

Bolton's nuclear enrichment remarks lack legal validity 2

Iranian tanker seized by Saudi Arabia released 3

Iranian athletes win three gold medals at Asian AKF Championship 15

Iran, Bangladesh team up for thriller "Nirvana" 16

Iran stops UK tanker after it hits boat and ignores distress call

Zarif: Iran's move is fully within international maritime rules



See page 2

Launching integrated forex market in last stages: CBI

TEHRAN— Central Bank of Iran (CBI) announced that the preparation for launching integrated forex market in the country is in the last stages, IRIB reported.

In a statement, the CBI's office of public relations also denied the news about launching this market on Monday.

While dismissing the news published by some websites about pre-determined

rates in this market, the statement also said that discovery of foreign currency exchange rates based on supply and demand is a feature of integrated market.

Some news websites and channels had published that integrated forex market will start operation on Monday with a pre-determined rate. →4

Zarif says U.S. has 'shot itself in the foot' by leaving JCPOA

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that the U.S. has "shot itself in the foot" by withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA.

"The U.S. has basically in my view shot itself in the foot by withdrawing from this agreement," he told Bloomberg in an interview aired on Thursday.

He also said, "There is a multilateral

agreement and no multilateral agreement can be implemented unilaterally. Everybody has to chip in. The Europeans think it is important for their security. If it is important for their security then you invest in your security. You don't get your security by praying for it. You must invest. You must do what is necessary. The Europeans need to take the necessary action." →2

Iran is becoming a drone superpower: The Hill

TEHRAN — Iran is quietly building up an arsenal of locally-produced drones that it is exporting to its allies in the region, The Hill argued in a piece published on Friday.

"Iran's drone technology appears to be growing more sophisticated," The Hill reported. "Since the 1980s, Iran sought to build up a force of locally produced drones."

In January, Iran put on display a plethora of new UAVs. These included

its Shahed-171 'stealth drone' with precision-guided missiles and its Kaman 12 drone, which supposedly can fly to a range of 200 kilometers for up to 10 hours, according to Iranian media.

The article, written by Seth J. Frantzman, maintained that Iran wants to show off its drones, at home and abroad, to show it can get around U.S. sanctions and continue to develop this military capability. →3

PERSPECTIVE
Hanif Ghaffari
Head of the Tehran Times
Politics Desk

Europe's return to the twentieth century!

The three countries of Britain, Germany and France are not in good shape: Berlin faces a crisis of leadership and there is no prospect of the end of the Anglo Merkel Chancellery. Even though Merkel will end her Chancellery, she can no longer be considered an influential politician in the European Union and the euro zone. In France, Emmanuel Macron, after victory of Le Pen and the French National Front (in the European Parliamentary elections), no longer has the power to revive his lost position in Paris. The UK is also thinking of leaving the European Union and how to manage the crisis. What does this show? The answer to this question is clear: Europe is going back to the twentieth century under the influence of Troika's downfall!

It's better to look at the subject a bit more realistic! The growth of extreme currents in Europe seems to have led to concerns and discontent among people such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel. This is while Berlin should not hide its role in this crisis. This social excitement has now become a "political demand" in the West. The dissatisfaction of European citizens with their governments has caused them to explicitly demand the return to the twentieth century and the time before the formation of United Europe. Obviously, in this situation, "Crossing the traditional parties" would become a general demand in the West. Under such circumstances, Merkel's and other European leaders' warnings about the return to the twentieth century and the time before the formation of United Europe simply means the inability of the Eurozone authorities in preventing the Right-extremism in the West.

On the other hand, EU foreign policy is still defined in direct relationship with the White House and the Brussels-Washington security relations. No doubt, under such circumstances, we can not speak of an "independent Europe" in the international system. Even, While US National Security Advisor John Bolton and Trump have repeatedly expressed their opposition to the existence of the European Union and the Eurozone, Europe has not taken any steps towards independence from the United States. Now, the EU has little opportunity to save itself from falling. The truth that some European leaders have not yet understood ...

Trump enacting repetitive scenario against Iran

By Haniyeh Sadat Jafariyeh

TEHRAN (MNA) — The behavioral method that the US President is applying against Iran resembles those his country had previously employed for other countries; most recent of which were Iraq and Libya.

The American method includes leading propaganda and psychological war against an intended country, putting maximum pressure on it via imposing economic sanctions to make the country agitate internally, making threats to wage war on it, sowing internal disagreements among the country's nation to shatter

its unity, urging disarmament of the country and finally attacking it or forcing its leaders to sit at negotiation table by making promises with no guarantees to be fulfilled.

The US could topple down Saddam Hussein in 2003, after practicing a psychological warfare and attacked the country under the name of removing a regime that developed and used weapons of mass destruction, harbored and supported terrorists, committed outrageous human rights abuses, and defied the just demands of the United Nations and the world.

The story repeated itself when the US kept

on applying pressure on Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi to step him down from power. The US believed Gaddafi had funded terror operations against America. The US government cut ties with the regime, and enacted sanctions against senior regime members. The US, along with several European and Arab nations, then began to call for the UN to authorize military intervention in the conflict. When the Libyan civil war broke out in 2011, the US took part in a military intervention in the conflict, aiding anti-Gaddafi rebels with air strikes against the Libyan Army. The US plan bore fruit eventually. →7

Dutch state partially liable for Srebrenica

TEHRAN — The Dutch government accepted Friday that the state was partially liable for the deaths in 1995 of some 350 Muslim males who were expelled from a UN base and killed by Serb forces at Srebrenica.

The Supreme Court of the Netherlands upheld a previous ruling against the Dutch state and set its liability at 10 percent of the overall loss suffered.

"The government accepts the verdict of the

Supreme Court," the Defense Ministry said in a statement. "The state thereby accepts liability for the damages as determined by the Supreme Court."

According to Reuters, the Dutch ruling paves the way for payments to the families of victims and survivors of the killings at Srebrenica, when around 8,000 Muslim men and boys in all were taken away and murdered in what was the worst mass slaughter on European soil since World

War II. It was recognized as a genocide by the International Court of Justice.

The adjudication of 10 percent liability means claimants are only likely to receive around a few thousand euros in compensation.

However, the case could still set an international legal precedent for states' liability when they contribute troops to peacekeeping operations. →13

Yemenis launch retaliatory drone attacks on Saudi air base

TEHRAN — Yemeni armed forces have conducted drone strikes on King Khalid air base in Saudi Arabia's southwestern Asir Province in retaliation for the kingdom's massive bombing of Sana'a early Saturday.

The al-Masirah TV channel reported that Yemeni army soldiers and allied fighters from Popular Committees used Qasif-K2 combat drones to target the air base near

the city of Khamis Mushait.

It quoted Yemen's armed forces spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Sare'e as saying that the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAVs) had accurately hit radar and military sites at the Saudi base.

The retaliation came after Saudi warplanes carried out airstrikes on Sana'a's September 21 park and the Ministry of Media Affairs earlier

in the day, al-Masirah reported.

Saudi air raids, it added, also targeted Farijah Camp in the Arhab district of Sana'a Province.

Saudi-led coalition spokesperson Colonel Turki al-Maliki said warplanes carried out an operation to destroy five "air defense sites and ballistic missile depots" in Sana'a on Saturday morning, the official Saudi Press agency (SPA) reported. →13

ARTICLE
Setareh Behroozi
Tehran Times journalist

'Better Future' lies in prosperity of startups

With the slogan of 'Better Future', the 25th edition of Iran International Exhibition of Electronics, Computer & E-commerce (ELECOMP 2019) is currently underway at Tehran Permanent International Fairground.

As its name suggests, ELECOMP is a major event in the electronics and computer industry, however, over the past five editions, organizers decided to allocate a part of the exhibition to emerging startups under the title of ELECOMP Stars.

And now startups manifest their growth during recent years by presenting their products and services in seven halls of the exhibition.

Startups open new windows of opportunity for removing social, economic and even environmental challenges worldwide and Iran is not an exception.

The motivation and innovation of young entrepreneurs, who are the founders of startups, is a great chance, which should not be ignored by officials and organizations.

ELECOMP Stars hosts different ranges of startups from emerging to well-established ones with reasonable prices in order to encourage all the people active in the field of innovation ecosystem.

Officials are concerned about the attendance of innovators as well as visitors in this edition of the exhibition due to hard economic situation as a result of the sanctions.

However, startups which fill seven halls of the exhibition show the dynamism of the innovation ecosystem in these hard days.

