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## Budget bill amendments approved

**TEHRAN** — The Iranian government approved on Saturday the amendments on the national Iranian budget plan for the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21), ILNA reported.

The generalities of a modified budget plan which has been restructured in line with the country's "resilient economy", were approved during a Supreme Council of Economic Coordination convention presided by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

The modifications consist of four major parts, which are "sustainable revenue resources", "effective expenditure", "promoting stability, development and justice" as well as "fundamental modifications of budgetary system". **-> 4**

## UK failure to release tanker won't be left unanswered: diplomat

**TEHRAN** — Iranian Ambassador to London Hamid Baedinejad has said that a failure by the British government to release Iran's oil tanker and its cargo will not be "left unanswered".

"Having miscalculated in its unlawful seizure of tanker, UK should not repeat its miscalculation. Ship did NOT violate any law or norm - but UK, through its illegal piracy, most certainly has. Failure to release the tanker and its cargo will NOT be left unanswered," he tweeted on Saturday.

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. **-> 2**

## Biden on Iraq War vote: Mistake I made was trusting Bush

**TEHRAN** — Former Vice President Joe Biden has gotten criticism on the campaign trail for his 2002 vote in favor of the Iraq War. Whether or not it ends up as an issue for voters—a recent poll indicated it may be for some—Biden addressed the issue.

Biden has previously expressed regret for his vote. When asked in New Hampshire about it, he had this to say:

"The mistake I made was trusting President Bush, who gave me his word he was using it for the purpose of getting inspectors in to see what was going on, whether they were producing nuclear weapons."

Meanwhile, a new Fox News poll from South Carolina finds former Vice President Joe Biden leading among Democratic primary voters with 35%. Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders is in a distant second place with 14%, and Sen. Kamala Harris is near him at 12%. No other candidate reaches double digits. **-> 13**

**ARTICLE**  
**Ebrahim Fallahi**  
Tehran Times journalist

## Iran's 'oil for execution' plan: old ideas in a new wrapping

This week Iran's Oil Ministry is going to officially start a new plan that is aimed to be a new way for selling oil and tackling the pressures imposed by U.S. sanctions on the country's oil industry.

The plan is to execute a barter system which allows domestic and foreign companies, investors and contractors to carry out projects in Iran in exchange for oil (I would like to call it "oil for execution").

In this regard, as the official inauguration of this new program, a business contract will be signed within the next few days, under which a domestic company is going to receive crude oil in exchange for funding a project to renovate a power plant in Rey county, near the capital Tehran.

At the first glance, the idea of offering oil in exchange for execution of industrial projects seems quite a new idea, however unfortunately it is no more than the same old structure under a new façade.

**U.S. sanctions and Iran's coping tactics**

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

The country has repeatedly announced that it is mobilizing all its resources to sell its oil, and it has done so to some extent. However, considering the U.S.'s harsher stand in the new round of sanctions, the situation seems more complicated for the Iranian government which is finding it harder to get its oil into the market like the previous rounds of sanctions.

Selling in the gray market, offering oil in stock exchange, offering oil futures for certain countries, bartering oil for basic goods and finally bartering oil in exchange for executing industrial projects are some of the approaches Iran has taken to maintain its oil exports.

A simple comparison between the above mentioned strategies would reveal that they are mostly the same in nature, and there are just small differences in their presentation and implementation. **-> 5**

## Startups come to light with No-Afarin scheme

**By Setareh Behroozi**

**TEHRAN** — The No-Afarin scheme, developed by the Information and Communication Technology Ministry to support startups, was introduced during a ceremony on Wednesday.

As the nature of startup as an emerging company founded by entrepreneurs to develop a product or service suggests, its future is unclear and this issue makes it different from companies and organizations.

The scheme aims to deal with the problems startup ecosystem facing in relation with insurance companies and the National Tax Administration.

With the slogan "Smart Iran, brighter future", the scheme is a part of the digital economy development document and aims to create 68,000 job opportunities.

ICT Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi said that with registration of 100,000 active startups in the scheme, Iran can join five unicorns

privately held startup company valued at over \$1 billion - until the end of the sixth five-year national development plan (2021).

He called the No-Afarin scheme the first step to transform the Information Technology Organization of Iran into a digital economy development organization in the near future.

But how the scheme can be considered as a step toward brighter future? What is digital economy and how much Iran has provided infrastructure to reach this goal?

First of all, it is better to know about details of the No-Afarin scheme, which can be known as a practical step taken by the government to strengthen the innovation ecosystem in Iran.

**The scheme in detail**

In a recent interview with the Digiato website, the secretary of the Association of Online Business, Reza Olfat-Nasab, announced that about 90 percent of online businesses in Iran

are loss-making firms according to the assessment of the National Tax Administration.

However, this is the nature of this kind of business that they should continue in order to reach profit after some years, he explained.

The scheme tries to cover such gaps between startups and state-run organizations.

Based on the nature of startup, it is a young company founded by one or more entrepreneurs in order to develop a unique product or service and bring it to market.

The scheme provides facilities for startups that were registered less than three years ago with making investment of maximum 2.5 trillion rials (about \$58,000) and having less than 50 trillion rials (about \$120,000) of income.

It facilitates the insurance and tax laws for the startups and paves the way for attracting investors. The startups are completely tax-exempted as far as they provide services and products. **-> 11**

## China holds military drills after U.S. approves arms sale to Taiwan

**TEHRAN** — China's military has recently carried out air and naval drills along its southeast coast, the defence ministry has said, in an announcement that came after Beijing demanded the cancellation of a potential arms sale from the United States to self-ruled Taiwan.

In a brief statement on Sunday, the ministry described the exercises as "routine arrangements in accordance with annual plans for the military".

It said they were held in "recent days".

On Friday, China said it would impose sanctions on U.S. firms involved in a deal to sell \$2.2bn worth of tanks, missiles and related equipment to Taiwan, saying it harmed China's sovereignty and national security.

That announcement came as Taiwanese Pres-

ident Tsai Ing-wen visited New York on a transit stop to diplomatic allies in the Caribbean, a trip that has also infuriated Beijing, further straining Sino-U.S. ties already affected by a bitter trade war.

Prior to leaving for the U.S., Tsai said the island was facing threats from "overseas forces", in a veiled reference to China.

China, which claims self-ruled and democratic Taiwan as its own and views it as a wayward province, had called on the U.S. not to allow Tsai to transit there on her overseas tour.

In a statement on Sunday, Taiwan's Presidential Office cited National Security Council Deputy Secretary-General Tsai Ming-yen as saying Tsai had spoken by telephone with U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi while she was in the U.S.

and met with other senators and members of Congress, without naming them.

Tsai said Taipei and Washington could forge even closer ties, and also thanked the U.S. for "the importance it attaches to the security of the Taiwan Strait" and the recently announced arms sale, the statement said.

The Taiwanese president has repeatedly warned of the threat from its giant neighbour and has vowed to defend Taiwan's security, democracy and way of life.

China has in recent years stepped up its military drills around Taiwan, including regularly flying what Beijing calls "island encirclement" exercises and sending warships into the waters around Taiwan.

**REPORT**  
**Ramin Hossein Abadian**  
Mehr News Agency journalist

## Details of Mogherini's trip to Baghdad: Iraq's clear messages about Iran

Federica Mogherini, the high representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, heading a diplomatic delegation, arrived in Baghdad on Saturday. This was Mogherini's first trip to Iraq since 2014.

Over her trip to Iraq, Mogherini visited top Iraqi officials including President Barham Salih.

Over the meeting, the two sides discussed recent events in the Middle East and methods to develop mutual relationships. After the meeting, the Iraqi Presidency released a statement.

According to the statement, "in his meeting with Mogherini, the Iraqi President highlighted the importance of coordination and collaboration in order to address the current issues in the region."

The statement added, "The Iraqi and European sides agreed that there should be joint plans and cooperation for saving the region from war and conflicts."

During her trip, Mogherini also met Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohamed A. Alhakim and Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi. Over these meetings, the two sides talked about expanding their relationships.

Obviously, the visit of a European Union high representative to Iraq is a critical event in the current situation; the tension rises as the United States ramp up sanctions against Iran and the western countries refuse to fulfil the commitments they made in their nuclear deal with Iran.

Anyway, a closer look at the details of the trip and the subjects discussed over the meetings reveal that Iraq delivered some clear messages about Iran to the Europeans.

One of these messages was the emphasis of Iraqi top officials that they will not give permission to any country to use Iraq's territory for running operations against its neighboring countries.

The firm response of Iraqi officials to European Union representatives is quite meaningful because U.S., as the main partner and ally of EU has always been determined to use Iraq's land for running plans against Iran. **-> 13**



## Protests held across U.S. over Trump's treatment of migrants

Thousands of undocumented immigrants were waiting in fear and uncertainty ahead of nationwide raids Sunday that President Donald Trump said would lead to a wave of expulsions.

Demonstrators in dozens of cities protested the planned raids, and local and state officials called for restraint, but to no effect. **-> 13**

## Zarif to Hunt: 'Iran will keep exporting oil under any circumstances'

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — In a telephone conversation with his British counterpart Jeremy Hunt on Saturday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif insisted that the oil sanctions against Iran by the U.S. are illegal and that "the Islamic Republic of Iran will keep exporting oil under any circumstances."

For his part, Hunt said Iran has right to export oil and voiced concern about the escalation of tensions in the region.



The seizure of an oil tanker by Britain in Gibraltar on July 4, which was carrying the Iranian oil, was also raised in the phone.

The British foreign secretary expressed hope that the outcome of legal and judicial investigations in Gibraltar would result in the immediate release of the tanker, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a report on its website.

Pointing to the legal destination of Grace 1 tanker in east of the Mediterranean, Zarif said, "The European Union, which has always opposed the extraterritorial imposition of U.S. sanctions, cannot take such measure itself, and the UK government must immediately make the necessary arrangements to end the illegal confiscation of the Iranian oil tanker."

Zarif also pointed to the case of Nazanin Zaghari and other dual nationals who have been arrested in Iran on security charges, saying, "The arrest and trial of these individuals have been in accordance completely with legal processes, and the UK government is expected to respect the enforcement of law and the independence of the Judiciary in the Islamic Republic of Iran."

## Iran rejects claims of talks with U.S.

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has strongly rejected claims of Tehran's talks with the United States.

Reportedly, it has been claimed that the U.S. and Iran have talks at foreign ministerial level with mediation of Russia.

However, Mousavi said on Sunday, "The Islamic Republic of Iran has no talks with U.S. officials at any level."

Mohamed ElBaradei, the former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, has said that the U.S. is applying waterboarding method to Iran by exerting economic pressure on the country.



"They are applying a waterboarding method to Iran, drowning Iran and then looking and then asking them: let's have a dialogue without any preconditions," he said in an interview with BBC Radio 4 published on Friday.

He added, "No country is going to cooperate under these humiliating conditions."

Iranian 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.

## Iran will not crack under U.S. pressure: National Interest

*By staff and agency*

In an article published by The National Interest on Saturday, it is said that Iran will "not crack" under the U.S. economic pressure.

"Will Iran crack under American pressure? Don't count on it. Iran has grown accustomed to living under America's recent economic sanctions and continues to pursue its own policies at home and abroad despite the restrictions associated with the latest U.S.-Iranian crisis," says the article.

The article added that Tehran can rely on substantial domestic support and has a large army.

U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew Washington in May 2018 from the multilateral nuclear accord, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was reached between Iran and six world powers in 2015.

Afterwards, Washington re-imposed sanctions on Iran that had been lifted under the JCPOA deal and ordered new ones.

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.

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

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced in May 2018 that the U.S. will apply economic and military pressure against Iran and will impose "the strongest sanctions in history" on the Islamic Republic.

Also, John Bolton, the national security advisor to President Trump, said in November 2018, "We think the (Iranian) government is under real pressure and it's our intention to squeeze them very hard. As the British say, squeeze them until the pips squeak."

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said in March that Washington has imposed the "strongest sanctions in history" on Iran, however, the U.S. will suffer "heaviest defeat in history".

Rob Macaire, the British ambassador to Tehran, said in June that the U.S. policy of exerting maximum pressure against Iran will reach nowhere.

# Rouhani: All Washington's anti-Iran plans have ended in failure

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday that all the plans that the United States has taken against Iran have ended in failure.

"During the past 14 months, the U.S. has imposed harshest sanctions against the Iranian people. However, any route that the U.S. has taken, be it political, social and legal, has led to failure," he told a gathering of people in Shirvan, North Khorasan Province.

The Trump administration revoked the international nuclear deal, officially called the JCPOA, in May 2018 and ordered reimposition of sanctions lifted under the deal and added new ones. The Trump administration has been insisting that it is applying "maximum pressure" against Iran to force the country to renegotiate the terms of the JCPOA.

However, Rouhani said, the Iranians' determination has not been weakened under the sanctions pressure.

Elsewhere, the president said the people are economically in a difficult situation, yet the country will overcome these difficulties through unity.

He also said it is wrong to say that the problems are rooted in the government's incompetence.

The president added the country's foreign debts has been cut by 25 percent despite sanctions.

"In the past 14 months that the pressure of sanctions has increased, our foreign debts have decreased. We had around \$12.4 billion of foreign debt, but today, this amount has decreased to \$9.5 billion," he stated.



Pointing to an emergency meeting held by the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about Iran's nuclear decision to reduce its commitments in response to violation of the JCPOA and reimposition of sanctions, Rouhani said no

country paid attention to the U.S. claims which was a victory for Iran.

The emergency meeting of the 35-member board was held on Wednesday at U.S. request to address Iran's exceeding of the limit set by the 2015 nuclear deal on its uranium enrichment

**"In the past 14 months that the pressure of sanctions has increased, our foreign debts have decreased. We had around \$12.4 billion of foreign debt, but today, this amount has decreased to \$9.5 billion," Rouhani stated.**

level, regardless of the fact that Washington itself committed the biggest breach against the agreement in May 2018 by leaving it.

Speaking on Thursday with the Beirut-based Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the United States became politically isolated at the IAEA board meeting.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi tweeted on Wednesday, "Another failure for the U.S. at the mockery of the IAEA's Board of Governors. The U.S. was once again isolated by its own hands."

Iran's ambassador to the IAEA, Kazem Gharib-Abadi, told Press TV, "We have been informed that the United States were seeking to have some formal outcome of this meeting, something like a resolution [...] but because they haven't been in a position to convince the others to have their support for their claim, regarding consideration of Iran's ceasing its implementation of the JCPOA, there has been no conclusion."

"The majority of the members of the Board supported the JCPOA, multilateralism and deplored unilateral actions of the U.S.," Gharib-Abadi added.

The Iranian envoy earlier told the IAEA's special meeting that "the sadistic tendency of the United States to use illegal, unilateral sanctions as an instrument to coerce sovereign states and private entities should come to an end."

Mikhail Ulyanov, the Russian ambassador to the IAEA, also tweeted after the meeting that the U.S. "was practically isolated on this issue".

## Mogherini says EU supports Iraq's peace proposal over Iran-U.S. tension

*By staff and agency*

European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said on Saturday that the EU supports an Iraqi proposal to hold a peace conference to ease tensions between the United States and Iran.

"We support completely the idea of regional conference that Iraq is proposing and the EU is fully behind that and fully ready to support this idea," Xinhua quoted her as saying

during a joint press conference with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed al-Hakim in Baghdad.

Mogherini said that she held talks with the Iraqi leaders and discussed the need to ease tensions and to pursue means to hold dialogue to avoid serious consequences of miscalculations.

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

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

The tension escalated after the IRGC shot down an unmanned U.S. surveillance drone on June 20 after it breached Iran's airspace.

## Trump revoked Iran nuclear deal in an act of 'diplomatic vandalism' to spite Obama, new leak reveals

British Ambassador Darroch says Trump discarded nuclear deal for 'ideological and personality reasons'

Kim Darroch, the former British ambassador to the United States, said the Trump administration was "set upon an act of diplomatic vandalism" in its decision to abandon the Iran nuclear deal, the Daily Mail reported Saturday, citing leaked cables.

The report comes following news last week that Darroch sent diplomatic cables describing President Donald Trump as "inept," "insecure" and "incompetent," a British government official confirmed to CNN. Darroch has since resigned, saying it was "impossible" for him to continue.

According to the Daily Mail, the former ambassador said Trump seemed to be discarding the Iran nuclear deal for "personality reasons," as the deal had been agreed to by former President Barack Obama. The paper also reported that Darroch hinted at discord brewing between Trump's closest aides and said the White House had failed to produce a "day-after" plan on how to handle the aftermath of withdrawing from the deal.

The White House told CNN it has no comment on the story. The paper says the memo was written after the then Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson appealed to the U.S. in 2018 to stick with the nuclear deal.

According to BBC, Darroch's memo to Johnson says: "The outcome illustrated the paradox of this White House: you got exceptional access, seeing everyone short of the president; but on the substance, the administration is set upon an act of diplomatic vandalism, seemingly for ideological and personality reasons - it was Obama's deal."

"Moreover, they can't articulate any 'day-after' strategy; and contacts with State Department this morning suggest no sort of plan for reaching out to partners and allies, whether in Europe or the region."

According to the New York Times, the vice president, the national security adviser and the secretary of state had all failed to "articulate why the president was determined to withdraw, beyond his campaign promises," Darroch wrote.

And the American government had no plan for what would follow.



"Even when you pressed," Darroch wrote to Johnson, "none had anything much to say about the day after, or a Plan B, beyond reimposition of U.S. sanctions."

The British government has launched an internal Whitehall inquiry into the leak. The Daily Mail has defended its decisions to publish further details from the memos.

A spokesman for the newspaper said it was in the public interest and revealed "important information" on the UK's attempts to stop President Trump abandoning the Iran nuclear deal.

He added: "What could be more in the public interest than a better understanding of how this position was reached, which may have serious consequences for world peace?"

In response, a Foreign Office spokesman called it a "totally unacceptable leak" of "sensitive material" and called for the source of the leak to "face the consequences of their actions".

Trump said Monday that the White House would no longer deal with Darroch, and the UK Foreign Office announced Darroch's resignation Wednesday. The former ambassador made his decision to step down after seeing that Johnson, the current frontrunner to replace Theresa May as British prime



minister, had refused to support him during Tuesday night's leadership debate, a British government official confirmed to CNN.

A UK Foreign Office spokesman told CNN on Saturday that whoever leaked the cables "should face the consequences of their actions."

Police in the UK have opened a criminal investigation into the leaked diplomatic cables that led to Darroch's departure. Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu claimed Friday that there is a "clear public interest in bringing the person or people responsible to justice."

At the time the U.S. withdrew from the deal, senior Trump administration officials -- including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said Iran was adhering to its commitments under the deal.

Earlier this week, Trump tweeted that Iran "has long been secretly 'enriching,'" a claim that has been contradicted by the International Atomic Energy Agency, whose monitors were tasked with ensuring that Iran was complying with the terms of the 2015 deal, as well as by independent experts and by Trump's own top intelligence officials.

## U.S. still obstructing int'l aid to Iranian flood victims

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Head of Iran's Red Crescent Society (IRCS) Ali Asqar Peivandi said that 20 countries have donated a total of €3 million to help victims of the massive floods of March and April, but the U.S. sanctions does not allow the aid to be transferred into the country.

Peivandi said on Saturday that efforts are still underway to transfer the international humanitarian aid, about 3-million-euros, into Iran to help those in flood-hit regions.

"Thanks to cruel U.S. sanctions, we have not been able to transfer the cash humanitarian aid from 20 countries, which amounts up to three million euros, into the country," Peivandi said.

"Iranian forex accounts are still blocked and the flood-hit people have not taken advantage of the international humanitarian aid yet," he added.

As he informed, some letters have been sent to UN officials and head of International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in this regard and Iran

is hopeful to find a way to absorb such aids into the country.

Unprecedented rainfalls since March 19 triggered disastrous floods in Iran. The tragedy started in the four Northern provinces of Mazandaran, Golestan, Semnan and North Khorassan on March 20. Thirty provinces of Iran were hit by severe weather conditions since then.

Official accounts confirmed that nearly 80

lives were claimed by the recent floods in Iran, while hundreds of thousands were left homeless.

The IRCS announced in April that Tehran had not been able to receive any foreign financial aid because of Washington's "inhuman" sanctions against the country.

"No foreign cash donation has been made to the Iranian Red Crescent Society yet and basically there are no financial channels available to do this," the IRCS said in a statement on April 7.

## UK failure to release tanker won't be left unanswered: Iranian diplomat

**1 →** The Iranian Foreign Ministry has said the seizure took place upon an order by the United States. White House national security advisor John Bolton has praised the move.

Iran has said the act amounts to piracy. Iran has 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," Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi told reporters on July 7.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi told IRNA in an interview published on Friday that Britain should immediately release the oil tanker.

"London's claims about seizing Iran's oil tanker are not credible from legal point of view and we urge the British to release this tanker as soon as possible," he said.

He noted that the British have been influenced by the U.S. and seek to enter a "dangerous game" that has been engineered by the White House.

"We want them to release this tanker immediately because it serves the interests of all," he added.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday that the UK action in seizing Iran's oil tanker is a violation of the 2015 nuclear deal, known as 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," Zarif stated.

Also on July 8, Zarif said 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.

# Government: Britain isolated after oil tanker confiscation

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN – Government spokesman Ali Rabiei said on Sunday that the British government has become isolated with its act of seizing an Iranian oil tanker.

Speaking at a press conference in Tehran, Rabiei said major European countries disagree with the British government's move, Iran Press reported.

"Iranian officials pursue the legal actions necessary with regard to the oil tanker seized by British military forces," he said.

He predicted that the oil tanker would be released soon, after British authorities retract their claims with regard to the ship's destination.

The spokesman also advised Britain not to send warships to the Persian Gulf and "instead let Persian Gulf nations provide the security of this region, for this way the security of the region and waterways will be better provided."

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 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," Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi told reporters on July 7.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday that the move was a violation of the 2015 nuclear deal, known as 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," Zarif stated.

Zarif had also said 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.

## Iran's offensive power would be devastating, Army chief warns

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN – Commander of the Iranian Army said on Sunday that Iran's offensive power would be devastating for the aggressors.

"Our offensive power and our capability to strike back after the start of an attack by the aggressors would be devastating and regrettable," Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi said, Mehr reported.

He emphasized that Iran has never begun a war and will never do so, but "we do not merely rely on defense" and are ready to strike back in case of any aggression.

Pointing to the enemies' hostility and their evil plots, the general said Iran's national and military capabilities can thwart such plots.

Pointing to Saddam Hussein's war on Iran in the 1980s, the top commander said, "Today we are much more powerful than that time in defending our ideals and protecting the nation and the country."

In similar remarks last week, General Mousavi said

Tehran is not seeking war against any country but it has learned how to defend itself.

"As repeatedly announced before, the Islamic Republic of Iran doesn't seek war against any country," he said, emphasizing that in countering the enemy's plots, military power is not enough.

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).

Commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force Amir Ali Hajizadeh rejected the U.S. claim that the doomed drone



had not entered the Iranian airspace, saying, "Other countries have refuted the U.S. claim of not violating the Iranian border."

## Three tons of narcotics seized in Sistan-Baluchestan

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN – Iranian intelligence forces have disbanded two major drug rings in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan and confiscated more than 3 tons of illicit drugs.

According to Tasnim, the intelligence forces targeted the drug-smuggling groups in the city of Iranshahr, around 250 km south of Zahedan, the provincial capital.

A number of drug smugglers were arrested during the operation.



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

In comments on July 9, Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations Majid Takht Ravanchi said 3,815 Iranian law enforcement forces have lost their lives and over 12,000 others have been wounded in the war on drug trafficking over the past 40 years.

Over the past three decades, Iran has seized approximately 11,000 tons of different

types of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, he added, saying that in 2018 alone, Iranian forces carried out 1,557 operations against drug traffickers, seizing approximately 807 tons of different types of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

According to the "World Drug Report 2019" of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in 2017 Iran had seized "the largest quantity of opiates ... accounting for 39 percent of the global total," the envoy stated.

## Parliament to mull proper response to UK's oil tanker seizure: MP

**TEHRAN (MNA)** – An Iranian lawmaker has said that in the next week, the parliament will decide on an appropriate response to the illegal measure of the United Kingdom in seizing the supertanker carrying Iranian oil.

"We will not give an inch against the English's measure. The Iranian parliament will adopt its decision on the case next week and the government will pursue it," Mohammadreza Pour-Ebrahimi, a member of the Majlis Economic Committee, told Mehr News Agency on Sunday.

"This action is the continuation of the English's animosity against the Iranian nation both before and after the [Islamic] Revolution. This measure will not be left unanswered," he added.

He went on to urge the Foreign Ministry to plan a counteraction, highlighting, "England will pay huge costs for its action."

London is following Washington's pol-

icies on Iran but despite all pressures, the Iranian economy is growing, he said, adding, "Iran's official oil export may arrive at a zero level but Iran's unofficial oil export will replace it according to agreements signed with some countries. If revenues from this unofficial oil sales decrease, there are alternative approaches planned in the budget which will be taken."

