Action.

Two world records are at stake -- one for average speed set in 2008, and one for total minimum time set in 1977 by a Pan American 747.

The mission, titled One More Orbit, paid tribute to the achievements of the Apollo moon missions with a takeoff time of 9:32 a.m. -- the same time as the original Apollo 11 liftoff on July 16, 1969.

Virts is a former commander of the International Space Station and a space shuttle pilot for the 2015 flight of Endeavour, STS-130.

The flight is also designed to be "carbon neutral" by using carbon sequestration offsets.

(Source: UPI)

Iran to establish visa-free regime for the Chinese on July 16

TOURISM TEHRAN — As of July 16, Chinese passport holders will no longer need visas to enter Iran, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

The privilege is valid for 15 days of stay in the Islamic Republic. In late June, the Iranian government, in a unilateral measure, approved to waive the visa requirement for Chinese travelers.



Government spokesman Ali Rabiei announced in June that Iran has decided not to stamp the passports of foreign tourists to help them skip the U.S. travel ban.

President Hassan Rouhani assigned the airport police not to stamp passports of foreign tourists. Taking into consideration the fact that America is practicing the economic terrorism plans, and people who travel to Iran may feel a bit afraid that they may be pressured by America," Rabiei told reporters in Tehran. He added that this can invite more tourists to Iran.

Nearly 7.8 million tourists traveled to Iran in the last fiscal year (ended March 20), showing a 52.5 percent growth compared with the preceding year.

Turkey: ancient 'sacred road' unearthed

The "Sacred Road" between two ancient Greek cities in what is today western Turkey have been unearthed.

The 3,000-year-old pathway in Turkey's Aegean Mugla province listed as tentative World Heritage site by UNESCO runs between Stratonikeia and Lagina.

The towns have remained inhabited throughout the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman and Turkish Republic periods.

The Northern City Gate and columns on the Sacred Road as well as the tombs in the regions were unearthed during excavations this year.

"The Sacred Road was used as a ceremonial path for the Lagina Hecate sanctuary from antiquity to the present," dig site head Bilal Sogut, who is also a lecturer in Turkey's Pamukkale University, told Anadolu Agency.

"It is the most important sacred road that connects the political center Stratonikeia with religious center Lagina," Sogut said, adding: "In ancient times, priests from Lagina would participate in ceremonies with a girl carrying the key in front and a choir in the back, walking the Holy Road and passing through the Northern City Gate into Stratonikeia."

Sogut said one of the highlights of the ancient city were its tombs, adding: "We want to exhibit the most important of the tombs in their original locations, to keep the burial traditions of the Sacred Road alive."

"We aim to bring the Sacred Road to the surface with the original materials of the periods and to open the area to tourism," he said. (Source: Anadolu Agency)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Great Barrier Reef

A World Heritage, the Great Barrier Reef is of remarkable variety and beauty on the north-east coast of Australia.

As the world's most extensive coral reef ecosystem, the Great Barrier Reef is a globally outstanding and significant entity. Practically the entire ecosystem was inscribed as World Heritage in 1981, covering an area of 348,000 square kilometers and extending across a contiguous latitudinal range of 14o (10oS to 24oS).



The Great Barrier Reef (hereafter referred to as GBR) includes extensive cross-shelf diversity, stretching from the low water mark along the mainland coast up to 250 kilometers offshore.

This wide depth range includes vast shallow inshore areas, mid-shelf and outer reefs, and beyond the continental shelf to oceanic waters over 2,000 meters deep.

Within the GBR there are some 2,500 individual reefs of varying sizes and shapes, and over 900 islands, ranging from small sandy cays and larger vegetated cays, to large rugged continental islands rising, in one instance, over 1,100 meters above sea level. Collectively these landscapes and seascapes provide some of the most spectacular maritime scenery in the world.

The latitudinal and cross-shelf diversity, combined with diversity through the depths of the water column, encompasses a globally unique array of ecological communities, habitats and species. This diversity of species and habitats, and their interconnectivity, make the GBR one of the richest and most complex natural ecosystems on earth.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iraqi arrivals in Iran gaining momentum

TOURISM TEHRAN — The number of Iraqi nationals visiting Iran is gaining momentum this year as the Islamic Republic endeavors to boost its tourism revenues in the face of U.S.-led sanctions.

Until May, 2,500 entry visas were issued daily by the Consulate General of Iran in Najaf, which began issuing 5,000 a day in July, Iran's economic charge d'affaires in Najaf, Aref Abbasi said, AlMonitor reported on Wednesday.

The official said that he believes this increase in the number of visas issued is due to "Iraqis preferring to arrive in Iran for tourism, shopping and treatment as a result of the prevailing security there."

Mousa Tabatabai, assistant to Iran's ambassador to Baghdad, told Al-Monitor, "The number of Iraqis arriving in Iran for religious tourism and treatment is growing bigger on a yearly basis. This is added to



those who travel to Iran to see their relatives. The visas are issued depending on the demand."

"There are 2-3 million Iraqis arriving in Iran every year. Such a figure will more likely increase as the visas have become free of charge between the two countries," Tabatabai explained.

During Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's visit to Iraq in March, the neighbors agreed to waive visa fees.

Some six thousand Iraqi nationals apply for the Iranian visa per day, Iran's consulate in Basra announced in May.

Some two million Iraqi nationals visited Iran during the first seven months of the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), constituting Iran's largest source of inbound passengers.

In return, hundreds of thousands of Iranian pilgrims head for the holy Iraqi cities of Najaf and Karbala each year.

Summer festival to highlight rural heritage in Gilan

TOURISM TEHRAN — Gilan province is to hold a summer festival, which turns the spotlight on rural heritage, traditions, arts and architecture in the northern province.

The annual event will be held at Gilan Rural Heritage Museum from August 12 to 23, CHTN reported.

Devoted to ancestral life, the open-air museum embraces dozens of countryside houses, traditional cafes and restaurants, a mosque, a school, a rustic charcoal-making furnace and a renovated blacksmith workshop.

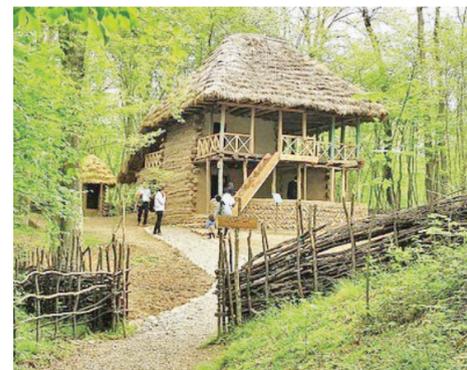
It also embraces buildings, a conference hall, a handicrafts marketplace, a museum of local dignitaries

among other sites.

Bounded by the Caspian Sea and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the north, Gilan, in the far past, was within the sphere of influence of the successive Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sassanid empires that ruled Iran until the 7th century CE.

Gilan is divided into a coastal plain including the large delta of Sefid Rud and adjacent parts of the Alborz mountain range.

Paddy cultivation dominates the region. Tobacco, fruits, vegetables, and tea (grown in the foothills above the rice fields) are also being cultivated in Gilan.



15% rise in visits to historical sites in Rey

TOURISM TEHRAN — Visits to historical sites in Rey surged 15 percent during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21) compared to the same period a year earlier.

Nearly 875,000 people toured recreational and tourism attractions in Rey during the period, its tourism director Amir Mosayeb Rahimzadeh said on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

Home to holy shrines of Imam Khomeini and Shah Abdol Azim, Rey welcomes many travelers and pilgrims in a year, he added.

"Fire Temple of Rey, Tughrul Tower, Cheshmeh-Ali, Naghareh-Khaneh Tower, Rashkan Castle and traditional bazaar of Rey are among historical attractions of the ancient city."

Currently, 39 out of 197 historical sites of Rey are inscribed on the National Cultural Heritage list, the official stated.



People visit the 12th-century Tughrul Tower in Rey, southern Tehran.

Rey was one of the capital cities of the Parthian empire (3rd century BC–3rd century CE) and it was captured by the Muslim Arabs in 641 CE. During the reign of the Muslim caliph al-Mahdi in the 8th century, the city grew in importance until it was rivaled in western Asia only by Damascus and Baghdad.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Islamic writers described it as a city of extraordinary beauty, built largely of fired brick and brilliantly ornamented with blue faience (glazed earthenware). It continued to be an important city and was briefly a capital under the rule of the Seljuqs, but in the 12th century it was weakened by the fierce quarrels of rival religious sects. In 1220 the city was almost entirely destroyed by the Mongols, and its inhabitants were massacred. Most of the survivors of the massacre moved to nearby Tehran, and the deserted remnants of Rey soon fell into complete ruin.

German and Finnish passports ranked as Europe's most powerful travel documents



The German and Finnish passports have resulted to be the most powerful travel documents in the continent of Europe, and the fourth most powerful in the world.

According to the latest update of the Henley Passport

Index, Germany and Finland are not only Europe's most powerful, but they are also the second most powerful documents in the world, both sharing the second spot with South Korea.

Japanese and Singaporean passports world's most powerful, since their holders can have access to 189 world countries visa-free, or by getting an e-visa or visa-on-arrival. On the other hand, South Korean, German and Finnish passport holders can travel to 187 countries without going through all the procedures of getting a visa sticker.

Other EU and Schengen countries are next, with Denmark, Italy and Luxembourg placed third, France Sweden and Spain listed fourth, and Austria, Netherlands, Portugal, and Switzerland sharing the fifth position.

While in the past the U.S. and the UK have been listed among the first three positions, now both are placed in the 6th, with their citizens having access to 183 countries visa-free or with an e-visa/visa-on-arrival.

According to a press release by Henley Global on the Henley Passport Index rankings, the upcoming Brexit has already affected the position of the UK in this list, though it is unknown what further consequences the

divorce between the EU and the UK will have for the latter.

"Throughout most of the index's long history, the UK has held one of the top five places in the ranking. However, with its exit from the EU now imminent, and coupled with ongoing confusion about the terms of its departure, the UK's once-strong position looks increasingly uncertain. The Brexit process has not yet had a direct impact on the UK's ranking, but new research using exclusive historical data from the Henley Passport Index indicates that this could change, with consequences that extend beyond a decline in passport power," the press release reads.

Political science researchers Ugur Altundal and Omer Zarpli, of Syracuse University and the University of Pittsburgh respectively, observe that the prospect of visa-waiver agreements with the EU has encouraged neighboring countries to adopt important reforms in areas such as civil and political rights, rule of law, and security.

They also note that freedom of movement appears to be a vital pre-condition not only for economic growth but also for social integration and progressive political change.

(Source: schengenvisa.info)

Ancient water tank still stores fresh water

A cistern storing fresh water dating back to the medieval era was unearthed in the ancient city of Tieion located in northern Turkey.

"There is a very large cistern from the Middle Ages that had been used for many years and repaired several times," Shahin Yildirim, head of the excavation, told Anadolu Agency.

The cistern, located in Filyos town in the Black Sea Zonguldak province, was excavated by a team of 25 archaeologists. Yildirim said a sample was analyzed

in the provincial Agriculture Directorate, adding: "Its scale is 7.45 pH, which is quite good for such a source. We still find it to be a drinkable value nowadays."

The pH scale is used to measure the alkalinity or acidity of a solution. Pure water is neither acidic nor alkaline and is measured 7 on the pH scale.

Yildirim went on to say that a tour route will be designated around the acropolis and various paths on Tieion, adding: "In this respect, one of the most important steps of this project is the me-

dieval cistern."

Tieion was founded by the Miletus colony led by the priest named "Tios."

The city was demolished and looted by the Romans and later rebuilt as a trade and fishing area linked to the Roman provinces. The region was later turned into a fishing town.

Excavations in the ancient city which started in 2006 intend to shed light on the history of the Black Sea and Asia Minor.

(Source: Hurriyet Daily News)



Tripartite agreement signed to promote space technology

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN – The Iranian Space Agency (ISA), the Iranian Space Research Center and the National Innovation Fund signed an agreement in Tehran on Tuesday to promote the use of space technology in different fields.