During a meeting on the sidelines of the exhibition, the head of the Iranian Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Guild Organization, Mohammad Baqer Asna-Ashari, said that many startups which attended the previous edition of ELECOMP Stars requested bigger stands in this edition.

"This shows the growth of startups during a year and also the role of ELECOMP in their activities," he said. →11



New achievements introduced at ELECOMP 2019

TEHRAN — The 25th edition of Iran International Exhibition of Electronics, Computer & E-commerce (ELECOMP 2019), which is currently underway at Tehran Permanent International Fairground, hosts different innovative ideas and achievements.

Here you can read about some of the innovative achievements introduced during the four-day event.

Smart applied meteorology app

A smart applied meteorology app was introduced by a space-based startup during the exhibition. →11

Foreign minister says engagement is losing credibility

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister **d e s k** Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that engagement with the international community “is losing credibility”.

“Engagement has lost credibility at home. People don’t look at engagement with the international community — the United States, for one reason, for not keeping its word; the Europeans for another reason, for not being able to stand on their word. So, yeah, engagement is losing credibility, and by extension, I am losing credibility,” he told National Public Radio (NPR) in an interview published on Friday.

Following is highlights of the interview published by the NPR:

■ **On economic consequences of the current sanctions**

Right now our economy is suffering less than last year because the United States has continued [the sanctions] and we have gotten used to it. Our currency is stabilizing. The growth rate is improving. The jobless rate is improving. We certainly can do without oil revenues forever, and that is our goal. The United States is simply expediting it for us.

■ **On instability in the region and whether Iran is pressuring the U.S.**

Well, we’re not attempting to pressure anybody, because we simply do our job. It is clear that a country that has 1,500 miles of coastline on the Persian Gulf is instrumental for security in that region. We are the strongest country in that region. Without us, you won’t have security in the region.

■ **On engaging with the international community**

Engagement has lost credibility at home. People don’t look at engagement with the international community — the United States, for one reason, for not keeping its word; the Europeans for another reason, for not being able to stand on their word. So, yeah, engagement is losing credibility, and by extension, I am losing credibility.

■ **On how close Iran and the U.S. have been to war**

President Trump said 10 minutes. It would have been [a war in June]. The United States can start a war, can’t end it. ... Nobody who starts a war ends the war. That’s the reality of history. ... Wars are destructive for all participants and even bystanders. And it would be destructive, that’s why we don’t want to engage in war. But that doesn’t mean we will run away from war.

Mohajer-4: Iranian drone which filmed USS Boxer

(Press TV) — Surveillance images released by Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) dismissing Washington’s claims of downing an Iranian drone over the Strait of Hormuz indicate that the drone in question was a Mohajer-4 surveillance aircraft.

The images, released on Friday, showed the drone monitoring the U.S. navy’s USS Boxer amphibious assault ship along with a fleet of accompanying vessels. The Mohajer-4’s landing skids can be seen in the video.

U.S. President Donald Trump claimed on Thursday that the drone had been “immediately destroyed” after it flew to within 900 meters of the USS Boxer and ignored “multiple calls to stand down.”



The Pentagon claimed the warship had taken “defensive action” against an Iranian drone at 05:30 GMT on Thursday, a claim that was challenged by the IRGC drone’s imagery.

The aircraft’s footage demonstrated that the Mohajer-4 continued its operations well beyond the time Washington had claimed to have downed the drone.

The Mohajer-4 drone has been designed for live reconnaissance and target acquisition and can travel at a maximum speed of 200 kmph and identify targets as much as 150 kilometers away.

The drone can operate up to seven hours under the direction of a drone operator or by using a predetermined auto-flight path.

The Mohajer-4’s composite body greatly reduces the aircraft’s radar cross-section, making it difficult for enemy radar and air-defense systems to engage with.

Various modified versions of the Mojaher-4 drone have also been developed for differing military, geometrical and traffic control purposes.

The Mohajer-6 drone enjoys major upgrades compared to the Mohajer-4 and can carry precision-guided munitions. The drone has successfully been used by Iran in a number of recent anti-terror operations.

The Mohajer family of drones was developed from Iran’s indigenous Mohajer-1 that was first deployed during the Iraqi war on Iran (1980-1988).

Iran at the time was in critical need of efficient surveillance aircraft in the face of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein’s largely foreign-backed military, to the extent that the CIA was sharing satellite imagery of Iranian troop movements with Baghdad.

Iran is, however, now one of the world’s top four or five countries, and the top drone power in the region, according to IRGC Aerospace Commander Amir-Ali Hajizadeh.

Iran’s UAV program has expanded in recent years with more than a dozen models operating for a variety of functions ranging from surveillance to intelligence gathering, carrying bombs and Kamikaze operations.

They have been playing a significant role in the fight against Takfiri terrorists as well as monitoring U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf.

Known to be able to hack into enemy drones, Iran currently possesses the biggest collection of captured or downed American and Israeli drones, including the U.S. MQ1, MQ9, Shadow, ScanEagle, and RQ-170 as well as the Israeli regime’s Hermes, Hajizadeh said earlier this year.

UK tanker seized after it hits boat, ignores distress call

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The Iranian **d e s k** military on Friday night impounded a British-flagged oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz for involvement in an accident with an Iranian fishing boat, after the tanker ignored distress calls.

Allah-Morad Afifpour, head of Ports and Maritime Organization in southern Hormozgan Province, said on Saturday that the 30,000-ton Stena Impero tanker had collided with a fishing boat on its route, adding that according to law, after an accident it is necessary that the causes are investigated.

Following the collision, those on board the fishing boat contacted the British vessel but didn’t receive any response, so they informed the Hormozgan Maritime Organization according to the legal procedures, Afifpour added.

Afifpour also noted that the Stena Impero had been taken to Bandar Abbas port, where it and its crew will remain while a probe is carried out into the vessel’s conduct.

The tanker was not carrying any cargo, he said, adding the crew members may be interviewed on technical matters.

“The investigation into the cause of the accident has started today,” he said. “All its 23 crew members will remain on the ship until the probe is over.”

“If necessary, and at the request of judicial authorities, the crew may be summoned for technical and specialist interviews,” Afifpour added.

Iranian authorities also said that the tanker had infringed on innocent passage and environmental pollution red lines.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, in a tweet on Saturday, said Iran’s conduct towards the British tanker had been fully within international maritime rules. He also compared Iran’s action with a recent seizure of an Iranian tanker by the UK in Gibraltar.

“Unlike the piracy in the Strait of Gibraltar,



“Unlike the piracy in the Strait of Gibraltar, our action in the Persian Gulf is to uphold int’l maritime rules. As I said in NY, it is IRAN that guarantees the security of the Persian Gulf & the Strait of Hormuz. UK must cease being an accessory to #EconomicTerrorism of the US,” Zarif tweeted.

our action in the Persian Gulf is to uphold int’l maritime rules. As I said in NY, it is IRAN that guarantees the security of the Persian Gulf & the Strait of Hormuz. UK must cease being an accessory to #EconomicTerrorism of the US.”

Late on Friday, the British government advised UK ships “to stay out of” the Strait of Hormuz “for an interim period.”

British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt

also warned that there will be “serious consequences” if the situation is not resolved.

On Saturday, Hunt tweeted that seizure of the UK-flagged oil tanker showed “worrying signs Iran may be choosing a dangerous path of illegal and destabilizing behavior”.

Tensions broke out between Tehran and London on July 4, after Britain’s naval forces unlawfully seized an Iran-operated oil tanker and its cargo of 2.1 million barrels of oil in the

Strait of Gibraltar, under the claim that the supertanker had been suspected of carrying crude to Syria in violation of the European Union’s unilateral sanctions against the Arab country.

Reports, however, said the confiscation took place at the request of the U.S.

Tehran has condemned the seizure as “maritime piracy,” warning that it would not go unanswered. It has also rejected London’s claim that the ship had been bound for Syria.

■ **Zarif says capture of British tanker should be pursued through legal procedures**

On Saturday, Hunt telephoned Zarif about the Stena Impero.

Zarif said, “In contrast to the illegal move of Britain in seizing the tanker carrying the Iranian oil, our move was done based on the request of the Ports and Maritime Organization.”

Zarif, who was attending the NAM meeting in Venezuela, added the issue of the British tanker should be pursued through a legal process.

The two foreign ministers also insisted on the need to find solutions and avoid tension.