Gibraltar police and customs agencies, aided by a detachment of British Royal Marines, boarded and impounded supertanker Grace 1, carrying Iranian oil, in the Strait of Gibraltar on Thursday, upon a request from the United States.

Later that day, Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned Britain's ambassador, Rob Macaire, to express its strong protest at the move. He was told that the British Royal Marines' move was tantamount to "maritime piracy."

London claims that the tanker had been carrying Iranian oil to Syria, which is under European Union's sanctions but Iran says first, the tanker was not headed to Syria, and second, Iran is not a member of an EU member and also not subject to any European oil embargo.

Tehran has called for an immediate release of the oil tanker warning that the responsibility for consequences of this provocative acts falls on London.

"I warn England that you are the initiator of insecurity in seas and you will later understand its repercussions," President Rouhani said on Wednesday.

Iran says the U.S. is behind the measure which tries to bring down Iranian oil sales to zero as part of its maximum pressure policy against the Islamic Republic. Iranian officials reiterate that this policy will not yield any result for Washington as



Iranians are well familiar with the culture of resistance.

In the latest development, UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt tweeted on Saturday that he had "spoke to Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif. Constructive call. I reassured him our concern was destination not origin of the oil on Grace One & that UK would facilitate release if we received guarantees that it would not be going to Syria, following due process in Gib courts."

## France sees risk of stumble into U.S.-Iranian conflict

**(REUTERS)** – Iran's breaching of caps on its uranium enrichment after the United States pulled out of world powers' nuclear deal with Tehran was "a bad reaction to ... (a) bad decision", raising fears of a stumble into war, France's foreign minister said.

Tensions have risen as Washington has blamed Iran for several attacks on oil tankers and Tehran shot down a U.S. surveillance drone, prompting President Donald Trump to order air strikes that he called off only minutes before impact.

Trump withdrew the United States last year from the 2015 deal between Iran and world powers to curb its nuclear program, to the dismay of co-signatories France, Britain, Germany, Russia and China.

Washington has since tightened sanctions to block Iran's oil exports and other benefits accruing from the deal. Tehran has responded by enriching uranium beyond set limits and threatening to restart deactivated centrifuges and ramp up enrichment well above the level deemed normal for electricity generation.

"The situation is serious. The rise of tensions could lead to accidents," French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told reporters when asked about the risk of a wider



Middle East war.

"The fact Iran has decided to pull back from some of its engagements on nuclear proliferation is an additional worry. It is a bad decision, a bad reaction to another bad decision, that of the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal a year ago," he said, arriving for Paris's annual Bastille Day military parade.

The European powers do not support Trump's sanctions

squeeze on Iran, aimed at forcing it into negotiations on stricter nuclear limits and other security concessions, but have been unable to come up with ways to allow Iran to avert them.

"No one wants a war. I've noticed that everyone is saying they don't want to go to the summit of the escalation. Neither (Iranian) President Rouhani, nor President Trump or other Gulf leaders. But here there are elements of escalation that are worrisome," Le Drian said.

"Iran gains nothing from withdrawing from its engagement (with nuclear deal). The U.S. also gains nothing if Iran gets nuclear weapons, so it is important that de-escalation measures are taken to ease the tensions."

In Baghdad on Saturday, European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini backed Iraq's proposal for a conference between Iran and its regional rivals, U.S.-allied Gulf states like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

*(Tehran Times editor's note: Iran, as a signatory to the NPT, does not seek to build atomic weapons and its nuclear program is only intended for civilian purposes. By signing the nuclear deal in 2015, Iran proved to the world that the commotion created over its nuclear program by Israel and the U.S. were politically motivated.)*

## Majlis reviews measures to counter U.S. 'economic terrorism'

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN – Majlis representatives on Sunday reviewed measures to improve national economy in efforts to counter the impact of U.S. "economic terrorism" against Iran, according to the Mehr news agency.



The MPs "reviewed a number of moves in today's closed session to help the country overcome the economic issues, which have been created by the U.S. sanctions, in order to improve the Iranian people's living conditions," Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said on Sunday.

Larijani also pointed to a recent call by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei for revisiting the economic policies and structures to settle the country's economic woes, emphasizing that different economic plans are being reviewed by the parliament for the current and next year.

U.S. President Donald Trump has imposed several rounds of sanctions on Iran after he withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal last year.

Trump has even introduced full ban on Iran's oil export, a move which has been described as an economic war against Tehran.

The sanctions were imposed regardless of Iran's full compliance with its commitments under the nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was struck between Iran and six major powers, including the United States.

## Zarif discusses JCPOA, ties with Norwegian counterpart

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN – Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif had a phone conversation with his Norwegian counterpart Marie Eriksen Soreide on Sunday to discuss mutual ties, JCPOA related issues and regional developments.

The phone conversation was made during Zarif's stopover in the Scandinavian nation en route to New York to take part in the annual meeting of the high-ranking officials of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, ISNA reported.



Zarif left Tehran for New York on Saturday.

After the UN meeting, the top Iranian diplomat will leave the U.S. for Venezuela to attend the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Zarif will also hold bilateral talks with top Venezuelan officials. After Venezuela, he will travel to Nicaragua and Bolivia for bilateral meetings.

## 'Iranians expect retaliation against British seizure of oil tanker'

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN – The Islamic Coalition Party Secretary General, Asadollah Badamchian, has said the Iranian people expect the government to take retaliatory measures in the aftermath of the British seizure of an Iranian oil tanker.

"Our nation believes that the British must pay the price of this act of piracy," Badamchian said on Sunday, according to Tasnim.

"There's a public expectation that a tit-for-tat action must take place," he added.

The oil tanker was seized on July 4 in an operation involving British Royal Marines. It was captured under the allegation that it was carrying crude oil to Syria in breach of EU sanctions.

Royal Gibraltar Police arrested the captain and his deputy on Thursday, while two second officers of the Grace 1 tanker were held on Friday.

According to Press TV, Spain, which challenges the British ownership of Gibraltar, has said the seizure was prompted by a U.S. request to Britain and appeared to have taken place in Spanish waters.

Iran has condemned the seizure as "maritime piracy," vowing to employ all its political and legal capacities to secure the release of the vessel.

Top Iranian figures have called for retaliatory measures against the British government.

Secretary of the Expediency Council Mohsen Rezaee has proposed that Iran should seize a British oil tanker if London doesn't release the tanker.

"The Islamic Revolution has never been an initiator of tension during its 40-year-old history, however, it has not hesitated to respond to bullies and thugs," Rezaee tweeted after the incident.

Rezaee, the former IRGC chief, added, "If Britain doesn't return the Iranian tanker, the duty of responsible [Iranian] bodies is to seize a British oil tanker in a retaliatory measure."



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	253577.5
IFX	3316.28

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,395 rials
GBP	52,804 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$66.72/b
WTI	\$60.21/b
OPEC Basket	\$66.10/b
Gold	\$1,416.30/oz
Silver	\$15.29/oz
Platinum	\$834.25/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Iran considering tea trade with Sri Lanka in return for oil dues

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iran is expected to sign a deal with Sri Lanka to receive the country's famed tea over the next two years in exchange for the settlement of loans obtained for the purchase of oil, Sunday Times reported. As reported, the issue was discussed during a meeting between the Sri Lankan Foreign Affairs Minister Tilak Marapana and Minister of Plantation Industries Navin Dissanayake together with other relevant officials of the two ministries, Plantation Industries Ministry Secretary J.A. Ranjith said on July 11. Sri Lankan tea exporters are currently facing a crisis since not only has the prices of tea dropped but the industry is unable to export to some of its key markets due to U.S. sanctions imposed on dollar transactions with Iran.



During the meeting they had discussed how to resolve the issue pertaining to the sale of Ceylon Tea to Iran due to the current U.S. sanctions imposed on Iran as a result of which banks refuse to engage in dollar transactions with Iranian banks. "As a result, now we are looking at settling this through the loans from the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) amounting to \$200 million," the ministry secretary said. At the moment the officials were working out the mechanism to be adopted to settle this without any transactions, he said. Ranjith explained that if this would be adopted they could sell tea to Iran for the next two years under this arrangement. The rate at which tea could be bought would be based on the market realities, he said.

As part of the transaction the CPC has agreed to pay the tea exporters some of the money directly thereby avoiding any financial transaction between the two countries in the sale of tea, the ministry secretary stated. In the meantime, Iranian officials were also engaged in discussions to work out a mechanism on how the deal can go through and in this respect negotiations were still underway. In 2018, Sri Lanka sold 23,914 metric tons (MT) of tea to Iran and in the previous year it was much higher at 27,418 MT. Iran is among the top five markets that purchases teas from Sri Lanka. The other key markets are Iraq, Turkey and Russia.

Sustainable GDP growth expected in second quarter: Malaysian minister

The continued industrial production expansion in May as well as solid expansion in exports and domestic demand point towards sustained gross domestic growth (GDP) in the second quarter (Q2) of 2019, said the Finance Ministry.

As per dailyexpress.com.my, its Minister Lim Guan Eng said the May 2019 Industrial Production Index, which grew 4.0 percent year-on-year (y-o-y), marked the third consecutive month that Malaysia's industrial production had beaten market consensus as compiled by Bloomberg.

From January to May 2019, the IPI grew 3.2 percent compared to the corresponding period last year, he said in a statement Saturday. In contrast, he noted, industrial production in other ASEAN economies experienced a contraction in May. Factory output in the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand fell 2.1 percent, 2.4 percent and 4.0 percent, respectively.

Lim said Singapore's Q2 2019 GDP grew just 0.1 percent y-o-y and shrank 3.4 percent quarter-on-quarter.

It was reported that HSBC economist Joseph Incalcaterra called the island republic's latest quarterly figure a "harbinger of further growth deterioration across the region" amid external challenges.

Lim pointed to the World Bank's forecast of a 4.6 percent GDP growth for Malaysia in 2019.

He also noted that on July 3, S&P Global Ratings' (Standard and Poor's) affirmed Malaysia's issuer credit rating at A- with a stable outlook.

He said in May, the country recorded an export growth of 2.5 percent y-o-y that was due to increased global demand for Malaysian electrical and electronics, and chemical products.

Budget bill amendments approved

**1 →** They are aimed at reducing the country's dependence on oil money and promoting economic stability under the umbrella term "resistance economy", ordered by Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

As reported, the council will study the priorities in this amendment plan in its next gathering.

Govt. mulling over a biennial budget plan

One of the major issues, which was discussed during the council meeting for budget bill restructure, was a proposal for preparing the country's budget bill on a biennial basis, Iran's Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjasand said on Sunday.

"Of course this is in contradiction with the country's constitution, so the issue is still under consideration," the minister stated.

Iran is pressing to reduce its dependence on oil sales, especially after the U.S. reimposed sanctions on the country last year.



The issue came of the highest importance due to Trump's decision on cutting all waivers of Iranian oil which would dramatically decrease the country's oil revenues.

In June, Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) published a report titled "Budget Amendment Outline" including 23 major policies, with cutting budget's direct dependence

on oil income as the major approach.

The organization published the report on its website, announcing that this report was due to be investigated in supreme council of economic coordination.

As reported, the outlines were prepared with the aim of supplying reliable source of budget for the country and promoting the government's performance in this due, supporting production and employment, setting stability in macro economy and elevating the people's livelihood status.

In late December, President Hassan Rouhani presented the administration's draft of the national budget bill for the current Iranian calendar year 1398 to the Majlis.

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

Earlier in the same month, Dejjasand had said that reducing the budget dependency on oil exports is the most important economic objective in the country.

'CBI to take all necessary measures to support private sector'

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Governor **d e s k** of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnasser Hemmati said the bank won't spare any effort in order to overcome the barriers in the way of the private sector's trade, IRNA reported.

The official made the remarks in a meeting with the board members of the country's chambers of commerce, guilds and cooperatives on Saturday.

In the meeting, Hemmati stated that CBI is planning to control the foreign exchange market in order to maintain market equilibrium in the country.

He further expressed hope that the continuation of the relative calmness in the markets would lead to a boom in domestic production.

"Fortunately, the foreign exchange market is stable, and the reinjection of exports revenues into NIMA are getting better which is a sign that the country's businessmen and traders are welcoming CBI's recent foreign exchange policies," he said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Hemmati underlined some of CBI plans for directing liquidity to small and medium-sized enterprises, adding that the central bank is actively pursuing support for small and medium-sized manufacturing units.

"In this regard, and in order to prevent recession, new programs are being developed in collaboration with the country's monetary experts and will be implemented in the form of a productive financing plan," he noted.

Like the other economic bodies of the country, CBI has defined supporting produc-



tion as its major plan in the current Iranian calendar year, which is named the Year of Pickup in Production, and in this regard Hemmati has several times stressed that supporting production units to flourish production is the priority of the country's banking system in current year.

In early May, the official outlined CBI plans for neutralizing or relieving the impact of U.S. sanctions on the country's economy and mentioned providing liquidity and working capital to maintain and boost domestic production as one of those plans.

To find the best ways for supporting production, CBI is regularly holding meetings with the representatives of private sector and also with the economists.

CBI's plans take two major approaches, first is that they will lead to secure finance for production activities and provide the working capital needed for such activities; and the second one is that they will not be resulted in any deviation in the banking resources and also in higher inflation.

In this regard, the central bank's committees of liquidity and credit have investigated several plans, that one of them is "Productive Finance Plan", which will be implemented after being discussed with monetary and banking experts.

Boosting railway network efficiency on agenda: RAI head

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Boosting efficiency of national railway network is a top agenda of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAD) activities in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21), RAI Head Saeed Rasouli stated.

"To materialize this target, connecting the cargo hubs to the national network via building 512 kilometers of railway is being followed up", the official said, IRIB reported.

Rasouli said the 512 kilometers of railway have the capacity of transporting 20 million tons of cargos per year, and put the total cargo transported via railway during the past Iranian calendar year at 46 million tons.

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

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

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

He said that a task force has been set up to follow up the issue, IRNA reported. The official has also announced that 20

trillion rials (about \$476.1 million) has been allocated to renovation of 1000 passenger and freight wagons and also locomotives through benefitting from domestic capabilities in the current Iranian calendar year, IRIB reported.

Rasouli said this amount has been allocated by the Planning and Budget Organization.

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

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

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

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

According to the manufacturers, the mentioned engine complies with Euro4 standards for reducing fuel consumption and competes with the best European engines in terms of quality.

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

First exhibit of domestic production opportunities to host 210 exhibitors

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iran's first **d e s k** exhibition of domestic production opportunities and manufacturing boom, which will run at Tehran from July 18 to 21, will host 210 companies and unions as exhibitors, deputy head of Iran's Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO) told Shata on Sunday.

Mohammadreza Abdollahi, the deputy head of IDRO for planning and development, said exhibitors from different industries in 21 provinces of the country will attend the event.

Last week, 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)

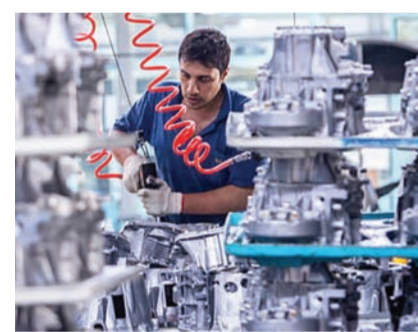
which has been named as the Year of Pickup in Production by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

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

The 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, according to Mohammad-Baqer Ali, the board chairman of IDRO.

"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," the official said.

Ali further explained that in this exhibi-



tion 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.

Tehran, Baghdad should help each other boom industries: Iraqi envoy

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iraq's **d e s k** ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran Saad Abdul Wahab Jawad Qandil said that the two countries of Iran and Iraq enjoy high potentials and can help each other for booming industrial and production units, Mehr news agency reported.

He made the remarks on Sunday in his meeting with Tehran governor general and added, "I propose to hold an expert-level joint meeting between economic enterprises and industrialists of the two countries for enhancing bilateral trade and business activities."

The two countries of Iran and Iraq have high potentials and capabilities to promote their trade and business level, he emphasized.

On July 7, Seyyed Hamid Hosseini, the secretary general of Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, mentioned some of the government's plans in the current Iranian calendar year

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

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

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

As previously reported by Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO), following an agreement on establishment of an Iran-Iraq trade committee, officials from the two sides held a

meeting to discuss the issue in Tehran on May 5.

In early March, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani headed a high-ranking political and trade delegation in a visit to Iraq, during which the two sides inked several agreements and emphasized expansion of trade ties.

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

The event was attended by several senior officials from both sides including Iran's First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri, Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi as well as Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, Iraqi Minister of Electricity Louay Al Khateeb, Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammad Hashim Abdul Majid Jasim, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister

Reza Rahmani, Head of Basra Chamber of Commerce Majed Mozan, and ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafei, along with representatives of private companies.

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

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

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

# Remaining platforms of SP phase 14 to start operation by end of autumn

**ENERGY TEHRAN** — Two remaining platforms of Iran's South Pars gas field's phase 14 of development will be put into operation by the end of autumn, according to Mohammad-Mehdi Tavasolipour, the operator of phase 14.

Making the remarks in a press conference after installing platform 14B of this phase on Saturday, Tavasolipour also said that \$150 million has been saved in the projects for building and installing the four platforms of phase 14, and put the total cost of the projects at \$550 million, Shana reported.

Platform 14B, which was installed on its designated offshore spot on Saturday, will add 14.2 million cubic meters of gas per day to the total output of the giant gas field, when it starts operation within 30-45 days, according to Tavasolipour.

The 2,450-ton structure, which is the third platform of phase 14 of South Pars development, had been shipped in Bandar Abbas, the capital city of southern province of Hormozgan, on June 11 to be installed on its designated offshore spot.

The platform was built in a 115-month period, Public Relations Department of Pars



Oil and Gas Company, which is in charge of developing the gas field, announced.

This project is 100 percent implemented by Iranian engineers and experts and more than

60 percent of its equipment is also domestic.

The first platform of phase 14 started operation in summer 2018 and the second platform namely 14C was shipped in

September 2018 and the installation operation of this platform were completed in October 2018.

Construction of platform 14D, the last platform of phase 14, has a 92-percent progress for the moment and it is scheduled to be installed on its designated offshore spot by the end of the seventh Iranian calendar month of Mehr (October 22), according to Tavasolipour.

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

In early June, Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, in separate decrees, outlined the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019-March 19, 2020) priorities of the ministry's four major subsidiaries.

In the decree addressed to Masoud Karbasian, the head of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), completion and inauguration of the phases 13, 14, 22 and 24 of South Pars gas field was one of the main priorities for NIOC.

## Iran's 'oil for execution' plan: old ideas in a new wrapping

➔ For instance, let's take a look at the "offering oil in stock market" strategy, and to see how it is different from the new idea of "offering oil in exchange for development projects".

### Oil at IRENEX vs. oil for execution

As I mentioned earlier, one of the main strategies that Iran followed in order to help its oil exports afloat has been trying new ways to diversify the mechanisms of oil sales, one of which was offering oil at the country's energy stock market (known as IRENEX).

In simple words, the idea behind this strategy was that companies would buy the oil which is offered at IRENEX and then they would export it to destination markets using whatever means necessary.

Since the first offering of crude oil at Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) in October 2018, the plan has not been very successful in attracting traders, and during its total 15 rounds of oil (including heavy and light crude) offerings only 1.1 million barrels were sold, while seven offerings of gas condensate have also been concluded with no sales. This has made some energy experts to believe that this whole strategy is doomed to fail.

The most important challenge that Iran has been faced in executing this approach is the impact of U.S. sanctions on the country's banking system and its shipping lines, since the purchased oil, ultimately has to be transported from the agreed oil terminals via oil tankers to different destination across the world.

With the previous strategies coming short, nearly six months after the first offering of oil at IRENEX, in early May, Masoud Karbasian, the head of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) announced that the company plans to barter oil for goods and in exchange for executing development projects.



However, the "oil for execution" part wasn't implemented until this weekend when Head of Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH) of Iran, Mohsen Tarzatab announced that the company is going to sign a €500 million contract under the new "oil for execution" framework for renovation of Rey power plant near Tehran.

According to Tarzatab, the TPPH decided to go for the deal after the sanctions prevented Japan from financing the renovation of Rey power plant.

Based on this deal, TPPH is going to renovate the power plant and in return NIOC will pay for the services in the form of crude oil. Clearly, TPPH is then in charge of the received oil and it's their concern whether to export it or sell it inside the country.

A closer look at this deal, reveals how similar it is to other approaches that NIOC has been taking. Just like the oil offered at IRENEX, in this model, too, a company is left with an oil cargo which is banned from entering global markets. The buyers are once again facing financial

barriers and shipping difficulties.

Although, like the first oil offering in which a few companies risked buying some oil, this time, too, TPPH, is making a significant gamble in signing this deal, but, just like the IRENEX experience, it seems really improbable for more companies to follow the state-owned TPPH's footsteps.

### Final thoughts

The need for taking all necessary measures for withstanding the economic pressures of the U.S. sanctions is an obvious fact, however the ways of doing so should be chosen more carefully.

It seems that the government has been only wrestling with the "problem" here rather than attempting to find practical "solutions".

Fortunately, in the past few months, the government seems to have seen the fact that the best way to withstand any economic pressure is the transition from an oil-dependent economy to an active, self-sufficient and independent economy which is more invested in its potentials for trade with neighbors rather than the oil market.

Solutions like offering oil in the energy exchange or oil for execution might be some kind of transition from traditional oil sales to new approaches, but they are not ultimate solutions in the face of sanctions.

To overcome the current economic conditions, the government has realized that it should have medium- and long-term planning and policy making.

Active diplomacy and attention to the energy needs and capacities of the neighboring countries and offering discounts for oil products, although are more time-consuming ways to increase oil sales, but will be more successful than the ways we discussed, and will yield greater benefits for the country.

## Oil market report: Re-balancing slows down

The main message of this report is that in 1H19 oil supply has exceeded demand by 0.9 mb/d. Our latest data show a global surplus in 2Q19 of 0.5 mb/d versus previous expectations of a 0.5 mb/d deficit. This surplus adds to the huge stock builds seen in the second half of 2018 when oil production surged just as demand growth started to falter.

Clearly, market tightness is not an issue for the time being and any re-balancing seems to have moved further into the future.

According to modernDiplomacy.eu, in the meantime, the widely-anticipated decision by OPEC+ ministers to extend their output agreement to March 2020 provides guidance but it does not change the fundamental outlook of an oversupplied market.

On our balances, assuming constant OPEC output at the current level of around 30 mb/d, by the end of 1Q20 stocks could increase by a net 136 mb. The call on OPEC crude

in early 2020 could fall to only 28 mb/d.

Clearly, this presents a major challenge to those who have taken on the task of market management. The picture will evolve as 2019 progresses, but in the near term the main area of focus remains demand growth.

### Behind our forecast

While the GDP estimates behind our forecast are unchanged from last month's report, there are indications of deteriorating trade and manufacturing activity.

Recent data show that global manufacturing output in 2Q19 fell for the first time since late 2012 and new orders have declined at a fast pace. On the positive side, the mood surrounding the U.S.-China trade dispute appears to have improved and the resolution of outstanding issues would be a massive boost to economic confidence.

The outlook for oil demand growth in 2019 is little changed from our last Report at 1.2 mb/d. On the basis that the economic outlook

in 2020 is better, there will be a rebound to 1.4 mb/d. This is despite the fact that we have downgraded our estimate for global oil demand growth in 2Q19 by 0.45 mb/d.

There are many reasons for this: European demand is sluggish; growth in India vanished in April and May due to a slowdown in LPG deliveries and weakness in the aviation sector; and in the U.S. demand for both gasoline and diesel in the first half of 2019 is lower year-on-year.

Unless the economic backdrop and the trade disputes worsen, global growth is nevertheless expected to be higher in 2H19. There will be support from oil prices, which, if they stay roughly where they are today, will be about 8% below the levels seen last year.

Geopolitical tensions remain high in the Middle East Persian

Gulf and we recently saw the interception of an Iranian tanker in the Mediterranean. Even so, the oil price impact has been minimal



with no real security of supply premium. This is not the case for shipping costs with reports of Persian Gulf insurance rates rising sharply.

For now, maritime operations in the region are close to normal and markets remain calm due to economic weakness, high oil stocks and a significant spare production capacity cushion. As always, the IEA continues to closely monitor the security of supply situation and is in regular contact with its members and partners.

## Is this the most important and overlooked energy source?

By Irina Slav

Last year, global carbon dioxide emissions hit a record despite the fast growth in renewable energy adoption. While this fact may have made many wonder what went wrong, for others, the reason is simple: the world's thirst for energy is growing and it will get it from one source or another. Boggled down in the fossil fuels vs renewables debate, we often seen to overlook one key component of the world's energy mix: nuclear power.

For all of the controversy around nuclear, the unpleasant truth seems to be that the world can't make it without nuclear -- at least not until renewables advance far beyond the reliability and efficiency levels they sport today. As energy expert Robert Rapier wrote in a recent article for Forbes, the world needs more nuclear.

"Renewables like wind and solar," Rapier wrote, "are poised to generate more electricity globally than nuclear power either this year or next year. While we can celebrate the fact that renewables are growing, it's important to keep in mind that they aren't growing rapidly enough to stop the growth of power produced from fossil fuels. Further, these sources don't represent firm power that can be called upon on demand."