ISA Director Morteza Barari, the head of the Iranian Space Research Center Hossein Samimi, and the head of the National Innovation Fund Ali Vahdat, signed the tripartite agreement at the closing ceremony of the space products exhibition, which was held from July 7 to 9.

Iranian knowledge-based companies and startups active in the field of space technology attended the event organized jointly by the National Innovation Fund and the Iranian Space Research Center.

Development and commercialization of space technology, space-based services and related industries in order to boost services and products of space technology were also mentioned in the agreement.

The agreement aims to create a network for space technology startups with other organizations and companies.

A series of meetings on IT and innovation will be also held on the sidelines of the event.

ICT ministry promotes space technology

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Ministry supports and develops different usage of space technology, ICT minister said during the signing ceremony.

Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi said that the ISA has promoted the usage of space technology in different fields during the past 18 months.

He named government monopoly as one of the factors which hinder the development of space technology in the country.

The open source space data should be provided for the private sector and the startups should be supported with training and development of market as well as providing financial facilities, he added.

Azari Jahromi said that the government



ICT Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi says that the space technology can be a great help for the agricultural industry

should boost space technology in addition to make legislation in the age of digital economy.

The private sector can also launch satellites into space with the flag of Iran, he said.

"I am sure that the private sector has the ability to launch satellites in a short time," he added.

He pointed to assessment of the damage caused by flood on agricultural products in the country via space technology as one of the main recent achievements in this field.

In May, a precise assessment on damage caused by flood on agricultural products was done by space technology and the result was submitted to the Ministry of Interior.

In the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21), provinces of Fars, Lorestan, North Khorasan, Golestan, Mazandaran, Hamedan, Khuzestan, Kermanshah, Semnan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad and Khorasan Razavi were hit hard by devastating floods incurring a dramatic loss.

Azari Jahromi said that the space technology can be a great help for the agricultural industry which creates jobs for alumni of

agricultural engineering as well.

The usage of space technology, which can create jobs and be a great help in natural crises, should be introduced to the public, he added.

The attendance of 180 startups in the three-day event is one of the achievements of the space sector, he said, adding that this attendance is an achievement of ISA in developing the usage of space technology.

He pointed to establishment of a space technology park in Mazandaran province as one of the main steps which have been taken for development of space technology.

Efficient systems have been provided in the case of natural crises using space technology and the government aims to support and facilitate startups in this field, he said.

"With the help of motivation and knowledge, startups can expand space industry to provide convenience for public."

National Innovation Fund to financially support space technology

The National Innovation Fund plans to provide financial support for the startups

active in the field of space technology and connect related organizations with this emerging market, the head of the fund Ali Vahdat said during the closing ceremony.

The event was attended by 182 startups, of which about 100 startups put their products and services on display during the exhibition, he said.

Meanwhile, representatives of the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, Tehran Municipality, the Red Crescent Society, the Iranian Space Agency, the Iranian Space Research Center, and the Department of Environment talked about their space-related demands on the sidelines of the meeting.

A number of bilateral meetings were also held between representatives of these organizations and startups.

He said that the startups applied for about two trillion rials (over \$47.5 million) worth of financial support and some agreements were signed between the fund and startups during the event, he added.

During the exhibition, startups introduced seven plans which are applicable in different industries.

In March, the head of the Iranian Space Research Center, Hossein Samimi, announced that the center was working on five key projects which were considered as the main achievements of Iran's space technology.

According to an agreement signed in February between the Iranian Space Research Center and the Ministry of Agriculture, remote sensing satellites are planned to be used in different sections of the agricultural industry.

The center has already provided a map of the cultivated area, which provides more than 95 percent of the national rice market in five provinces.

According to Morgan Stanley, it is estimated that the global space industry could generate revenue of \$1.1 trillion or more in 2040, up from \$350 billion, currently. Yet, the most significant short- and medium-term opportunities may come from satellite broadband Internet access.

Iranian biopharmaceutical medicines treat patients in Russia, Turkey: VP

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN – CinnaGen Pharmaceutical Group launched the new production line in Turkey with the name of CinnaGen ilac. The factory produces 22 types of medicine that are mostly used for treating chronic, life-threatening diseases such as cancer, osteoporosis, multiple sclerosis (MS), as well as the nervous system and blood diseases.

In early July, Iran's Food and Drug Administration announced that Iran is now manufacturing pharmaceutical raw materials as well as medicines in many countries, including Russia.

Robot-assisted surgery, linear particle accelerator, dosimeters, Radio frequency (RF) wireless medical devices and medical cyclotron are produced by the Iranian knowledge-based companies, Sattari explained.

Some knowledge-based companies in Iran, which are active in the field of traditional medicine, provide medicine to treat different diseases like chronic migraine headache, he said.

"Over 260 knowledge-based companies are active in the field of new medicines and 200 companies are active in the field of medical equipment in Iran. These knowledge-based companies earn millions of dollars of income by exporting medicine to other countries."

Today, Iran has one of the largest e-com-



The vice president for science and technology Sourena Sattari (2nd from left) attends the International Industrial Trade Fair (INNOPROM 2019), which is held from July 9 to 14 in Yekaterinburg, Russia

merce networks in the Middle East holding over 90 percent of market share with online retail business, he said, adding, over 4400 knowledge-based companies are active in the country, providing technologies and services that can be used in international joint venture projects.

"Millions of dollars of trade are done by over 1000 product suppliers and 11,000 shopping websites in Iran. One of the websites is amongst

the top 200 most-visited ones in the world."

This is a great opportunity for Russians to expand their market in Iran, he added.

Technology also provides a great chance for development of cultural relationship between the countries, so Russian companies can introduce their services and products using internet platforms in Iran, he noted.

"Iran and Russia can cooperate in different

fields of technology including emerging diseases, regional environmental challenges, and energy efficiency. Cooperation in the field of innovation and technology between the two countries is one of the main issues that was on high agenda during recent years."

Cooperation in the field of nanotechnology, biotechnology, aerospace, cognitive science and renewable energies can depict a brighter future for the region, he said.

70 knowledge-based companies attend INNOPROM 2019

A high-ranking trade and technology delegation, comprising managing directors of 70 knowledge-based companies, travelled to Russia from July 9 to 14.

Headed by Sattari, the delegation is also composed of representatives from ministries of foreign affairs, science, and health, as well as the Trade Promotion Organization and the National Innovation Fund.

The managing directors plan to hold meetings with their counterparts in the Russian cities of Moscow and Yekaterinburg to boost cooperation.

The meetings aim to develop cooperation in the field of technology and science between the two countries.

Need more agility? focus on shared meaning

Strategy has become a bit like milk: it has a shorter and shorter shelf life because of volatility. Except, unlike milk, strategies don't come stamped with expiration dates. This often leads to vague strategies that tend to violate the fundamental requirement of strategy: an articulation of clear choices.

The vagueness stems from the pressure put on leaders to create looser strategic guidelines in order to provide managers with more room for adaptability and inventiveness — critical if they are to successfully navigate ambiguity.

Based on our research, organizations should not be doubling down on strategy, but rather, should look elsewhere for shared meaning and the clarity that employees need to function well amidst rapid change. Denise Pickett, the head of US Consumer Services at American Express, shared with me this powerful realization: "Great strategy doesn't excite people. Strategy is always chunked down and changed to target to different levels. Strategy won't be digestible by everyone all together. So it can't be a guiding light for 10,000 people."

Instead, I think purpose is the indispensable tool to increase strategic agility. Purpose is stable and enduring which paradoxically is needed more than ever in a chaotic environment that demands agility. Purpose serves as the starting point of strategic thinking and provides meaning, an important motivator that guides decision-making.

The question that I often hear from leaders is how to define and articulate purpose so strategic agility can be unleashed. Yes, purpose involves the fundamental question of "why do we exist?" But starting there can create missteps that lead to more vagueness and poor business decisions. Purpose is a simple but layered narrative. It has qualities that create clarity, but also at the same time, invite discussion and debate.

To make this happen, I offer different "lenses" or angles

through which to examine this question of fundamental meaning, along with examples for each. Each angle begins with the letter C that foster agility.

■ Capability

What can we uniquely do or offer that other firms cannot?

The U.S. business unit of McDonald's toyed with a purpose centered around "honest food." It did not stick. Their core capability — and current corporate purpose — is about providing "delicious feel-good" moments for everyone and making these moments "easy." Fast, consistent, delicious and easy is what they do millions of times each day. This return to a purpose based upon their business drivers clarified the core capability that is critical to their business and must be nurtured.

■ Caring

What motivates and energizes our people? What drives their empathy for customers and stakeholders? Since purpose should provide the organization with focus and energy, these questions are absolutely critical.

ANZ, the Australian multinational banking and financial services company, engaged their top 200 leaders in crafting the company's purpose, but they didn't stop there. They used an online collaboration tool to ensure they activated what was on the minds of employees. The result was engaging over 15,000 employees to test ideas and get input. This effort led the bank to articulate their fundamental role in helping "people and communities thrive."

Further, by engaging employees you can gain insight into where purpose-based decisions really matter. For example, ANZ used purpose to decide which social initiatives made sense for them to support, such as economic inclusion of refugees. According to Shayne Elliott, ANZ's CEO, purpose helped lend coherence to the bank's community policies "because employees know why they are important and how

they link to the business." Focusing on what your people care about helps them to care more about their work.

■ Context

It would be a huge mistake to just focus on the internal by examining only what motivates employees. There needs to be an outside-in approach as well.

What is happening in the world that allows us to make a contribution? In other words, why might the world need our capabilities?

Take the example of Nedbank, one of the major South African banks. In the midst of South Africa's political uncertainty, it occurred to Nedbank's leaders that financial institutions needed to step up to help create greater stability. In response, they crafted Nedbank's purpose: "To use our financial expertise to do good for individuals, families, businesses and society." This, in turn, allowed them to make timely decisions on how they would help state-owned enterprises, which were in dire need of financial advice and support.

■ Customers

What do the people we serve want and need, not just in terms of products and services, but also experiences? Note that we've not yet asked a "why" question. This is to ensure we have enough background and context before going there.

MailChimp translated a sharp understanding of its core customers — small businesses — into purpose that defined the company's existence: "democratizing technology to enable the underdog". This stemmed from the recognition that technology, if provided in the right way, enabled these small business customers to punch well above their weight. Tom Klein, MailChimp's chief marketing officer, shared that this lens is really "emotional territory" and drove greater empathy for customers. This also links closely to the 2nd-C of Purpose - Caring.

(Source: forbes.com)

INOSPORT meets sport demands of organizations

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN – The INOSPORT, a pitch and reverse pitch events, on technological demands in the field of sports is currently underway at Tehran International Permanent Fairground.

The event is held concurrent with the 18th International Exhibition of Sports, Sporting Goods and Equipment (SPORTEX 2019) and Startup SPORTEX, which is held from July 9 to 12.

Pitching is an opportunity to introduce your business idea in a limited amount time from a few seconds to a few minutes. You can use a presentation to underline your speech or just do it orally. The main goal of a pitch is to gain new customers, investors or stakeholders to support your business.

With the focus on physical activity and health, the event aims to meet the demands of sport organizations.

The demands, which are proposed by the organizations are in five categories of training sport (for schools and kindergartens), sport for all (lifestyle, physical activities and obesity), championship sport (competitions, gadgets), professional sports (sport clubs, stadiums) and citizen's sports (neighborhood sport urban demands and services).

The event is organized by the Iran National Technomart, Iran Sport for All Federation, Padis Science and Technology Park and the vice presidency for Science and Technology.



Iranian knowledge-Based companies to attend Plast Euasia 2019

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN – Ten Iranian-knowledge-based companies will present their products at the Iran national pavilion at the Plast Eurasia, which will be held from December 4 to 7 in Istanbul.