According to Reuters, Hunt said he had expressed his “extreme disappointment” over Iran’s seizure of the British-flagged tanker.

“Just spoke to ... Zarif and expressed extreme disappointment that having assured me last Saturday Iran wanted to de-escalate situation, they have behaved in the opposite way,” he tweeted on Saturday.

“This has to be about actions not words if we are to find a way through,” Hunt added. “British shipping must and will be protected.”

Hunt made no mention of the tanker carrying the Iranian oil captured by his country’s forces on July 4. In the last Saturday phone call, Hunt had promised Zarif that Britain was not seeking tension with Iran and expressed hope to release Grace 1 in a week.

Bolton’s nuclear enrichment remarks lack legal validity: Shamkhani

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Ali Sham-**d e s k** khani, secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, has said that U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton’s remarks that Iran should not be allowed to enrich uranium “have no legal credibility”.

Bolton tweeted on Thursday that Iran should not have been allowed to maintain enrichment capabilities in the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

“One of the worst mistakes of the Iran deal, now on full display, was allowing Iran to maintain enrichment capabilities. There

should be no enrichment for Iran. Maximum pressure continues until Iran abandons its nuclear ambitions & malign activities,” Bolton tweeted.

Shamkhani said, “Remarks made by the U.S. national security adviser in which he denies Iran’s rights to enrich uranium are symbols of falsity, unilateralism and violation of international norms and lack any legal credibility.”

He noted that any country which is a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty is legally entitled to enrich uranium for peaceful

purposes.

He added that Iran’s right to enrich uranium has been recognized in the JCPOA and also in the 2031 resolution of the UN Security Council.

The security chief added if this right was not recognized Iran would have not entered nuclear talks which produced the JCPOA.

According to the NPT, even NPT signatories mastering nuclear technology are duty bound to help others to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

“..... in furtherance of this principle, all Parties to the Treaty are entitled to participate



in the fullest possible exchange of scientific information for, and to contribute alone or in co-operation with other States to, the further development of the applications of atomic energy for peaceful purposes.”

Zarif says U.S. has ‘shot itself in the foot’ by leaving JCPOA

“We will survive, we will prosper, long after President Trump is gone. Our time slots are in millennia.”

tions, accepting certain sanctions, I mean the missile sanctions were not lifted by the United States and they were not lifted by the United Nations, because we were not prepared to discuss them. We changed the language in the resolution which is very clear. It’s been a very different language in 2031 than it was in the 1929. The United States has a lot to do before it can talk about our missiles. First implement the agreement that they first made. We didn’t have a revolution in the United States. A government of the United States elected by its people had an agreement with Iran and that agreement had been endorsed by the Security Council where the U.S. was and is a permanent member. So, nothing is changed and they have to live up to their commitment. Then they need to start looking at what the problem is. The problem in the region is not the 16 billion dollars that we spend on defense. It’s the 67 billion dollars that Saudi Arabia spends on buying weapons from the United States and the other Western countries, the 22 billion dollars the Emirates spends. The United States is selling 50 billion dollars to our region. That has to stop. That is making our region flammable.”

He added that Trump seems to believe that “what’s mine is mine and what’s yours is negotiable.”

■ **‘We are not waiting President Trump to leave office’**

Zarif also said that Iran is not waiting for

President Trump to leave the office.

“No country in the right mind would make their foreign policy based on events that they don’t have any control over. We are not waiting President Trump to leave office. We don’t know what will happen in 2020. We don’t deal with other countries based on their domestic policies. We deal with other countries as their unitary players in the international relations. We know that no country is a monolith. We certainly are not monolith. We need to deal with other countries in international relations as a unitary player not as a player with various branches of government,” he stated.

■ **‘UK was not in a position to seize a ship that was carrying Iran’s oil’**

Pointing to seizure of Iran-operated supertanker Grace 1 off the coast of Gibraltar by Britain on July 4, Zarif said that the United Kingdom was not in a position to seize a ship that was carrying Iran’s oil.

He said, “That boat was not going to Syria. We cannot tell you where it was going because the United States with its policy of zero oil sale by Iran would go prevent us from selling that oil. The United States is preventing us from doing transparent oil sale. Unfortunately, because there are no EU sanctions that are applicable to non-EU member states. EU, unlike the United States, doesn’t impose its sanctions on third parties. That’s only what the United States does and EU has objected to that. So, the United Kingdom was not in

a position to seize a ship that was carrying, it wasn’t our ship and it was a ship that was carrying our oil and it wasn’t destined to Syria. We were selling our oil. There were no sanctions on Iranian oil. No UN sanctions on Iranian oil. Nobody has the right to confiscate that ship. So, it’s piracy pure and simple.”

■ **‘Don’t play with Iran’**

In another interview with the New Yorker on Thursday, Zarif said, “We always respond. Don’t play with Iran.”

“We say, ‘You may start a war, but you won’t be the ones who end it,’” Zarif warned. He added, “We will survive, we will prosper, long after President Trump is gone. Our time slots are in millennia.”

■ **‘We are interested in substance’**

According to the Guardian, Zarif told reporters on Thursday that Iran offers a deal with the U.S. in which it would formally and permanently accept enhanced inspections of its nuclear program, in return for the permanent lifting of U.S. sanctions, saying, “It’s not about photo ops. We are interested in substance.”

“There are other substantial moves that can be made,” he said.

He said, “If they [the Trump administration] are putting their money where their mouth is, they are going to do it. They don’t need a photo op. They don’t need a two-page document with a big signature.”

Zarif noted that in 2023, under the JCPOA, Iran’s parliament, the Majlis, was supposed to ratify the Additional Protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), a voluntary agreement that allows IAEA inspectors extensive access in Iran to ensure the country does not have a covert nuclear weapons program. As part of the JCPOA, Iran already observes the Additional Protocol. Ratification by the Majlis would make it a more permanent commitment.

At the same time, under the JCPOA, the U.S. Congress was due to lift sanctions on Iran. Zarif proposed that the Iran and U.S. take those steps immediately.

“If Trump wants more for more, we can ratify the Additional Protocol and he can lift the sanctions he set,” Zarif said. “He has said that he will take any measure to Congress — fine. Lift the sanctions and you’ll have the Additional Protocol sooner than 2023.”

The problem in the region is not the 16 billion dollars that we spend on defense. It’s the 67 billion dollars that Saudi Arabia spends on buying weapons from the United States and the other Western countries, the 22 billion dollars the Emirates spends. The United States is selling 50 billion dollars to our region. That has to stop. That is making our region flammable.”

Europeans are all talk and no action, MP says

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Alaeddin Boroujerdi, a member of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, has criticized European countries for failing to fulfil their obligations under the 2015 nuclear agreement, saying the Europeans are all talk and their inaction is unacceptable.

Speaking with the Mehr news agency on Saturday, Boroujerdi said if the other parties to the nuclear deal, also known as the JCPOA, do not secure Iran's interests from the accord, Iran would resume its pre-JCPOA nuclear program.

"Four years ago, we didn't have any restrictions, and if the other parties to the JCPOA don't abide by their commitments, we will certainly return to conditions prior to the deal," he said.

A year after the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA and introducing sanctions against Iran, Tehran announced that it would reduce its commitments to the deal to create a balance in the agreement.

Iranian officials say that reducing commitments is legal and done according to paragraphs 26 and 36 of the deal. Iran says this process of reduction will continue every 60 days as long as other



parties to the deal fail to safeguard Iran's economic interests in the face of U.S. illegal sanctions.

"Europeans have shown that they

don't want to pay the price for saving the agreement. They just make beautiful remarks while words without action are not acceptable for Iran," Boroujerdi

asserted.

'Iran to work with China, Russia on JCPOA'

In an interview with ISNA published on Friday, Boroujerdi said Iran is working with Russia and China and that these two countries are implementing their commitments under the JCPOA.

On Tuesday, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, said, "As stated by our foreign minister, who works hard, Europe has had eleven commitments, none of which it has met. The foreign minister, despite his diplomatic considerations, is clearly stating that. But what did we do? We acted based on our commitments, and even beyond that."

Ayatollah Khamenei reiterated that Iran continued to stay committed to the JCPOA despite the fact that the Europeans violated the international agreement and yet demanded Iran to stay with its promises.

"Now that we have started to reduce our commitments, they step forward. They are very insolent, and they have not abided by their eleven commitments. We have just started to reduce some of our commitments, and this process will surely continue," the Leader asserted.