Indeed, the intermittency problem of renewables is by far the most serious one. While the industry solves it by coming up with scalable and affordable storage, nuclear can help keep the world going. It could even have a long-term future if the industry finds a way to make fail-safe reactors and convince the public they are indeed fail-safe, says Rapier, noting the difference between fail-proof and fail-safe lies in the fact that "if an accident takes place, the system fails to a safe state."

### The world's energy needs

While this would certainly take some time to sink in after Chernobyl and Fukushima, nuclear continues to satisfy a sizeable portion of the world's energy needs, at a little over a tenth as of 2017. That's down from 17.5 percent in 1996 and its share will continue to fall as reactors are retired when they reach the end of their productive lives.

At the same time, fewer nuclear plants will be constructed because of the higher upfront costs and the negative public attitude. Natural gas and subsidized renewables are the main challengers, the International Atomic Energy Agency said in a 2018 report.

However, while natural gas is likely to remain cheap in the observable future, subsidies for renewables are being rolled back, notably in China. This has already resulted in a decline in new solar and wind investments during the first half of this year. The slowdown could extend into the second half and beyond. In the meantime, energy demand will continue rising.

Among the factors driving this demand increase are urbanization and poverty-fighting programs that have access to energy as part of their foundation.

### The genuine drive

There is a genuine drive among energy companies to help the hundreds of millions of people living without electricity today to gain access to it soon. It's not just reputation management, either. Electricity supply is a profitable business. In addition to this, climate change will also contribute to greater energy demand: extreme weather tends cause spikes in energy consumption.

Last year, according to the 2019 BP Statistical Review of World Energy, non-fossil fuels represented 36 percent of the global energy mix. Coal represented 38 percent. That's the same proportion of energy sources as two decades ago. What it suggests is that, as Rapier notes, renewables are simply not growing fast enough to completely replace fossil fuels and nuclear.

As Rapier put it, there are those who will still reject the idea of nuclear power under any circumstances. But there are consequences from such a stance. Some will idealistically believe that renewables will fill the world's growing power demands, but in reality that's just not happening. Whether you like it or not, absolute rejection of nuclear power almost certainly means higher global carbon dioxide emissions.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## Russia looks for Asia LNG buyers to blunt Western sanctions' bite

Russia is boosting Arctic production of liquefied natural gas to counter growing competition from the U.S. while looking to Asia's major energy importers to buffer projects against Washington's ire.

According to Nikkei, Russian gas producer Novatek agreed on June 29 to sell a 10 percent stake in its Arctic LNG 2 terminal to Japanese trading house Mitsui & Co. and state-owned Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corp. Two Chinese companies -- China National Oil and Gas Exploration and Development Corp. and China National Offshore Oil Corp. -- have a 20 percent stake in the facility.

The terminal is scheduled to go online by 2023 and will supply Japan with 2 million tons of LNG annually -- about one-tenth of the facility's capacity.

Russia wants closer cooperation with Japan and China in developing natural gas reserves, and establishing more buyers in Asia will help insulate its companies against additional Western sanctions.

"U.S. sanctions against Russia are likely to expand this year and many international investors, particularly in the West, are watching developments closely so they are not caught up in the new sanctions measures," said Elizabeth Rosenberg, senior fellow and director of the Energy, Economics and Security program at the Center for a New American Security, a Washington-based think tank.

The U.S. has already threatened sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline currently under construction in Europe, saying it increases the region's energy dependence on Russia.

That threat makes the turn to Asia more urgent. Securing sales in Japan is very significant for Russia, and lower liquefaction costs in colder regions will make Russia's Arctic gas competitive, according to Andrey Polishchuk, an analyst at Raiffeisen Bank in Moscow. "The fact that companies have been able to attract investment, regardless of whether or not there are sanctions, shows the optimism about these projects," he added.

Just days before the announcement of the Japanese stake in Arctic LNG 2, Novatek shipped its first gas to Japan from the Yamal LNG terminal, which launched in 2017. An LNG transshipment terminal scheduled for construction on Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula will enable the company to supply more LNG to Japan, Novatek Chairman Leonid Mikhelson said.

## Malaysian petroleum storage and distribution project to use Rotork control network and electric actuators

By Carla Sertin

Rotork's Pakscan™ control system will be used to control hundreds of additional intelligent Rotork IQ actuators at a new petroleum terminal in Malaysia.

Neway Valve (Suzhou) Co Ltd has ordered more than 570 IQ3 multi-turn actuators to be installed on gate and ball valves ranging from 8 to 42 inches at the Pengerang Deepwater Petroleum Terminal. The site is operated by Pengerang Terminals (Two) Sdn Bhd.

Phase two of the project involved the construction of storage and distribution facilities needed to transport crude oil, petroleum, chemical and petrochemical products to the Refinery & Petrochemicals Integrated Development (RAPID) tank farm, also in southern Johor. The second phase also included the construction of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facilities, comprised of a regasification unit



and two 200,000 m3 LNG storage tanks, as well as the building of berths for the loading and unloading of LNG vessels.

The project's third phase got underway in May and will see the construction of petroleum and petrochemical storage tanks for medium to long term customers.

Rotork's IQ3 actuators will be used to control the flow of the products on to carriers which use a deepwater jetty with depths up to 24 meters to carry products to the two sites,

and will also ensure the complete isolation of the hydrocarbon products to prevent contamination. The Pakscan network bus system will be connected to seven hot standby Rotork Master Stations.

### Separate field networks

Suitable for use in all industries, the Rotork Master Station is capable of operating up to 240 actuators across three separate field networks allowing the optimum network to be used in different plant areas. It supports Modbus® RTU protocol with third party device integration and Pakscan Classic, Rotork's standard two-wire closed loop system, which has more than 170,000 existing devices installed in networks around the world.

The Rotork Master Station can be supplied with built-in redundancy support via a hot standby configuration, allowing a replica unit to assume network control in the event of

an error in the primary unit.

The end user is already successfully operating IQ3 actuators at six other sites in the Pengerang Integrated Petroleum Complex, a 6,239 acre downstream development in Malaysia.

The local support offered through Rotork Site Services (RSS) was also key in securing the order. RSS is carrying out extensive on site commissioning of both the IQ3 actuators and Rotork Master Stations.

RSS provides field support for repairs, commissioning, upgrades and maintenance through a global network of fully trained and experienced service engineers. With support for both Rotork and non-Rotork products available, RSS can also assist with planned shutdown support through project management and supervision, on-site overhaul and testing, and a large stock of OEM spares.

(Source: oilandgasmiddleeast.com)

## Iraqi envoy: joint plan for Arvand Rud pending endorsement

**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** – The Iraqi ambassador to Tehran said Iraq and Iran have devised a series of measures to dredge the Arvand Rud and make the border river navigable again, noting that the plans will be implemented after formal endorsement by the political leaders of the two countries.

In an interview with Tasnim, Sa'ad Jawad Qandil explicated the joint plans that Iraq and Iran have formulated for dredging and clean-up of Arvand Rud within the framework of an agreement signed by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi.



The ambassador said joint commissions from the two countries have held several meetings for coordination on Arvand Rud and have reached a road map to revive a main shipping route in the border river in compliance with the 1975 Algiers Accord.

According to Qandil, the road map entails an inclusive plan to dredge the river, salvage the shipwrecks, remove the obstacles, and clear the mines remaining in the river from the war in the 1980s.

The ambassador also noted that Iraq and Iran will tap into their local capabilities to dredge Arvand Rud, noting that international assistance will be also provided if necessary. "The road map will be carried out after ratification by the political leaders of the two countries," he concluded.

Back in May, Iranian and Iraqi authorities signed the proceedings of a meeting that had been held to study the technical issues of dredging Arvand Rud.

Last week, Official delegations from Iran and Iraq held the second meeting of a joint commission for coordination on Arvand Rud in Tehran to discuss the general framework of the arrangements for dredging and clean-up of the river.

The two sides have agreed that the joint operational ideas would be submitted to the high-ranking officials of the two countries to be agreed upon and implemented.

Tehran and Baghdad have already signed an agreement to resolve disagreements over Arvand Rud based on the 1975 Algiers Accord, which deals with border issues and norms of good neighborliness.

## A new low for UK in global politics

**TEHRAN (FNA)** – Ambassadors play a vitally-important role for the governments that they represent.

Part of their work is to relay their assessment of political leaders elsewhere to support their home government in planning its foreign policy. These communications are strictly confidential and usually encrypted, so they do not become public knowledge.

Last week, reports by the UK's ambassador to the United States, Sir Kim Darroch, were leaked in a national newspaper. The reports detailed a White House that was deeply divided and incompetently driven by the poor leadership of President Donald Trump. Such comments are regularly found in the news media in the US, the UK and elsewhere.



The issue was not simply that the UK's ambassador had such views, but that they were made in secretive reports to the British Prime Minister. This showed that Sir Kim agreed with Trump's many critics about the dysfunctional administration he oversees. Predictably, these remarks were met with fierce anger by Trump, who called the ambassador «wacky» in a series of malicious comments on social media that appeared to justify the critical assessments made of him by Sir Kim. Trump then

called on the ambassador to resign or be sacked and refused to engage further with him. Over the last few days, there has been an eerie silence from 10 Downing Street about these events. Theresa May has tried so hard to win American support for a new free trade deal with Britain post-Brexit that she was the first foreign leader to meet Trump at the White House after his election. May also extended a full state visit and banquet with the Queen more quickly than had been given to any other modern US president to help win favor.

Thus far, none of these extraordinary measures of Britain bending over backwards to please the US president has been met with any reciprocity or gratitude. With publication of these remarks, it has all but imperiled any chance of a trade deal the protectionist Trump does not genuinely appear to want.

While Sir Kim's job would have been made very difficult if shunned by the White House, he was reportedly due to retire by year-end anyway. With a new PM to be appointed shortly, a new team in the UK's embassy could have been arranged drawing little attention. A key trigger for Kim's resignation was seeing Tory leadership rival and likely next Prime Minister Boris Johnson refuse to back him in the role.

There are serious consequences moving forward. First, the UK is sending a signal to Washington and the world that it is willing to let Trump – not the prime minister – decide when British ambassadors should be removed from office. This is a further sign of geopolitical weakness that smells of a government desperate to go to almost any lengths to make a trade deal post-Brexit that ironically will damage Britain's ability to negotiate terms more favorably in the future.

Secondly, the UK's ambassadors will fear sending frank and genuine assessments to the prime minister for fear they might be hacked. They will also know that if Johnson succeeds in winning the Tory leadership race, he will not stand by them in difficult times. This could be enormously damaging for UK foreign policy in the near term coming at precisely the wrong time as Britain seeks to strengthen its global trading links.

We still do not know how these reports were leaked to the press in the first place. Until more information is found on the source and the objectives behind the leak, this one-off event will mark a new low for the UK and its attempt to revitalize its global image.

# Blame America too for Our ruptured relations with the Chinese

By Doug Bandow

**THE AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE** – Hanging out in China for a couple weeks is an experience. Beijing feels a lot like a Western city: tall buildings, horrid traffic, distinct neighborhoods, lots of money. You come across the full range of people—funny, friendly, officious, nervous, helpful, distant, welcoming, interesting.

Yet the political and cultural differences are also real: forced respect for political leaders (maybe everyone really loves President Xi Jinping, but, really, EVERYONE?); rigid hierarchy (for a conference opening ceremony and dinner, we “distinguished” visitors lined up like the Soviet politburo and went to our assigned seats); deference to age (I hate to admit it, but this one is an advantage now!).

There have been a lot of unofficial discussions outside of the major conference I'm currently participating in. And many topics have been of interest, including North Korea, trade, U.S. politics, and, of course, Beijing-Washington relations. While some of my Chinese colleagues are hopeful after the Trump-Xi meeting at the G-20, few have any illusions about the continuing challenge our two countries face. Perhaps the most important question I was asked was this: why the recent worsening of relations? Or more bluntly: why do Americans hate us now? The query is worth a serious think.

Richard Nixon's 1972 decision to break the Cold War isolation of the People's Republic of China was long overdue. Ignoring unpleasant regimes doesn't make them go away. The lack of communication channels with potential adversaries can have catastrophic consequences, including, among them, China's previous entry into the Korean War.

Such a state of affairs intensified hostility between the two nations, which remained until the 1970s. After Mao Zedong's death, when China embraced reform, Americans found an avid new trading partner. Despite Beijing's embrace of brutal authoritarianism in Tiananmen Square, many U.S. policymakers and analysts imagined that the PRC's submersion in the international economic system would encourage social, cultural, and ultimately political liberalization. Frankly, I was among those who hoped to see such a transformation. Some Americans even imagined that capitalism would turn China into an Americanized version of itself—friendly and free.

For a time, liberalization appeared to be a reality. The PRC was no democracy, to be sure, but American culture suffused Chinese life, especially that of the young. Social strictures of the Maoist era disappeared: people were free to marry without official approval. Religious liberty advanced, irregularly and inconsistently, yes, but spaces still opened for people of faith. A genuine private sector arose, with Chinese free to seek employment where and how they wished. Even increasing indirect political debate appeared possible, as restrictions over academic cooperation, NGO activities, and foreign contacts eased. There remained red lines, to be sure, but China's authoritarianism seemed a bit



looser, more tired and less determined.

U.S.-China relations still hit significant bumps over the intervening years. The PRC was not smoothly becoming a Sinicized version of America (whatever that might even look like) because the Chinese Communist Party sat uncomfortably atop an ancient civilization. Chinese worldwide are loyal to that heritage, if not necessarily to the particular government in power. Nevertheless, with economics serving as the relationship's foundation, the common expectation was that ties between China and the United States were destined to improve, however irregularly:

- China Isn't an Enemy and Hawks Shouldn't Turn It Into One

- America's Relationship With China Can't Become Too Big to Fail

- The rise of President Xi Jinping changed everything.

Of course, Xi is not alone. He represents viewpoints that have long been present within the CCP. But his government has formalized several important trends and is creating a very different China than the one once expected by Americans. The impact on American opinion has been dramatic: an increasing number of analysts express regret at having engaged the PRC economically and speak darkly of the possibility of a new cold war, this time with China rather than Russia.

In almost every area, Americans perceive a mix of double-cross and disappointment. For instance, human rights have moved in reverse: the Xi government is attempting to Sinicize religion, limit academic exchanges, tighten internet controls, and restrict NGOs. Even more shocking has been the detention of a million Uighurs in re-education camps.

The CCP appears to be turning to technology to create a totalitarian state, with pervasive cameras and a highly intrusive “social credit” system. Official attacks on the rule of law and support for enhanced party control have shattered any illusion of a move toward Western standards. Beijing's foreign policy has grown more aggressive,

especially involving territorial disputes in East Asian waters and with Taiwan. China's military build-up has put hard power behind more political objectives. The ongoing crackdown in Hong Kong, though seen as a domestic question in Beijing, is viewed as a repudiation of the international agreement reached with the United Kingdom over the territory's return to the PRC.

Finally, promises of further economic reforms have gone a-glimmering. Even corporate America, long the strongest supporter of the Sino-American relationship, has grown frustrated, viewing the Chinese market as almost irredeemably biased against foreign firms. Concern, even anger, has grown over IP theft and technology transfer, as well as potential security threats arising from Chinese economic activities. The result has been to dissolve what once was the firmest foundation for ties between the two countries.

Obviously, Chinese officials defend their conduct, and in some ways the PRC is only mimicking the behavior of the rising American republic of the 19th century—one can hardly be more aggressive internationally than to launch a war against a neighbor and seize half of its territory, as America did to Mexico. Nevertheless, in other areas, such as human rights, Beijing's behavior transgresses deeply held American values.

What has driven the bilateral relationship to its current depths? The answer is a confluence of factors that in virtually every area are moving ties backwards. Moreover, there looks to be little hope for improvement. Xi appears determined to rule for life. He is committed to expanding pervasive party control over Chinese society and his international posture looks to be permanently aggressive. The case against China appears to be a lengthy one. But U.S. policymakers need to take a more hard-headed approach that realistically assesses both the practical impact of Chinese behavior and the likelihood of changing the PRC's policies.

First, international relations will always be messy, pragmatic, and unsatisfying. Washington must deal with many

unpleasant, even murderous governments. Further, global social engineering is but a dangerous fantasy: the world's greatest power has proven incapable even of replacing the hostile government of a small island almost within sight of its coast. These challenges and limitations are even greater when applied to a putative great power, such as China.

Second, Beijing poses no existential threat to America. The geopolitical struggle is over Washington's continued domination of East Asia along China's border. That will grow ever more difficult and will not be worth the cost and risk. The PRC is already a great power and, though it faces a multitude of economic and political challenges, is likely to become a superpower. The United States will have no choice but to accommodate this more powerful China, leaving friendly Asian states to take over responsibility for constraining, if not containing, Chinese behavior.

Third, Americans should not hesitate to promote our principles and values, especially involving basic human rights. But policymakers must be realistic about their ability to influence China's development. No combination of lectures, sanctions, and threats is likely to force a nationalistic regime to abandon policies that it views as essential for its political control. Closing off contacts—canceling the visas of Chinese academics, for instance—is self-defeating. Western friends of China should look for ways to encourage increased information flows to the Chinese people while remaining engaged with the PRC.

Fourth, trade benefits both parties and is best kept free rather than excessively managed. Washington must decide what issues are broadly essential to our commercial relationship, especially given legitimate security concerns. No time should be wasted on trade balances and deficits, which are but aggregations of a multitude of private transactions. U.S. officials cannot expect to prevent Beijing from asserting government control over their economy: after all, Washington is neither advocate nor practitioner of laissez-faire. In short, what are the necessary few red lines for both states?

Fifth, Americans must give up unrealistic expectations. China will always be China—sometimes more friendly towards America and sometimes less. Moreover, U.S. policy should reflect the fact that circumstances and responses will change in the coming years. If one thing is unlikely to be static, it is China's development.

Of course, Beijing will also have to accommodate American views and policies, so neither side is likely to be happy in making such compromises. But this is how it works now: the unipolar world is gone and won't be seen again for a very long time, if ever.

It is easy to blame the Xi government for the ongoing deterioration of U.S.-China relations. However, American expectations and objectives have also played an important role. Both countries have a powerful, indeed even overriding incentive to avoid a rupture. Washington and Beijing should thus work cooperatively in the coming decades.

## If Von der Leyen heads European Commission, she may have to shed German cloak

By Sun Keqin

**GLOBALTIMES** – German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen has been nominated the European Commission president. The nomination reflects Germany's ambition to play a greater role in the EU and to some extent shows Von der Leyen's strong personality and high reputation as a political heavyweight of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU).

To head the European Commission, the German nominee still has to see her appointment confirmed by a vote of members of the European Parliament on July 16. There have been certain dissenting voices inside Germany and other European countries. Many from the Social Democratic Party of Germany and the Green Party have questioned the nomination process.

But in spite of such doubts, Von der Leyen has gained the support of major European powers including France and Germany, and has also been backed by many Eastern European countries. In addition, as a member of the European People's Party, she is backed by the largest political group in the European Parliament. Thus it is highly likely that she will emerge victorious on July 16. Be as it may, if she assumes office, challenges await her.

Generally, the position of the European Commission leader is occupied by politicians from middle and small powers in Europe, while the big countries stay out of the competition. But if Von der Leyen from Germany, the most powerful among the 28 EU members, gets the spot, other powers, especially the middle and small ones, will certainly feel uneasy. Furthermore, due to her tough image and policy, such uneasiness might be heightened.

Hence, to lead the European Commission, Von der Leyen should work at burnishing her image to appear to



be more of a European politician than merely a German one. She needs to keep the continent's overall interests in mind and coordinate relations among big and small powers as well as Eastern and Western Europe. If she fails to change and still considers German interests as European interests, there will be mounting resistance.

Thus, if Von der Leyen takes office, Germany's influence may get a fillip but other countries will start to push back at Berlin. Germany and France are two most important engines of the European integration. The CDU and Von der Leyen herself are also supporters of a united bloc. If integration hits a roadblock, the German politician as the possible future leader will undoubtedly help advance the European integration process. Thus, the interests of Germany will be more closely linked to the whole continent.

Nonetheless, anti-integration views, including populism, have gained ground in Europe. She needs

to balance such forces and manage various conflicts. It might not work if she pushes the integration too fast. A significant shift is unlikely in the EU's foreign relations. First, though the German politician has previously sounded alarm bells about China's impact on Europe, Beijing's ties with the continent may not be affected. As Germany is a core member of NATO, it is not surprising that Von der Leyen, as the German defense minister, has taken the same political position with NATO, and thus made certain ideological remarks. Not only she, many inside Europe have increased doubts about China. But Von der Leyen is a pragmatic politician. She is expected to re-examine China-EU and China-Germany relations, and finally redeem herself.

Moreover, the European Commission chief cannot play a decisive role in dealing with China-EU ties. Her approach toward China will be tempered by Brussels and other countries' policies.

Second, there are strains between the EU and the US. In particular, Washington has been taking aim at Berlin, mainly over military issues. The German defense minister has been in favor of strengthening NATO and increasing military spending, but she has been concerned about US hegemony and the White House's bellicose attitude.

Therefore, in terms of US policy, she may be cooperative, but will certainly not let the EU be bullied. She once clearly opposed US pressure on Germany to boost its military spending.

As the future European Commission head, Von der Leyen is expected to stand by European interests and positions if the US piles up pressure on Europe. But she will also try to reconcile differences and improve relations with the US.

## Biden's new troubles

# Senator who supported the Iraq war

By Saeed Sobhani

**TEHRAN** — Biden's support for the Iraq war during the Bush presidency has now been troubled for him. Interestingly enough, US President Donald Trump intends to focus on this issue. Undoubtedly, Biden's support for the Iraq war is indicative of his lack of control over US foreign policy. Biden claims he is a skilled man in the field of American foreign policy! Here is a look at Biden's support for the Iraq war. Some analyzes in this regard may be helpful:

As Branco Marcetic wrote in "Inthesetimes", Bernie Sanders has used Biden's record to draw a contrast with his own opposition to the Iraq War. Rep. Seth Moulton, another 2020 candidate, has called for Biden to admit he was wrong for casting the vote. And a recent POLITICO/Morning Consult poll showed more than 40 percent of respondents between 18 and 29 were less likely to back Biden because of it. But to say the now-Democratic frontrunner voted for the Iraq War doesn't fully describe his role in what has come to be widely acknowledged as the most disastrous foreign policy decision of the 21st century. A review of the historical record shows Biden didn't just vote for the war—he was a leading Democratic voice in its favor, and played an important role in persuading the public of its necessity and, more broadly, laying the groundwork for Bush's invasion.

In the wake of September 11th, Biden stood as a leading Democratic voice on foreign policy, chairing the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As President Bush attempted to sell the U.S. public on the war, Biden became one of the administration's steadfast allies in this cause, backing claims about the supposed threat posed by Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein and insisting on the necessity of removing him from power.

Biden did attempt to placate Democrats by criticizing Bush on procedural grounds while largely affirming his case for war, even as he painted himself as an opponent of Bush and the war in front of liberal audiences. In the months leading up to and following the invasion, Biden would make repeated, contradictory statements about his position on the issue, eventually casting himself as an unrepentant backer of the war effort just as the public and his own party began to sour on it.

Biden hadn't always been a hawk on Iraq. He had voted against the first Gulf War in 1991, though even his opposition to that war had been tepid at best, focused mainly on badgering George H.W. Bush into having Congress rubber stamp a war Bush had already made clear he was intent on waging with or without its approval.

In 1996 Biden criticized Republican claims that then-President Bill Clinton wasn't being tough enough on Iraq amid calls to remove Saddam Hussein from power, labeling an ouster "not a doable policy." Before the War on Terror drove U.S. foreign policy, Biden criticized Bush during his first year in office for the then-president's hawkish position on missile defense.

September 11th changed all this. Only one day before the attacks, at a speech in front of the National Press Club, Biden had called Bush's foreign policy ideas "absolute lunacy" and charged that his missile defense system proposal would "begin a news arms race." But the nearly 3,000 Americans who were killed on U.S. soil that day upended the political consensus. Bush's approval rating shot up to a historic 90 percent, and any elected officials who failed to match the president's zeal for military retribution became vulnerable to accusations of being "soft on terror."

"Count me in the 90 percent," Biden said in the weeks after the attack. There was "total cohesion," he said, between Democrats and Republicans in the challenges ahead. "There is no daylight between us."

In November 2002, just a little over a year following the World Trade Center attacks, Biden faced re-election amidst a political climate in which the Bush administration had incited nationalist sentiment over the issue of terrorism. In October 2001, Biden had been criticized in Delaware newspapers for comments that were perceived as potentially weak, warning that the United States could be seen as a "high-tech bully" if it failed to put boots on the ground in Afghanistan and instead relied on a protracted bombing campaign to oust the Taliban.

Consequently, Biden, then deemed by the New Republic to be the Democratic Party's "de facto spokesman on the war against terrorism," quickly became a close ally of the Bush administration in its prosecution of that war. The White House installed a special secure phone line to Biden's home, and he and three other members of Congress met privately with Bush in October 2001 to come up with a positive public relations message for the war in Afghanistan.