The 29th International Istanbul Plastics Fair, Plast Eurasia, is the largest plastics industry fair held every year in Europe and is organized by TUYAP in cooperation with PAGEV (Turkish Plastics Industry Foundation) in Tuyap Fair Convention and Congress Center, Istanbul.

Plastic machinery, heat and control equipment, mould, chemicals and raw materials, machinery auxiliary industry, hydraulic and pneumatic and recycling are different scope of the fair.

The previous edition brought together 1,094 companies and company representatives from 44 countries and 51,684 professional visitors from 103 countries on the 5th-8th of December in Tuyap Fair Convention and Congress Center, Istanbul.

The fair provides opportunity for the participants to discover the latest technologies to take advantage of testing new products and services, benefit of keeping up to date by strengthen their brand awareness and brand image.

Some face-to-face meetings to find the right target group to increase chance of being in-sight and in-mind at the right time with perspective customers are provided during the event.

The fair also develops new business strategy by analyzing the sector comparing the features and the prices of the products.

Machine learning helps robot harvest lettuce for the first time

Engineers from the University of Cambridge have developed a vegetable-picking robot that can autonomously identify and harvest iceberg lettuce, one of the more manually demanding crops for human pickers. Vegebot was trained using a machine-learning algorithm that helped it distinguish healthy lettuces ready for harvest, in a variety of different weather conditions.

Agricultural harvesting is one area of industry that has always embraced new technological advances. Some crops, such as wheat or potatoes, are relatively easy to harvest mechanically at a large scale, but other crops still require painstaking human labor to harvest. Developing an autonomous robotic system to pick a vegetable such as cucumber for example, has proved incredibly challenging.

Lettuce is another difficult crop that so far has proved resistant to automation. As well as growing flat to the ground and needing to be cut at precise points, a field of lettuce presents a novel challenge for robot vision, which needs to home in on an individual head of lettuce ready to be picked in a sea of green leaves.

"Every field is different, every lettuce is different," says study co-author Simon Birrell on the particular challenges in developing an autonomous lettuce-harvesting system.

The first, and arguably most complex, problem the engineers needed to solve in the development of a lettuce-harvesting robot was teaching the system to identify a healthy head of lettuce in a crowded green field. A machine learning algorithm was developed, and then trained the robotic system, first on images of lettuces and then on actual lettuces in laboratory conditions. Then, the system was moved into real-life field conditions to learn the look of a lettuce head for harvest across an assortment of different weather conditions.

The second challenge was to produce a way to make sure the robot could cut and pick each individual lettuce with the precision necessary to maintain a stem length according to commercial standards. This involved a custom-designed soft gripping arm, with a second camera near the cutting blade to ensure the cut is smooth and in the right location.

(Source: New Atlas)

Salmon farms in UK 'at serious risk' after closures due to environmental damage

The world's largest salmon farming company Mowi has announced two of its salmon farms on the west coast of Scotland are to cease production and the company will focus its production on "locations more appropriate for modern day aquaculture".

The closure of the Loch Ewe salmon farm comes after 15 years of failing to meet certain environmental standards, with the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) reportedly imposing reductions of around two thirds on the permitted quantity of fish farmed.



Another farm at Loch Duich is also set to close. Both are in inland sea lochs which have been blamed for adverse impacts on marine life.

Mowi said it had identified the farms "as candidates for relocation due to the enclosed nature of the sea lochs where the farms are situated and the sites' proximity to sensitive wild salmonid habitats."

Experts said the closures could have ramifications for the wider industry, which is already under pressure to deal with surges in sea lice affecting stocks and mass mortality events because of algal blooms in warming waters.

Other farms "will be at serious risk now, because the regulator should continue to apply reductions as and when they fail," campaigner Corin Smith told The Independent.

Mr Smith's freedom of information (FOI) requests have previously revealed the Scottish government's support for salmon farming expansion.

The Loch Ewe farm has recorded "unsatisfactory" benthic levels every year since 2005. Benthic monitoring measures the levels of macro-invertebrate species in and on the seabed.

Andrew Graham-Stewart, director of Salmon and Trout Conservation Scotland (S&TCS), said: "We welcome Mowi's decision to close the Loch Ewe farm. There can be no doubt that the decision is a vindication of S&TCS' long campaign to end salmon farming in this enclosed sea loch," which the organisation said "has devastated sea trout stocks in iconic Loch Maree, previously the best sea trout fishery in western Scotland".

He said they believed "the other factor in Mowi's decision is clearly the farm's failure to reduce its benthic impact."

He added: "As a consequence, SEPA has cut the farm's permitted biomass very substantially, thus diminishing its commercial viability."

Mowi has "signalled its intention to move the biomass elsewhere," he said, adding: "If Mowi wishes to apply for a biomass increase at another location, then that should be judged on its own merits. Indeed, it would be disingenuous to try and link it to the closure of Loch Ewe. Furthermore, it is vital that any biomass increase elsewhere avoids migration routes for wild salmonids." (Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Depleted uranium shells

(January 11, 2001)
Internal Army documents seen by BBC News which suggest that military officials were warned almost four years ago that depleted uranium shells used in NATO weapons could cause cancer. BBC Science Correspondent Fergus Walsh reports.

These documents, marked 'restricted', date from 1997 and discuss a new type of **tank ammunition** containing **depleted uranium**, a heavy metal that enables rounds to penetrate thick armor. They say there is a **potential hazard from toxic and radioactive dust** on impact. Exposure to uranium dust, they say, **has been shown to increase** the risks of developing lung, lymph and brain cancers.

Shaun Rusling from the Gulf War Veterans Association says the documents raise major concerns: "This is documentation **based on the analysis** from the Gulf War which was completed by land command in 1997 and also the preparatory documents for the health and safety of the troops **deploying** to Kosovo. So are they actually admitting that they got the deployment wrong for Kosovo also, because of depleted uranium?"

But the Ministry of Defense has **issued a statement** saying analysis in these documents is regarded as **flawed**. It doesn't change the **MoD's** position; there was only **low level radiological risk**. And that is backed up by established scientific opinion. Professor Nick Priest, an environmental toxicologist at Middlesex University, believes the **concern** over depleted uranium is **misguided**: "Uranium has a chemical **toxicity** because it is a heavy metal like lead and many other metals. And because it's not very radioactive then the risk of problems associated with any small amount of radiation dose which people receive is very very small."

Words
'restricted': if a document is marked 'restricted' then only certain people are allowed to see it
tank ammunition: shells fired from tanks against an enemy
depleted uranium: what is left over after natural uranium has been enriched: it can be used to make weapons or for reactor fuel
potential hazard: something which could possibly be dangerous
toxic and radioactive dust: dust which contains a substance which produces energy in the form of harmful rays
has been shown to increase: a formal phrase which emphasizes that there is evidence of this
based on the analysis: they have studied what happened to soldiers who fought in the Gulf War
deploying: if an army deploys troops it makes them available for immediate action
issued a statement: made an official announcement
flawed: not accurate, not correct
MoD: the initials of the Ministry of Defense
low level radiological risk: there is only a small chance of something dangerous happening as a result of the radiation
concern: worry
misguided: the concern is wrong because it is based on bad information
toxicity: if something is toxic, it is poisonous

'Humans responsible for over 95% of wildfires'

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Over 95 percent of wildfires in the country are due to human-caused ignition from unattended campfires, debris, and negligently discarded cigarettes, the commander of the forest protection unit of Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization, has said.

During the last month, wildfires increased by 35 percent compared to the same period last year, while human-started wildfires accounted for 95 percent of the whole massive fire, Ali Abbasnejad said.

Despite the effort made by rangers, wildfire sparks blazed through more than 500 hectares of the forests and rangelands across the country, he lamented.

He went on to add that some of the wildfires also are intentional acts of arson, some set fire to another's property which is rooted in regional disputes, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

This year, 60 to 70 percent of the wildfires happened in Zagros and Hyrcanian forests, however, last year the most raging fires were reported in provinces of Khuzestan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Kordestan, he explained.

Wildfire even swept in two provinces of Qom and Markazi, despite having less vegetation cover, he highlighted.

Heavy rains over the past few months led to growing vegetation covering vast areas of forests and rangelands which soon turned dry due to temperature rise and enhanced the possibility of massive fires, he lamented, adding, people must be cautious to prevent such happenings.

Based on the latest data published by National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center affiliated to Iran's Meteorological Organization, since the current crop year (September 23, 2018), precipitation in the country



Heavy rains over the past few months led to vegetation covering vast areas of forests and rangelands which soon turned dry due to temperature rise and enhanced the possibility of massive fires.

increased to 312 from 159.3 millimeters in the previous water year, demonstrating a 95.9 percent rise. The amount also raised in comparison to the long-term average of 223.2 mm, amounting to 39.6 percent.

"Some 83 percent of the country's total land area amounting to 135 million hectares is covered by natural resources. Unfortunately, we do not have sufficient human forces and facilities to protect our natural resources."

Currently, some 4 million rangers are protecting the natural resources of the country, but there is still a shortage of forces, he added.

Referring to forests and pastures protection as a national duty, he added that it is the responsibility of all the organizations to better plan for potential desirable and undesirable effects of wildfires and the people also should care for the environment.

"Over the past few years, under the agreement between the Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization, the Ministry of Defense and the Disaster Management Organization, we insisted to use helicopter for aerial firefighting, which has not yet been feasible," he concluded.

Qasem Sabz'ali, commander of the forest

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

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

How to reduce wildfires
The following measures can be adopted in order to prevent wildfires.

Never leave a fire unattended, such as overnight.

Always make sure the fire is completely doused with water and smothered with dirt before leaving.

Don't start a fire on a windy day. Save it for another time.

Dispose of used matches and butts in a closed container or cup of water.

Keep lighters and matches out of the reach of children.

Only burn yard waste or rubbish in a 50-gallon drum or fire pit.

Don't burn anything highly combustible, including paper or fabric soaked in oil or gasoline.

Don't park a hot car or other machine in dry grass.

Don't allow gasoline or motor oil to spill on grass or other vegetation.

Tractors, off-road vehicles and equipment being used in wooded areas, such as chainsaws, must have spark arrestors.

If you're lighting a campfire or doing a burn, make sure to have a fire extinguisher.

If a fire has gotten out of control, you must call the emergency services immediately.

'Vehicle inspection curbs air pollution up to 25%'

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Vehicle inspection can contribute to air pollution mitigation by 15 to 25 percent, Tehran City Council member, Arash Milani, said.

Vehicle inspection is a procedure mandated by national or subnational governments in many countries, in which a vehicle is inspected to ensure that it conforms to regulations governing safety, emissions, or both. Inspection can be required at various times, e.g., periodically or on the transfer of title to a vehicle.

When a vehicle passes inspection, often a sticker (inspection decal or inspection sticker) is placed on the vehicle's windshield or registration plate to simplify later controls.

Milani noted that all the residents should consider inspection as a must, and pointed out that extremely-old cars also should be discarded from operation, Fars reported on Tuesday.

It is planned to set up mobile inspection stations for the Taxi owners, which can be so efficient to inspect more clunker vehicle in transport fleet, he added.

Referring to the new traffic scheme, he said that the newly initiated traffic scheme is a step toward air pollution mitigation and it is hope that such measures increases



to bring clean air to the capital.

Tehran Municipality has prepared a new traffic scheme for the capital in an attempt to address persistent air pollution and traffic congestion in the metropolis, which went into effect on June 22.

The scheme replaced odd-even traffic scheme in the city, a plan that, according to many experts, was unsuccessful in achieving its goals of reducing traffic or air pollution.

Another solution to air pollution in the capital is biking promotion, which is fulfilled when the bike lanes are increased and the city's infrastructure become compatible with bicycles, he explained.

He went on to say that bikes should be given serious consideration to encourage people using it for transportation along with promotion of biking culture among the citizens.

Quarter of world's biggest firms 'fail to disclose emissions'

Grantham Research Institute found half do not factor climate crisis in decision-making.

About a quarter of the world's highest-emitting, publicly listed companies fail to report their greenhouse gas emissions and nearly half do not properly consider the risks from the climate crisis in decision-making, new research has found.