Iran dismisses rumors Fordow nuclear site is closed

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Behrooz Kamalvandi, spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), has dismissed reports of closure of Iran's Fordow nuclear site, saying the facility is being used for research on vacuum systems used to enrich uranium.

The Fordow facility is open, and research and development activities on vacuum valves used for enriching uranium is being carried out there, Kamalvandi said on Saturday, according to Tasnim.

"The vacuum valves are utilized in complicated nuclear industries, and American nuclear analyst David Albright has also acknowledged the progress of this technology (in Iran) is his recent report," he added.

Last year, Kamalvandi said there will be no change to the Fordow nuclear plant as long as the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, is preserved.

Part of the JCPOA, the official name for the 2015 nuclear deal, states: "Iran will convert the Fordow facility into a nuclear, physics and technology centre."



Montazeri urges Nigeria to send Sheikh Zakzaky to Iran for treatment

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Mohammad Jafar Montazeri, Iran's prosecutor general, has urged the Nigerian judiciary to release Sheikh Ibrahim al-Zakzaky, the top Shiite cleric and leader of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN), and send him to Iran for medical treatment.

In a letter released on Saturday, Montazeri denounced the Nigerian military's mistreatment of Sheikh Zakzaky, saying reports about the cleric's conditions have hurt the feelings of supporters of the oppressed people of Nigeria, Tasnim reported.

"...I, as the prosecutor general of the Islamic Republic of Iran, urge the Nigerian judicial authorities (to take steps) in line with their judicial independence and support for a captive citizen, and provide the ground for his release and transfer him to the Islamic Republic of Iran for treatment," he said.



Sheikh Zakzaky, who is in his mid-sixties, lost his left eyesight when Nigerian government forces raided the northern town of Zaria more than three years ago. His wife also sustained serious wounds while more than 300 of his followers and three of his sons were killed in the violence.

The cleric has been kept in custody along his wife and a large number of his followers ever since.

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

Zakzaky's legal team has long called for his release, saying he is suffering from health issues that require urgent medical care abroad but the state high court in Kaduna has denied the request.

MP: No matter whether London and Paris leave or stay in JCPOA because they aren't honoring obligations

TEHRAN (FNA) — A senior member of the Iranian parliament has criticized European countries for failing to deliver on their commitments under the nuclear deal, adding that it makes no difference for Tehran whether London and Paris leave or stay in the agreement as they are not honoring their promises to the Islamic Republic.

Iran is indifferent to whether the UK and France stay in the nuclear agreement of 2015, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or they leave it as they disregard their undertakings, Hossein Naqavi Hosseini wrote on his Twitter page on Saturday.

The European parties to the deal have practiced their own policies while conforming to the U.S., the lawmaker underlined. "As soon as the U.S. and Europe honor their JCPOA commitments, we will implement our JCPOA commitments, too," he said.

Washington withdrew from the internationally-endorsed JCPOA in May 2018, reimposed the toughest-ever sanctions against the country and started a plan to zero down Tehran's oil sales.

Under the nuclear pact reached between Iran and six world powers in July 2015, Tehran undertook to put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for the removal of nuclear-related sanctions.

Iran is becoming a drone superpower: The Hill

TEHRAN — "This is why, from January to July, Iran has been conducting drone exercises and has said that it even monitored the movements of a U.S. aircraft carrier. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which Washington designated a terrorist organization, is spearheading these recent drone efforts."

"In any future conflict with Iran that might involve the U.S. and its allies against Iran and its proxies, the drone threat will need to be addressed," Frantzman warned. "It already is being confronted by Israel, Saudi Arabia and others. It is a clear symbol of Iran's growing footprint across the Middle East, which stretches from Beirut to Damascus, Baghdad and Yemen via the Gulf of Oman."

Iranian tanker seized by Saudi Arabia released

POLITICAL TEHRAN — An Iranian ship that had been involuntarily kept by Saudi Arabia in Jeddah port was released on Saturday.

According to reports, it was being carried along its crew toward Iranian waters by two tugboats.

The tanker, Happiness 1, owned by the National Iranian Tanker Company, suffered a technical problem on April 30 and carried to Jeddah port. However,

Saudi Arabia had refused to release it since then.

Saudi Arabia has charged Iran more than 10 million dollars under the pretext of fixing and keeping the ship.

The Saudi move in refusing to free the ship was in contravention of law, especially the law of seas. It was an instance of illegal seizure of a country's property.

Legally, the Saudi government is tasked to repay the money for keeping the ship without any reasons for about 80 days.



Russia's Putin welcomes any detente between Iran, U.S.



POLITICAL TEHRAN — Russian President Vladimir Putin has said his country would welcome any detente between the United States and Iran.

Putin expressed concern over the Tehran-Washington tensions, saying, "This worries us because this is happening near our borders."

He made the comments to U.S. director Oliver Stone in an interview published on the official Kremlin website on Friday.

"This may destabilize the situation around Iran, affect some countries with which we have very close relations, causing additional refugee flows on a large scale plus substantially damage the world economy as well as the global energy sector," Putin said, according to Tass.

"We would welcome any improvement when it comes to

relations between the U.S. and Iran. A simple escalation of tension will not be advantageous for anyone. It seems to me that this is also the case with the U.S.," he added.

The United States withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal on 8 May 2018 and imposed harsh economic sanctions on Tehran, including oil embargo.

One year later, on 8 May 2019, Iran's Supreme National Security Council announced suspension of some commitments in the framework of the nuclear deal and gave other participants in the deal two months to return to their obligations.

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

'Cuba, Iran culturally resistant to economic pressure'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Simon Rodriguez Pedro, Cuban co-chairman of Iran-Cuba parliamentary friendship group, has called for expansion of ties between Iran and Cuba.

During a meeting with the Iranian ambassador to Havana Rashid Bayat-Mokhtari, Rodriguez pointed to the good relations between Iran and Cuba.

He also referred to the visit the Iranian parliamentary friendship group made to Havana, saying resistance is the common point between the Iranian and Cuban cultures, which can be used to expand ties, IRNA reported.

On U.S. pressures against Tehran and Havana and the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal, Rodriguez



said, "The U.S. economic terrorism goals against Iran and Cuba are illegal. That's a conspiracy to dominate independent countries, for example Iran and Cuba."

The Iranian ambassador, for his part, pointed to the 60 years of Cuba's and 40 years of Iran's resistance to the evil plots hatched by the U.S., saying despite the deceitful calls of the U.S. for negotiations, Washington's actions regarding the nuclear deal proves that "the U.S. is not trustworthy."

He also said European countries did not do anything special to safeguard Iran's benefits under the deal in the one-year opportunity Tehran gave them, causing Tehran to gradually decrease its commitments to the deal.

However, Bayat-Mokhtari continued, if Iran's interests are met, Tehran will go right back to its full JCPOA commitments.

'Iran confiscated British oil tanker according to intl. law'

ing British oil tanker was carried out according to the rule of retaliation in international law.

"The rule of retaliation is a recognized concept in international law and it is used in the face of another country's illegal measures. The correct action of Iran's government to encounter illegal economic war and seizure of oil tankers is an example of this rule and it is carried out according to international law," Kadhodaï tweeted on Saturday.

In a statement on Friday, the IRGC

said that the vessel named "Stena Impero" had been captured "at the request of Hormozgan Ports and Maritime Organization when passing through the Strait of Hormuz, for failing to respect international maritime rules." The oil tanker was transferred to the coast to undergo the required legal proceedings, the statement added.

An unnamed Iranian maritime official said the ship had breached international maritime regulations by passing through a prohibited maritime passage in the Strait,

turning off its tracking signals and ignoring warnings issued by Iranian authorities. "The tanker had turned off its tracker and ignored several warnings by the IRGC before being impounded," the source said.

On July 4, British Royal Marines in Gibraltar stormed the Iran-operated 300,000-tonne Grace 1 and detained it, accusing it of carrying oil to Syria in possible violation of the European Union's sanctions on the Arab country. Iran condemned the move as "piracy" and summoned Britain's ambassador in protest over it.



POLITICAL TEHRAN (MNA) — Guardian Council spokesman Abbasali Kadhodaï said that Iran's measure to seize a trespass-

Iranian police seize 650kg of opium in single operation

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — The anti-narcotics police forces of southern provinces of Bushehr and Hormozgan, in a joint operation, have managed to capture 650 kilograms of opium, a provincial police chief announced on Saturday.