Biden's stance on Iraq soon began to change, too. In November 2001, Biden had batted away suggestions of regime change, saying the United States should defeat al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden before thinking about other targets. By February 2002, he appeared to have cracked open the door to the possibility of an invasion.

"If Saddam Hussein is still there five years from now, we are in big trouble," he told a crowd of 400 Delaware National Guard officers that month at the annual Officers Call event.

"It would be unrealistic, if not downright foolish, to believe we can claim victory in the war on terrorism if Saddam is still in power," he said around the same time, echoing the language of hawks like Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman.

Biden soon developed the position he would hold



for the following 13 months leading into Bush's March 2003 invasion of Iraq: While the Bush administration was entirely justified in its plans to remove Hussein from power in Iraq, it had to do a better job of selling the inevitable war to the U.S. public and the international community.

"There is overwhelming support for the proposition that Saddam Hussein should be removed from power," he said in March 2002, while noting that divisions remained about how exactly that would be done. If the administration wanted his support, Biden continued, they would have to make "a complete and thorough case" that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and to outline what they envisioned a post-Hussein Iraq would look like.

It was a stance well-calibrated for the political climate. Biden could continue to point to disagreements with the administration for liberal audiences, even if they were merely procedural, while putting his weight behind the ultimate goal of war with Iraq. At the same time, Biden's apparent criticisms doubled as advice for the administration: If you want buy-in from liberals for your war, this is what you'll have to do. "I don't know a single informed person who is suggesting you can take down Saddam and not be prepared to stay for two, four, five years to give the country a chance to be held together," Biden recounted telling Bush privately in June 2002. It was a talking point he would repeat often over the next year, that regime change in Iraq was the correct thing to do, but would require a long-term commitment from the United States after Hussein's removal.

During frequent television appearances, Biden didn't just insist on the necessity of removing Hussein from power, but appeared to signal to the Bush administration on what grounds it could safely seek military action against Iraq. When Bush's directive to the CIA to step up support for Iraqi opposition groups and even possibly capture and kill Hussein was leaked to the Washington Post in June, Biden gave it his approval. Asked on CBS's "Face the Nation" if the plan gave him any pause, Biden replied: "Only if it doesn't work."

"If the covert action doesn't work, we'd better be prepared to move forward with another action, an overt action, and it seems to me that we can't afford to miss," he added.

"Prominent Democrats endorse administration plan to remove Iraqi leader from power," ran the subsequent Associated Press headline. A month later in July, Biden affirmed that Congress would back Bush in a pre-emptive strike on Iraq in the event of a "clear and present danger" and if "the president can make the case that we're about to be attacked."

Asked on "Fox News Sunday" the same month if a discovery that Hussein was in league with al-Qaeda would justify an invasion, Biden replied: "If he can prove that, yes, he would have the authority in my view."

"And this will be the first time ever in the history of the United States of America that we have essentially invaded another country preemptively to take out a leadership, I think justifiably given the case being made."

These themes would be used by the Bush administration in the months ahead to sell the war to the American public. The non-existent ties between Hussein and al-Qaeda became one of the most high-profile talking points for the war's proponents. And the Bush administration would publicize the supposedly imminent threat Hussein posed to the United States, including then-National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice's infamous September declaration that "we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud."

By July Biden appeared to rule out a diplomatic solution to the conflict. "Dialogue with Saddam is useless," he said.

It was also in July 2002 that Biden carried out one of his most consequential actions in the lead-up to the Iraq War, when he held several days of congressional hearings about the then-potential invasion. Biden stressed the hearings weren't meant to antagonize the White House. Rather, as he explained, they would inform the American people about the stakes of the

conflict and the logistical issues involved in waging it. At the time, the pro-war stance shared by the administration, much of the press, and Democrats like Biden was by no means unanimous. Many of the United States' closest allies in Europe (apart from Tony Blair's British government) were wary of the war drums beating from Washington, as were many Arab states. In July, King Abdullah II of Jordan, a U.S. ally in the Middle East, called the idea of an invasion "somewhat ludicrous."

The same month, the Houston Chronicle reported, based on interviews with anonymous officials, that a number of senior military officials, including members of the joint chiefs of staff, were in disagreement with the White House's drive for war with Iraq, and believed that Hussein posed no immediate threat to the United States. The day before the hearings, Scott Ritter, the former chief weapons inspector at the UN, cautioned that it was far from "inevitable" that Iraq had restarted its weapons program, and warned that "Biden's open embrace of regime removal in Baghdad" threatened to make the hearings "devolve into a political cover" for Congress to authorize Bush's war.

Yet as Stephen Zunes reported for The Progressive in April 2019, none of these views were aired at Biden's hearings, which opened with Biden stating that WMDs "must be dislodged from Saddam, or Saddam must be dislodged from power," and that "if we wait for the danger from Saddam to become clear, it could be too late." Ritter himself was never invited to testify. Neither were other experts critical of the Bush narrative on Iraq, including Rolf Ekéus, the former executive chairman of the United Nations Special Commission, the inspection regime set up after the Gulf War to deal with WMDs, and former UN Assistant Secretary General Hans Von Sponeck, who complained that he was "very agitated by the deliberate distortions and misrepresentations" that made it "look to the average person in the U.S. as if Iraq is a threat to their security." According to Biden, Bush later thanked him for the hearings.

By Zunes' count, none of the 18 witnesses who were called objected to the idea that Hussein had WMDs, and all three witnesses who testified on the subject of al-Qaeda claimed the organization received direct support from Iraq—the very red line Biden had said would give Bush the authority to invade the country. Out of the 12 witnesses who discussed an invasion, half were in favor and only two opposed. Biden himself said throughout the hearings that Iraq was a national security threat. It was largely up to Republicans on the committee—namely Lincoln Chafee and Chuck Hagel—to voice skepticism about a war effort. Ritter accused Biden and other members of congress of having "preordained a conclusion that seeks to remove Saddam Hussein from power regardless of the facts." Indeed, on the day of the hearings, Biden had co-authored a New York Times op-ed suggesting that continued "containment" of Hussein "raises the risk that Mr. Hussein will play cat-and-mouse with inspectors while building more weapons," and that "if we wait for the danger to become clear and present, it may be too late."

Having given a platform to pro-war talking points, Biden then hit the talk show circuit to cite the lopsided testimony he himself had arranged in order to argue for war. Determining Hussein's intentions was "like reading the entrails of goats," Biden told NBC's "Meet the Press," and what mattered more was Hussein's ability to use WMDs, whatever those intentions might be. He pointed to testimony in the July hearings to argue it was clear that Iraq had such weapons. "We have no choice but to eliminate the threat," he said. "This is a guy who's an extreme danger to the world."

While the mainstream press featured few skeptical and anti-war voices at the time, a number of them assailed Biden for going along with the Bush administration. "Biden apparently believes that he fulfills the constitutional function of advise and consent by merely being the cheerleader for the administration's rising chorus demanding war with Iraq," wrote Stanley Kutler in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. "When and how are the only questions in his repertoire."

## Youth may stir but not rock U.S. politics

By Zhang Wenzong

**GLOBALTIMES** — US women's national soccer team co-captain Megan Rapinoe's feuding with President Donald Trump in late June has drawn eyeballs. Rapinoe said she would not go to the White House if invited. So, after the US team claimed victory and Trump tweeted his congratulations, quite a few young Americans made a fuss about it. The episode mirrors young Americans' dissatisfaction with the status quo in the US. To a large extent, this is why the 2018 US midterm elections saw the highest level of participation among youth aged 18-29 in a very long time. More and more young people are entering US Congress. "Thanks to a crop of newly-elected millennials, the average age of Congress in 2019 will drop by 10 years from what it is now," according to US media. In that case, will young people change the US political process and its direction?



American youths are active in thinking and dare to express themselves. But since they have just started their academic research or career, their ability to make a difference is relatively weak. They were greatly affected by the 2008 financial crisis. Due to the heavy burden of student loans, high unemployment rate and shrinking salaries, they bitterly regard the drawbacks of the capitalist system and social inequality.

Many of Trump's policies which have been implemented since he assumed office are at odds with American youth's demands. Young people believe that tax cuts and deregulation are beneficial to big entrepreneurs and the rich; Trump's efforts to kill Obamacare will hurt their welfare; the anti-abortion movement and the crackdown on unauthorized immigration are against liberal values.

In addition, a vast majority of young people are keen on environmental protection. They care about the future of the planet and mankind. US withdrawal from the Paris climate deal and vigorous development of fossil energy thus get on their nerves. To cap it off, Trump's personality does not meet their requirements for politicians.

Young Americans' dissatisfaction with US politics and policies has been reflected in the votes. According to an analysis released by the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University, 31 percent of youth (ages 18-29) turned out to vote in the 2018 midterms, a substantial increase over 2014. The key findings also indicate that 67 percent of youths voted for a Democratic candidate and 32 percent for a Republican candidate, which was "a historic 35-point vote choice gap."

In the US House of Representatives and Senate, an increasing number of young members are bringing American youths' demands to the political spectrum. For instance, with the support of young voters, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, an organizer for Senator Bernie Sanders' 2016 campaign, has become the youngest woman elected to Congress. She calls the capitalist system "irredeemable," wants to abolish the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency and rallies to stop fossil fuel production in 10 years, which go against Trump and the GOP's philosophy. Due to substantial media coverage, Ocasio-Cortez seems to have become a star of the Democratic Party.

Young Americans' increase in voter turnout is a good thing for the Democrats. But it is uncertain whether the trend will continue. During social movements, young people were proactive in the beginning, yet their passion gradually flagged. Polls show that only a minority of young Americans believe they can change the way their society functions by voting. What they have been seeing since they were even younger is political polarization and prejudice in different parties. It is easy for them to lose confidence in US politics. Yet if they gradually lose their voting enthusiasm and remain distant from politics, their influence on US politics will soon be lost and the problems they are concerned about will be harder to resolve.

Even if young Americans are mobilized today, their political influence should not be exaggerated. To begin with, the proportion of young voters in US elections is not high. Furthermore, generally speaking, youths have limited impact on US presidential elections. For instance, when blue and red states are relatively stable, candidates who can win over the swing states and Rust Belt states will secure the final victory. But there are not many young people in key states like Ohio, Pennsylvania and Florida.

If the Democratic Party wants to turn the tables, they must focus more on ethnic minorities, women, and even a large number of white male voters, rather than young people. Regardless of how political ecology in the US changes, young people's discontent and demands need to be responded to by policymakers. As a new force in the US left wing, young Americans will continue to influence US politics in their own way.

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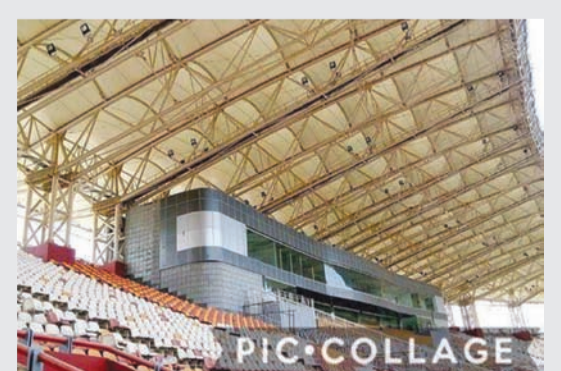
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# Moons that escape their planets could become 'ploonets'

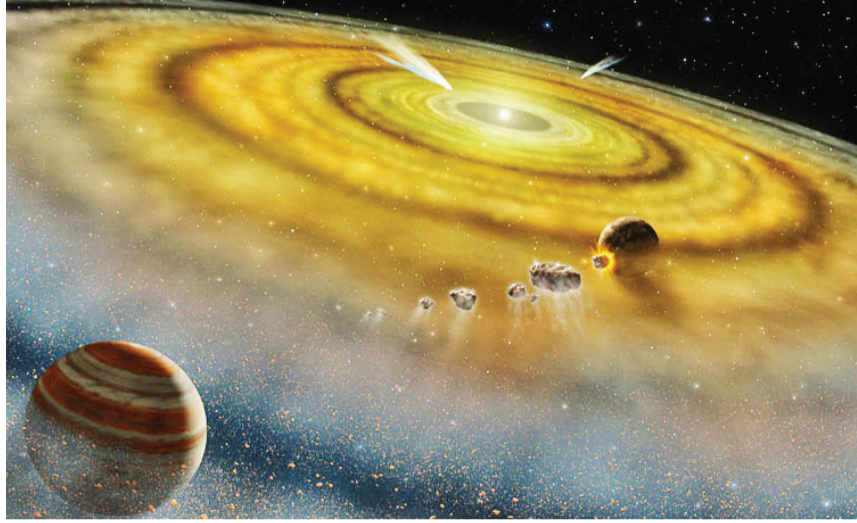
In other star systems, some moons could escape their planets and start orbiting their stars instead, new simulations suggest. Scientists have dubbed such liberated worlds "ploonets," and say that current telescopes may be able to find the wayward objects.

Astronomers think that exomoons — moons orbiting planets that orbit stars other than the sun — should be common, but efforts to find them have turned up empty so far. Astrophysicist Mario Sucerquia of the University of Antioquia in Medellín, Colombia and colleagues simulated what would happen to those moons if they orbited hot Jupiters, gas giants that lie scorchingly close to their stars. Many astronomers think that hot Jupiters weren't born so close, but instead migrated toward their star from a more distant orbit.

As the gas giant migrates, the combined gravitational forces of the planet and the star would inject extra energy into the moon's orbit, pushing the moon farther and farther from its planet until eventually it escapes, the researchers report June 29 at arXiv.org.

"This process should happen in every planetary system composed of a giant planet in a very close-in orbit," Sucerquia says. "So ploonets should be very frequent."

Some ploonets may be indistinguishable from ordinary planets. Others, whose orbits keep them close to their planet, could reveal



their presence by changing the timing of when their neighbor planet crosses, or transits, in front of the star. The ploonet should stay close enough to the planet that its gravity can speed or slow the planet's transit times. Those deviations should be detectable by combining data from planet-hunting telescopes like NASA's TESS or the now-defunct Kepler, Sucerquia says.

Ploonethood may be a relatively short-lived phenomenon, though, making the worlds more

difficult to spot. About half of the ploonets in the researchers' simulations crashed into either their planet or star within about half a million years. And half of the remaining survivors crashed within a million years.

Even with few visible survivors, ploonets could help explain some bizarre exoplanetary features. Moon debris from such crashes could lead to giant ring systems around planets, like the 37 rings that encircle exoplanet J1407b, the team says.

Or, if the ploonet had an icy surface or an atmosphere before moving close to its star, the star's heat would evaporate it, giving the ploonet a tail like a comet's. Evaporating ploonets zipping by with a long light-blocking tail could explain strangely flickering stars like Tabby's star, Sucerquia says.

"Those structures [rings and flickers] have been discovered, have been observed," Sucerquia says. "We just propose a natural mechanism to explain [them]."

While the solar system doesn't have any hot Jupiters, ploonethood may be possible here, too. Earth's moon is moving slowly away from the Earth, at a rate of about 4 centimeters per year. When it eventually breaks free, "the moon is a potential ploonet," Sucerquia says — although that won't happen for about 5 billion years.

The study is a good first step for thinking about what would happen to exomoons in real planetary systems, says planetary astrophysicist Natalie Hinkel of the Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio, who wasn't involved in the new work. "Nobody's looked at the problem quite like this," she says. "It adds to the layers of how complex these systems are."

Plus, ploonet is "a wonderful name," Hinkel says. "Normally I sort of eye-roll at these made-up names, but this one is a keeper." (Source: sciencenews.org)

## Super salty, subzero Arctic water provides peek at possible life on other planets

In recent years, the idea of life on other planets has become less far-fetched. NASA announced June 27 that it will send a vehicle to Saturn's icy moon, Titan, a celestial body known to harbor surface lakes of methane and an ice-covered ocean of water, boosting its chance for supporting life.

On Earth, scientists are studying the most extreme environments to learn how life might exist under completely different settings, like on other planets. A University of Washington team has been studying the microbes found in "cryopegs," trapped layers of sediment with water so salty that it remains liquid at below-freezing temperatures, which may be similar to environments on Mars or other planetary bodies farther from the sun.

At the recent AbSciCon meeting in Bellevue, Washington, researchers presented DNA sequencing and related results to show that brine samples from an Alaskan cryopeg isolated for tens of thousands of years contain thriving bacterial communities. The lifeforms are similar to those found in floating sea ice and in saltwater that flows from glaciers, but display some unique patterns.

"We study really old seawater trapped inside of permafrost for up to 50,000 years, to see how those bacterial communities have evolved over time," said lead author Zachary Cooper, a UW doctoral student in oceanography.

Cryopegs were first discovered by geologists in Northern Alaska decades ago. This field site in Utqiagvik, formerly known as Barrow, was excavated in the 1960s by the U.S. Army's Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory to explore large wedges of freshwater ice that occur in the permafrost there. Subsurface brine was eventually collected from the site in the 2000s.



"The extreme conditions here are not just the below-zero temperatures, but also the very high salt concentrations," said Jody Deming, a UW professor of oceanography who studies microbial life in the Arctic Ocean. "One hundred and forty parts per thousand -- 14% -- is a lot of salt. In canned goods that would stop microbes from doing anything. So there can be a preconceived notion that very high salt should not enable active life."

It's not fully known how cryopegs form. Scientists believe the layers might be former coastal lagoons stranded during the last ice age, when rain turned to snow and the ocean receded. Moisture evaporated from the abandoned seabed was then covered by permafrost, so the remaining briny water became trapped below a layer of remaining soil.

To access the subsurface liquids, researchers climb about 12 feet down a ladder and then move carefully along a tunnel within the ice. The opening is just a single person wide and is not high enough to stand in,

so researchers must crouch and work together to drill during the four- to eight-hour shifts.

Deming describes it as "exhilarating" because of the possibility for discovery.

Samples collected in the spring of 2017 and 2018, geologically isolated for what researchers believe to be roughly 50,000 years, contain genes from healthy communities of bacteria along with their viruses.

"We're just discovering that there's a very robust microbial community, coevolving with viruses, in these ancient buried brines," Cooper said. "We were quite startled at how dense the bacterial communities are."

The extreme environments on Earth may be similar to the oceans and ice of other planets, scientist believe.

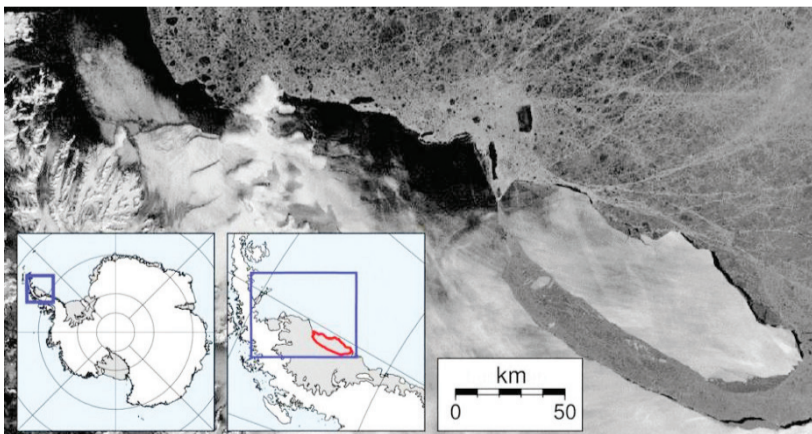
"The dominant bacterium is Marinobacter," Deming said. "The name alone tells us that it came from the ocean -- even though it has been in the dark, buried in frozen permafrost for a very long time, it originally came from the marine environment."

Mars harbored an ocean of water in the past, and our solar system contains at least a half-dozen oceans on other planets and icy moons. Titan, the moon of Saturn that NASA will explore, is rich in various forms of ice. Studying life on Earth in frozen settings that may have similarities can prepare explorers for what kind of life to expect, and how to detect it.

The research was funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation to learn how bacteria and viruses coevolve in different marine environments. Other collaborators at UW are Josephine Rapp, a postdoctoral researcher in Oceanography, Max Showalter, a doctoral student in Oceanography, and Shelly Carpenter, a research scientist in Oceanography.

(Source: Science Daily)

## Giant iceberg on the move in Antarctica



One of the largest icebergs in the world, A68, is on the move. Since it calved from Antarctica's Larson C ice shelf two years ago, the iceberg has rotated 270 degrees and drifted 155 miles north, carried by the ocean current known as the Weddell Gyre.

Glacier expert Adrian Luckman, a geography professor at Swansea University in Wales, published an animation of the glacier's movements on his blog.

"This animation is made from hundreds of Sentinel-1 microwave images stitched together in five-day intervals," Luckman wrote in the post.

Satellite records suggest A68 is the sixth largest iceberg currently floating in Earth's oceans. It is roughly the size of Maryland, or four times the size of the city of London, and its volume is twice that of Lake Erie. The iceberg weighs more than 1 trillion metric tons.

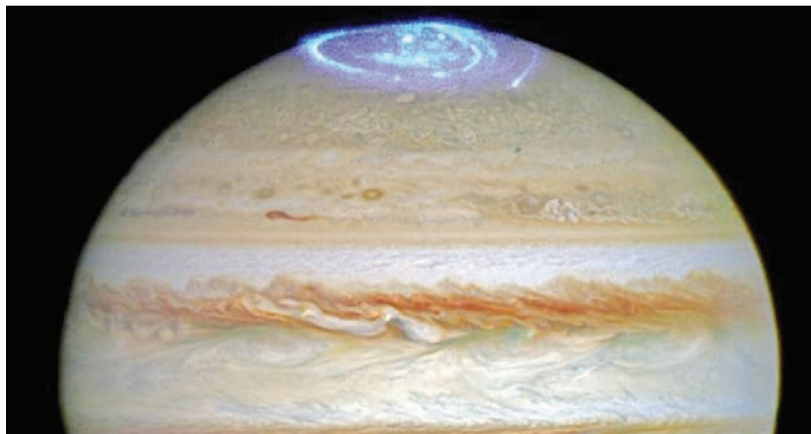
For more than a year after it initially calved, A68 remained mostly

motionless, grounded on the Bawden Ice Rise, a shallow seabed near the edge of the Larsen ice shelf. Last fall, the iceberg began to disengage from the seafloor, spin and drift. Over the last year, A68 has begun to move at an accelerated pace.

When it first split, scientists expected the iceberg to quickly break apart and disintegrate, but it has remained mostly intact. Its resilience is surprising, given its relatively slim shape. Despite a length of nearly 100 miles, the iceberg's ice measures less than 2,000 feet at its thickest point.

Iceberg calving is a natural phenomenon. As inland glaciers supply coastal ice shelves with new ice, older ice is pushed out to sea. But a growing body of evidence suggests rising water and air temperatures are triggering instabilities along the coasts of Antarctica and Greenland, accelerating melting and increases the rates of iceberg calving. (Source: UPI)

## Jupiter's auroras powered by alternating current



New analysis of Juno mission data suggests Jupiter's auroras are powered by alternating current, not direct current.

Jupiter, the largest planet in the solar system, boasts an aurora with a radiant power of 100 terawatts, or 100 billion kilowatts. It's the brightest aurora in the solar system.

Like Earth's auroras, Jupiter's light shows are centered around its poles. The auroras are fueled by a system of electric currents running through the gas giant's magnetosphere.

"Jupiter's electric current systems are driven by the enormous centrifugal forces in Jupiter's rapidly rotating magnetosphere," Joachim Saur, researcher at the University of Cologne, said in a news release. "Because of Jupiter's fast rotation -- a day on Jupiter lasts only ten hours -- the centrifugal forces move the ionized gas in Jupiter's magnetic field, which generate the electric currents."

When gas particles in Jupiter's upper atmosphere are excited by charged particles

produced by the interactions between solar winds and the planet's magnetosphere, a brilliant, swirling glow is produced.

For the last three years, NASA's Juno spacecraft has been circling Jupiter. Its orbit passes over both poles. Recently, Juno used its instruments to measure the direct electric currents running through Jupiter's magnetosphere. Analysis of the Juno data showed Birkeland currents, direct currents running along the gas giant's magnetic field lines, totaled 50 million amperes.

According to the new study, published this week in the journal Nature Astronomy, direct currents measured by Juno can't entirely account for the power of Jupiter's auroras. Therefore, scientists concluded alternating, turbulent Alfvénic currents, are helping fuel the gas giant's polar light shows.

"These observations, combined with other Juno spacecraft measurements, show that alternating currents play a much greater role in generating Jupiter's aurora than the direct current system," Saur said. (Source: UPI)

## New dark energy data emerges from misshapen, distorted, ancient voids

There are voids in the universe, and we can't see them properly. And that's a good thing.

These voids — giant, irregular gaps in space that are empty of galaxies — are all over the cosmos. But, because they are empty, astronomers can't directly observe them. Instead, they spot them by mapping galaxies across space, and then marking the areas in between these areas. However, from our perspective on Earth, all those voids look distorted.

These areas appear stretched in some places and squished in others. That's a consequence of "redshifting" of galaxies at their borders, a visual distortion caused by the movement of these systems: As they move away from the viewer (Earthlings, in this case), the galaxies' wavelengths appear to stretch, becoming more red; those moving toward us would look more blue as their wavelengths get shorter. Dark energy is the name astronomers have given to an invisible force stretching our universe and causing galaxies to move away from one another.