The findings show the distance even the world's biggest companies still have to cover to meet the goals of the Paris agreement on climate change, according to the group of investors coordinating the report.

The research covered a sample of 274 of the world's highest emitting companies which are publicly listed, and therefore must make official disclosures of key financial data.

It was carried out by the Grantham Research Institute on climate change at the London School of Economics and commissioned by the Transition Pathway Initiative, a group of investors supportive of the Paris agreement, with about \$14tn (£11tn) in funds under management.

Of a smaller sample of 160 of the biggest emitters, only one in eight – 20 companies – globally were found



to be reducing their emissions at the rate necessary to meet the Paris goal of holding temperature rises to within 2C of pre-industrial levels.

Simon Dietz, co-director of the Grantham Institute, said: "It's over three years since the Paris agreement was signed, and this research shows the corporate sector is improving its climate planning and performance, but not fast enough. Cutting through the noise, we can see that barely 12% of companies plan to reduce emissions at the rate required to keep global warming below 2C."

The researchers examined companies in key sectors including oil and gas, steel and aluminium, utilities, car manufacturing and air transport, which combined account for more than 40% of emissions from public companies around the world. (Source: The Guardian)

Holland covers hundreds of bus stops with plants as gift to honeybees

The roofs of hundreds of bus stops have been covered in plants as a gift to honeybee, by a city in the Netherlands. Mainly made up of sedum plants, a total of 316 have been covered in greenery in Utrecht.

The shelters not only support the city's biodiversity, such as honey bees and bumblebees, but they also help capture fine dust and store rainwater.

The roofs are looked after by workers who drive around in electric vehicles, and the bus stops have all been fitted with energy-efficient LED lights and bamboo benches.

They are just one of a number of measures Utrecht has introduced in a bid to improve air quality.

The city aims to introduce 55 new electric buses by the end of the year and have "completely clean public

transport" by 2028.

The electricity used to power the buses will come directly from Dutch windmills.

Utrecht also runs a scheme which allows residents to apply for funding to transform their own roofs into green roofs.

(Source: The Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

170 birds, animals released back to wild

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

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

بازگشت ۱۷۰ پرنده و حیوان به طبیعت

بیش از ۱۷۰ فرد از ۱۵ گونه جانوری مختلف صبح امروز به مناسبت هفته محیط زیست رهاسازی شدند.

محمد کرمی، رئیس اداره نظارت بر امور حیات وحش اداره کل محیط زیست استان تهران در این باره به خبرنگار مهر گفت: در این برنامه گونه های مختلف را در پارک ملی خجیر رهاسازی کردیم.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"lipo-, lip-"

Meaning: fatty
For example: Most patients are pleased with the outcome of their **liposuction** surgery.

PHRASAL VERB

Pack something away

Meaning: to put something back in a box, case etc. where it is usually kept
For example: Christmas was over and the decorations packed away.

IDIOM

Cry one's eyes out

Explanation: to cry a lot and for a long time
For example: My son cried his eyes out when he discovered his bike had been stolen.

Hezbollah slams U.S. sanctions on parliamentarians as 'humiliation' for Lebanese

TEHRAN— Lebanese lawmaker Ali Fayyad has censured the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) over adding two members of the country's parliament to its list of sanctioned individuals on charges of acting on behalf of Hezbollah resistance movement.

The U.S. decision "is a humiliation for the Lebanese people," Fayyad told Lebanon's Arabic-language MTV television network on Tuesday evening, calling on parliament and the government to issue a formal condemnation.

Meanwhile, Lebanese Finance Minister Ali Hasan Khalil wrote in a post published on his official Twitter page that the U.S. sanctions "concern all of the Lebanese even if they are directed at Hezbollah" and are "unjustified."

Earlier in the day, U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions on two Hezbollah members of Lebanon's parliament and a security official responsible for coordinating between the resistance movement and the country's security agencies.

The Treasury placed MPs Amin Sherri and Muhammad Hasan Ra'd and Wafiq



Safa, a top Hezbollah security official, on its sanctions blacklist, and accused Hezbollah of using its parliamentary power to

advance its resistance activities. "Hezbollah uses its operatives in Lebanon's parliament to manipulate institutions

in support of the terrorist group's financial and security interests, and to bolster Iran's malign activities," said Sigal Mandelker, Under Secretary of Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence.

Ra'd is the head of the parliamentary bloc of the party and an MP since 1992, and Sherri has been an MP representing Beirut since 2002.

Some 50 Hezbollah individuals and entities have been blacklisted by the Treasury since 2017.

On May 16, 2018, the United States and its partners in the Terrorist Financing and Targeting Center (TFTC), which includes Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and United Arab Emirates, imposed sanctions on Hezbollah leadership, targeting its Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem.

According to Press TV, U.S. President Donald Trump's administration imposed additional sanctions on Hezbollah in late October last year, targeting individuals and international organizations that do business with the group.

U.S.-led coalition should address harm to civilians during Syria operations: HRW

TEHRAN— Human Rights Watch (HRW) has called upon the U.S.-led coalition purportedly fighting the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group should address the harm to civilians during military operations in war-torn Syria.

The New York-based rights organization reported on Tuesday that the alliance has not thoroughly investigated the attacks that killed civilians or created a program for compensation, or other assistance to civilians who suffered harm from its operations.

It cited field investigations into 4 apparently unlawful coalition airstrikes in Syria's northeastern Hasakah province from 2017 and 2018, where no compensation or condolence payments were made to the victims. The aerial raids reportedly killed 63 civilians and damaged and destroyed property.

Human Rights Watch further highlighted that whilst the U.S. Congress authorized the Defense Department in the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to make condolence payments to civilians in Syria in December 2016, the process for making claims has not been defined.

"The U.S. should promptly develop a standardized condolence payment process and conduct outreach as feasible with affected communities to explain and publicize the process. The process should allow safe and convenient avenues to submit claims in the person's preferred language and should identify local partners as facilitators.

"Condolence payments should reflect the circumstances, needs, and preferences of affected civilians. Options may include public acknowledgement, apologies, monetary payments, and livelihood assistance," it said.

The rights organization went on to ask members of the

U.S.-led military coalition to coordinate their efforts to create a unified system to track, assess, and investigate reports of civilian casualties and to provide prompt and equitable condolence payments and other forms of amends.

"In cases in which coalition forces are found to have committed laws-of-war violations, appropriate compensation should be swiftly paid to the victims or their families," Human Rights Watch said.

"For the civilians who suffered under ISIS (Daesh) rule to rebuild their lives, the coalition should include condolence payments to those families who were harmed by their military operations," Lama Fakih, deputy Middle East director at the human rights organization said.

"Providing victims of airstrikes with some help for their suffering would be an important step," Fakih pointed out.

According to Press TV, the U.S.-led coalition has been conducting airstrikes and operations against what are said to be Daesh targets inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a United Nations mandate.

The military alliance has repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians. It has also been largely incapable of achieving its declared goal of destroying Daesh.

On February 12, the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, in two separate letters addressed to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the former rotating president of the Security Council, Anadolu Ndong Mba, denounced the coalition strikes conducted against Baghouz a day earlier, saying the U.S.-led warplanes had pounded a refugee camp.

Local sources told the state-run Ikhbariyah Syria tel-



evision news network that 16 civilians, including seven children, were killed as a result of the raid.

"This new crime is in line with the series of war crimes and crimes against humanity, which the U.S.-led coalition has perpetrated against Syrian people, its continued support for terrorism, and its use of terrorists and separatist militia forces to advance its fiendish plots aimed at Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity," said the letters.

The ministry also called on the UN Security Council to stand up against such attacks and crimes.

It also demanded that the UN body assume its responsibilities regarding the establishment of international peace and security, conduct an international probe into these criminal acts, condemn them, and put an immediate halt to such air raids as well as the "aggressive" presence of American and other foreign military forces in Syria

Turkey warns U.S. against harmful steps over S-400 systems

TEHRAN— Turkey has called on the United States to refrain from steps that could harm bilateral relations after the U.S. State Department said Ankara would face "real and negative consequences" in case it presses ahead with plans to acquire advanced Russian-made S-400 missile defense systems.

Turkish Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hami Aksoy said a statement on Wednesday that the latest remarks by State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortugus were not in line with the spirit and content of talks between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump during the G20 summit in the Japanese port city of Osaka last month.

"We are inviting the U.S. to avoid taking the wrong steps which would exclude diplomacy and dialogue and harm relations,"

Aksoy noted.

He further noted that Ankara had still not received a response from Washington to its proposal to set up a working group to look into the impact of the S-400 purchase.

On Tuesday, Ortugus renewed U.S. warning to Ankara that there would be consequences if it completes the purchase of the S-400.

"Those consequences include participation in the F-35 program," she told reporters, adding that Turkish officials were fully aware of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

The U.S. Congress passed the CAATSA against Russia in August 2017 over allegations of interfering in the 2016 presidential election. The law, among other things, imposes sanctions on countries and companies that engage in

contracts to purchase weaponry from Russia. Erdogan said after meeting Trump last month that he was confident Turkey would not face sanctions for the S-400 purchase.

After the meeting, Trump appeared convinced by the Turkish leader's assertion that former U.S. president Barack Obama did not allow Ankara to buy Patriot surface-to-air missile systems.

"You can't do business that way. It's not good," Trump said at the time.

According to Press TV, Moscow and Ankara finalized an agreement on the delivery of the S-400 in December 2017. Back in April 2018, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin said in Ankara that they had agreed to expedite the delivery of the S-400. At the time, it was said that the delivery could be

made between late 2019 and early 2020.

A number of NATO member states have criticized Turkey for purchase of the S-400, arguing the missile batteries are not compatible with those of the military alliance.

They also argue that the purchase could jeopardize Ankara's acquisition of F-35 fighter jets and possibly result in U.S. sanctions.

The S-400 is an advanced Russian missile system designed to detect, track, and destroy planes, drones, or missiles as far as 402 kilometers away. It has previously been sold only to China and India.

Ankara is striving to boost its air defense, particularly after Washington decided in 2015 to withdraw its Patriot surface-to-air missile system from Turkish border with Syria, a move that weakened Turkey's air defense.

UN human rights expert criticizes U.S. inaction over Khashoggi case

TEHRAN— An independent United Nations rights expert, who conducted an investigation into the murder of prominent journalist Jamal Khashoggi last October, has criticized the United States for its inaction over the case.

"(It) has the jurisdiction or at least the interest to take action. Silence is not an option. Speaking up is required but not enough. We have to act," UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions Agnes Callamard told a conference in London hosted by human rights groups on the killing of the Saudi-born dissident.

She stressed that Washington could act "either through

an FBI investigation (or) a civil law investigation... (or) the declassification of CIA and other materials. All of those things I believe can be done and should be done."

"The US was not at the top of the cooperation chain. They did the minimum to keep them within the remit of what is expected from a Western government," Callamard said.

The United Nations human rights expert added she was not granted any access to the CIA, the US Department of Justice or other officials from US President Donald Trump's administration.

Callamard further argued that the West risked a "democratic deficit" in not responding to widespread public disgust at the killing.

"That is dangerous... that democratic deficit must be tackled," she commented.

Hatice Cengiz, a Turkish writer and Khashoggi's fiancée, also echoed her call for justice at the conference.

"We ask all European countries and especially the UK to take this report more seriously," she said. "It's too dangerous to behave as if nothing has happened."

Khashoggi, a Washington Post contributor and critic of the Saudi crown prince, was murdered at the Saudi consulate in Turkey's largest city of Istanbul on October 2, 2018.

Riyadh initially said it had no knowledge of his fate, but later blamed the murder on rogue agents.

UK ambassador to U.S. resigns amid Trump row

TEHRAN— Sir Kim Darroch has resigned as British ambassador to the United States, as a diplomatic row between the two allies erupts.

"The current situation makes it impossible for me to carry out my role," said the diplomat, following the leak of unflattering remarks made about U.S. President Donald Trump.