Speaking to reporters in the southwestern port city of Asalouyeh on Saturday, Bushehr Province Police Commander Brigadier General Khalil Vaezi said the Law Enforcement Force prioritizes the fight against drug dealers, working on a round-the-clock basis, and this has led to an insecure atmosphere in Iran for the smugglers.

Following the intelligence activities of the police forces a major drug ring was identified and destroyed in a joint operation by the anti-narcotic police forces of Bushehr and Hormozgan, the commander said.



During the operation, he added, the forces seized a vehicle belonging to the drug ring and captured 27 packages of opium, weighing 655 kilograms in total.

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

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

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

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

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	246437.3
IFX	3213.11

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,303 rials
GBP	52,506 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$62.96/b
WTI	\$56.10/b
OPEC Basket	\$64.60/b
Gold	\$1,439.90/oz
Silver	\$16.38/oz
Platinum	\$859.75/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Launching integrated forex market in last stages: CBI

Establishment of this market has been approved by the Money and Credit Council (MCC), the highest banking policy-making body of the Central Bank of Iran, on January 8 as the CBI aims to explore the real volume of demand and supply in the foreign currency market through a new mechanism.

Regarding this market, a CBI official said on May 5 that the new mechanism aims to organize the transactions in the foreign currency exchange market between the exchange shops.

Forex market in Iran, which had been experiencing many ups and downs after the U.S. withdrew from Iran's nuclear deal (known as JCPOA) in May 2018, has been recently stabilized, while Iranian currency rial is strengthening.

Economic experts believe that the noticeable drop recently witnessed in the exchange rates (for dollar falling from 130,000 rials to lower than 120,000 rials) has been mainly the result of forex management measures taken by CBI.

That's true and CBI Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati said on Monday that the value of Iranian rial is recovering against the U.S. dollar as the CBI policies for shielding the currency against the U.S. sanctions are taking effect.

He said the foreign currency exchange market is stabilized. "Of the CBI's measures which led to this stabilization in the forex market it could be referred to injecting more foreign currency into the market in a controlled way over the past month which did not lead to a sudden drop in the rates, because such drop would again result in rise of the rates", according to Mehdi Sadeqi Shahedani, an economist.

The economist believes that CBI strengthening its supervision over NIMA has been resulted to injection of more foreign currency to the domestic economy via this system making the forex rate coming down.

In early July 2018, Iran launched Forex Management Integrated System, locally known as NIMA, to allow the exporters of non-oil commodities to sell their foreign currency earnings to importers of consumer products.

The system, which seeks to boost transparency, create competitiveness among exchange shops and a secure environment for traders, was aimed to create the ground for importers to supply their required foreign currency without specific problems and for exporters to re-inject their earned foreign currency to domestic forex market.

Then, when the issue of launching integrated forex market was announced by the CBI, some said that NIMA will stop activity once this market comes to operate, although it was denied by the CBI governor.

On May 25, Abdolnaser Hemmati stressed that NIMA is a pivot of the foreign currency exchange and trade related activities in the country and it will not be omitted from the forex market at all.

While this system will not stop its activity, it has been ordered and emphasized that 50-60 percent of the foreign currency earned from the exports should be presented in NIMA, the CBI governor added.

Unlocking liquidity will restore growth and stability for Nigeria: Ayo Teriba

If Nigeria is to achieve sustainable economic growth and stability in its economy, unlocking liquidity must be given top priority.

According to proshareng.com, Dr. Ayo Teriba, an economist and CEO, Economic Associates, made explained this point at the Q2, 2019 one-day quarterly conference on Nigeria's economic outlook in Lagos.

He decried the fact that Nigeria was at the low end of the liquidity ladder in Africa, arguing that the situation had to be addressed urgently. Liquidity he pointed out was critical to increasing the nation's external reserves that serve as a buffer against shocks in commodity prices.

One of the ways he believed Nigeria could improve its liquidity, is by attracting capital inflows, which was important considering the revenue challenges of the government.

In the evolving race for global liquidity, Teriba made a strong case for the alignment of policies to strengthen liquidity.

According to him, the "Federal government is focused on growth, while the Central Bank of Nigeria is concerned about stability. There is no express concern about liquidity".

He was of the view that liquid markets are about making sure that there are buffers against shocks, and for Nigeria, having more capital inflows was important than outflows.

The economist stressed the need for Nigeria to move beyond exports, taxes and debts towards rental income and equity. He stressed that Nigeria had a lot to gain from securitizing its assets.

Giving further insight on capital flows, he identified foreign direct investment, FDI and Remittances as the major types that Nigeria should utilize.

Iran to save €85m in a year by indigenizing auto parts

ECONOMY TERHAN — Iranian Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister for Industrial Affairs Farshad Moqimi said the country's car makers will soon sign deals worth \$7.4 trillion rials (about €157.4 million) with domestic spare parts manufacturers, which will save the country €85 million in a year.

According to the official, based on the mentioned contracts, 32 domestic car parts manufacturers will manufacture 35 different items which are currently being supplied by foreign manufacturers.

Moqimi also said that five specialized workshops and meetings are scheduled to be held this year in order to discuss and explore ways for indigenization of automobile industry.

In early May, Iran's Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani has stressed that the policy of domestic manufacturing of auto parts should be seriously followed up.

Given that 1.25 million vehicles are anticipated to be manufactured in the country during the current Iranian calendar year (ends



on March 19, 2020), the part manufacturers will need 150 trillion rials of working capital (about \$3.571 billion) for the purchase of raw materials and other required items.

As previously announced by Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry, Iranian carmakers manufactured 42,623 vehicles during the first Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 20, 2019).

The ministry's data show that car manufacturing in Iran has fallen 47.2 percent in the first month of this year from 80,794 cars manufactured in the same month of the previous year.

Earlier this month, Moqimi had also stressed that the regulations should be in a way that remove the barriers in the way of domestic production.

"When a regulation is set, it may remove a problem but creates another one. Taking this issue into account and also considering the special current condition of the country, some special approach should be taken when setting the regulations", the official said.

In late May, Moqimi had announced that Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry will launch a comprehensive system for registration of domestically-made products in near future.

'Over 6,500 stone processing units operating across Iran'

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Director General of Mineral Industries Office of the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade Seifollah Amiri said over 6500 stone processing units are currently active across the country, 500 of which are exporting to global markets.

According to Amiri, only seven percent of the country's stone (both decorative and construction) mines have been scientifically surveyed and explored and the other 93 percent need to be surveyed and explored properly in order to tap into the significant potentials of this sector.

Speaking on the sidelines of the first exhibition of domestic production opportunities and manufacturing boom in Tehran, the official noted "Manufacturing the machinery in this area requires high-tech knowledge and the domestic production exhibition can provide a platform for the presence of knowledge-based companies in this field."

Iran exported \$350 million worth of decorative and facade stones during the past Iranian calendar year (March 2018-March 2019).

According to Rahmati the vice-president of the Iranian stone association, Iran is currently producing 13 million tons of such stones, cementing its place among the world's top five countries in this industry.

Statistics suggest that the number of decorative and facade stone mines in the country exceeds 2,000, of which only 200 are currently active.

"The annual production capacity of the country's active mines is estimated at 30 million metric tons and these mines have created 380,000 job opportunities directly and indirectly," Rahmati said.

The official noted that, based on a five-year plan for the country's stone industry, the value of exports in this area was supposed to reach \$2 billion, but this goal isn't realized because the practical steps and support required by the ministry of industry did not take place.

"Iranian stone industry has high potential, proper reserves, color variation and superior quality compared to rivals, but it needs support and incentives to realize these potentials," he added.

Mentioning the unjust U.S. sanctions, Rahmati noted that the country's stone industry is obviously experiencing a tough period, however the current hurdles can be eliminated with serious presence in different global markets, especially overseas exhibitions.

Iran's first exhibition of domestic production opportunities and manufacturing boom kicked off at Tehran permanent



international fairground on July 18.

The four-day exhibition is hosting 210 companies active in various fields like automotive and spare parts, household appliances, mineral industries, oil, gas and petrochemical industries, telecommunications and marine industries.

The exhibit 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.

'300 companies omitted from privatization plan for current year'

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Head of Iranian Privatization Organization (IPO) announced that the organization deleted 300 state-run companies from the list of companies that their shares were planned to be transferred to the private sector in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020).



Mir Ali Ashraf Abdollah Pouri-Hosseini also said that some other 300 companies will be attached priority in the mentioned list, Tasnim news agency reported on Saturday.