That distortion turns out to be a good thing, according to a paper published July 9 in the journal Physical Review D. Until now, researchers have relied on precise measurements of the redshifts of individual galaxies to figure out how fast the universe is expanding, and in turn, how much dark energy is present to drive that expansion. But measuring the distortions of voids turns out to be a much more precise technique, allowing the researchers to narrow down that expansion even further.

"What we are actually measuring is the distortion in the positions of galaxies around void regions," said Seshadri Nadathur, a researcher at the University of Portsmouth in the United Kingdom, and lead author of the paper. "The cool thing about voids is that they are regions of space around which we can very accurately model galaxy motions."

That's because the math needed to precisely determine the motions of galaxies becomes a lot simpler inside these voids, Nadathur told Live Science. (In this case, the research team studied voids about 5.5 billion light-years from Earth.)

"Galaxies move because of gravity pulling them toward regions of excess matter, and the problem generally is that our theory of gravity — Einstein's general relativity — is very complex, and the equations are hard to solve exactly," he said. "So most of the time in cosmology we use approximations — known as 'perturbation theory' — to help make the problem tractable. This perturbation theory works a lot better in void regions than it does in regions where there is lots of matter, so our predictions are simpler to make and a lot more accurate in voids."

The upshot of that added accuracy is that, using the technique pioneered in this paper, scientists can make much more precise estimates of the expansion rate of the universe, and better confirm that observed expansion rates line up with astronomers' preferred theories for why the expansion is happening. The new result also further limits the scope of some alternative theories that are floating around out there. The previous best measurements of galactic motion did all this too, but about four times less well, according to Nadathur.

Those previous best measurements of the redshifts of galactic voids came from a study of the sky called the Baryon Oscillation Spectroscopic Survey (BOSS). This void-distortion measurement also relied on BOSS data, but vastly improved on its conclusions applying this new analysis technique to the data from BOSS.

The improved measurement of the universe's expansion conformed to existing theories of how dark energy works in the universe, the researchers wrote in the paper: that we live in a "flat" universe with constant dark energy driving its expansion. "By putting our results together with those from the BAO [Baryon Acoustic Oscillation] technique, we are able to get a much better measurement of the cosmic expansion rate 5.5 billion years or so ago," Nadathur said. "And this in turn is very important because it tells us what dark energy has been doing during that time, as well as other things like the curvature of space — which is what gets us cosmologists excited."

The researchers also pointed out in the paper that there are several upcoming efforts to scan the sky more precisely than BOSS, in order to understand dark energy even better. This same technique, the researchers wrote, should vastly improve the precision of those surveys as well.

(Source: Live Science)

## Russia launches major new telescope into space after delays

A Russian Proton-M rocket successfully delivered a cutting-edge space telescope into orbit Saturday after days of launch delays, Russia's space agency said.

Roscosmos said the telescope, named Spektr-RG, was delivered into a parking orbit before a final burn Saturday that kicked the spacecraft out of Earth's orbit and on to its final destination: the L2 Lagrange point.

Lagrange points are unique positions in the solar system where objects can maintain their position relative to the sun and the planets that orbit it. Located 1.5 million kilometers (0.93 million miles) from Earth, L2 is particularly ideal for telescopes such as Spektr-RG.

If all goes well, the telescope will arrive at its designated position in three months, becoming the first Russian spacecraft to operate beyond Earth's orbit since the Soviet era. The telescope aims to conduct a complete x-ray survey of the sky by 2025, the first space telescope to do so.

The Russian accomplishment comes as the U.S. space agency NASA celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing on July 20, 1969.

Russian space science missions have suffered greatly since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union. Budget cuts have forced the Russian space program to shift toward more commercial efforts.

A Russian Mars probe, called Mars 96, failed to leave Earth's orbit in 1996. A later attempt to send a probe to Mars, called Fobos-Grunt, suffered a similar fate in 2011.

Work on Spektr-RG telescope began in the 1980s but was scrapped in the 1990s. Spektr-RG was revived in 2005 and redesigned to be smaller, simpler and cheaper. (Source: AP News)

## 'Bent' pyramid: Egypt opens ancient oddity for tourism

Egypt has opened to visitors the "bent" pyramid built for the pharaoh Sneferu, a 101-metre structure south of Cairo that marks a key step in the evolution of pyramid construction.

Tourists will now be able to clamber down a 79-metre long, narrow tunnel from a raised entrance on the pyramid's northern face, to reach two chambers deep inside the 4,600-year-old structure.



King Sneferu, the first pharaoh of Egypt's 4th dynasty, built three major pyramids, including the pioneering 'bent' pyramid, now open to the public. (Photograph: Mohamed El-Shahed/AFP/Getty Images)

They will also be able to enter an adjoining 18-metre high "side pyramid", possibly for Sneferu's wife Hetepheres, opened for the first time since its excavation in 1956.

The "bent" Pyramid is one of three built for Fourth Dynasty founding pharaoh Sneferu in Dahshur, at the southern end of the Memphis necropolis, a UNESCO world heritage site.

Its appearance is unusual. The first 49 meters, which have largely kept their smooth limestone casing, are built at a steep 54 degree angle, before tapering off towards the top. It has been reopened to the public for the first time since 1965, when it was closed for restoration works.

The angular shape contrasts with the straight sides of Sneferu's Red Pyramid just to the north, the first of ancient Egypt's fully formed pyramids and the next step towards the Great Pyramid of Giza. Architects changed the angle of the "bent" pyramid when cracks started appearing in the structure, said Mostafa Waziri, secretary general of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities.

"Sneferu lived a very long time ... the architects wanted to reach the complete shape, the pyramid shape," Mohamed Shiha, director of the Dahshur site, said.

"Exactly where he was buried - we are not sure of that. Maybe in this [bent] pyramid, who knows?"

Authorities are seeking to promote tourism at Dahshur, about 28km (17 miles) south of central Cairo. The site lies in the open desert, attracts just a trickle of visitors, and is free of the touts and bustle of Giza.

As they opened the pyramids, archaeologists presented late-period mummies, masks, tools and coffins discovered during excavations that began near the Dahshur pyramids last year and are due to continue.

"When we were taking those objects out, we found ... a very rich area of hidden tombs," Waziri said.

The promotion of Dahshur is part of a wider push to boost tourism, an important source of foreign revenue for Egypt that dipped steeply after the country's 2011 uprising but has gradually recovered.

Archaeologists also unveiled the nearby tomb of Sa Eset, which has been closed since its excavation in 1894 and contains finely preserved hieroglyphic funerary texts.

Foreign ambassadors invited to attend the archaeological announcements were led sweating into the tight spaces of the tomb, which is not expected to be opened to the public for another two years.

(Source: The Guardian)

# Chinese museum to showcase celadons from Iran, other countries

**HERITAGE DESK** TEHRAN — On Saturday, a collection of centuries-old celadons, on loan from the National Museum of Iran, reached Beijing's Palace Museum, which is to host a vast exhibit of such potteries from several countries.

The Iranian collection comprises 14 celadon containers that belong to a larger cluster, which dates from Safavid era (1501-1736), CHTN reported on Sunday.

The celadons were once endowed to the Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and Shrine Ensemble, by Safavid King, Shah Abbas the Great. However, they found their way to the National Museum of Iran in the Persian calendar year 1314 (1925-26), the report added. The ensemble is named after Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili (1253-1334), who was a Sufi philosopher and leader of Islamic mystic practices.

Celadon is greenish ceramic glaze that is used on stoneware. It is particularly valued in China, Korea, Thailand, and Japan.

Titled "Longquan of the World: Longquan Celadon and Globalization", the exhibition will also showcase objects on loan from Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Japan, Syria, Egypt, the United Kingdom, and other countries and regions.

Organized jointly by the Palace Museum, Zhejiang Provincial Museum, and the People's Government of the municipality of Lishui, the first stage of the exhibit will



A celadon bowl dating back to Safavid era (1501-1736)

be held in Beijing at the Forbidden City from July 15 to October 20; the second stage will be held at the Zhejiang Provincial Museum from November 15 through February 16, 2020.

With approximately 830 collection pieces on show, the galleries feature 507 works from the Palace Museum with 205 pieces from eighteen provincial or municipal

museums and archaeological institutes in Zhejiang Province. Another 120 or so pieces are from eleven museums or archaeological institutes in various countries or administrative regions, including thirty-five works created in imitation of Longquan celadon during different historical periods.

According to organizers, archaeologists unearthed Longquan celadon from the

Song (960-1279), Yuan (1279-1368), and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties throughout China. Quantities of celadon have also been discovered at digs and shipwrecks along the historic land and maritime trade-routes in countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, India, Egypt, Kenya, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, and other countries and regions.

From the twelfth century to the current age, celadon has been enjoyed by people throughout China and around the world in palace courts and common residences.

"Longquan of the World: Longquan Celadon and Globalization" presents the spread of Longquan celadon along the land and maritime routes of the historic Silk Road and allows visitors to gain a deeper understanding of the origin of the One Belt, One Road initiative and the future of international trade and development.

Currently, another loan collection from the National Museum of Iran is on show at a Beijing exhibit that opened its doors to the public on July 13 at the National Art Museum of China, under the name "The Asian Civilization Exhibition". The Iranian objects include clay works, Achaemenid inscriptions, Sassanid sculptures and glassworks which represent the [long-lasting] relationship between Iran and China.

## Preliminary studies start on fossilized skull found in western Iran

**HERITAGE DESK** TEHRAN — Preliminary studies have been started on pieces of a fossilized skull, which was unearthed earlier in western Iran. The skull is attributed to Homo sapiens.

The skull could probably reveal further detail on the migration routes of Homo sapiens from the African continent to Asia, southwest Asia, the Eurasia region, and ultimately their arrival in Europe, and it may be considered as an important discovery in the Paleolithic studies of the world, CHTN reported on Sunday.

A team of Iranian archaeologists, earlier in May, excavated stone tools and a fragment of a fossilized skull, from Kaldar cave in western Lorestan province. The cave has also yielded weapon fragments crafted by Neanderthals.

Kaldar is a key archaeological site that provides evidence of the Middle to Upper Paleolithic transition in Iran. The

cave is situated in the northern Khorramabad valley and at an elevation of 1,290m above sea level. It measures 16?meters long, 17?meters wide and seven?meters high.

Excavations in 2014-2015 led to the discovery of cultural remains generally associated with anatomically modern humans (AMHs) and evidence of a probable Neanderthal-made industry in the basal layers.

It provides an opportunity to study the technological differences between the Mousterian and the first Upper Paleolithic lithic technologies as well as the human behavior in the region.

The term Homo sapiens, in taxonomy, is the only extant human species. The name is Latin for "wise man" and was introduced in 1758 by Carl Linnaeus (who is himself also the type specimen). Neanderthals are an extinct species or subspecies of archaic humans in the genus Homo, who



People visit Iran's Kaldar cave, where a fossilized skull attributed to Homo sapiens, was unearthed.

lived within Eurasia from circa 400,000 until 40,000 years ago.

## Retrospective shows delicacy of mirrorwork in Iranian architecture

**HERITAGE DESK** TEHRAN — Delicacy of mirrorwork in Iranian architecture is in the limelight at the UNESCO-registered Golestan Palace in downtown Tehran, where a retrospective of a veteran Iranian artisan is underway.

The exhibit features a select of over 30 pieces by Siavash Tarzi, who started the career in 1972, IRIB reported.

Calligraphy of Quranic verses, illuminated manuscripts, geometric patterns are among works that could be enriched through the art of mirrorwork, Tarzi said.

Mirror work, on the other hand, has very close bonds with different skills such as carpentry, tiling and stone carving, the artisan added.

Tarzi has also carried out restoration works at many historical sites and monuments across the country, notably ones at



A view of the Mirror Hall (Talar-e Aineh) at the UNESCO-registered Golestan Palace in downtown Tehran.

Golestan Palace, which its Mirror Hall (Talar-e Aineh) is very famous.

The fall of the Sassanid Empire (224-651) to invading Islamic forces ironically led to the creation of remarkable religious buildings in Iran. Arts such as calligraphy, stucco work, mirror work, and mosaic work, became closely tied with architecture in Iran in the new era. Archaeological excavations have provided sufficient documents in support of the impacts of Sasanian architecture on the architecture of the Islamic world.

Golestan Palace became a center of Qajari arts and architecture which is an outstanding example and has remained a source of inspiration for Iranian artists and architects to this day. It embodies a successful integration of earlier Persian crafts and architecture with Western influences.

## Ancient Yemeni heritage on verge of being lost forever

Thousands of historical works in Yemen that have survived centuries may be lost forever due to the five-year civil war and the subsequent humanitarian crisis in the region. In this ancient country on the Arab peninsula various works significant to human history have been left to their fate along with the country's great heritage.

### Sheba: Ancients mentioned in the Quran

Established by the people of Sheba from the Sheba Kingdom - a name also used as a title of a surah in the Quran - are just one of the many ancient kingdoms that reigned in present-day Yemen.

The city of Marib was once the capital of the Sheba Kingdom and continues its existence as a province today. It still houses the ruins of thousands of years of works, such as Arash Bilqis (the Throne of Bilqis), the Temple of Awwam aka the Mahram Bilqis (the Sanctuary of the Queen of Sheba) and the Ma'rib Dam.

### Nearly 3,000-year-old artifact

Located some kilometers away from Marib, Arash Bilqis, which dates back to the 10th century BC, harbors evidence that Queen Bilqis once actually lived. Despite being thousands of years old, the main part of the building is still standing and continues to shed light on the deep history of Yemen.

Arash Bilqis attracts visitors from around the world with its monolithic stone pillars stretching more than 8 meters high featuring writing and detailed masonry. Inside the building, blocks on which inscriptions are written and large stone stairs rising from the ground are eye-catching.

The architecture of the building, also known as the Temple of Barran, was built with advanced engineering for the period. It is believed that this building was a sanctuary that was popular for many people from the Arab peninsula between the fourth and 10th centuries BC.

The country houses outside the city and Arash Bilqis, which is reached via fields, transport visitors back to parallels told about Queen Bilqis and the Prophet Solomon, also

known as King Solomon or the King Prophet.

The sanctuary, one of Yemen's historical treasures, is surrounded by iron bars and barbed wire today. Unfortunately, the lack of security around the significant site leaves it vulnerable to damage or possible destruction.

After witnessing centuries, this piece of living history bears the wear caused by the arbitrary travel of people and lack of care caused by the civil war environment. On the other hand, the six pillars of Arash Bilqis are used as a logo or symbol by Yemeni people who want to make reference to their past.

### Awwam Temple: History buried in sand

In Marib, where traces of the 3,000-year-old Sheba civilization remain, Awwam Temple is another significant site that has been abandoned to its fate.

Known also as Mahram Bilqis (the Sanctuary of the Queen of Sheba) and dedicated to Al-maqah or Al-muqh, the Moon God of ancient Yemenis, is estimated to date back to between the fifth and seventh centuries BC.

The pillars, which were the most common architectural feature in southern Arab religious buildings before the Islamic period, stand out in this temple, as well. The largest section of the temple, which has eight pillars of 13 meters in height, creates a circular area. This structure, on which inscriptions in Old South Arabian language are written, connects to the inner section of the temple where the pillars are located via a large gate.

### Pristine inscriptions

On the walls of the inner section, fake windows featuring inscriptions with Old South Arabian letters along with many stone pillars can be seen.

The inscriptions on the pillars can still be read clearly. While this increases the value of the temple, the detailed masonry in the inner hall indicates how advanced the Sheba people were as artisans.

The temple was built outside the city of Marib, which has

led researchers to believe that religious rituals might have been kept secret during the period.

### Tunnel linking two temples

It is believed the temple was once connected to Arash Bilqis via a tunnel; however, over time, the tunnel fell into disrepair and was reclaimed by nature.

There is a graveyard in the oval section of the temple. Though the graves are arranged in four-story rooms, the faces of the dead are depicted in relief on the exterior walls. The majority of the temple's structure, which has been left unguarded and neglected because of the war, is under the sand. The historical ruins are protected with just a simple wire.

### Ma'rib Dam: Engineering wonder of ancient world

Ma'rib Dam was one of the most significant buildings in Yemeni history and was built to meet the water requirements of the region. Constructed in the eighth century BC by the Sheba Kingdom, the dam is considered an engineering wonder from the period and one of the oldest dams in the world.

During this period, the dam was so important that the Himyarite Kingdom maintained it after capturing the region from the Sheba people. The dam, built with advanced technology for the period, was damaged several times but always repaired and remained in use for centuries. It played a significant role in the welfare of the people by providing fertile, irrigated land in the valleys. It was demolished around 570 CE.

Serving the region for about 400 years, periodic damage to the dam also led to disasters. One of the most famous crises caused by the dam was the Flood of the Arim, which is also mentioned in the Quran.

As a result of these disasters, water-channels were destroyed, and the area was left underwater. Under these circumstances, thousands of people migrated and changed the demographic structure of the Arab peninsula and Bilad al-Sham.

(Source: Daily Sabah)



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Studenica Monastery

A World Heritage, Studenica Monastery is the largest and richest of Serbia's Orthodox monasteries.

Located in the Rashka district of central Serbia, Studenica is an outstanding and well-preserved example of a Serbian Orthodox Church monastery. Enclosed by an almost circular wall strengthened with two fortified gates, it features an array of exceptional monuments, including the main church at the center and monastic facilities along the encircling wall.



It was founded near Studenica River in the late 12th century by Stefan Nemanja, also known as Saint Simeon, who established the medieval Serbian state. His remains, as well as those of his wife Anastasia and of the first Serbian king, Stephen the First-Crowned, rest in this monastery.

It is there that Stefan Nemanja's youngest son, Saint Sava Nemanjic, initiated the independent Serbian Orthodox Church in 1219 and wrote the first literary work in the Serbian language.

The complex's two principal monuments, the Church of the Virgin and the King's Church, enshrine priceless collections of 13th- and 14th-century Byzantine paintings. Studenica became the most important monastery in Serbia, and has remained so to the present day.

Churches and hermitages are located in the area surrounding the monastery, as well as the quarries and vestiges of a settlement for the workers who mined and shaped the marble used to build the Church of the Virgin.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Sanctions hamper access to life-saving medicines in Iran: M8 Alliance

**HEALTH TEHRAN** — M8 Alliance, the academic backbone of the World Health Summit, has announced in a recent resolution that “economic sanctions imposed by certain countries (not the United Nations) against Iran had harmful effects on the countries’ economies, people’s welfare, healthcare, and the availability of life-saving medicines.”

The resolution was published following the World Health Summit 2019 (WHS) regional meeting in Iran’s Kish Island on April 29–30.

Each year, the World Health Summit in Berlin is complemented by a Regional Meeting in a different part of the world. Regional Meetings are hosted and organized by the M8 Alliance member holding the World Health Summit International Presidency, which rotates every year.

According to Ali Jafarian, international president of WHS 2019, the WHS regional meeting in Kish Island addressed the U.S. sanctions against Iran and how it has hampered the country’s access to medicine and medical equipment as well as doing the financial transactions to acquire such products. After that, the members suggested to address the subject by writing a resolution that was signed by the M8 Alliance board of directors.

The initial draft of the resolution was prepared in the [Iranian month] of



## WORLD HEALTH SUMMIT

Ordibehesht (ended May 21) and it was reviewed by the M8 Alliance members for about two months before being published, ISNA reported Jafarian as saying.

The 8th paragraph of the resolution states:

“Emphasize and promote respect, dialogue, justice, and peace among nations

and people in the spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. These principles must guide the world and all nations in dealing with conflicts. Every effort of a respectful and peaceful dialogue has to be made in order to avoid aggressive acts and sanctions.

Data were presented at the World

**Every effort of a respectful and peaceful dialogue has to be made in order to avoid aggressive acts and sanctions.**

## Can a desert plant help treat Endometriosis?

**HEALTH TEHRAN** — A new study has investigated the effects of Escanbil, a desert plant, in treating Endometriosis, Royan Research Institute reported.

Endometriosis is a chronic, gynecological condition where tissue from the uterus (endometrium) begins to grow outside of the uterus. This causes lesions or nodules which can lead to intense pain (particularly during menstruation) and infertility.

Escanbil has been used in traditional medicine for years. The locals used it for treating abnormally heavy or prolonged menstruation and menstrual cramps. The traditional medicine also advise it for treating infertility.

The research was carried out by a cooperation of researchers in Royan Institute, Tehran University of Medical Science, Tarbiat Modares University and the Department of Experimental and Clinical Pharmacology of Saarland University in Germany.

The study suggested that Escanbil extracts may help treat endometriotic lesions as the plant contains bioactive chemical components that could inhibit multiple processes, such

as angiogenesis, inflammation and invasive tissue growth.

Over the research, first an endometriotic lesion was induced on lab mice; then the mice received extract of 50?mg/kg Escanbil total extract over 4 weeks.

The researchers then examined the growth, cyst formation, vascularization and immune cell infiltration of the lesions.

The results showed that the Escanbil extracts significantly inhibited the growth and cyst formation of developing endometriotic lesions. This was associated with a reduced vascularization, cell proliferation and immune cell infiltration.

In conclusion, it was revealed that Escanbil extracts can target fundamental processes in development of endometriosis, so they can have beneficial effects in treatment of the diseases.

According to Medical News Today, Endometriosis affects between 6 and 10 percent of women of reproductive age worldwide.

The condition appears to be present in a developing fetus, but estrogen levels during puberty are thought to trigger the symptoms.



Most women go undiagnosed, and in the U.S. it can take around 10 years to receive a diagnosis.

Allergies, asthma, chemical sensitivities, autoimmune diseases, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, breast cancer, and ovarian cancer are linked to women and families with endometriosis.

## How doctors got it wrong: 3 ‘conditions’ they no longer recognize

Medical research has changed how doctors diagnose conditions for the better. Read this Spotlight feature to find out about the top three “medical conditions” that healthcare professionals no longer recognize as such.

Throughout history — both recent and distant — doctors have made many mistakes.

In some cases, they meant well, but they did not yet have the knowledge or technology to assess a person’s health condition correctly.

In other cases, however, they diagnosed non-existent medical conditions or disorders as a means of backlash against social outliers.

Some “conditions” that we will discuss in this Spotlight feature, such as “bicycle face,” may sound amusing, while others, such as dysaesthesia aethiopicia, may sound scary.

But all of these fabricated “conditions,” and especially the fact that some doctors and members of the public took them very seriously at the time, likely had a substantial adverse effect on the lives of the people who received a diagnosis for one of them.

### 1. Bicycle face: ‘A physiognomic implosion’

“The cycling season will be coming on soon, and there is every reason to suppose that more people than ever will take advantage of it — women especially.” This is the first sentence of an article called “The dangers of cycling,” published by Dr. A. Shadwell in 1897, in the National Review.

Allegedly, this doctor coined the expression “bicycle face” to describe a pseudo medical condition — with mainly physiological symptoms — that affected women cyclists in the early days of cycling in the 1800s. In his article, Shadwell claimed that this “condition” caused a “peculiar strained, set look,” as well as “an expression either anxious, irritable, or at best stony” in the rider.

Both men and women could develop bicycle face, though women were implicitly more affected by it since the condition could ruin their faces and their complexions, and thus make them less desirable.

This condition was also a particular result of riding too fast and too far, giving free rein to what Shadwell implied was an unhealthful compulsion.



“A vice [...] peculiar to the bicycle,” Shadwell wrote, “is that the ease and rapidity of the locomotion tempt to over-long rides by bringing some desirable objective within apparent reach.”

“Going to nowhere and back is dull, going to somewhere (only a few miles farther) is attractive; and thus many are lured to attempt a task beyond their physical powers,” he argued.

For example, according to an article in an 1897 issue of the *Phrenological Journal*, Dr. Sarah Hackett Stevenson, a female physician from the United States, explained that cycling poses no threat to women’s health.

“[Cycling] is not injurious to any part of the anatomy, as it improves the general health. [...] The painfully anxious facial expression is seen only among beginners and is due to the uncertainty of amateurs. As soon as a rider becomes proficient, can gauge her muscular strength, and acquires perfect confidence in her ability to balance herself and in her power of locomotion, this look passes away.”

### 2. Female hysteria: ‘A nervous disease’

The fake mental condition that researchers have referred to as “female hysteria” has had a long and fraught history. It has roots in mistaken ancient beliefs, such as that in the “wandering womb,” which alleged that the uterus could “go wandering” through the female body,

causing mental and physical problems.

Doctors used to think that women were more prone to hysteria, a nebulous mental illness.

In fact, the term hysteria derives from the Greek word “hystera,” which means “womb.” Yet, female hysteria became a much more prominent concept in the 19th century when the neuropsychiatrist Dr. Pierre Janet began to study psychiatric — and alleged psychiatric — conditions at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris, France, in the 1850s.

Janet described hysteria as “a nervous disease” characterized by “a dissociation of consciousness,” which causes a person to behave in extreme ways or to feel very intensely. Other famous contributors to the field of medical science, such as Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, continued to build on these initial concepts throughout the late-19th and the 20th centuries.