"Since the leak of official documents from this embassy there has been a great deal of speculation surrounding my position and the duration of my remaining term as ambassador," he said in his resignation letter to Sir Simon McDonald, the foreign office's head of diplomatic service.

"I want to put an end to that speculation. The current situation is making it impossible for me to carry out my role as I would like."

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office confirmed the 65-year-old's resignation on Wednesday.

"That tranche of documents - diplomatic telegrams - was leaked to a British newspaper; it is assumed by either a politician or civil servant who is sympathetic to Donald Trump and wanted to embarrass the ambassador," said Al Jazeera's Laurence Lee from London.

"Trump then went full-bore against the UK, disinviting the veteran diplomat from

several events and the administration cancelling an important meeting with UK trade minister Liam Fox.

"[Sir Kim] has been described as a very experienced and very capable diplomat. This has led to a flat spin of a diplomatic crisis."

Trump had on Monday launched a broadside against UK Prime Minister Theresa May and said the U.S. would "no longer deal" with the British ambassador after the diplomat's assessment of the Trump administration as "inept" was leaked to the Daily Mail newspaper.

■ **Twitter 'diplomacy'**

Trump lambasted May's handling of

Brexit on Twitter, saying she disregarded his advice.

"What a mess she and her representatives have created" he wrote. "I do not know the Ambassador but he is not liked or well thought of within the U.S. We will no longer deal with him."

"The good news for the wonderful United Kingdom is that they will soon have a new Prime Minister."

Hours after Trump's tweet, May's spokesman reiterated Britain's position that the leak was unfortunate and said Darroch "continues to have the prime minister's full support".

A new world order with changes in power balance: Dividing the world into opponents and friends

➔ U.S. is now focused more than ever on gaining advanced military technologies and investing on new offensive systems; the country has now entered a new round of arms race and is threatening its competitors with war and annihilation in the new "star wars" atmosphere that has been created by U.S. in the first place.

Trump's new invasive strategy in 2019 is now combined with NATO's new military strategy passed in 2018 that makes U.S. NATO's world leader and Germany the Europe's leader so that they can quickly respond to Russia and China. This new combination will surely increase the military conflicts and future threats and will make the "political militarism" a priority for everyone.

According to NATO plans, U.S. nuclear weapons, including 20 atomic bombs, will stay in Bushel in Germany and NATO's military bases in North Atlantic Ocean and Germany will restart their activities. The nuclear weapons kept in Bushel, are of type B61-4 and each of them has a power four times greater than the bombs that destroyed Hiroshima. Anyway, by 2020, U.S. will replace these weapons with more modern nuclear weapons.

The new decisions made in NATO will surely change the general, long-term policy and strategies of this treaty; this will change NATO's defensive mode into an offensive mode and will expand its activities beyond the boundaries of its member countries; an example of this interregional approach is a new scheme for setting up an Arab NATO.

Over the last few years, Baltic States were also among the regions that had to endure the most hostile and violent military actions of both U.S. and Russia. In fact, after NATO prolonged the deployment of its forces in the Baltic area and enhanced its weapons and facilities in this region, Russia felt compelled to unveil its future nuclear weapons and missiles.

In late 2016, Pentagon official announced that Baltic region is strategically important because from a geostrategic point of view, if Russia occupies the southern border of Lithuania, Europe will lose its on ground connection with the Baltic States including Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

According to NATO, in 2016, there was an unprecedented increase in the number of Russia's "hostile" and "provoking" activities in Baltic area and the number of alarms given by NATO. Over this period, NATO's navies sent 870 alarms to Russian fighters in Baltic area; such a large number was never witnessed even during the peak of the Cold War.

Instead of being concerned about Russia's activities and security issues that might occur, NATO is now prepared for a possible military clash with Russia. The political concerns has now turned into real military threats and operations, in an environment that is even more hostile than that of the Cold War.

Clearly, these security changes are not in favor of Russia, therefore, the country can only face NATO's constant threats if it cooperates with the major powers of Asia and Middle East.

Up to now, Russia has been able to give a firm response to such threats by testing its super-advanced weapons and running arms races, but in future, if it wants to maintain the power balance and subtract the huge costs of defense systems, it has to find strategic, powerful allies both among its neighboring countries and in other parts of the world.

Amid all these tensions and conflicts, Europe will be in the front line of war and peace between U.S. and Russia. Like a "security hostage without a free will", Europe will be a bystander and might even a victim if any of two sides decide to use banned weapons.

Despite all its political and economic capacities, Europe will be buried in the arms race between U.S. and Russia and will only be a target, even more at danger than it was during the Cold War.

This is why Europe is worried about Iran's withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as this would disrupt Europe's power in the Middle East, increases the tension and makes Europe even a bigger target of threats.

Therefore, it seems that in near future, we will see a new order in the world. This new order definitely depends on the destiny of the JCPOA, the Deal of the Century and the military clashes in the Baltic area. The results will come about soon, but at a great expense.

U.S. and Russia are already squandering a lot of money on nuclear weapons and missiles; seemingly they think that their possible clash will come about with a great cost and will cause a severe damage and threaten the lives of many people.

Recently, NATO's Secretary General threatened Russia with a nuclear defensive and received its response from Russia by deployment of short-range and long-range missiles in European countries that member states of NATO.

U.S. Senate Foreign Relations chairman offers bill on Saudi rights

TEHRAN— The Republican chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Jim Risch, has introduced legislation seeking to push back on Saudi Arabia over human rights and criticizing Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The bill, seen by Reuters on Wednesday, is the latest effort in the U.S. Congress to hold Saudi Arabia accountable for rights abuses, including the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at a Saudi consulate in Turkey and a humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are fighting Houthis in Yemen.

However, it does not address weapons sales to Saudi Arabia. Risch had said he wanted to introduce legislation that President Donald Trump would sign.

Although Trump's fellow Republicans hold a majority of seats in the Senate, the chamber last month defied him by voting to block billions of dollars in military sales to Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other countries.

A handful of Republicans joined Democrats to pass resolutions to block the sales, rejecting Trump's decision to sidestep Congress' review of such deals by declaring an emergency over Iran.

Trump has promised to veto all 22 of the resolutions of disapproval. The measures did not get enough votes in the Senate to override his veto.

Risch's bill calls for a "comprehensive review of" and report on Washington's relationship with Saudi Arabia addressing issues including the Saudi diplomatic presence in the United States.

It also calls upon Trump to deny or revoke visas of any Saudi citizens tied to rights abuses, although it allows waivers if they are in the U.S. national interest.

The House of Representatives is due to vote on some of the resolutions of disapproval of the weapons sales next week. They are expected to pass the Democratic-controlled chamber, Reuters reported.

Media have an 'agenda' against Pogba - Solskjaer

Manchester United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has moved to hose down speculation that Paul Pogba is unhappy and set to leave the club, declaring the media have an "agenda" against the French World Cup winner.

Pogba's agent recently told The Times that the troubled 26-year-old intends to leave United, while the player, himself, said in Tokyo last month that he thought it might be time for a "new challenge somewhere else".

Serie A club Juventus and La Liga giants Real Madrid have been linked with Pogba, and the speculation has followed United to Australia on their pre-season tour ahead of a match against A-League side Perth Glory on Saturday.

Pogba has two years left on his contract, with the option for a third, however, and Solskjaer hit out at media for indulging in the transfer talk.

"Agents talk all the time. As I said, we've not had any bids from any clubs," he told reporters in Perth on Wednesday. "That's all I can say about this matter."

"There is an agenda against Paul, he's a top, top bloke. A great professional, there's never been any problems and he's got a heart of gold."

Pogba, who moved to Old Trafford from Juventus for a then-world record transfer fee of £89.3 million in August 2016, was named in last season's PFA Premier League Team of the Year and has scored 31 goals in 142 appearances in all competitions.

But he has frustrated fans with his inconsistency, and a series of low-key performances last season culminated in clashes with angry supporters in the final-day home defeat by relegated Cardiff.

Manchester United posted a video of the team taking a stroll through Perth on its social media accounts earlier in the week but the upbeat soundtrack of electronic music could not disguise what appeared to be a heated exchange between Pogba and team mate Jesse Lingard.

(Source: Reuters)

Mbappe not guaranteed PSG stay - Leonardo

Paris Saint-Germain sporting director Leonardo stopped short of promising that Kylian Mbappe will sign a contract extension with the French champions but expressed his desire to rebuild around him.

Speaking with Le Parisien in the second part of an interview where he also admitted that Neymar can leave if an offer that satisfies all parties is received, Leonardo refused to promise a new deal for the 20-year-old.

"Extending him or not is not a question," Leonardo said. "I never make promises. For two reasons: firstly, I do not do everything at this club. Secondly, I do not want to pluck promises out of thin air without being certain that I can deliver on them."

"The only thing that interests me is the concrete -- today." Leonardo indirectly underlined the differences between Mbappe and Neymar -- praising Mbappe's positive attitude towards the start of preseason training while Neymar is absent without PSG's permission.

"There is no question of whether or not a contract extension for Kylian is a priority or not," Leonardo said. "He is here, which is very important for the club, so there is no debate."

"When training resumed on Monday, he arrived with a superb attitude -- smiling, as always. He is charismatic, people love him very much. It is important to have a player like him in the squad -- young and smiling."

When asked if PSG should be building towards the future around Mbappe, Leonardo was in no doubt.

(Source: Soccernet)

Griezmann clause payment complications for Barça

As the saga continues, FC Barcelona's aim was to turn this week into 'Griezmann Week'. However, it seems as though the situation is more complicated than they would have liked, or indeed expected.

Those in charge of transfer dealings at the Camp Nou have been working on the premise that they would pay the player's release clause of 120 million euros at LaLiga headquarters on Wednesday. Following that, the player would arrive in the Catalan capital after his agreed 30 days holiday and could be presented on Friday (12 July), having the traditional photograph in the Camp Nou store, and on Monday could start training with his teammates, finally one of the squad.

However, Barça's lack of liquidity and ongoing negotiations with the banks that can endorse the 120 million euros, is likely to disrupt the club's plans. This could force them to delay the current timeline, with a payment then potentially not being made before Friday.

This is a reason why the Spanish champions have tried to negotiate, although without success, a deferred payment of the player's buy-out clause with Atlético Madrid. This would change the situation to a simple transfer agreement between the two clubs rather than one buying the player out from their current contract.

(Source: AS)

Juve fans call for Higuain stay

Juventus fans have called for Gonzalo Higuain to stay at the club after he arrived for his preseason medical.

Higuain was included in Maurizio Sarri's first training squad on Tuesday, and he checked into J Medical the following morning.

It was there that a group of Juve supporters made no secret of their desire for the striker to be retained.

"Stay with us, Gonzalo," was one of the chants that could be heard.

The 31-year-old appeared to be on the scrapheap after failed loan spells at Milan and Chelsea last season.

Roma are keen to take him, but his agent-brother is adamant he will not play for another Italian club.

(Source: Football Italia)

Court in a trap? Wobbly Serena faces test against wily Strycova

American superstar Serena Williams is tantalizingly close to equalling Margaret Court's record haul of 24 Grand Slam titles but it's far from a certainty given her shaky displays so far at Wimbledon.

The 37-year-old seven-time champion had to draw on all her strength -- physical and mental -- to get past unseeded compatriot Alison Riske in the last eight and faces another grass court loving opponent in Barbora Strycova in Thursday's semi-finals.

The 33-year-old Czech veteran -- the oldest player to play in a woman's semi-final for the first time -- has found the thought of retirement a spur for playing some of her finest tennis and says she will step onto Centre Court "without any fear".

The other semi-final pits two seeds against each other, seventh seed and former world number one Simona Halep against eighth seeded Ukrainian Elina Svitolina.

It says a lot about the turbulence of women's tennis that Williams is making her 12th semi-final appearance while of the other three only Halep has gone this far before, and that was back in 2014.

Williams is the colossus that still bestrides women's tennis, but there are chinks in her armour as have been exposed both at Wimbledon and in her last two Grand Slam finals.