In its planned budget for the current Iranian year, the Iranian government expects to earn some 106 trillion rials (about \$2.5 billion) of income from divesting shares of state-run companies to the private sector.

In Iran, implementation of privatization plan aimed at more productivity, investment making, job creation, promotion of trade balance, more competition in domestic economy, and reducing financial and management burden on the government has been under the spotlight over the past decade.

The law on implementation of the general policies of the Article 44 of Iran's Constitution on privatizing state-owned companies was declared in 2006 in a bid to downsize the government and promote the private sector's role in the national economy.

The government envisioned a large privatization program in the Fifth Five-Year National Development Plan (2010-2015), aiming to privatize about 20 percent of the state-owned firms each year. Under the present interpretation of the Article 44, some state-owned companies have been privatized to reduce their financial burden on the country's budget and also increase their productivity.

Downsizing the government is on the agenda, but a number of factors has been hindering privatization trend in the country, among them government's high interference in the management of the transferred companies is a challenging one.

Second Announcement



IN THE NAME OF GOD

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

EXTENSION OF INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 98-01/100

Tender Holder:

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Two-Stage Tender:

Purchasing of H.265/HEVC Video Encoder according to the tender documents

Deadline of Receiving Documents:

As of publishing second announcement of advertisement latest by the business hour dated on Wednesday July 24, 2019.

Place of Receiving Documents:

Secretariat of Tenders' Commission, Technical Purchasing (KALA) Dept., Media Technology and Development Deputy Office, Bldg. No. 2, IRIB, Jam-e Jam St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran

Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participating in Tender:

The amount of USD 7,500 which should be in the form of extendable bank guarantee

Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:

The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted within one main envelope marked with tender number no later than 15 p.m. on Saturday August 24, 2019 and submitted to the Secretariat of Commission of Tenders.

Time and Place of Opening Envelopes

The date of opening envelopes A&B is at 8:30 a.m. on Monday August 26, 2019 in the office of Vice President of IRIB Planning and Financial Resources and opening of envelope C will be after technical evaluation. It should be noted that bidders should hold license from the authorized bodies.

For more information, please contact the following phone numbers: 0098-21-22166313

It is obvious that cost of publishing two advertisements shall be borne by the winner of tender.

Public Relations Dept. of IRIB

Iran's refining capacity grows nearly 40% since March 2017

E N E R G Y TEHRAN – Head of National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) said Iran's crude oil and gas condensate refining capacity has increased by 38.8 percent since 2017.

According to Ali-Reza Sadeq-Abadi, currently the country's refining capacity has reached 2.15 million barrels per day (mbpd) up 600,000 bpd from 1.55 mbpd at the beginning of the Iranian calendar year of 1396 (March 21, 2017).

"Daily processing capacity of the country's refineries is expected to increase by 250,000 barrels by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020) to reach 2.4 million bpd," Sadeq-Abadi said.

According to the official, most of the increase in the capacity is expected to come from the fourth phase of Iran's Persian Gulf Star Refinery (PGSR) which is located in the southern province of Hormozgan.

The official noted that the mentioned phase is more focused on capacity optimization and fault elimination of existing phases.

In early May, PGSR Managing Director Mohammad-Ali Dadvar announced that the refinery's processing capacity is going to reach 540,000 barrels per day by the end of the current Iranian calendar year.

Last week, Iranian Parliament passed a bill for increasing the capacity of the country's oil and gas condensate refineries.

The approval of the bill came after earlier



this month the Research Center of Iran's parliament announced that petro-refineries are two times more profitable than refineries and suggested that National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC)'s new refinery projects be defined as petro-refineries.

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

Republic has been taking various measures to counter the U.S. actions and alleviate the impacts of the unjust sanctions on its economy.

One of such policies was to increase the crude oil refining capacity and preventing the sales of crude oil.

As new development phases of the giant offshore South Pars gas field have come online under the administration of President Hassan

Rouhani, Iran's gas production capacity has reached 800 mcmd. Moreover, due to the development of shared fields in the West Karoun area, Iran's crude oil production capacity has experienced a big jump.

In parallel, petrochemical development, as well as refinery enhancement projects have been among key policies of the Oil Ministry in recent years.

Despite the U.S.'s attempts to zero Iran's oil exports in the past one year, this objective has not been achieved in practice. On the contrary, Iran has seen its crude oil refining capacity increase.

Sadeq-Abadi said: "Thanks to planning, 850,000 bpd of crude oil and gas condensate, which the U.S. unlawful sanctions could prevent from entering world markets, has been refined in Iran and converted to products of higher value-added."

Among the policies the Oil Ministry has adopted for boosting the refining capacity of the country are increasing feedstock receipt to take in maximum crude oil and condensate at oil refineries.

The latest data show that the supply of gas condensate to refineries would increase from the current 450,000 bpd to 500,000 bpd and oil supply to refineries would go from 1.7 mbpd to 1.9 mbpd.

Sadeq-Abadi also gave a positive assessment of Iran's strategic gasoline and gasoil reserves, comparing it with Iran's hard currency reserves.

SP phase 14 refinery's 1st unit to go operational by late Oct.

E N E R G Y TEHRAN – Managing director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) said the first unit of South Pars gas field's phase 14 refinery will be operational by the end of the seventh Iranian calendar month of Mehr (October 22), IRNA reported.

"Phase 14 is the latest and most prioritized phase among the South Pars field's current projects, producing one billion cubic feet of gas from its first two platforms has been achieved, and two remaining platforms will be installed and inaugurated by the end of autumn," Mohammad Meshkinfam said.

Mentioning the total physical progress in the first unit (unit 122) of the mentioned phase's refinery, Meshkinfam noted that "This unit is the prerequisite for touching the refinery's flair, and it is the first unit which goes operational by receiving gas from the phase platforms."



The third platform of South Pars phase 14 was installed on its offshore spot on July 13, and according to Mohammad-Mehdi Tavasolipour, the operator of this phase, this platform as well as the one remaining will be put into operation by the end of autumn.

According to the official, \$150 million has been saved in the projects for building and installing the four platforms of phase 14, and the total cost of the projects stood at \$550 million.

The third platform of South Pars phase 14, namely platform 14B, will add 14.2 million cubic meters of gas per day to the total output of the giant gas field, according to Tavasolipour.

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 Iranian calendar month of Mehr, 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.

CIOFC to boost oil production in Sa'adat Abad oil field

E N E R G Y TEHRAN – The executive operation of a development project for maintaining and enhancing oil production at Sa'adat Abad oil field in central Iran commenced on July 17, Shana reported.

According to the Central Iranian Oil Fields Company (CIOFC), with 2.245 trillion rials (nearly \$53.5 million) of investment, the project is aimed to increase the field's crude oil output by 3,000 bpd.

"Under Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) and Engineering, Procurement and Drilling (EPD) frameworks, the project has been awarded to domestic

companies," Ramin Hatami, the managing director of CIOFC, said.

According to Hatami, during in this project, two wells, an appraisal and a development well, were to be drilled in the field and the project also entails installation of power generation facilities near the field.

This project is a part of master plan to develop the three fields of Sa'adat Abad, Danan and Naft Shahr, he added.

Sa'adat Abad oil field is located 120 km off southeast of Shiraz city in Fars province.



Managing Director of NICICO:

Copper Industry Invests €1.8bn for Sustainable Development, a Golden Opportunity for Development

Managing Director of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) Ardeshtir Sa'd-Mohammadi revealed that his company will invest €1.8 billion for the sustainable development.

He made the remarks in the Ordinary Annual General Assembly meeting of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) and added, "NICICO attained the highest record of production of copper concentrate in a way that the company produced 1,180,000 tons of copper concentrate last year in 1397 (ended March 20, 2019)."

Also, the company witnessed maximum production of copper production containing mineral in a way that NICICO managed to produce 298,000 tons of copper since its establishment up to the present time, Sa'd-Mohammadi maintained.

Moreover, producing copper in the same period, NICICO sold more than 10,000 billion tomans worth of copper last year (ended March 20, 2019), with the average price of \$6,500 in each ton, he said, adding, "of total 10,000 billion tomans worth of sales of the company, 5,000 billion tomans of which was gained as profit."

Turning to the current status of the company at the capital market, the managing director said, "National Iranian Copper Industries Company ranked its status among 50 TSE-paneled company in a way that its rank promoted from 30 to 3."