Little by little, a complex image of this nebulous mental condition emerged. Typically, doctors diagnosed women with hysteria, as they considered women more sensitive and easily influenced.

A hysteric woman might exhibit extreme nervousness or anxiety but also abnormal eroticism. For this reason, in 1878, doctors invented and first started to use vibrators on their patients, believing that this — often enforced — stimulation could help cure hysteria.

It took a long time for doctors to give up

on hysteria as a valid diagnostic, and they kept changing their minds. The American Psychological Association (APA) did not include hysteria in their first Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-I), which appeared in 1952. However, the “condition” made an appearance in the DSM-II in 1968, and finally left the stage of psychiatry for good in 1980 when the APA published the DSM-III.

Instead, the APA replaced this elusive “condition” that aimed to encompass too many symptoms with an array of distinct psychiatric conditions, including somatic symptom disorder (previously “somatoform disorder”) and dissociative disorders.

### 3. Dysaesthesia aethiopicia: ‘A hebetude’

Nineteenth-century medicine did not just “target” women, however. Slavery was still widespread in the U.S. throughout the first half of the 19th century, and some doctors made victims of slavery also victims of scientific racism.

Dr. Samuel Adolphus Cartwright, who practiced medicine in the states of Mississippi and Louisiana in the 19th century, was guilty of inventing several “medical conditions” that made the lives and situations of enslaved people even worse.

One of these “conditions” was dysaesthesia aethiopicia, a fictitious mental illness that allegedly rendered slaves lazy and mentally unfit. Cartwright described this “condition” as a “hebetude [lethargy] of mind and obtuse sensibility of body.”

Dysaesthesia aethiopicia was supposed to render enslaved people less likely to follow orders and make them sleepy. It also supposedly led to the development of lesions on their skin, for which Cartwright prescribed whipping. The lesions were, most likely, the result of violent mistreatment at the hands of slave owners in the first place.

Enslaved people, however, were not the only ones exposed to this strange “condition.” Their owners were also likely to “catch” it if they fell into one of two extremes: too much friendliness or too great cruelty.

While scientific racism has appeared repeatedly throughout history, some researchers warn us that we are not yet entirely free of its dangers.

(source: medical news today)

## Startups come to light with No-Afarin scheme

➔ The startups can employ trainees for two years while according to the law, the companies can benefit from trainees between four to six months. According to the scheme, startup owners should not distribute profit, while they should add it to investment.

The government provides insurance coverage for the trainees and the startups have not to pay any money.

According to the scheme, coworking spaces and accelerators are recognized as the official places that can receive insurance code.

The factors are assessed in e-government process and there is no need for filling the forms in person.

Previously, the government provided financial facilities for startups, however, the best way for investment in startups is through venture capitals (VCs).

The government established Fund of Funds (FOF) that gives loans to VCs, however, they should invest the money in a startup and are not allowed to loan the money to startups.

The scheme also provides an opportunity for foreign companies to establish accelerator centers in Iran, which was not allowed so far.

According to previous laws, the license of a startup was not transferred to a big company that bought it. According to the No-Afarin scheme, the license of a startup is transferred to the company that buys over 67 percent of the startup share.

All the information and processes are available on the website [irannoafarin.ir](http://irannoafarin.ir) that is developed by the Information Technology Organization of Iran (ITO).

The Iranian ICT Guild Organization manages the website in order to reduce the role of the government in managing the innovation ecosystem, the ITO director Amir Nazemi said.

So far, 129 startups, 191 startup teams, 23 companies, 16 accelerators and incubator centers and seven investors have registered on the website.

### Long way to go, but steps being taken

According to [techopedia.com](http://techopedia.com), the digital economy is a term for all of those economic processes, transactions, interactions and activities that are based on digital technologies and many digital tools including internet.

Iran has had several achievements in different fields of digital economy in recent years. According to statistics released by the ICT Ministry in September 2018, over 93,700 job opportunities were created in the field of smart transportation system, e-commerce and mobile applications in Iran during the Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017–March 2018).

One cannot undermine the role of startups, as emerging institutions with innovative solutions, in development of digital economy. Most startups provide online services and product, which strengthen the digital economy in the country.

On the other side, the e-government and transparency are other important elements, which can boost digital economy and ecosystem.

The ICT Ministry announced that goal of e-government has been realized by 62.8 percent in the country before the first Iranian month of Farvardin, which began on March 21. However a long way is to go to implement the e-government in different organizations and companies.

Startups can pave the way for a brighter future. Their motivation, energies and solutions can lead to a better society to live in. The good news is that the government recognizes their crucial role. There is a long way to go, but steps are being taken.

## Myths about low-carb diets

Low-carb diets are incredibly powerful.

They may help reverse many serious illnesses, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, and metabolic syndrome.

However, some myths about this diet are perpetuated by the low-carb community. Many of these notions are not backed by science.

Here are common myths about low-carb diets.

### 1. Low-carb diets work for everyone

Studies consistently show that low-carb diets aid weight loss and improve most risk factors for disease.

That said, this eating pattern is not appropriate for everyone. Some people may simply feel unwell on the diet, while others don’t get the results they expect.

Notably, athletes and people who are physically active need significantly more carbs than this diet can provide.

Low-carb diets can promote weight loss and improve health for many people. However, this may not apply to everyone — particularly athletes.

### 2. Carbs are inherently fattening

A high intake of sugar and refined carbs harms your health. Still, carbs are only fattening if they’re refined and included in foods that are highly palatable and easy to overeat.

For example, baked potatoes have plenty of fiber and help you feel full — whereas potato chips are deep-fried in corn oil and seasoned with salt, making them heavily processed and addictive.

Keep in mind that many populations around the world, such as inhabitants of the Japanese island of Okinawa, maintain good health on a high-carb diet that includes whole, unprocessed foods.

While overeating any calorie-dense nutrient will cause weight gain, carbs themselves aren’t fattening if included in a balanced diet based on whole foods.

### 3. Carrots, fruits, and potatoes are unhealthy because of their carbs

Many real, traditional foods are demonized by low-carbers because of their carb content.

These include foods like fruits, whole potatoes, and carrots. It is essential to limit these foods on a very low-carb, ketogenic diet — but this does not mean that there is anything wrong with those foods.

In nutritional science, as in most disciplines, context is important. For example, it would be a health improvement to replace any junk food in your diet with high-carb, ripe bananas. However, for people with diabetes trying to cut carbs, adding bananas to their diet may be harmful.

Although you should limit your intake of whole, high-carb fruits and vegetables on a low-carb diet, these foods can still be a healthy component of a balanced diet.

### 4. Low-carb diets should always be ketogenic

A ketogenic diet is a very-low-carb diet, usually consisting of fewer than 50 grams of carbs per day alongside a very high fat intake (60–85% of calories).

Ketosis can be a highly beneficial metabolic state, especially for people with certain diseases like diabetes, metabolic syndrome, epilepsy, or obesity (4Trusted Source, 5, 6Trusted Source).

However, this isn’t the only way to follow a low-carb diet. This eating pattern can include 100–150 grams of carbs per day — and perhaps more.

Within this range, you can easily eat several pieces of fruit per day and even small amounts of whole, starchy foods like potatoes.

While a very-low-carb, ketogenic diet may be the most effective for quick weight loss and several illness symptoms, it doesn’t work for everyone.

A low-carb diet doesn’t have to be ketogenic. For those who don’t feel like going on keto, a general low-carb diet can still provide many benefits.

(Source: Healthline)

## 'Iranian' employment system to be launched within 2 weeks

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — A career and employment system, titled 'Iranian', offering employees with job security will be launched by the end of this month (July 21). Issa Mansouri, deputy minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare has announced.



One of the main features of the website is that employees are offered job security, as some companies having financial difficulties refuse to sign a contract with their employees or avoid to offer them insurance coverage, so under the system, all the working individuals will have specific job codes, he explained.

The employment or unemployment condition of the whole working population will be determined through the system, and the unemployed individuals will register their experiences and skills which will be accurately coded and specified, that will lead to precise policy making for employment, he stated.

It will be inaugurated by the next two weeks, he noted, YJC reported on Sunday.

Employees can receive job certificates under the system; it also provides job opportunities for those unemployed and identifies the companies violating labor law.

Identifying and categorizing the harmful, hazardous, and physically hard jobs, controlling contracts and insurance coverage, are among the other features of the system.

## Female southern right whales 'whisper' to offspring to avoid being heard

Female southern right whales "whisper" to their offspring to avoid being overheard by their killer whale cousins, according to new research.

Whale mothers and calves hide from predators by gravitating towards cloudy water near the coast. Here, they shelter in the noisy surf, stay in close proximity and effectively whisper – calling softly less than once per dive – to avoid attracting any unwanted attention, the study found.

When scientists analyzed the volume of the animals' calls, they were surprised by how quiet the moos and grunts were.

The pounding waves drowned out the calls within a few hundred meters, making it difficult for killer whales to eavesdrop on the soft conversations, according to the study published in the Journal of Experimental Biology.

(Source: The Independent)

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### Earthquake hits India

(February 1, 2001)  
BBC business reporter Mark Gregory looks at the economic impact of the earthquake on Gujarat's 42 million people and the wider Indian economy.

The earthquake has struck one of India's most prosperous and economically significant states, but damage to key industrial installations has been limited. The employers' organization, the Confederation of Indian Industry, expects the disruption to cost about two hundred million dollars in lost production over the next couple of weeks. One key problem is a shortage of manpower - many workers have fled the area to avoid the risk of injury or death in aftershocks.

Factories are likely to be operating at half capacity. Lower output in Gujarat could result in nation-wide shortages of some raw materials and industrial products. Gujarat has one and a half thousand kilometers of coast line and a number of major ports. Industry officials say India's exports could be reduced by four or five percent in the financial year that ends in March. It'll take more than a week to complete repairs to the earthquake damaged port of Kandla, an important center for handling imports of oil and exports of agricultural products.

The Bombay stock market has recovered from the initial shock of the news - share prices actually rose two percent on Tuesday. However, there was heavy selling of shares in India's Housing Development and Finance Corporation amid fears that borrowers will default on loans to buy property following the quake. One area of major long term uncertainty is the impact of the earthquake on India's gaping government budget deficit.

Finance minister Yaswant Sinha has asked the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for one and a half billion dollars in loans to fund reconstruction. So far the World Bank has promised 300 million dollars of immediate aid. Analysts say much of the burden repairing the damage will inevitably fall on the already financially stretched government in Delhi. There's speculation that finance minister Sinha will take announce an extra tax to ease the financial pain in his annual budget speech due at the end of February.

**Words**  
**earthquake:** when the earth's crust moves and shakes the ground above  
**prosperous:** wealthy and successful  
**economically significant states:** financially important areas  
**disruption:** interference  
**manpower:** people who can work  
**fled the area:** escaped from the place in which they live and work  
**operating:** running its service  
**reduced:** become less  
**share prices:** the price of a company's stock  
**borrowers will default on loans:** people will not be able to pay the bank money they have borrowed  
**impact:** effect, consequences  
**burden:** hard work or financial problems  
**inevitably:** the only possible result  
**speculation:** thoughts and ideas about what might happen

# Defects still challenge law on upholding rangers' right

**ENVIRONMENT** TEHRAN — Although the law to uphold the rights of rangers has raised hope among those spent a lifetime to defend the nature, it still has many defects, former commander of Tehran province's environment protection unit has said.

A long-awaited bill to protect the rights of rangers including rules on carrying and use of firearms, was approved by Majlis [Iranian parliament] on June 24.

The bill was drafted in July 2016 by the Department of Environment following the death of two rangers, Mohammad Dehqani and Parviz Hormozi, who were killed in June 2016 during an armed conflict with poachers in Hormozgan province. It has been approved by the judiciary committee of Majlis in September 2018.

As per the proposed bill the rangers would not face charges in case of involuntarily manslaughter while on duty and would be compensated for the losses they suffer while trying to protect the environment and the biodiversity, the government is required to allocate budget to help those rangers who might be obliged to pay out blood money or other sort of money-penalty compensation for murder or any injuries trespassers may suffer in armed conflicts with them, and the rangers will be provided with regular insurance coverage and are entitled to compensation for the losses they suffer while doing their job.

The bill on protecting the rangers' rights was not comprehensive and the issues of payment and legal problems remained unresolved, ISNA quoted Naqi Mirza-Karimi as saying on Sunday.

In the field of carrying and use of firearms, the law does not add a new issue, and only repeats the existing rules, he said, adding, although the previous gun rules did not function properly, and the only advantage of current gun rules is ensuring that rangers can use weapons during the armed conflicts and when needed.



**Multiple deaths and injuries of the rangers occur while trying to safeguard the environment and wildlife. Rangers who risk their lives protecting the environment and wildlife sometimes fall victims by getting into fight with poachers and may either suffer severe wounds, get killed, or charged with involuntary manslaughter.**

Also, no new authority has been given to the rangers in terms of using firearms, and the conditions for the use of weapons by the rangers are no different from those previous ones, he lamented.

The most important part, and perhaps the only benefit of the bill, is Article 2 that is related to the necessity of insurance coverage for the rangers and supporting the volunteer defenders of the environment, he highlighted.

He went on to explain that of course, in terms of social insurance, it should be noted that before the adoption of the bill,

the DOE sought for insurance coverage of all the rangers, and the issue is currently being pursued.

Mirza-Karimi criticized the bill for disregarding the issue of payment raise for the environmental defenders, emphasizing that unfortunately, no increase in wages or salaries is mentioned through the bill.

The issue of increasing the salaries of the forces, which was supposed to be one of the main issues in the bill, was excluded from the law, he regretted, adding, there was no news about improving the livelihood of the rangers in the law.

He went on to add that under the law, rangers receive insurance benefits after death, illness, limb deficiencies, long-term disability and accidents.

He also emphasized that unfortunately the bill does not mention the rangers' employment contracts, and it is unclear what is going to happen for those who have been serving more than 10 years in remote locations, impassable mountainous areas or desert hills.

Referring to the current payment problems, he noted that one of the other biggest challenge the rangers face in their career is payment delays, which must be pursued by an inspection team.

The lack of law enforcement is the main reason behind the rangers' problems, even if a bill is approved and turned to a law, it should be enforced, otherwise it does not have value, he explained.

"I am not pleased with the bill's approval; as the name suggests that a bill has been passed to support the rangers, while none of the requirements in the bill has been taken into consideration, neither the payment problems nor legal inconsistencies of gun rules," he regretted.

In my point of view, the bill was a golden opportunity that is lost and it is hard to find another similar opportunity, he added.

He further called on the related officials to register the national ranger's day concurrent with birthday of Imam Reza (AS) in the country's official calendar in order to respect those dedicated a lifetime to defend the environment.

Some 123 rangers have been killed while protecting the environment since 1979 in Iran.

Multiple deaths and injuries of the rangers occur while trying to safeguard the environment and wildlife. Rangers who risk their lives protecting the environment and wildlife sometimes fall victims by getting into fight with poachers and may either suffer severe wounds, get killed, or charged with involuntary manslaughter.

## Scheme launched to control stray dog population in northeast Tehran

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — Following the overpopulation of stray dogs in Damavand county, northeastern part of Tehran, some animal right advocates have proposed a scheme to control their population, ISNA reported on Sunday.

Stray dogs are unconfined dogs that live in cities. They may be pets which have strayed from or are allowed freedom by their owners, or may be feral animals that have never been owned. Street dog overpopulation can cause problems for the societies in which they live.

Currently, the municipality has collected the stray dogs for vaccination and sterilization, but it is not possible to release them near the urban areas even after vaccination and sterilization, an animal right advocate, Amin Behdad said.

So, we proposed a scheme, through which dogs will be released after sterilization and vaccination at certain locations outside the residential areas, where food stations are designed to prevent them from heading to residential areas searching for food, he explained.



Some locations around urban areas will be covered with plants and seedlings for such dogs, under the scheme, he noted.

He went on to say that feral dogs are not a threat to humans after vaccination and sterilization, in addition, they are necessary in urban areas as they prevent other animals

entrance into the cities such as hyenas and wolves.

"Under the scheme, some 25 food stations are scheduled to be set up around Damavand county.

Moreover, a center stretching to 3000 square meters will be set up for dogs' recovery consisting of a surgery room, a vaccination room, and etc.

After collecting dogs, they stay in the center for two to three days to recover, and then they are released into the defined locations."

Majid Kharrazian-Moqaddam, director of the wildlife conservation and management at the Department of Environment, warned in June that measures to control stray dog population must be employed, otherwise they will impose threats to the wildlife.

Behzad Amiri, head of zoonotic diseases department at the Ministry of Health, said in October 2018 that rabies, an infectious viral disease spread to people through animal bites, impose health economic burden amounting to 1.8 trillion rials (about \$42 million) on the country annually.

## Asiatic cheetahs spotted in eastern Iran

**ENVIRONMENT** TEHRAN — Two Asiatic cheetahs have been observed in Tabas county, located in South Khorasan province, eastern Iran, since the beginning of this year (March 21), head of Tabas department of environment has said.

Two Asiatic cheetahs have been spotted in Naybandan wildlife refuge in Tabas county, so far, Mehr news agency quoted Ali Hatami as saying on Sunday.

Also, one of the locals reported to have seen an Asiatic cheetah with her cub, Hatami noted.

The observation and census of the species is really difficult because it is always mov-

ing between Naybandan wildlife refuge and Ravar wildlife refuge in southeastern Kerman province, he explained.

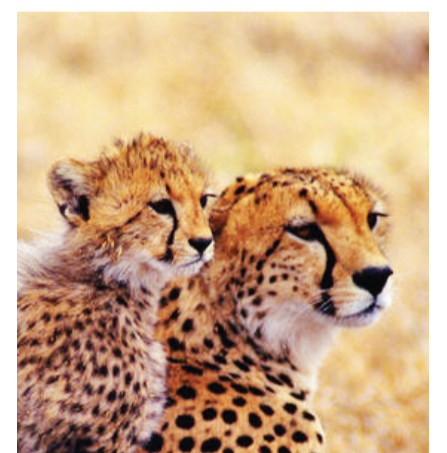
Naybandan wildlife refuge is a national park, situated in 180 km south of Tabas county. Stretching to 1,500,000 hectares, it is the largest reserve in Iran, which was known to have held the highest population of Asiatic cheetahs. Since 2006, it was estimated that at least 15 cheetahs live there.

The world's fastest mammal, capable of reaching speeds of 120 kilometers per hour, once stalked habitats from the eastern reaches of India to the Atlantic coast of Senegal, once their numbers have stabilized in parts

of southern Africa, but they have practically disappeared from northern Africa and Asia.

The subspecies "Acinonyx jubatus venaticus", commonly known as the Asiatic cheetah, is critically endangered, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, with fewer than 50 believed to remain in Iran.

Roads fragmenting cheetahs' habitats are the main threats for the species, while guard dogs and stray dogs, drought spells, decreasing population of the prey species to support the cheetahs, and habitat loss are also other factors endangering the sparse population of the cheetahs in the country.



### ENGLISH IN USE

#### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

### Euphrates softshell turtle threatened with extinction in Iran

Euphrates softshell turtle is endangered in the country mainly due to habitat loss and low precipitation, environmental expert Asghar Mobaraki told YJC on Friday.

#### PREFIX/SUFFIX

##### “-biotic”

■ **Meaning:** life  
■ **For example:** The two groups of micro-organism which have been shown to be therapeutically beneficial as **probiotics** are the following.

#### PHRASAL VERB

##### Palm something off

■ **Meaning:** to persuade someone to accept or buy something that is not of good quality  
■ **For example:** He tried to palm off his old books onto me.

#### IDIOM

##### Crying shame

■ **Explanation:** If something is a crying shame, it is very sad or unfortunate  
■ **For example:** It's a crying shame that some families cannot afford lunch for their children.

### جمعیت لاکپشت‌های فراتی رو به انقراض رفت

اصغر مبارکی کارشناس محیط زیست در گفتگو با خبرنگار حوزه محیط زیست گروه اجتماعی باشگاه خبرنگاران جوان گفت: در چند سال اخیر به دلیل کمبود بارش‌ها زیستگاه‌های لاکپشت‌های فراتی رو به نابودی رفت.

# Protests held across U.S. over Trump's treatment of migrants

➔ Before dawn on Sunday, agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) hit the streets of at least 10 major American cities with plans to arrest some 2,000 undocumented migrants who entered the United States recently.

The scope of the operation appears far more modest than the "millions" Trump had promised would be detained and expelled when he first mentioned the raids – and subsequently postponed – last month.

But that has not eased the anguish felt by those who fear they might be targeted.

Twitter Ads info and privacy  
Adding to their concerns are media reports that ICE agents are prepared to scoop up not just those targeted by removal orders but also other undocumented migrants that agents may come upon incidentally.

That, potentially, could include some migrants who have been in the country for years, with homes, jobs and children who are US citizens.

➔ **'It's traumatizing'**  
"This uncertainty, this fear, is wreaking havoc," Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot said on CNN. "It's traumatizing people."

Trump insisted on Friday that "most mayors" want the raids.  
"Most mayors do. You know why? They



don't want to have crimes in their cities," he said, repeating his frequent – and incorrect – assertion that migrants are more likely to be criminals than native-born Americans.

Several mayors have expressed concern about the federal operation.

Miami Mayor Francis Suarez pointed out that in 2018, his first year in office, his

Florida city experienced its "lowest homicide rate in 51 years – so I don't understand the rationale for choosing Miami."

"It doesn't make it easier for us, as mayors, to keep our citizens and those who are in our city ... quiet and calm."

➔ **'A political act'**  
Some city officials, as well as pro-mi-

grant and civil rights groups, have sought to educate those who might be targeted on their rights in the event of a raid.

"We're asking people, if you are in fear of deportation, to stay in on Sunday, to travel in groups," Atlanta Mayor Keisha Bottoms said on CNN. If "someone comes to your door, please don't open the door unless they have a warrant."

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio told MSNBC he sees the raids as "a political act to convince a lot of people in America that immigrants are the problem."

Like many other city officials, he fears the aggressive roundup could intimidate migrants, making them less likely in future to cooperate with local police, thus making it harder to ensure public safety.

➔ **Millions 'in line'**  
"We have millions of people standing in line waiting to become citizens of this country," Trump said.

He said it would be unfair to them if others could simply cross the border in an attempt to gain the privileges of American life.

But the impending raids have raised concerns about how a new influx could affect federal detention centers already badly overcrowded, AFP reported.

## Early Afghanistan pullout 'strategic mistake': U.S. general

TEHRAN — Trump Administration's nominee for chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has warned against early pullout of U.S. forces in Afghanistan while insisting that China will remain the "primary challenge" to the American military for up to 100 years.

"I think pulling out prematurely would be a strategic mistake," said current Army Chief of Staff General Mark Milley at his confirmation hearing for the top military post before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday, military news outlet Task & Purpose reported Saturday.

Despite a recent national poll by Pew Research Center, which found that 58 percent of U.S. veterans surveyed believed that the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq were not worth the sacrifice, Milley still emphasized that American troops should stay in the war-ravaged country until a negotiated settlement is reached with Taliban terrorists – the very group the U.S. forces invaded Afghanistan in 2001 to root out in the name of "war on terror."

"I think it is slow; it's painful; it's hard – I've spent a lot of my life in Afghanistan," Milley stated. "But I also think it's necessary."

Milley further boasted that the U.S.-led occupation of Afghanistan has been partly successful, arguing that Washington's initial reason for invading the country was to

make sure it would never again be used as a base for a terrorist attack on the homeland.

Since there hasn't been such an attack since 2001, "We've been successful to date," he underlined. If confirmed, Milley will succeed outgoing chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen. Joseph Dunford, to become the highest-ranking military officer in the United States and principal military adviser to President Donald Trump.

The transition would come as the Trump administration confronts a variety of geopolitical challenges, including the continued expansion of China's military might, as seen in areas such as the South China Sea.

"China is improving their military very, very rapidly -- in space, air, cyber, maritime, land domains," Milley said during the hearing. "They're outspending us in research and development and procurement ... We, the United States, need to make sure that we do not lose our advantages that we have relative to other countries, specifically relative to China."

According to Press TV, the army general, however, further pointed out that "China is not the enemy," but instead was a "competitor" The term "enemy" means "you're at war," he added. "We're not there. We don't want to be there. We want peace, not war, with China."

Milley has commanded units with the 10th Mountain Division and the 101st Airborne and served multiple combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

## Warren pledges to probe 'U.S. crimes against immigrants'

TEHRAN — U.S. Democratic presidential hopeful in 2020, Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, has vowed to establish a commission to investigate "crimes committed by the United States against immigrants" if she is elected president.

"On my first day, I will empower a commission in the Department of Justice to investigate crimes committed by the United States against immigrants," Warren announced Saturday at the progressive Netroots Nation conference.

She went on to accuse U.S. President Donald Trump of looking the other way at abuse of Latin American refugees at the country's southern borders, but said she will not do so.

"To anyone out there who's working in this system, understand you abuse immigrants, you physically abuse immigrants, you sexually abuse immigrants, you fail to get them medical care that they need, you break the law of the United States of America and Donald Trump may be willing to look the other way, but President Elizabeth Warren will not," the senator further declared.