Outplayed by Angelique Kerber in last year's Wimbledon final and then a spectacular meltdown in the US Open defeat by Naomi



Osaka gives Strycova genuine hope of an upset.

Not that the diminutive Czech will require any as her bubbly character oozes optimism and her form guide is as good as any of the semi-finalists having ousted four seeds on her way to the semi-final.

Williams's clay court campaign was affected by a knee injury but has accrued invaluable extra game time by playing the mixed doubles with another former world number one, Andy Murray.

"This is the first time since Australia (she reached the quarter-finals of the Australian Open)

that I actually felt, like, good," said Williams.

"It's been a really, really long year for me already, and hard year, because I'm usually not typically injured."

"I don't know where I am. I do know I feel good."

'Fighting spirit'

"She's good on the grass," Williams said of an opponent she has defeated three times without dropping a set, including the first round at Wimbledon seven years ago.

"She knows what to do. She has a good all-around game. She's incredibly tricky. It's

definitely not easy.

"But it's something I'm definitely geared up for."

Strycova for her part described Williams as a great champion and amazing athlete but if that indicated she was intimidated think again.

"I don't have fear, I don't have such a power like Serena, but I have other weapons. I will try to use them as much as I can. I will enjoy. I have really at this point nothing to lose."

Halep should prevail in the other clash, not only because of her greater experience and having won a Slam in last year's French Open, but she says she has at last taken to grass after not being best suited to it when she lost to Eugenie Bouchard in the 2014 semi-final.

Halep showed this in impressing in her previous two matches dealing with the partisan crowd in beating Coco Gauff and then coming back from 4-1 down and break points in the first set against Zhang Shuai in her quarter-final.

"I'm a different person," said the 27-year-old Romanian.

"Everything changed. I have a lot of experience now. I'm more confident."

"I love grass. It's first time when I say that."

Svitolina has at last broken the psychological barrier of reaching the semi-finals -- four losing quarter-final appearances at other Slams testify to her inability to go further.

(Source: AFP)

Silver sees free agency changes after NBA star shifts



NBA free agency rules need to be revised after a wild week of deals saw superstar talent shifts and player trade demands, league commissioner Adam Silver said Tuesday.

Speaking in Las Vegas after team owners meetings at the NBA Summer League, Silver said it was clear talks had been underway about major moves long before the NBA opened its official negotiating period.

News of Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving going to Brooklyn broke minutes into the start of free agency on June 30, leading Silver and many others to conclude the NBA can't enforce its own free agency regulations.

"Obviously, if deals are being announced immediately after the discussion period begins, there had been prior discussions," Silver said.

"To a certain extent, we always knew that there was some leakage, some slippage around those deadlines, and I think there was a certain amount that historically had been acceptable in the league."

"The consensus at both our committee meetings and the board meeting was that we need to revisit and reset those rules... It's pointless at the end of the day to have rules that we can't enforce."

"The sense in the room was we should revisit those rules, think about what does make sense for our teams so that ultimately we can create a level playing field."

If some teams wait to open talks when

NBA rules allow, they might find their desired talent already agreed to deals with another club.

"The marching orders to the league, together with our labor relations committee, is that we should spend the next several months thinking about both what is in our unilateral power to change and then potentially what it is we should be discussing with the players when we sit back down for bargaining," Silver said.

Silver said the NBA need not wait for final salary cap figures if they made adjustments later.

He saw positives in Brooklyn's moves plus Kawhi Leonard and Paul George going to the Los Angeles Clippers -- George after asking for a trade from Oklahoma City. But big markets showed an edge over small ones.

"You want to make sure you have a league where every team is in a position to compete. My sense was, especially when it comes to free agency and the rules around it, that we've got work to do."

In some ways, star players command more power in the talent shift equation than teams.

"I don't necessarily see it as player versus owner," Silver said. "To the extent the balance of power is out of whack a little bit, we should address it."

"This notion of player power, what we're really talking about is a small group of players."

(Source: France 24)

Konta, reporter have tense exchange after loss



Johanna Konta didn't appreciate having her performance questioned after losing in the quarterfinals at Wimbledon on Tuesday.

As the last British player remaining in the tournament, Konta was the crowd favorite against Barbora Strycova on Centre Court, but she lost 7-6 (5), 6-1 despite holding a 4-1 lead in the first set.

Konta attributed Strycova's comeback solely to her opponent's good play -- and bristled at the notion that it was her own mistakes that were at fault.

Asked by a reporter whether she should "look at yourself a little bit about how you cope with these big points," Konta shot back: "Is that in your professional tennis opinion?"

A testy exchange followed, with the reporter saying that if Konta wants to win a Grand Slam tournament someday, she should be willing to learn from matches like this one.

Konta interrupted him to say, "Please don't patronize me."

"In the way you're asking your question, you're being quite disrespectful and you're patronizing me," she said. "I'm a professional competitor who did her best today, and that's all there is to that."

After Andy Murray ended a 77-year wait for a British men's champion at Wimbledon, the country's tennis fans -- and media -- have become increasingly hopeful that Konta could become

the first homegrown female champion since Virginia Wade in 1977.

But Konta, who reached the semi-finals at the All England Club in 2017, insisted it wasn't the pressure that got to her when she was leading.

"I guess what happened is that I have an opponent on the other side of the court who has everything to say in how the match goes, as well," Konta said. "I don't think you need to pick on me in a harsh way."

"I mean, I think I'm very open with you guys [in the media]. I say how I feel out there. If you don't want to accept that answer or you don't agree with it, that's fine. I still believe in the tennis that I play. I still believe in the way I competed."

Former Wimbledon champion Marion Bartoli said Konta had been "bullied" by the questioning at the news conference, while journalists would say they are just doing their jobs by asking what went wrong in a match.

"[News conferences] can be extremely difficult," Bartoli told the BBC's Today at Wimbledon. "It is part of your job, you just have to sort of say exactly what she said - I am a professional tennis player, I tried my best today."

"Obviously us as analysts, we're trying just to figure it out what happened exactly, why she lost that match and why the other one won it."

(Source: ESPN)

Madagascar tongue-twisters tackle Tunisia for semi-finals place

Before the Africa Cup of Nations kicked off in Egypt last month, Madagascar were best known for the tongue-twisting surnames of players such as Anicet Andrianantenaina and Charles Andriamahitsinoro.

Now, 20 days into the biennial tournament, the Indian Ocean islanders have stunned three-time champions Nigeria and are preparing to face Tunisia on Thursday in the last quarter-final.

While France-born coach Nicolas Dupuis insists "the team is the star", midfielder Andrianantenaina and forward Andriamahitsinoro have caught the eye.

Bulgaria-based Andrianantenaina was among the 11 footballers chosen by a Confederation of African Football (CAF) panel as the best in the 36-match group phase.

Andriamahitsinoro, who plays for a Saudi Arabian club, made the substitutes' list in the group 'dream team', and his two goals have put him in contention for the Golden Boot award.

"The coach is correct to say the team is the star and, sometimes, an individual will stand out when we need him to. That is our strength," explained Andriamahitsinoro.

He stands out on the field because he has blond dyed hair and is tall in a squad of mostly medium-height footballers.

Tunisia coach Alain Giresse says his first target of a last-eight place has been achieved, adding: "We are capable of lifting the trophy 15 years after doing so for the first time."



Here, AFP Sport looks at Thursday's last-eight matches as Algeria face the Ivory Coast in a clash of former champions before Madagascar meet 2004 winners Tunisia.

Madagascar v Tunisia

The countries have met competitively only twice with Tunisia winning 1-0 at home and 2-0 away in 2002 World Cup qualifying.

Since then, Tunisia hosted and won a Cup of Nations while Madagascar became so weak that the Democratic Republic of Congo went to Antananarivo three years ago and won a qualifier 6-1.

But while unimpressive Tunisia reached the quarter-finals with four straight draws -- a penalty shootout win over Ghana was officially classified as a draw -- Madagascar blossomed.

Apart from the 2-0 triumph over African powerhouses Nigeria, they defeated fellow debutants Burundi and held Guinea and DR Congo playing eye-pleasing football.

Should Madagascar eliminate vastly more experienced Tunisia, they will become the first Cup of Nations debutants since South Africa in 1996 to reach the semi-finals.

Algeria v Ivory Coast

This clash extends one of the great rivalries in the tournament with the Ivorian Elephants winning three and the Algerian Desert Foxes two of seven previous meetings.

When they last met, in a 2015 quarter-final, Ivory Coast triumphed 3-1 with Serey Die part of the winning team while the losing line-up included Riyad Mahrez.

The midfielders, who have contrasting roles with Die primarily a destroyer and Mahrez a creator, captain the teams in Suez four years later.

Algeria coach Djamel Belmadi believes his team, the only survivors with a 100 percent record in Egypt, can go all the way, saying: "It does not cost anything to be ambitious."

Rival coach Ibrahim Kamara is saying little during this Cup of Nations while a side boasting star attackers like Nicolas Pepe, Jonathan Kodjia and Wilfried Zaha has yet to sparkle.

(Source: Eurosport)

Greco-Roman wrestlers claim Junior Asian Wrestling Championships title

S P O R T S TEHRAN – Iran Greco-Roman team claimed the title of the Junior Asian Wrestling Championships in Chon Buri, Thailand on Wednesday.

The Iranian team won seven gold medals, one silver and one bronze in the two-day tournament.

Bahram Maroufkhani (67kg), Mohammad Reza Rostami (72kg), Mohammad Naghousi (77kg), Hossein Forouzandeh (82kg), Hassan Forouzandeh (87kg), Hamed Abdevali (97kg) and Ali Akbar Yousefi (130kg) won seven golds.

Saeid Arjemand Dashtaki (63kg) and Milad Ali Rezanezhad (60kg) won a silver and a bronze medals respectively.

Iran claimed the championship with 218 points, followed by Kazakhstan and India with 146 and 145 points.

RESULTS

Greco-Roman

55kg

GOLD - Vijay VIJAY (IND) df. Ikhtiyor BOTIROV (UZB), 4-0

BRONZE - Donghyeok WON (KOR) df. Koichi TSUTSUMI (JPN), 2-1

BRONZE - Zhanibek ISSAKHANOV (KAZ) df. Sahatsawat PHUANGKAE (THA), 9-0

60kg

GOLD - Mukhammadkodir YUSUPOV (UZB) df. Sachin RANA (IND)

BRONZE - Olzhas SULTAN (KAZ) df. Alamusi ALAMUSI (CHN)

BRONZE - Milad Ali REZANEZHAD (IRI) df. Yun Bin SHIN (KOR)



63kg

GOLD - Assaukhat MUKHAMADIYEV (KAZ) df. Saeid ARJMANDDASHTAKI (IRI), 2-2

BRONZE - Ryota KOSHIBA (JPN) df. Javokhirbek SAMATOV (UZB), 8-3

BRONZE - Sangjun PARK (KOR) df. Nursultan MAKHMUDOV (KGZ), 5-4

67kg

GOLD - Bahram TAYYAR MAROUFKHANI (IRI) df. Nurzhigit KENESHBEK (UZB)

BRONZE - Saurabh SAURABH (IND) df. Guotao ZHANG (CHN)

BRONZE - Umidjon AKHROROV (UZB) df. Minseong PARK (KOR)

BRONZE - Saurabh SAURABH (IND) df. Guotao ZHANG (CHN)

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BRONZE - Umidjon AKHROROV (UZB) df. Minseong PARK (KOR)

77kg

GOLD - Mohammad NAGHOUSI (IRI) df. Akyzbek TALANTBEKOV (KGZ), 6-3

BRONZE - Nao KUSAKA (JPN) df. Zhalgasov DAULET (KAZ), 8-0

BRONZE - Dilshod OMONGELDIYEV (UZB) df. Bahetijiang KELAN (CHN), 7-0

82kg

GOLD - Hossein Jahanbakhsh FOROUZANDEH GHOJEHBEIGLOU (IRI) df. Teshin HIGUCHI (JPN)

BRONZE - Eli MAGOMADOV (KAZ) df. Sanjeet SANJEET (IND)

BRONZE - Toyly ORAZOV (TKM) df. Danuson ARRICHUAI (THA)

87kg

GOLD - Hasan FOROUZANDEH GHOJEHBEIGLOU (IRI) df. Meirbek KORDABAY (KAZ), 5-1

BRONZE - Ryohta NASUKAWA (JPN) df. Han LEI (CHN), FALL

BRONZE - Kumar SUNIL (IND) df. Azat SALIDINOV (KGZ), 10-7

97kg

GOLD - Hamed Nazar Ali ABDOVALI (IRI) df. Jeongyul KWON (KOR)

BRONZE - Deepanshu DEEPANSHU (IND) df. Houzhi HAO (CHN)

BRONZE - Aday KURMANSEITOV (KAZ) df. Daniyar SHERIMBEKOV (KGZ)

130kg

GOLD - Aliakbar Hossein YOUSOFIAHMAD-CHALI (IRI) df. Aawesh AAWESEH (IND), FALL

BRONZE - Alibek SARSENGALIYEV (KAZ) df. Ilyosbek GULOMJONOV (UZB), 8-0

Godwin Mensha's Mercedes blown up outside his mom home

PLDC — Ex-Persepolis and Esteghlal striker Godwin Mensha saw his Mercedes Benz on fire after it was blown up.