According to the latest report of Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO), outstanding rank of the company has been preserved in the first three months of the current year in 1398 (March 21 – June 21).

Placing special emphasis on the fundamental value of the company among industrial and production units as well as its profitability for shareholders of the company in the course of years, he said, "NICICO managed to offer positive efficiency of 1616 percent to its shareholders in the past 12 years."

He put the current value of the company at 326 billion rials, adding, "to maintain status of the company and increase profitability, strategy of the company should be defined based on development of exploration,



operations, operation of development projects and also increase of production volume."

In addition to preserve current situation, the company would witness promotion of production rank among top companies in the world, the CEO of the company added.

Why Development?

In response to a question why copper industry of the country should move towards development and production growth, he addressed shareholders of the company and added, "study of status of copper metal shows that five factors affect the demanding trend of this metal, total of which should be considered in the field of development and any decision should be made in accordance to it."

Lack of proper alternative for copper, increase of consumption of copper by countries in the world including China, United States and Germany (these countries account for 61.5 share of copper consumption volume in the world.), strategy of the US for renovating infrastructures, improving fundamental factors such as electrical cases, airports, aerospace industries, moving towards taking advantage of electric vehicles and cars, discovery of new copper reserves in the world and getting lion's share of producing 830 million tons of extractable minerals have been cited as the main five factors for making decision in implementation of development projects."

To compile and formulate future strategy of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO), moreover these fundamental factors, mineral's policymaking adopted in this regard should be taken into serious consideration," he opined.

For example, European Union (EU) has formulated a strategy for profit-yielding investment for the next 10 years in the mineral and industrial sector, he said, adding, "in its formulation, EU has specified 20 elements and articles for lucrative investment."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Sa'd-Mohammadi reiterated, "fortunately, copper is considered as one of the most lucrative and profitable elements in EU's pre-defined strategy, because, 2.5 million tons of copper will be added to the growing demand in the worldwide."

With due observance to the said issue, it can be concluded that National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO)

should not lose the opportunity of investing in development projects, he emphasized.

Turning to the changes of copper consumption in the world since its discovery and added, "the worldly consumption of copper has been on the verge of rise. Over the past 20 years, copper production has turned twofold and we should not lag behind to increase copper production."

Managing director of the company said that about 99 percent of companies in the world are working in the copper sector, adding, "no industry like copper industry is safe and secured profitable."

Golden Opportunity for Development

He added, "NICICO has invested in the concentrate sector in recent five years and we have a golden opportunity for this issue, because, statistics in world confirms copper consumption and also increasing price trend of copper by 2023."

The average price of copper in the next five years will hit over \$7,500 tons, he said, adding, "today, about \$12,570 should be invested for production of each ton of copper, so that it seems necessary that this investment volume should hit \$8,000 in Iran."

Therefore, this is a golden opportunity for investing in the field of copper, otherwise, Iran will lag behind the fast-paced development of copper industry in the world, NICICO managing director added.

He pointed to the fulfillment of development projects of copper industry in the field of increasing production capacity of concentrate in the company and added, "given the significant rise of copper in the worldwide, existence of 400,000 tons smelting capacity in the country and also maintaining export status of the

NICICO in the field of concentrate due to its profitability, we need one million tons of concentrate."

Of total one million tons of copper concentrate, 450,000 tons of which will be provided with the expansion projects of copper in Aloo, Darrehzar and Chah Firouzeh, so that effective planning should be made to attain new reserves and activating them, he stated.

Discoveries, Guarantor of Dynamicity of NICICO

Statistics show that a 100,000-ton copper concentrate production plant can earn 5 billion tomans profits, 2.5 billion tomans of which is the profit which is gained by the company, he reiterated.

In line with the second objective of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO), which is making new investment in the field of exploration and expansion of copper reserves with the aim of increasing copper concentrate production, it is agreed that land area as large as 60,000 square kilometers will be explored in the nationwide."

Totally, NICICO holds 10 copper zones in the provinces of Kerman, East Azrbaijan, Yazd, Isfahan and Sistan and Baluchestan.

He put the current proven copper reserves of the company at 2,200,000,000 tons, he said, adding, "once new copper mines are put into operation, the said figure will increase significantly."

NICICO Gains Half of Total Revenues Obtained Last Year as "Profit"

He went on to say that NICICO produced 247,000 tons of cathode last year (ended March 20, 2019), the rate of which

was unprecedented in all-time history of the company.

"We are sure that, despite some months of stoppage in Khatounabad Copper Production Company due to overhauling, developing and modernization of smelter unit, it is hoped that we will produce cathode in the current year more than a year ago."

With due observance to the said issue, the company will break the copper production record with the nonstop efforts of industrial personnel and staff of the company."

Turning to the fair and good performance of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) in the field of sales in the current year (started March 21, 2019), he added, "given the production and sales statistics, the company has managed to materialize most of its objectives ahead of scheduled date."

Despite unjust sanctions imposed by US against the country, the company managed to sell 5,100 billion tomans worth of copper i.e. equivalent to half of total revenues of the company gained over the past year (ended March 20, 2019), CEO of NICICO added.

In the end, Managing Director of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) Ardeshtir Sa'd-Mohammadi said, "certainly all development projects of the company can be put into operation under the auspices of empathy, unity and amity successfully, the issue of which will generate more employment opportunities. With the studies made in this regard, the company will make its utmost efforts to materialize most of its objectives in the current year (started March 21, 2019)."

By A.Saiedi



The troubled mistake of the former vice president of U.S.

Europe's decline inevitable unless it resists U.S. unilateralism: Italian author

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — An Italian author and geopolitical analyst hailed the "successful" strategy of resistance adopted by countries like Iran, Venezuela, and Syria against the US, and warned that if Europe does not liberate itself from US unilateralism, its decline is inevitable.

"There is no doubt that Iran, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen have been successful in their strategy of resistance..." Stefano Vernole, the head of External Relations at the Eurasia Mediterranean Study Center, said in an interview with the Tasnim News Agency.

"What Europe needs is a process of military, economic and cultural liberation (from US) on a continental scale, otherwise its decline and disintegration appear practically inevitable," he added.



Vernole, a graduate in contemporary history and analysis of conflicts, ideologies, and politics in the contemporary world, has worked in the field of bibliographic cataloging and in the field of public administration. He is the head of external relations at the Eurasia Mediterranean Study Center and Deputy Director of "Eurasia", a journal of geopolitical studies. He is the author of Ex-Yugoslavia: Dirty Game in the Balkans, National Fragmentation and Geopolitical Risk of Kosovo (2013), The Serbian Question and the Kosovo Crisis (2008), as well as co-author of The struggle for Kosovo (2007), Tibet Crossroads between Past and Future (2014), Discovering Tibet (2015), and Lo Xizang (Tibet) and the New Silk Road (2016).

The following is the full text of the interview:

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

A: There is no doubt that Iran, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen have been successful in their strategy of resistance but these are sovereign states, the situation is different for the Palestinians who in reality are still struggling to have real recognition. It is equally clear that not only their condition of national sovereignty was essential for the purpose, in fact, the support of a part of the anti-imperialist powers proved decisive. Syria has obtained decisive help precisely from the Iranian and Russian military intervention, Venezuela has nevertheless obtained economic and diplomatic support from Moscow and Beijing, Yemen has been helped by Iran and other countries. The cause of Palestine in recent decades, however, inflamed the hearts of millions of people around the world. Unfortunately, the internal differences and some strategic errors of the leadership of the PLO (including Hamas) in recent years have seriously damaged the image, alienating a part of the likes he enjoyed. To sum up, there are at least two conditions necessary for victorious resistance: an independent territorial base and important international friendships.

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

A: Theoretically yes, but the starting conditions are different for each nation, as I explained partly in the previous answer. First of all, the difference is between countries that belong (better are employed) to NATO or not, because they have much narrower margins of maneuver than others. Paradoxically, non-Western countries have more autonomy and the possibility of alternative choices. An emblematic case is that of the current Italian government, within which there would be exponents certainly interested in a 360-degree geopolitical turn compared to the current strategic location of their country, but they have to deal with the constraints deriving from belonging to the Atlantic Alliance. Rather than making high-sounding proclamations, it is a question of snatching bits of sovereignty whenever the opportunity arises, remembering that time plays against the United States and in favor of the Eurasian group led by China and Russia.