Warren also emphasized that we need to treat those who come to the U.S. "with humanity and we need to follow the law." The liberal lawmaker unveiled her

immigration plan this week which included designating a Justice Department task force to probe allegations of medical neglect and physical and sexual assault and "give it independent authority to pursue any substantiated criminal allegations."

"Let there be no ambiguity on this: if you are violating the basic rights of immigrants, now or in the future, a Warren administration will hold you accountable," she wrote in a Medium post.

According to Press TV, Warren is among more than 20 Democratic Party candidates seeking the 2020 presidential nomination amid growing divisions in one of the country's two dominating political parties.

Meanwhile, thousands of protesters have staged rallies across the United States to protest the immigration policies of President Donald Trump's administration and its plan for mass arrests of undocumented migrants around the country.

The nationwide rallies, dubbed "Lights for Liberty: A Vigil to End Human Concentration Camps," took place in 700 U.S. cities on Friday to protest the inhumane conditions of migrant detention centers and the Trump administration's crackdown on asylum seekers and refugees.

## Details of Mogherini's trip to Baghdad: Iraq's clear messages about Iran

➔ For example, just a few months ago, Donald Trump talked about how the American forces observe Iran's activities through Iraq.

Another message was that Iraq is going to adopt a balanced foreign policy. In his meeting with Mogherini, Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi said "the current government of Iraq pursues a balanced foreign policy and good relations will all its neighbors."

By making these statements, the Iraqi officials are actually telling the westerners that they cannot sabotage their relationship with their neighbors, and particularly Iran, in order to develop their ties with U.S. and Europe.

These messages show that the efforts of the west for damaging the relations of Iraq and Iran have been fruitless and the Iraqi officials don't intend to reduce their economic or diplomatic relations with Tehran, despite the constant pressures from the West.

Over this trip, Mogherini and other officials in the West realized that Iraq has no intention to follow in the footsteps of some other countries in the Middle East such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain who played a destructive and negative role in the region and exacerbated the tensions; in other words, U.S. and the West cannot depend on Iraq to follow the same destructive policy.

Iraqi officials are adamant to stay away from the ominous triangle of the Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain, but the western countries and specially U.S. have always done all they could to drag Iraq into regional tensions; however, up to now, their plans have been unsuccessful as Iraq has stayed firm on its policy to avoid rising up tensions.

Clearly, Mogherini has received Iraq's clear messages regarding Iran and will deliver this information to U.S. who is their ally and close partner.

## Biden on Iraq War vote: Mistake I made was trusting president Bush

➔ This is the first 2020 Democratic primary poll from South Carolina that meets CNN standards, though Biden has held large leads in other polls from the Palmetto State.

What's the point: After getting attacked by Harris during the first Democratic debates over a number of racial issues (including busing), there was a real question as to whether Biden would be able to hold onto African American support.

South Carolina, of course, is the first real test of black support in the Democratic primary. It's the fourth contest of the primary season, and a majority of Democratic primary voters in the state are likely going to be African American.

The Fox News poll indicates that Biden still holds a significant lead among black voters. It's not just that Biden leads the South Carolina primary. It's that his black voter support is even higher than his overall support. Biden leads among black voters in the Palmetto State with 41%, while he's only at 25% among white voters.

## France to create space command within air force

TEHRAN — French President Emmanuel Macron said he had approved the creation of a space command within the French air force to improve the country's defense capabilities.

Addressing military personnel, Macron said the new military doctrine setting up a space command would strengthen protection of French satellites. He said the investment involved had yet to be determined.

"To give substance to this doctrine and ensure the development and reinforcement of our space capabilities, a space command will be created next September in the air force," Macron said, adding that it would later become the Space and Air Force.

French Defense Minister Florence Parly said last year she was committed to giving France strategic space autonomy in the face of growing threats from other powers amid a race in space militarization.

The French military spending program for 2019-2025 has earmarked 3.6 billion euros (\$4.06 billion) for investments and renewal of French satellites.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization aims to recognize space as a domain of warfare this year, four senior diplomats told Reuters in June.

According to Reuters, U.S. President Donald Trump's administration announced a plan last year to create a new "Space Force" as the sixth branch of the military by 2020.

## Sudan paramilitaries shoot dead civilian

TEHRAN — Members of a feared Sudanese paramilitary force shot dead a civilian Sunday in a town southeast of the capital as angry residents protested against the paramilitaries, witnesses and doctors said.

The incident occurred in El-Souk in the state of Sinnar when residents of the town rallied demanding that members of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) leave the town, witnesses told AFP.

"Residents of the town had gathered outside the office of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) to complain about the RSF," a witness said.

"RSF members deployed and initially started shooting in the air but later they opened fire at residents, killing a man and wounding several other people," said the witness, who declined to be named for security reasons.

A committee of doctors linked to the country's umbrella protest movement, the Alliance for Freedom and Change, confirmed the incident.

The resident "was killed by gunshot in his head fired by Rapid Support Forces militia," it said in a statement, adding that several other people were wounded.

Witnesses said El-Souk residents had gone to the NISS office to complain after the RSF raided a youth club on Saturday during a rally held to mourn the deaths of demonstrators killed in a Khartoum sit-in on June 3.

On Saturday, protesters held rallies in several cities and towns across the country, including in Khartoum, to mourn those killed in a raid on a protest camp on June 3 in the capital.

## Macron booted & told to 'step down' during Bastille Day parade in Paris

TEHRAN — France's major national holiday didn't proceed smoothly for President Emmanuel Macron, as dozens of protesters booed him and demanded his resignation ahead of a massive military parade in central Paris.

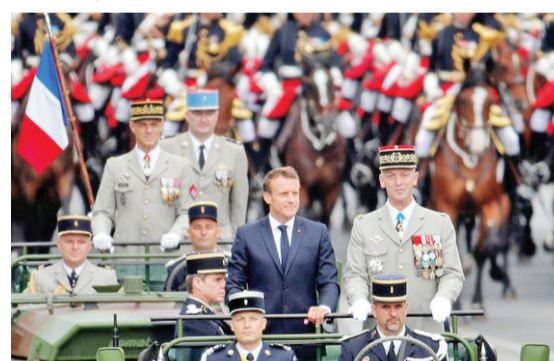
Numerous people started to vent their anger at Macron moments before his motorcade – accompanied by the French horse guards – showed up at the Champs Elysees avenue on Sunday afternoon. Ruptly agency filmed people booing and chanting 'Macron, step down!' in French, RT reported.

Some were seen waving France's national flag as the President and his entourage headed down the street to review participating troops. The protesters were encircled – though were not confronted – by dozens of police officers wearing riot gear.

At some point, however, the situation became more tense, with police using pepper spray during small scuffles in downtown Paris. It is unclear how many 'Yellow Vests' were present as they had been urged not to wear their iconic high-visibility jackets on this national day.

It has been reported that protest leaders, Eric Drouet, Maxime Nicolle and Jerome Rodrigues, were apprehended by police at the main military parade route, the Champs Elysees avenue.

It comes just one day after the 'Yellow Vests' took to the streets again on Saturday, marking the 35th consecutive week of the nationwide protest against the Macron government's policies. Simultaneously, leaders of the protest movement urged followers to take part in the rally on Bastille Day.



## UK police identify suspect behind leaked envoy memos

TEHRAN — The suspect behind the leak of confidential memos from Britain's Washington ambassador, which sparked a major diplomatic rift with the United States, has been identified, the Sunday Times newspaper reported.

Last week, Britain's Mail on Sunday newspaper published memos from Kim Darroch in which he described Donald Trump's administration as "inept" and "dysfunctional", prompting an angry response from the U.S. president and causing the envoy to announce his resignation.

British officials have launched an inquiry to find the person responsible for the leak and counter-terrorism police said on Friday they had launched a criminal investigation.

According to the Sunday Times, which cited unnamed government sources, a suspect had been identified and suggestions that it could be the result of a computer hack by a foreign state had been ruled out.

"They think they know who did the leaking," an unnamed government source told

the paper. "It's now a case of building a case that will stand up in court. It was someone with access to historical files. They went in and grabbed a range of material. It was quite crude."

Both the Sunday Times and the Mail on Sunday reported that intelligence officials from the GCHQ eavesdropping spy agency were about to join the investigation to find the suspect by scouring email and phone records.

The Mail also published further memos from Darroch, defying a police warning that

media which did so could be committing a criminal act.

According to Reuters, the paper said Darroch had written to the British government in May 2018 that Trump had decided to unilaterally withdraw from Iran's nuclear deal with major powers for "personality reasons" because it had been agreed by his predecessor Barack Obama.

Darroch had said in the cable that the Trump administration was "set upon an act of diplomatic vandalism", the paper said.

## Merkel's health is a private matter, Germans say after shaking bouts

TEHRAN — Most Germans believe Angela Merkel's health is a private matter, a poll showed on Saturday, after the chancellor suffered the latest in a series of shaking episodes this week that have raised questions about whether she should give an explanation.

Merkel, who turns 65 next week, shook visibly at a welcoming ceremony for Finland's prime minister on Wednesday – the third such episode in as many weeks. On Thursday, she broke with protocol and sat at a similar welcome for Denmark's premier.

The episodes have concerned many Germans and fired

up a debate among some of the chancellor's Christian Democrats about whether she should pass power to her protegee sooner than a planned handover in 2021.

Yet the survey of 4,495 representative voters, which pollster Civey conducted on Thursday and Friday for the Augsburg Allgemeine newspaper, showed a majority – 59% – believed Merkel's health was her own business.

The voters were asked: "In your view, should Angela Merkel provide detailed public information about her state of health, or is this her private concern?" Just 34% favored her health details being published, with 7% undecided.

The chancellor, who has no history of serious health issues, insisted "I am fine" on Wednesday, after trembling at the ceremony to receive Finland's premier, and said she was "working through" a bout of tremors that first occurred in mid-June.

But she has declined to give any details about her health. According to Reuters, Merkel has led Germany since 2005, making her the longest-serving political leader of a major Western democracy. Now serving her fourth term in office, she does not plan to stand again at the next federal election, due in 2021.

## Serena: My fight for equality ends 'in my grave'

Serena Williams says she has no plans to end her fight for equality any time soon after a question from a reporter invoked Billie Jean King's concerns on Williams' dedication to tennis.

After her third straight Grand Slam final defeat Saturday, Williams was asked in her postmatch news conference whether she should focus on tennis over being a celebrity or fighting for equality.

"The day I stop fighting for equality and for people that look like you and me will be the day I'm in my grave," Williams responded.

King later tweeted to clarify her views, saying she supported the work Williams did to push for equality.

King spoke to the BBC mid-Wimbledon about wanting to see Williams focus more on her on-court prospects than trying to juggle everything else.

"You never count her out. Every time she wins one more match helps. Quite frankly, if I were Serena, I would give up being a celebrity for a year and a half," King said. "If she wants to win titles, if she wants to beat records, that's the question. I don't know what she wants. No more Met Galas. Just stop all this insanity because she is trying to be everything."

(Source: ESPN)

## Griezmann upset by Atletico attitude - lawyer

Antoine Griezmann's lawyer, who was responsible for depositing his client's €120 million release clause at La Liga's headquarters, has criticised Atletico Madrid's reaction to the forward's transfer to Barcelona.

Sevan Karian paid the money to La Liga on Friday to pave the way for Barca to announce the signing of Griezmann on a five-year deal. Atletico responded furiously to the move, though, claiming that they're due an additional €80m.

Griezmann's release clause dropped from €200m to €120m at the start of the month. The Rojiblancos claim a pre-contract agreement which pre-dates July 1 means Barca should have to pay €200m. President Enrique Cerezo has even suggested he has evidence of the pre-contract.

Sources at Barcelona have told ESPN FC that the Spanish champions remain calm about the threats and insist the club have not breached FIFA's regulations. But Karian said Atletico have completely backtracked on what they told Griezmann when he announced he was leaving in May.

"Antoine is very disappointed with the attitude shown by Atletico and the club's hierarchy," he said. "They are acting in bad faith and are communicating the opposite of what they told him in person."

"But let them do as they see fit, we will do the same if necessary. For the moment, for [Griezmann], he only wants to think about this new chapter in his career. He wants to celebrate this weekend by discovering his new home."

Griezmann's departure has not gone down well with Atletico fans, either. His plaque outside the Wanda Metropolitano -- something you earn by playing 100 games for the club -- was defaced by supporters on Saturday. The same happened last summer when former goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois signed for rivals Real Madrid.

(Source: SoccerNet)

## Sources: City preseason hit by grounded flight

Manchester City's preseason preparations have been thrown into disarray due to an "unforeseen administrative issue" by the club's travel advisors, forcing Pep Guardiola's players to delay their flight to China by over 24 hours.

Sources have told ESPN FC that an admin error by Thomas Cook, the company with the contract to arrange all of City's travel, led to the cancellation of Saturday's flight to Shanghai for the first leg of the club's summer tour of the Far East.

Although the City squad had not arrived at Manchester Airport before the flight was cancelled, a large number of the club's staff had already checked in before being told that they would not be flying until Sunday at the earliest.

The club said in a statement posted on social media: "Due to an unforeseen administrative issue beyond the club's control, which is being resolved, regrettably, we will embark on our preseason tour a little later than intended."

Despite reports suggesting the delay was due to City's flight being refused permission to enter Chinese airspace, sources have told ESPN FC that the reason for the delay was down to the club's travel company.

City are due to play their first preseason fixture against West Ham in Nanjing on Wednesday in the Premier League Asia Trophy.

But with Guardiola deciding to have his players train at the club's CFA training centre in Manchester on Sunday morning, the squad were not due to fly out to China until early evening.

(Source: Mirror)

## Korean women crushed 64-0 by Hungary at world water polo

South Korea's women suffered a record 64-0 defeat by Hungary in water polo as the hosts marked their world championship debut with an unwanted slice of history.

A rampant Hungary side buried the hapless Koreans in an avalanche of goals -- 34 in the first half and 30 more after the break -- in their Group B clash in Gwangju.

The lop-sided result followed a horror outing for South Africa, who were battered 33-0 by the European champions the Netherlands a day earlier.

New Zealand's men previously held the honour of being the biggest world championships losers after being pulverised 38-1 by Croatia at the 1994 tournament in Rome.

South Korea only rustled up a women's team a month before the start of the competition, calling on former swimmers and with all but captain Oh Hee-ji still in their teens.

Their lack of experience told against the two-time world champion Hungarians as it took their beefier opponents just 12 seconds to take the lead on a penalty shot by Dorottya Szilagyi.

After that it quickly became hard to follow the score as the goals poured in at a rate of roughly one every thirty seconds in the 32 minute match.

(Source: AFP)

# Wait goes on for Williams as inspired Halep wins Wimbledon

Serena Williams remained tantalisingly one short of a record-equalling 24 Grand Slam singles titles as Simona Halep thrashed the off-key American in a one-sided Wimbledon final on Saturday.

Halep began the week halting American 15-year-old Coco Gauff's dream run and will end it at the Champions Ball after dismantling seven-times winner Williams 6-2 6-2 with an inspired display on Centre Court.

She is Romania's first Wimbledon singles champion.

The 27-year-old set the tone by breaking the Williams serve in the opening game and raced into a 4-0 lead in front of 15,000 incredulous fans.

She remained rock solid throughout, making only three unforced errors in a remarkable display of defence mixed with clinical counter-punching. Williams simply could not respond.

Even when Williams fired herself up at the start of the second set and began thumping the ball with her customary power, seventh seed Halep refused to back off.

Halep weathered the squall, then reeled off the last five games of what she described as the match of her life.

Williams has now lost three Grand Slam finals without winning a set since returning to action last March, following the birth of daughter Olympia in September 2017.



September 2017.

But this was the most chastening as she lasted only 56 minutes before biffing a forehand into the net -- her 26th unforced error -- to end the contest.

It was the second shortest Wimbledon final since Martina Navratilova thrashed Andrea Jaeger in 1983, one minute longer than Petra Kvitova's trouncing of Eugenie Bouchard five years ago.

"She played out of her mind," Williams, who had won nine of her previous 10 matches against Halep, said on court

after picking up the runners-up salver for the second straight year, having ran into a similarly inspired Angelique Kerber last year.

"It was a little bit a deer in headlights for me. Whenever a player plays like that you just have to take your hat off."

Until Saturday the only other Romanian to reach a Wimbledon final was Ilie Nastase who finished runner-up in 1972 and 1976. Halep went one better as she added the Wimbledon crown to the French Open she won in 2018.

### 'Mother's dream'

Halep said it had been her "mother's dream" for her to hold aloft the Venus Rosewater Dish.

Victory means she becomes a lifetime Wimbledon member.

"I wanted this badly," she said. "When I started the tournament, I talked to the people from the locker room that my dream is to become a member here. So today it's real."

"I'm very sure that was the best match of my life."

After losing to Kerber a year ago, then to Naomi Osaka in a stormy U.S. Open final, Williams, 37, hoped it would be third time lucky to finally move level with Australian Margaret Court on the all-time list of Grand Slam title collectors.

Despite having only five tournaments under her belt this year, Williams, who won her first Wimbledon title in 2002, had looked calm and composed en route to her 11th Wimbledon final.

If she thought she could put down an early marker she was mistaken as three unforced errors in the opening game handed Halep an unexpected gift of an early break.

Halep grew in stature and could not miss. Williams, on the other hand, looked tight and lacked feel.

(Source: Reuters)

## Swimming: Sun doping case needs more 'clarity', says Australia coach



Australia's head swimming coach has questioned a panel decision to clear Sun Yang of wrongdoing in refusing a doping test and urged anti-doping authorities to provide more transparency over the Chinese swimmer's case.

A FINA Doping Panel cleared triple Olympic champion Sun of breaching the governing body's rules in January but the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is seeking to overturn the decision at the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

"A case like this surely doesn't help the reliability and trust in this system," Jacco Verhaar said in comments published by Sydney's Daily Telegraph newspaper on Sunday.

"I think WADA, FINA, IOC, all these parties really need to work hard together to provide more clarity, more transparency."

Verhaar's comments come as Sun prepares to extend his haul of nine world titles in Gwangju, South Korea. The swimming events at the world championships start next Sunday.

Britain's Sunday Times newspaper reported in January that world record holder Sun had been involved in a dispute with doping testers last September, resulting in damage to a blood sample.

The Chinese Swimming Association rejected the allegations in a statement in January.

On Sunday, the Daily Telegraph posted a 59-page report by the FINA Doping Panel following a hearing at which Sun admitted to refusing to comply with an out-of-competition test because of his doubts over testers' accreditation.

The report said the testers had taken blood samples from Sun while at the clubhouse of his residence compound but the swimmer and his entourage then refused to let them depart with the samples during a tense stand-off.

Sun's mother Ming Yang had a security guard at the residence compound get a hammer to smash open a container containing one of the blood samples.

"The DCO (Doping Control Officer) was horrified," the report said, citing the tester's witness statement.

"She went outside the clubhouse and discovered that the athlete and a guard had broken one of the secure sample containers with a hammer."

Although describing Sun's behaviour as "a huge and foolish gamble", the Doping Panel agreed with his contention that the testers had not produced sufficient accreditation and that he had grounds to refuse the test.

"The Doping Panel is satisfied that the Athlete was not properly notified by the DCO," the report said.

(Source: Eurosport)

## Neymar renews war of words with PSG, hailing Barcelona 'remontada'



Neymar fired another shot in his battle with Paris Saint-Germain after saying his favourite football memory is Barcelona's incredible 2017 comeback win over PSG, which Neymar helped inflict on his current club.

Asked by online sports channel Oh My Goal about his best changing room memory, the world's most expensive player chose the aftermath of that win.

"We all went crazy afterwards. I think it was the best possible feeling for all of us," the Brazilian star said in the interview, which was posted on Saturday.

Neymar was speaking in Sao Paulo ahead of his belated return to the club on Monday, after insisting last week that he had prior agreement from PSG to stay in Brazil to help his foundation, the Neymar Institute.

His comments are set to further strain his relationship with the club.

He wants out of the Parc des Princes and would prefer a return to Barca, but is struggling to find suitors due to the 222 million euros (\$252 million) the capital splashed out to take him away from Barcelona two years ago.

The chances of him rejoining the Catalan giants are further complicated by Antoine Griezmann's arrival from Atletico Madrid for 120 million euros.

When Neymar missed last Monday's first training session PSG issued a statement declaring they would take "appropriate action" against the star.

Sporting director Leonardo has nevertheless said that "Neymar can leave PSG if there is an offer that suits everybody".

Later Saturday, Neymar added fuel to the fire over a possible return to the Camp Nou, with an Instagram post.

It was a 10-second video of himself in a Barcelona shirt, his father, and a quote from the Bible: "No weapon turned against you will prosper." (Isaiah Chapter 54, Verse 17).

Barcelona's famous rout of Paris Saint-Germain took place in the final 16 stage of the 2017 Champions League.

PSG had won the first leg of that Champions League last 16 tie 4-0 and were seconds away from the quarter-finals.

Neymar scored in the 88th and 91st minutes of the famous match before setting up Sergi Roberto for a winner five minutes into stoppage time.

That sealed their 6-1 win over PSG, who then shelled out the world-record fee to bag the Brazilian the following summer.

"What we felt when we scored the sixth goal I've never felt anything like that, it was incredible," Neymar told Oh My Goal on Saturday.

(Source: AFP)

## Mihajlovic to stay and 'fight' at Bologna after leukaemia diagnosis

Bologna coach Sinisa Mihajlovic revealed on Saturday that he is battling leukaemia after being diagnosed with the disease a day before pre-season training with the Serie A club was set to begin.

Club president Joey Sapatu confirmed that "Mihajlovic is and will remain Bologna's coach" while he battles the blood disease, with his treatment set to begin on Tuesday.

"When I got the news, it was a real blow. I sat there for days crying, your life passes before your eyes," Mihajlovic told reporters at a press conference which ended in a standing ovation for the Serb.

"I will face it, with chest puffed out, looking it in the eyes, the way I always have done."

"I cannot wait to go to hospital and start the fight. It is aggressive, but it is beatable."

"Unfortunately, nothing was given to me in life. I had to fight for everything. I'll fight this too."

Club doctor Gianni Nanni said that Mihajlovic had "acute leukaemia" but insisted that the 50-year-old had a good chance of recovery and could continue working as Bologna coach.

"Twenty years ago we might not even have talked about challenging this illness, but today with the knowledge that we have we can even talk about a rosie future for a coach that can carry on with his career," said Nanni.

"This is an disease that can be beaten... He needs to carry on his work and tell those players when they've done something wrong."



### Serie A support

The shock news comes ahead of a first full season at Bologna for the 50-year-old, who arrived as coach following the sacking of Filippo Inzaghi.

He guided them to 10th in Serie A after a blistering run of form that saw them win eight of their last 12 games and finish well clear of the relegation zone.

Mihajlovic has been in Italy since he moved to Roma in 1992 from Red Star Belgrade, where he had won the European Cup, but is best known for his time at Lazio.

He won the Serie A title, two Coppa Italias and the Cup Winners Cup in his six-year spell with Roma's fierce cross-town

rivals, and remains a hero figure among Lazio supporters.

Mihajlovic is also considered one of the best set-piece takers of all time. He jointly holds with Andrea Pirlo the record for free-kick goals scored in Serie A, striking 28 times from dead ball situations.

Lazio were among the clubs and players to show their support for Mihajlovic on Saturday, tweeting: "We won lots together, and we're with you in this battle too."

Since retiring as a player in 2006 he has coached a succession of clubs, mostly in Italy, and the Serbian national team.

"Wishing you strength, Sinisa. Everyone at Inter is by your side for the battle ahead," wrote Inter Milan, where Mihajlovic ended his career on the field and started life on the bench.

However he had ties to notorious Serbian nationalist paramilitary warlord Arkan -- who was assassinated at the start of the century -- and after becoming coach of his country in 2012 he ordered players to sing the national anthem before matches, kicking attacking midfielder Adem Ljajic off the team when he refused to do so for "personal reasons".

In 2000 Mihajlovic admitted racially abusing Patrick Vieira during a Champions League match between Arsenal and Lazio.

Vieira said Mihajlovic called him a "black bastard" and a "fucking black monkey", insults which the Bologna boss claimed came after Vieira called him a "gypsy shit".

(Source: France 24)

# Iran need to battle for Olympic berth: Nikkhah Bahrami

**S P O R T S** TEHRAN — Iran forward Samad Nikkhah Bahrami says that they will do their best to book the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games berth but it will not be an easy task.

The 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup will kick off on Aug. 31 and the best Asian team will directly advance to the 2020 Summer Olympics.

Iran have been drawn in Pool C along with Spain, Puerto Rico and Tunisia.

"We are preparing for the 2019 World Cup and I think taking part at the warm up competitions will help us prepare for the World Cup," Nikkhah Bahrami told Iran Republic News Agency (IRNA).

"We've had good days of training and now are ready to compete. Iran will have a difficult tournament in China but I am sure all players will battle to seal a berth in the Olympic, however it will not be an easy task," he added.