Mensha has returned to Nigeria to see his mother but last night he was shocked to see his car is burning.



He is unsure of the motive for the incident, but thinks jealousy is the reason behind the occurrence.

According to Mensha, the incident will be investigated by the police.

A video is also going viral of the car which shows Mensha's car is burning.

Mensha has played for Iranian football clubs Paykan, Persepolis and Esteghlal.

Vahid Amiri leaves Trabzonspor

TASNIM — Iranian international winger Vahid Amiri has parted ways with Turkish football club Trabzonspor.

The 31-year-old player joined Trabzonspor from Persepolis last season but failed to meet expectations.

Amiri is now a free agent player.

Iranian clubs Persepolis, Tractor Sazi and Sepahan are eying the player.

He has been reportedly linked with Qatari clubs as well.

Amiri has represented Iran national football team in the 2018 World Cup and 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

Liverpool step-up pursuit of Sardar Azmoun

Liverpool have stepped-up their interest in Zenit Saint Petersburg striker Sardar Azmoun as Jurgen Klopp looks to add to his attacking options this summer.

Klopp already has a formidable front three at his disposal but he knows he needs support for the likes of Roberto Firmino, Sadio Mane and Mohamed Salah if they're to compete on all fronts this coming season.

Daniel Sturridge is set to leave Anfield after struggling to establish himself while Divock Origi's future is uncertain so Klopp is being tipped to dip into the market for another striker and it appears Azmoun is being eyed as a potential signing.

The Metro are citing a report from Sport that claims Liverpool have stepped-up their interest in the 24-year-old after sending scouts to watch him in action for Zenit Saint Petersburg at the weekend.

The representatives would have been impressed with what they saw as Azmoun scored twice but his brace wasn't enough as Zenit ended up losing the Russian Super Cup 3-2 to Lokomotiv Moscow.

The Iranian international has scored 19 goals in 34 games in all competitions since joining Zenit from Rubin Kazan on February 1st while he's also got 28 goals in 45 caps for his country so he certainly has an impressive strike rate in front of goal.

Liverpool were first linked with Azmoun back in January 2017 but the level-headed youngster opted against the move due to concerns over regular playing time. However, he was confident he would eventually end up at a top European club in the near future.

Azmoun could get another chance to join Liverpool again this summer if the Merseysiders decide to formalize their interest and test Zenit's resolve with a firm offer over the coming weeks. (source: Metro)

Iran beat Ireland at 2019 IFCPF World Cup

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran emerged victorious over Republic of Ireland in the 2019 International Federation of Cerebral Palsy Football (IFCPF) World Cup in Sevilla, Spain on Wednesday.

The Iranian team defeated Ireland 4-1 at the Ciudad Deportiva Sevilla FC Cisneros Palacios in Group B.

Both teams remain in contention for the quarterfinals.

Rasoul Atashafrouz scored four goals for the Iranian team, while Dillon Sheridan scored the only goal for Ireland.

Iran, who started the competition with a 3-2 defeat to

the U.S., will face Finland on Friday.

The 2019 IFCPF World Cup features 16 of the world's top Para 7-a-side teams that qualified through IFCPF Regional Championships and the IFCPF rankings.

Ukraine enter the tournament as reigning world champions after winning the 2017 IFCPF World Championships.

The Nations Group A: Japan, Germany, England, Brazil

Group B: Ireland, Iran, Finland, the U.S.

Group C: Ukraine, Spain, Australia, Argentina

Group D: Thailand, Russia, Netherlands, Canada

FIFA launches child safeguarding program and toolkit

Millions of children around the world are involved in football, almost all of whom follow a favourite team. Many children play in organised matches or kick-about and some also take an early interest in coaching and refereeing.

However they may be involved in the game, what these children all have in common is the right to enjoy football in a safe environment and a culture of respect and understanding.

With this firmly in mind, today FIFA launched a new dedicated program and toolkit – FIFA Guardians™ – designed to enhance child safeguarding standards within football.

Developed by FIFA together with its Child Safeguarding Expert Working Group, this new initiative aims at providing practical guidance to support the 211 FIFA member associations (MAs) in reviewing their existing safeguarding measures, to help prevent any risk of harm to children in football, and to appropriately respond if concerns arise.



Containing practical guidance and support materials, the new online toolkit is based on "five principles and five steps" that are underpinned by recognized international standards and best practice in child safeguarding across sports. The FIFA Guardians toolkit is also based on the premise that keeping children safe from

harm is "Up to all of Us", no matter the country we are from or the role we hold in football.

The FIFA Guardians program will be rolled out in the coming months through a series of training modules and workshops to promote global awareness and its implementation in all FIFA MAs and by working

together with the confederations.

In launching the new program today, FIFA Secretary General, Fatma Samoura, said: "FIFA's vision is to promote the game of football, protect its integrity and bring the game to all. In realizing this vision, we aim to ensure that involvement in football, in any form, is a positive experience for all children.

"Furthermore, as the world governing body of football, FIFA has a duty and responsibility to ensure that those who play football can do so in a safe, positive and enjoyable environment.

"Today's launch is a landmark step for FIFA and the world of football in general, and I am confident that the FIFA Guardians program will help to mobilise action and guide our 211 member associations around the world in reviewing and implementing their own safeguarding measures to keep children safe in football. FIFA believes this to be every child's right."

(Source: FIFA)

Brazil, Iran and Poland to battle in Pool B

The 2019 FIVB Volleyball Nations League Finals has six teams who could all come away with the title in the second year of the event.

In Pool B, Brazil is a leading contender to win the title, but they will need to face a hungry Iran aiming for its first major title along with a young Poland squad that has reached the Final Six.

Brazil finished the 15-match preliminary phase with a VNL-leading 14-1 record – two wins more than its next closest competitor. Brazil, which is 5-0 head-to-head with the other Finals Round opponents, come into the Final Round on an eight-match win streak. While nearly perfect in the win column, Brazil was forced to a fifth set five times, showing it can bend but not break under pressure more times than not.

Brazil's depth has been showcased throughout the tournament with each player able to step in and change the game.

"I think our strength is the group," Brazil captain and setter Bruno Rezende said. "We have not just the starting six, but 14 players who can enter and change the game. That is our strength. Many teams have difficulties to know which Brazil players will be in front of them. We are a mix of young players with experienced players. That is our keys to make a good Final Six here in Chicago."

Alan Souza, Brazil's opposite, said the tournament field is strong top to bottom.

"It is difficult to put a main favorite for this Final Six because all teams have good chances," Brazil opposite Alan Souza said. "Like Brazil, many teams are mixing young players with star players. It will be an interesting Final Six. We hope that we have a lot of confidence that we can obtain the final and be champions of the Final Six."

Iran opened the Volleyball Nations League preliminary round with a 10-1 record with its only setback being to Brazil, then became the first non-host team to qualify for the VNL Finals by reaching an 11-2 record and an unreachable

33 points. Iran ended the preliminary round 12-3 and in second place, an improvement of five wins over last year's inaugural VNL season's record of 7-8.

Iran is aiming to win their first world-level title, and they are up for the challenge. But they are not looking ahead to a title match, but to do well in Pool B and its first match on Thursday against Poland.

"We come here to fight against everybody, but we have to think about the first step and the first match, not about the title," Iran head coach Igor Kolakovic said. "We have to think about step-by-step, not so far ahead."

Iran captain Mir Saeid Maroufakrani echoed his coach's thoughts and said it was important for the team to get off to a good start and playing two weeks in front of their home crowds. Now, all six teams in the Finals are strong and back to a level start in the Finals.

"Actually we didn't think about the Final Six when we first started the Volleyball Nations League," Iran captain Mir Saeid Maroufakrani said. "We try our best. We came here game-by-game, point-by-point. It was important to play two weeks in Tehran with our supporters. Now our main goal is to play our maximum best here, but all the teams here are so strong. Nobody can say who will win the tournament. We will try our best. Our goal is to play in the final."

Kolakovic feels the team's ability to train together ahead of the VNL preliminary round and its ability to stay healthy was a key factor in Iran's fast start.

"I think after the club season, some players had a really good rest and that helped," Kolakovic said. "We started to train about one month ahead without any problems or injuries. We made good shape, and after that, especially in the beginning we played really well. After that a lot of travel and a lot of games without so much time for good practice."

Poland's preliminary schedule was stacked early with three straight Finals Round foes in the first four match-



es (defeating USA, losing to Brazil and France). Poland overcame the tough start, earning the last spot into the Finals on the penultimate day of the preliminaries. Overall, Poland finished the preliminary round in fifth place with an 11-4 record.

Karol Klos, Poland's 28-year-old captain, is one of two players who have Olympic Games or World Championship experience for his team in Chicago. He feels the journey to reach the Finals Round has been beneficial for the youthful roster, as well as who represented their country to get to this stage.

"It was a long journey for all 24 players on our national team because we played everyone depending on which week we played," Klos said. "It was long, but it was a successful journey for the national team of Poland, the twice world champions. But also for the young guys who are here in Chicago with me – I am one of the oldest ones here. But for them, it was an amazing experience to get something from these games. It is also a nice journey in front us in the next few days."

(Source: FIVB.org)

Al Sadd, Al Duhail shift gears as showdown nears

Qatar clubs Al Sadd and Al Duhail are picking up the pace ahead of their 2019 AFC Champions League Round of 16 tie in August.

While Al Duhail have been based in the Portuguese city of Portimao since July 1, Al Sadd reported for training in Doha on July 7.

Qatari champions Al Sadd will have a new head coach in the dugout with Spain and Barcelona legend Xavi Hernandez having been announced as the man in charge at the end of the 2018-19 season.

Al Sadd kicked off their preparations without Saad al Sheeb, Tareq Salman, Akram Afif, Hamed Ismail, Hassan Al Haydos, Salem Al Hajri and Abdelkarim Hassan as they have been given additional time off after featuring in Qatar's 2019 Copa America campaign.

Al Sadd will head to Barcelona on Sunday for a 16-day training stint.

The first leg of their 2019 AFC Champions League Round of 16 tie will be on August 6 at the iconic Al Janoub Stadium with the return tie a week later.

The winners will face either Al Nassr of Saudi Arabia or Al Wahda of the UAE in the quarter-finals.

Al Duhail, meanwhile, will play the first of their five friendly matches in Portugal against the Portimonense second team later on Wednesday.

That will be followed by a tie against Louletano on Sunday. Also lined up are friendlies against Farense, Maritimo and the senior Portimonense side.

The 2019-20 Qatar Stars League kicks off on with the curtain raiser Sheikh Jassim Cup - featuring Al Sadd and Al Duhail - on August 17.