"We don't want to lose in the prestigious event and will do our best. But we know that the FIBA World Cup will be a difficult tournament since the teams can secure their places in the Olympics," the 1.98 m player stated.

Nikkhah Bahrami says participating in a pre-tournament competition in China will help them to be more prepared for the FIBA World Cup.

"We also need to become accustomed with China's weather condition. It could be helpful," he went to say.

"The FIBA World Cup is a tough competition and is not predictable. The competition will bring 32 teams together and several teams will try to win the tournament. And the rest of the teams will do their best to secure Olympics berths. But I can assure you we will try to win a berth," Nikkhah concluded.



## Iran capture freestyle team title in Junior Asian Wrestling C'ships

**S P O R T S** TEHRAN — After winning the Greco-Roman team title on Wednesday, Iran captured the freestyle team title on the final day of the Junior Asian Championships in Chon Buri, Thailand on Saturday.

For the second straight day, Iran won three gold medals in freestyle, bringing the gold-medal haul to six over the two-day freestyle competition.

Iran finished with 201 points, 55 points ahead of runner-up Japan. India finished third in the team standings with 129 points.

Iran's gold medalists on Sunday were Mahdi SHIRAZI (61kg), Ali Reza ABDOLLAHI (92kg) and Amir ZARE (125kg).

Iran's Mohammadsadeq FIROUZPOUR (70kg), Abdollah SHEIKHAZAMI (79kg) and Alireza REKABI had already won three gold medals in the first day.

### RESULTS

Final Freestyle Team Scores

GOLD - Iran (201 points)

SILVER - Japan (146 points)

BRONZE - India (129 points)

Fourth - Kazakhstan (111 points)

Fifth - Korea (111 points)

### 57kg

GOLD - Yuto TAKEKISHITA (JPN) df. Vijay Bajirao PATIL (IND), 7-4

BRONZE - Hyeonsu CHO (KOR) df. Narankhuu NAR-MANDAKH (MGL), 14-4

BRONZE - Taiyrbek ZHUMASHBEK UULU (KGZ) df. Abzal OKENOV (KAZ), 6-2

### 61kg

GOLD - Mahdi SHIRAZI (IRI) df. Nodir RAKHIMOV (UZB), 6-0

BRONZE - Ikromzhon KHADZHIMURODOV (KGZ) df. Kodai OGAWA (JPN), 8-4

BRONZE - Adil OSPANOV (KAZ) df. Putawan SENAWAT (THA), 10-0

### 65kg

GOLD - Syrbaz TALGAT (KAZ) df. Alireza ASHKIVAR (IRI), 4-4

BRONZE - Bobur ISLOMOV (UZB) df. Sunny SUNNY (IND), 5-4

BRONZE - Taiki TSUTSUMI (JPN) df. Injong HWANG (KOR), 8-1

### 70kg

GOLD - Mohammadsadeq FIROUZPOURBANDPEI (IRI) df. Sangho HAN (KOR), 10-1

BRONZE - Ayumu SUZUKI (JPN) df. Vishal KALIRAMA (IND), 6-3

BRONZE - Mirkamol BESHIMOV (UZB) df. Parinya CHAMNANJAN (THA), FALL

### 74kg

GOLD - Parveen MALIK (IND) df. Tu AHEIYOU (CHN), 4-2

BRONZE - Yu FUJITA (JPN) df. Jinwoo MOON (KOR), 11-0

BRONZE - Amirhossein KAVOUSHI (IRI) df. Bayarsaikhan TSEDENBALJIR (MGL), 11-0

### 79kg

GOLD - Abdollah SHEIKHAZAMI (IRI) df. Tanggesi TANGGESI (CHN), 10-0

BRONZE - Sandeep Singh MANN (IND) df. Tilek KABYKOV (KAZ), 13-8

BRONZE - Shoto KANEKO (JPN) df. Daehyun NAM (KOR), INJURY

### 86kg

GOLD - Tatsuya SHIRAI (JPN) df. Baisal KUBATOV (KGZ), 2-1

BRONZE - Govind KUMAR (IND) df. Seyedabolfazl HASHEMIJOUYBARI (IRI), 8-4

BRONZE - Jeongwoo PARK (KOR) df. Teng ZHAO (CHN), 3-0

### 92kg

GOLD - Ali Reza ABDOLLAHI (IRI) df. Ajiniyaz SAPARNIYAZOV (UZB), 10-0

BRONZE - Haksu BAN (KOR) df. Enkh Orgil BEEJIN (MGL), 4-2

BRONZE - Symbat SULAIMANOV (KGZ) df. Bekzat URKIMBAY (KAZ), FALL

### 97kg

GOLD - Alireza REKABI (IRI) df. Zyyamuhammet SAPAROV (TKM), 10-0

BRONZE - Akash ANTIL (IND) df. Rehemana RUSIDANMU (CHN), 12-2

BRONZE - Arslanbek TURDUBEKOV (KGZ) df. Haroon ABID (PAK), 12-1

### 125kg

GOLD - Amir ZARE (IRI) df. Buheerdun BUHEERDUN (CHN), 11-1

BRONZE - Vishal VISHAL (IND) df. Gan Erdene SOD-BILEG (MGL), 7-0

BRONZE - Bakdaulet OSSERBAY (KAZ) df. Shogo MUTO (JPN), 10-0

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As fans across the Continent prepare for Wednesday's Asian Qualifiers draw for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023, the AFC.com looks back at some of the unforgettable qualifying clashes of years past.

We kick off by recalling the epic FIFA World Cup France 1998 qualifying playoff between Japan and Islamic Republic of Iran, which sent the Samurai Blue to the Finals for the first time in their history.

### The backstory

One of Asian football's established powerhouses, Iran had endured a two-decade World Cup qualification drought following their only other appearance in 1978, and they had ample reason to believe they would be able to end it in time for 1998.

With a new breed of Team Melli stars including Khodadad Azizi, Ali Daei and Karim Bagheri entering their peak years, Iran had made a splash at the previous year's AFC Asian Cup by beating Saudi Arabia 3-0 and Korea Republic 6-2 before finishing third.

They continued in that fashion with a series of big wins on the road to France, but a goalless draw at home to Kuwait, followed by a 2-0 loss in Qatar cost them a direct place in the Finals, and head coach Mohammad Mayeli Kohan his job, just nine days before the playoff.

While Iran were hoping to return to the World Cup, Japan had never been, but the Samurai Blue had won the AFC Asian Cup on home soil in 1992, and the nation was in the midst of a football boom after the formation of the J-League the following year.

The domestic game had hit the big time in 1993, but it was also a year that provided one of the cruelest blows in Japan's football history, when they had been seconds

away from sealing a place at USA 1994, only to concede a late goal against Iraq in a match which would go down in folklore as the 'Agony of Doha'.

### The match

With both sides finishing third in their respective qualifying groups, a single-leg play-off in neutral Johor Bahru, Malaysia would decide who would claim Asia's final direct qualification place at France 98, with the losers to face Australia in an Inter-Confederation playoff.

Iran had brought in Brazilian Valdeir Vieira as their new head coach just prior to the match, while superstar forward Kazuyoshi Miura started for Japan having netted 14 goals in qualifying, including six in a match against Macau and four in another against Uzbekistan.

With 53 international goals, and the 1996 J-League scoring title to his name, Miura was an iconic figure in the Japanese game, but it was his strike partner Masashi Nakayama who gave Takeshi Okada's side the lead after being supplied by a youthful Hidetoshi Nakata in the 40th minute.

That goal had delighted the travelling army of Japanese fans, but the feeling of despair from four years prior began to return when sloppy passing, coupled with an elementary spill from goalkeeper Yoshikatsu Kawaguchi allowed 1997 AFC Player of the Year Azizi to equalize less than a minute into the second half.

Having led at half-time, Japan found themselves 2-1 down by the hour-mark as Daei rose majestically to score with a precise header before wheeling away in a celebration which had become second nature, given the goal was his 31st on the international scene in an extraordinary 18-month spell.

Iran's World Cup dream was now within touching distance after 20 years of waiting, while, for Japan, the scars of Doha were increasingly at risk of being reopened on the other side of the Continent.

Japan head coach Okada quickly reshuffled his line-up by introducing Wagner Lopes and Shoji Jo, and it was the latter who rescued his side's hopes, meeting a pinpoint Nakata delivery with a superb header to level the tie in the 76th minute.

With the sides deadlocked at 2-2 after 90 minutes, golden goal extra-time would decide the winner, prompting Okada to play his final card by introducing Masayuki Okano, the forward with one international goal to his name, and who had not featured at all in the final stage

of qualifying.

With Iran tiring, and Nakata wreaking havoc, Okano found himself on the end of multiple chances but failed to find the net, with coach Okada covering his face in disbelief after the Urawa Reds man skied a gilt-edged chance from just six yards.

It looked certain that the match would be decided by penalties when Daei poked an effort wide from point-blank range in the 118th minute, but Okano emerged as the hero just seconds later, arriving after goalkeeper Ahmad Reza Abedzadeh spilled a goal-bound Nakata drive to steer the ball into the net, and Japan into their first ever FIFA World Cup.

In more ways than one, Japan had their golden goal and, four years after the Agony of Doha, Okada and his staff sprinted onto the pitch to bask in the Joy of Johor Bahru.

### The aftermath

Having had their own World Cup dream snatched away on Japan's night of nights, Iran had little choice but to turn their attention to their Inter-Confederation playoff against the Soccerroos, where they would write history of their own.

Having played to a 1-1 first leg draw in front of more than 120,000 fans in Tehran, Team Melli's drought looked set to continue when Australia raced to a 2-0 lead in the return leg, but goals in the 75th and 79th minutes from Bagheri and Azizi gave Iran an unforgettable win on away goals to seal qualification after all.

Both Iran and Japan were eliminated in the group stage at France 98, but not without achieving momentous results, as Iran defeated the United States 2-1 to earn their first ever win on the world stage, while Nakayama scored Japan's first World Cup goal in a 2-1 defeat to Jamaica.

Ali Daei went on to become the greatest goal scorer in international football history with 109 goals in 149 appearances for Iran, while Masayuki Okano's crucial goal in Johor was his last for Japan.

Hidetoshi Nakata would become one of Japan's biggest ever footballing icons with a glittering career in Italy, while Kazuyoshi Miura was sensationally left out of Japan's 1998 World Cup squad, and never appeared on the game's biggest stage.

Now 52, Miura famously still plays for J2 outfit Yokohama FC, and holds the records for the both oldest player and oldest in global professional football.

(Source: the-afc)

## Hamilton wins sixth British Grand Prix victory

Trailing Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas at the start, the five-time world champion took advantage of a safety car and then cruised to victory by a margin of more than 20 seconds and now has more British Grand Prix wins than any driver in the history of Formula One.

But it was further back where most of the drama took place with eventual third-place finisher Charles Leclerc embroiled in an epic race-long battle with Max Verstappen.

Verstappen was shunted by Sebastian Vettel late in the race but recovered to finish fifth.

Vettel was handed a 10-second penalty and finished 16th as a result.

"Honestly, I can't tell you how proud I am to be here today in front of my home crowd, with my whole family here today, my team.

"You'd think you would get used to something like that, but it feels like the first time and I'm forever grateful to everyone who's come out.

"I couldn't have done it without my team, and the guys back at the factory, and their wives and their kids who support them.

"When I tell people thank you to the team, there's nearly 2,000 people who make this possible. I'm just a chink in that chain, and I'm super proud to be a part of this."

(Source: Express.co.uk)

## Teymouri wins bronze at Yasar Dogu

**TASNIM** — Bahman Mohammad Teymouri claimed a bronze medal at the Yasar Dogu 2019 Ranking Series tournament in Istanbul.

He defeated Azerbaijan's Abubakr Abakarov 7-4 at 79kg in the men's freestyle.

The gold medal went to American wrestler Alex Dieringer, who defeated Slovakian Akhsarbek Gulaev 4-1 in the final.

The Yasar Dogu International is the final event in the UWW Rankings Series this season.

Competitors earned placement points toward their seeds at this year's World Championships.

The four wrestlers with the most placements points per weight class will be seeded accordingly at the World Championships in September in Kazakhstan.

## Iran women team drop four places in FIFA ranking

**IRNA** — Iran women national football team moved down four places in the latest FIFA rankings.

The Iranian team moved down to the 70th place.

Australia remains Asia's highest ranked national team despite falling two places, while DPR Korea returned to the global top 10 in the July update of FIFA's Women's World Ranking.

After winning the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup, USA cemented its place at the top of the world, followed by Germany and World Cup runner up Netherlands.

The next Women's World Ranking will be published on September 27, 2019.

## Ayanda Patosi joins Baniyas Club

The former KSC Lokeren player has found a new home in Asia following a successful spell with the Capital Blues Premier Soccer League (PSL) side Cape Town City have announced that Ayanda Patosi will join United Arab Emirates (UAE) outfit Baniyas Club on loan.



The attacking midfielder spent the second round of the 2018/19 season out on loan at Iranian side Esteghlal from the Citizens.

Patosi had a successful spell with Tehran-based outfit, but the club decided not to retain his services and he returned to City.

The Citizens have since revealed that the diminutive playmaker has now joined Baniyas ahead of the 2019/20 campaign.

"Cape Town City and Baniyas Club have reached an agreement for midfielder Ayanda Patosi."

"The deal will see Ayanda spend one year on loan in the UAE Pro League, with an option to buy at a further fixed amount."

"We wish Pato well as he continues to dominate outside SA borders," a club statement read.

Patosi, 26, cemented his place in the Esteghlal starting line-up - scoring four goals in 13 Iranian Persian Gulf Pro League matches.

The Cape Town-born player also featured six times in the Asian Champions League for the Capital Blues.

Baniyas have since snapped up Patosi as they look to mount a serious challenge for the UAE Pro League title next season.

Patosi, who has represented South Africa at senior international level, will be looking to impress and hope that Baniyas purchase him from City.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY  
www.tehrantimes.com

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Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807  
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603  
www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.  
Tel: 88911433  
Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com  
Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737

Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimesdaily

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran  
P.O. Box: 14155-4843  
Zip Code: 1599814713



GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Chastity is the beginning of morality.  
Imam Ali (AS)

## Imam Reza (AS) Intl. Festival honors cultural figures

**CULTURE** TEHRAN — Several Iranian writers who have authored books on Imam Reza (AS) and cultural figures were honored during the closing ceremony of the 17th Imam Reza (AS) International Festival on Saturday.

The ceremony took place at Sepid Tower in Mashhad on the eve of the birthday anniversary of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Imam of the Shia Muslims.



Actor Dariush Arjmand speaks after being honored during the 17th Imam Reza (AS) International Festival at Sepid Tower in Mashhad on July 13, 2019. (Fars/Iman Jannati)

The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi and the director of the Imam Reza (AS) International Art and Cultural Foundation, Mahmudreza Barazesh, attended the closing ceremony.

Former Astan Quds Razavi officials Ali Karimi-Qoddusi and Ali-Mohammad Baradaran-Rafiei and poet Jafar Mahsoorkh were among the honorees.

Also included were writers Faezeh Azimzadeh Ardebili and Mohammad-Ali Mojahedi, actor Dariush Arjmand and calligrapher Qassem Tavakkoli.

The secretaries of different sections of the festival were also honored at the ceremony.

The 17th edition of the Imam Reza (AS) International Festival opened with the birthday celebration of Hazrat Masumeh (SA), the sister of the Imam (AS), at her holy shrine in Qom on July 4.

The ten-day festival offered a wide variety of programs in different Iranian provinces.

The programs included theater performances, book fairs, art exhibitions and cultural seminars. Exhibitions of rare Persian and Arabic manuscripts and documents were also organized.

Cities in the provinces of Hamedan, Bushehr, Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari, North Khorasan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, and Markazi hosted sessions on religious poems.

The Razavi Theater Festival, an event dedicated to plays on religious themes, was held during the festival in East Azarbaijan Province.

A number of musical performances were also held in Tehran while several calligraphy exhibits were organized in South Khorasan Province.

Sistan-Baluchestan hosted an exhibition of graphic designs, and Isfahan showcased a collection of book illustrations in an exhibit during the festival.

The festival was also held in several countries in collaboration with Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, the Ahlul-Bait World Assembly, and several other organizations.

A large collection of cultural products were put on display at the Razavi Permanent Exhibit in Mashhad, where the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) is situated.

## Niavaran center to review film scores by Miklos Rozsa

**A R T** TEHRAN — Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center will be hosting a session on Thursday to review film scores by Miklos Rozsa, a Hungarian-American composer who is best known for his prolific output of film scores.

Iranian musician and scholar Nasrollah Davudi is scheduled to discuss a number of Rozsa's works during the session.

Rozsa received 17 Oscar nominations for his works. He won three Oscars for "Spellbound" in 1945, "A Double Life" in 1947 and "Ben-Hur" in 1959.

He wrote some of cinema's epic scores, including "The Thief of Bagdad", "Invincible", "King of Kings", "El Cid" and "The Golden Voyage of Sinbad".



A poster for Niavaran Cultural Center's session for the review of Hungarian-American composer Miklos Rozsa's works.

# "Driving Lessons" named best short at Golden Apricot festival

**A R T** TEHRAN — Iranian filmmaker Marzieh Riahi's acclaimed movie "Driving Lessons" won the Golden Apricot for best short film at the 16th Golden Apricot International Film Festival in Yerevan, Armenia, the organizers announced on Saturday.

The film tells the story of Bahareh, a young girl who, according to Iranian law, must have a man from her relatives accompany her on driving lessons so she and her male instructor won't be alone.

Georgian director Rati Tsiteladze's "Prisoner of Society" received the Silver Apricot in the same section.

A jury headed by Italian director Pippo Mezzapesa judged 25 movies in the short film competition. The jury also included Canadian operator Norayr Kasper and Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival Program Director Georges Bollon from France.

The Golden Apricot in the full-length film competition went to "Ray & Liz" by Richard Billingham from the UK, while "Beantpole" by Russian director Kantemir Balogov was awarded a Silver Apricot in the same category.

"Midnight Traveler", a co-production from the USA, UK, Qatar and Canada by Hassan Fazili, won a special mention.

"Horizon", a co-production between Georgia and Sweden by Tinatin Kajrishvili, won the FIPRESCI prize in the Regional Panorama Competition.

"Aging" by Iranian director Behruz Shoeibi won the AAFCCJ Award, which is presented by the Armenian Association of Film Critics and Cinema Journalists.

The film is about Mahsa, an addicted woman who thinks that her girl is dead but when she finds out that her daughter is alive and lives with her father (Mahsa's ex-husband), she decides to take her back. This forces her to face her ex-husband and his new wife.



A scene from Iranian filmmaker Marzieh Riahi's movie "Driving Lessons".

Iranian filmmaker Reza Mirkarimi, who is also the director of Iran's Fajr International Film Festival, was a member of the full-length film competition jury, which was headed by Russian screenwriter Aleksandr Mindadze.

## Revayat Cultural Foundation honors Ahmadreza Darvish



Filmmaker Ahmadreza Darvish (L) receives an award for his lifetime achievements from at Revayat Cultural Foundation director Mohammad-Yashar Naderi in Tehran on July 13, 2019. (Revayat Cultural Foundation)

**A R T** TEHRAN — The Revayat Cultural Foundation honored Ahmadreza Darvish for his 30 years of filmmaking on the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, which is called the Sacred Defense in Iran, on Saturday.

He received an award from the director of the foundation, Mohammad-Yashar Naderi, the foundation announced on Sunday.

Darvish's latest movie "Hussein, Who Said No" about the uprising of Imam Hussein (AS) against the Umayyad dynasty in 680 CE provoked controversy when several top

clerics and certain people slammed the film over its depiction of some Shia saints.

The film was banned in Iran in 2015 hours after its premiere following protests by the clerics

The film, which has been dubbed into several languages, including Arabic and English, won the grand prize for the best full-length feature at the 7th Baghdad International Film Festival in 2015.

"Duel", "Resurrection", "Kimia" and "Last Flight" are among Darvish's noteworthy credits.

## Marivan street theater festival to promote tourism

**A R T** TEHRAN — The 14th Marivan International Street Theater Festival, held annually in the northwestern Iranian city of Marivan, announced on Sunday that it will put its spotlight on tourism in the region this year.

"Tourism will be the main item of the festival this year," the director of the festival, Fateh Badparva, said during a meeting held at the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization (CHTHO) in Tehran.

"The festival needs to bring positive benefits to people. Tourists can help develop the city and Kordestan Province, and I must say that Marivan has the necessary potential to

attract more tourists," he added.

He also said that cultural events such as the Cannes Film Festival show that they can help draw more domestic and foreign tourists, and the Marivan festival can take the first steps this year.

CHTHO deputy director in tourism affairs Vali Teimuri, who also attended the meeting, said that the CHTHO plans to introduce Marivan as a tourist destination, and that the Marivan festival can play a key role in this way.

The festival, which will be held from August 23 to 27, plans to organize exhibitions to showcase handicrafts from western Iranian cities.

## "Sara and Aida" director Maziar Miri named best at Russian festival



"Sara and Aida" director Maziar Miri in an undated photo.

**A R T** TEHRAN — Iranian filmmaker Maziar Miri was selected as best director for his drama "Sara and Aida" at the 14th In Family Circle, an international family film festival in Russia, a public relations team for the film announced on Sunday

The film is about two close friends. The reputation of one of them is in danger, so they need to figure out how to resolve this issue with each other's help.

"Sara and Aida" won the best Asian film award at the 10th Jaipur International Film Festival in India in January 2018.

Films from different countries, including Romania, the U.S. Italy, India, Turkey, Spain and Brazil, were screened in the official competition of the In Family Circle festival that took place in the Russian city of Yaroslavl.

The event is dedicated to screening films with the main idea of chastity, love and loyalty in family relationships.



An Iranian troupe performs during the 12th Marivan International Street Theater Festival on September 10, 2017. (Mehr/Mobin Peymankar)

## "Game of Thrones", "Veep" make final grabs for Emmy glory

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — "Game of Thrones," "Veep" and "The Big Bang Theory," three major series that wrapped last season, will find out with Tuesday's nominations if they get another shot at Emmy gold or have been overshadowed by shiny new rivals such as "Pose" and "Fleabag."

HBO's gore-and-dragons fantasy saga and its Washington satire "Veep" look well-positioned to garner top series and cast nominations, even though some fans and critics dinged (OK, savaged) "Game of Thrones" for an uneven season.

It promises to be "the last hurrah of the Emmy giants." Tom O'Neil, author of "The Emmys" and editor of the Gold Derby awards handicapping website, said of the premium cable series. "In all likelihood, they'll get their farewell hug, because we know that the Emmys are a lot like TV reruns: they repeat," he said.

In Tuesday's horse race, HBO is looking to rebound as the most-nominated outlet, bragging rights it lost after a 17-year record was snapped last year by relative upstart Netflix (with 112 bids to HBO's 108). The streaming service that's making a multibillion-dollar investment in programming has something to prove as well. So far it has fallen short of competitors Hulu and Amazon's top series trophies for, respectively, "The Handmaid's Tale" and "The Amazing Mrs. Maisel."

"Game of Thrones" and "Veep" are fierce competitors, with each winning the last three times they were in contention. "Game of Thrones" is poised to reap nods for stars including



Peter Dinklage, the only cast member to win an Emmy (make that three), and Emilia Clarke. After several supporting actress nods for her portrayal of ill-fated Daenerys Targaryen, Clarke is seeking best-actress honors.

There is competition afoot for "Game of Thrones" in the drama series category from "Pose," set in 1980s New York and the ball culture world, and "Killing Eve" with Sandra Oh. Last year, Oh became the first person of Asian ancestry to snare an Emmy nod for best drama series actress.

The comedy races look especially tight.

"Veep" sat out 2018 because of a production delay while star Julia Louis-Dreyfus was treated for breast cancer. "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" took streaming's first best comedy trophy and its star, Rachel Brosnahan, won best comedy acting honors.

Brosnahan and Louis-Dreyfus are likely contenders this year. The latter has collected six trophies for her "Veep" role as ex-President Selina Meyer and, with her Emmys for "Seinfeld" and "New Adventures of Old Christine," is tied with Cloris Leachman at eight for the most-winning performer ever.

Those seeking to invade her turf include Phoebe Waller-Bridge for "Fleabag" and Natasha Lyonne for "Russian Doll," while "Veep" itself could be challenged by their shows and Golden Globe-winning "Barry," starring Bill Hader.

CBS' "The Big Bang Theory," which ended its 12-season run in May, has gradually receded from Emmy attention, last earning a best comedy series bid in 2014. That was also the last year that star and Emmy favorite Jim Parsons captured a trophy for best comedy actor, his fourth for the show.

There's a "decent chance" that Parsons could be nominated once more, O'Neil said.

If "The Big Bang Theory" doesn't make the comedy series cut, ABC's "black-ish" could again be the sole network entry in a field of buzzy cable and streaming nominees. Among dramas, "This Is Us" could be the lone broadcast entry, as it was last year.

Some major past winners aren't in contention this year because of eligibility window requirements, among them "Atlanta," "Big Little Lies," "The Crown," "Westworld" and "The Handmaid's Tale" (although it was able to submit in a handful of down-ticket categories).