(Source: the-afc)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Victory is won eventually by those who are patient and persistent, even if it takes a long time.
Imam Ali (AS)

Iranian Artists Forum to review Roy Andersson films

A R T TEHRAN — Movies from 76-year-old Swedish director Roy Andersson will be reviewed during a three-day program starting from July 13 at the Iranian Artists Forum.

“Songs from the Second Floor”, Andersson’s 2000 drama inspired by the Peruvian poet César Vallejo, is one of the films that will be screened in the program titled “Three Days with Roy Andersson”.



A poster for “Three Days with Roy Andersson”, Iranian Artists Forum’s program for a review of Swedish director Roy Andersson’s films.

The film is about people who are trying to communicate, searching for compassion and getting the connection between small and large things.

“You, the Living” produced in 2007 is another highlight of the lineup. It is about humankind, its greatness and its baseness, joy and sorrow, its self-confidence and anxiety, its desire to love and be loved.

The program will also screen the 2014 drama “A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on Existence” about Sam and Jonathan, a pair of hapless novelty salesman, who embark on a tour of the human condition in reality, and the fantasies that unfold in a series of absurdist episodes.

The 1991 short movie “World of Glory”, which was Andersson’s critical comeback to cinema, after many years in advertising, will also be reviewed.

The narrative portrays a man in white make-up who guides the viewer through his life in a bleakly stylized world.

Critics Majid Akhgar and Mehdi Moqimmejad and filmmaker Mohammadreza Aslami will attend the review sessions, which will be organized after each screening.

The program starting at 5 pm every day is open to the public.

“Rona, Azim’s Mother” to hit Iranian silver screens in September

A R T TEHRAN — “Rona, Azim’s Mother”, a co-production between Afghanistan and Iran by Tehran-based Afghan brothers Jamshid and Navid Mahmudi, is scheduled to go on screen at Iranian theaters during September.

Starring Iranian actors Mohsen Tanabandeh and Mojtaba Pirzadeh, the film is about Azim, an Afghan refugee who works as a janitor in Tehran. While helping his mother and his brother’s family plan to smuggle themselves into Germany, he feels betrayed by his brother when he abandons their mother.

The film has received several awards in Iranian and international events, including Kim Ji-seok Award at the 22nd Busan International Film Festival in October 2018 and best film award at the Sharm el-Sheikh Asian Film Festival in Egypt last March.

“Rona, Azim’s Mother” was Afghanistan’s submission to the 91st Academy Awards in the best foreign language film category in 2018, however, it did not make the shortlist.

The Mahmudi brothers’ other film “Parting”, which is another Afghan-Iranian joint production about love and migration, was also submitted by Afghanistan to the 89th Annual Academy Awards to represent the country in the best foreign language film category at the 2017 Oscars.

19th Traditional and Ritual Theater Festival to open in Kashan

A R T TEHRAN — The 19th Traditional and Ritual Theater Festival will open in the central Iranian city of Kashan, director of the festival Davud Fal’halibeigi has said.

The opening ceremony will take place at the Qajar-era historical house of Tabatabaieha on August 11.

A two-day international seminar will be organized on the sidelines one day earlier in the neighboring town of Qamsar, which is famous for its rosewater.

The festival will continue in several historical sites across the city the next day, and will then move to Tehran where it will continue until August 17.

The previous edition of the festival was held at Tehran’s City Theater Complex.

Books on Khorramshahr women’s resistance in Iran-Iraq war published

CULTURE TEHRAN — Four books on the resistance of women in Khorramshahr during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war have recently been published in Tehran.

Published by Sureh-Mehr, an affiliate publisher of the Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization (IIDO), the books were introduced during a ceremony in the Art Bureau in Tehran on Tuesday.

The southwestern Iranian city of Khorramshahr was captured by Iraqis on October 26, 1980 during the early months of the Iran-Iraq war and it was liberated on May 24, 1982.

“Prettiest Days of Life”, the memoirs of Seyyede Fuzieh Madih compiled by Somayyeh Shariflu, and “Sabah”, the memoirs of Sabah Vatankhah compiled by Fatemeh Dustkami, are two of the books.

Also included are “Saji” containing memories of Nasrin Baqerzadeh written by Behnaz Zarrabizadeh and “Bright Lights of the City” written by Faezeh Sasanikhah.

The ceremony was attended by the writers, IIDO director Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Qomi, Art Bureau director Mohsen Momeni-Sharif and the director of the Art and Literature Department of the bureau, Morteza Sarhangi.

Speaking at the ceremony, Qomi said that the role of women is important in the war, and added, “The arrogance tries to expose its own image of woman to us, while our women follow the paths of Hazrat Fatima (SA), the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (S), and Hazrat Zeinab (SA), the sister of Imam Hussein (AS), and the 7000 female martyrs are great examples of the fact.”

Momeni-Sharif said that war literature in the world has a great difference with what is in Iran.

“Iran fought with a well-equipped army in the war, and mothers and women played a major role in supporting and encouraging the men to fight against the enemy,” he added.

The ceremony concluded with short speeches by the writers.



IIDO director Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Qomi speaks during the unveiling ceremony of four books on Khorramshahr women’s resistance at the Art Bureau in Tehran on July 9, 2019.

Tehran session to discuss connections between Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht

A R T TEHRAN — A number of Iranian scholars and artists will come together in a meeting at Tehran’s City Theater Complex on Friday to discuss the influences German philosopher Walter Benjamin and German playwright Bertolt Brecht have on each other’s works.

Iranian scholars Morad Farhadpur, Reza Sarvar, Nima Isapur and stage director and playwright Mohammad Rezairad are scheduled to give lectures during the session entitled “Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht and All the Angels of the History”.

In addition, “The Angel of the History”, a play that is currently on stage at the Charsu Hall of the complex, will be reviewed during the session.

Rezairad is the writer and director of the play, which is about the last night of the life of Benjamin, who killed himself while fleeing Europe to the U.S. in 1940.

Milad Rahimi, Reza Behbudi, Baran Kosari, Milad Shajareh and Sina Karami are the main members of the cast for the play, which will remain on stage until July 19.

Benjamin was an acclaimed critic, a literary theorist and an eclectic thinker. Among his best-known works are the essays “The Task of the Translator”, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” and “Theses on the Philosophy of History”.

Brecht was one of the twentieth



A poster for the meeting “Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht and All the Angels of the History”.

century’s most influential theater artists. He was the main proponent of the genre named epic theater. Among his credits are the plays “Life of Galileo”, “Hangmen Also Die”, “Don Juan” and “The Seven Deadly Sins”.

Benjamin and Brecht met each other when they were both in exile during the Nazi period and World War II. It seems the friendship between the two artists had shaped their thoughts and writings.

Melbourne festival picks movies from Iran

A R T TEHRAN — Four Iranian films will go on screen at the Melbourne International Film Festival, which will be held in the Australian city from August 1 to 18.

“Brick and Mirror”, UK-based Iranian filmmaker Ebrahim Golestan’s 1964 drama will be screened in Restorations, a section dedicated to newly restored classics and cinematic treasures of the world.

The film is about Hashem, a cab driver who finds an infant child in the back seat of his cab one night after he gives a ride to a young woman. He and his girlfriend, Taji, try to cope with this unwanted child. Hashem insists on getting rid of the child, Taji on keeping him. By the end, Hashem gets rid of them both.

“Seven Beauties” by Lina Wertmuller from Italy, “Return Home” by Ray Argall from Australia, “The Queen” by Frank Simon from the U.S., “Pixote” by Hector Babenco from Brazil and “Distant Voices, Still Lives” by Terence Davies from England will be reviewed in this section.

“The Juniper Tree” by Nietzsche Keene from Iceland, “Black Robe” by Bruce Beresford from Canada and “Sátantango” by Béla Tarr from Germany are also among the films.

Iranian films “Tattoo” by Farhad Delaram, about a young girl who wants to renew her driver’s license but she is sent



A scene from UK-based Iranian filmmaker Ebrahim Golestan’s movie “Brick and Mirror”.

to the traffic police center for her tattoos, and “Son of the Sea” by Abbas Jalali-Yekta about a grieving couple that has lost their son, will compete in the short film section of the festival.

The festival will also screen “Passage”, a co-production between Iran and Australia by Iranian director Kimia Hendi.

The short film is about a young girl, Shirin, who has just lost her father and tries to cope with her grief.

Brazil mourns bossa nova founder João Gilberto as he is buried in Rio



Maria do Ceu, wife of Brazilian singer Joao Gilberto, kisses his face during his wake in Rio de Janeiro’s Municipal Theater, Brazil July 8, 2019. (Reuters/Ricardo Moraes)

RIO DE JANEIRO (Reuters) — Brazilians said goodbye to legendary musician João Gilberto, a founder of bossa nova, ahead of his funeral on Monday afternoon, with an outpouring of grief from some of the biggest names in the country’s music industry.

Gilberto, 88, died on Saturday in his house in Rio de Janeiro. The family did not disclose the cause of death.

The musician’s family, Brazilian celebrities and the public paid their respects in a public visitation that began on Monday morning in Rio de Janeiro’s ornately marbled Municipal Theater. Gilberto was buried later in a private ceremony in Niteroi, across Guanabara Bay from Rio.

“I want Brazil to be silent to hear João Gilberto. Let the Brazilians hear more João Gilberto,” his widow, Maria do Céu Harris, said ahead of the morning’s memorial ceremony, news website G1 reported.

Gilberto is credited with originating the bossa nova style with the release of the

1959 record “Chega de Saudade.” Bossa nova is characterized by the combination of Brazilian samba music with “cool jazz.”

Gilberto went on to popularize the genre globally with the album “Getz/Gilberto” with American saxophone player Stan Getz, selling millions of copies and winning several Grammy awards.

On that album, Gilberto sings “The Girl from Ipanema,” written by musician Antonio Carlos Jobim and poet Vinicius de Moraes, which would become one of the globe’s most recorded and played songs of all time.

Musicians Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso took to social media to post videos performing tributes to Gilberto and recalling the enormous influence he had on their music.

“João Gilberto was the greatest artist my soul came into contact with,” Veloso said on social media. “Before I was 18 I learned everything I knew from him and how to learn everything that was to come.”

Chinese movie-ticketing leader Maoyan says to boost film investment, Tencent partnership



The website of Chinese movie ticketing app Maoyan Entertainment is seen next to the app on a mobile phone in this illustration picture taken on Sept. 4, 2018. (Reuters/Florence Lo)

BEIJING (Reuters) — Maoyan Entertainment (1896.HK), China’s leading movie-ticketing platform, said it would boost investment in the domestic film industry and deepen its partnership with Tencent Holdings Ltd (0700.HK), as it works to halt a downturn at cinemas.

The comments come as box office revenue this year lags that of last year. To reverse the trend, cinemas are pinning hopes on domestic movies, Chief Executive Zheng Zhihao told Reuters.

“Whether the full-year revenue will be in line with that of last year or even exceed, it remains to be seen,” Zheng said in a recent interview.

Box office revenue slumped 2.7% in the first half of 2019, showed data from Maoyan, while the number of movie-goers fell 10%. Analysts noted the downturn coincided with a slowdown in domestic consumption at a time when a trade dispute with the United States threatens to impact an already softer economy.

Unlike in countries such as the United States, most Chinese movie-goers secure seats by buying tickets online from dealers such as Maoyan and Taopiaopiaopiao, backed by Alibaba Group Holding Ltd (BABA.N).

However, the ticketing market is approaching saturation and so Maoyan aims to expand further in content investment and distribution, Zheng said.

“Over the years we have built up our strength in ticketing, distribution and media, and now we have newly created capital for maneuverability,” Zheng said.

He also said Maoyan has begun a strategic alliance with gaming and social media firm Tencent, giving it access to resources from group firms such as Tencent Pictures, Tencent Video, Tencent Investment and Tencent Music Entertainment Group (TME.N).

As well as Tencent, Maoyan is also backed by online delivery company Meituan Dianping (3690.HK).