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

A: The comparison between supporters of US unilateralism and those of Eurasian multipolarism is today the great geopolitical game that takes place on a global scale. However, Europe cannot support it for two main reasons: it is not a truly sovereign international entity not even possessing an autonomous army but having to rely on NATO (i.e. a military alliance led by the USA); he has no alternative idea to that of liberalism and North American liberalism, having renounced his cultural identity in favor of US soft power. Difficult, given also the recent appointments to the top management of the European Commission, that Brussels can soon reverse this trend, so it risks being relegated to the margins of the global agenda. What Europe needs is a process of military, economic and cultural liberation on a continental scale, otherwise, its decline and disintegration appear practically inevitable.

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — Former US Vice President Joe Biden's support for the Iraq war has become a big trouble for him. Many analysts believe that this could create a major crisis for Biden during the first phase of the Democratic primaries. Biden, however, is trying to make things natural! In the 2016 presidential election, Hillary Clinton was criticized by many American voters for supporting the Iraq war. Here are some of the latest news and analyzes in U.S.:

■ **Sanders slams Biden, says he was 'wrong big time' on Iraq War**

As Fox News reported, in some of his most forceful criticism to date against 2020 Democratic rival Joe Biden, Sen. Bernie Sanders said he has some "pretty significant" policy differences with the former vice president as he assailed his stances on trade, Wall Street regulation and more. And Sanders — the populist senator from Vermont who's making his second straight White House run — said that Biden was "wrong big time" in voting in 2002 in support of the Iraq War.

In an interview Tuesday with the Washington Post, Sanders also slammed Republican President Trump over his controversial tweets directed at Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and three fellow first-term progressive lawmakers. He called Trump a "racist" and a "bigot."

And the independent senator said that if elected to the White House, he would "absolutely" look into breaking up online giants Amazon, Facebook, and Google. Sanders was interviewed a day after Biden unveiled a plan to beef up the Affordable Care Act — better known as ObamaCare — by adding a "public option."

Biden's move is a bid to protect the signature 2010 law — which dramatically altered the nation's health care system — not only from the decade-old attempts by the GOP to repeal the law, but also from calls from the Democratic Party's left flank to replace it with "Medicare-for-all."

"I understand the appeal to Medicare-for-all. But folks supporting it should be clear that it means getting rid of ObamaCare. And I'm not for that," Biden emphasized.

Sanders, firing back a day later, said "of course he's wrong" regarding Biden's insinuation that a single-payer Medicare-for-all system would tear up ObamaCare. And he said that "when Trump and his friends tried to repeal it, you're looking at a guy who traveled all over this country, led large rallies, and worked with Democratic senators and members of Congress to oppose what Trump was doing."

"I have helped write and defended the Affordable Care Act," Sanders added. But he noted that "you know what — times change and we have to go further."

"I like Joe and I hope we will have this debate, but when Joe says something to the effect that 'Medicare for seniors' -- what did he say -- will end, I mean that's just obviously an absurd situation," Sanders added. He explained that his Medicare-for-all plan would cost \$30-40 trillion over a 10-year period. But he compared that to the \$50 trillion he said it would cost to continue the nation's current health care system. Sanders also slammed Biden for his vote in the 1990s as a senator from Delaware in favor of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), as well as his initial support for the Iraq War. Biden has long admitted that his 2002 Iraq War vote was a mistake. And Sanders targeted Biden for his votes to deregulate Wall Street, which he noted he opposed. "That led in my view to the Wall Street collapse of 2008 and the incredible pain that that caused for the American people," Sanders noted. And he argued that "the differences between Joe and me on foreign policy, on domestic policy, is pretty significant. More importantly, our vision for the future of this country is very different and voters will end up taking a look at our records, at our ideas for the future. They'll make their decision."

Sanders also took aim at the president over his language — both on Twitter and in front of cameras at the White House — slamming Ocasio-Cortez and fellow Democratic freshman Reps. Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan. In comments that Democrats have called racist, Trump said that if the lawmakers "hate our country," they can go back to their "broken and crime-infested" countries, fix them and then "come back and show us how it's done." "If you're not happy in the U.S., if you're complaining all the time, you can leave, you can leave right now," he said.

Three of the four lawmakers were born

Barnie Sanders challenges Biden over Iraq war



Former US Vice President Joe Biden's support for the Iraq war has become a big trouble for him. Many analysts believe that this could create a major crisis for Biden during the first phase of the Democratic primaries. Biden, however, is trying to make things natural!

in the United States. "We have a president of the United States who is a racist, who is a bigot," Sanders emphasized. "This is disgusting. This is the most racist out-break statements from a president that I've heard in my life and it must be universally condemned."

In the interview, Sanders also said if elected, he would probably not move the U.S. embassy to Israel from Jerusalem back to Tel Aviv. Sanders, 77, was asked if his age was a factor in the 2020 election. He noted that it was one of many factors, but also said that he's "blessed with good health." Explaining he used to run long distance as a younger person, he jokingly challenged the 73-year-old president, saying "I will run a mile with Donald Trump."

■ **Joe Biden Was One of the Iraq War's Most Enthusiastic Backers**

As Branko Marcetic wrote in *Jacobin Mag*, Joe Biden didn't just vote to invade Iraq — he worked hard alongside George W. Bush to persuade the public to back it. Biden holds significant responsibility for the bloodshed that has engulfed Iraq and the surrounding region since the invasion.

As the Trump administration's saber-rattling toward Iran threatens another disastrous war in the Middle East, foreign policy has gained newfound focus in the 2020 presidential race. And former vice president Joe Biden's 2002 vote in favor of the Iraq War leaves him with a particularly glaring vulnerability. Biden's vote had already become a sticking point in the race before President Trump began his provocations toward Iran in earnest. 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 eighteen and twenty-nine were less likely to back Biden because of it.

But to say the now-Democratic front-runner 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 twenty-first 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 11, Biden stood as a leading Democratic voice on foreign policy, chairing the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As President Bush attempted to sell the US 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.

■ **From Dove to Hawk**

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 US foreign policy, Biden criticized Bush during his first year in office for the then-president's hawkish position on missile defense.

September 11 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 new arms race." But the nearly 3,000 Americans who were killed on US 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 reelection 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 as 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 created opened 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 thirteen 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 US 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.

■ **Setting the Ground Rules**

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 preemptive 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.

In the 2016 presidential election, Hillary Clinton was criticized by many American voters for supporting the Iraq war

Trump enacting repetitive scenario against Iran

Now, a similar scenario is constructed against Iran.

But will the scenario work as it did previously?

More than a year ago, the US President pulled out from Iran's nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, calling it the worst deal America has ever made. He started an economic war against Iran hoping to oblige Iranian officials start a new round of talks with the US to hammer a new deal. The US president imposed the toughest financial embargo ever in the history to have Iran's economy suffocate. Not having what he expected from his JCPOA withdrawal and draconian sanctions, Trump started claiming that Iran has violated JCPOA covertly enriching uranium. In his latest move, he also sanctioned top Iranian officials including Iranian FM and the Leader of the Islamic Revolution. Trump also introduced Iran as the biggest threat to the security of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. He sought to make his allies accompany him with the idea and also sent troops to the region.

Trump has announced repeatedly that he does not seek war with Iran but thanks to his deeds and the repeated American scenario, and the recent created tensions in the Persian Gulf, the risk of what some call 'an accidental war' is high.

As Dr. Mohammad Marandi, Political analyst and the Head of American Studies Department at the University of Tehran, told Mehr news agency in an interview, "the sanctions imposed on Iran are unprecedented. They are more severe than what the US had imposed on Iraq or Libya. Of course, ultimately the US attacked both Iraq and Libya and destroyed the two countries. But in the case of Iran, the country is much stronger therefore attacking it would be very painful for the US. It is not a war that they can really win."

"Iran is a larger country with a larger population with powerful armed forces plus powerful regional allies including Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, Yemen and Afghanistan. Turkey is moving closer to Iran as well as the Qatar and Oman," he noted.

"On the other hand, Iranian economy is much larger than that of Iraq and Libya. It is much diverse. It has a large agricultural, industrial, and mining sector. The country has 15 neighbors and that is very difficult for the US to block Iran's trade with them. They are waging economic warfare against Iran or economic terrorism as some say but Iran has many advantages. In addition, rivals to the US, China and Russia, are moving closer to Iran since the US imposed sanctions on Russians and due to its economic war with the Chinese," he added.

Regarding Iran's reaction to US measures, it should be said that the country has been patient, reasonable but defiant to its definite rights.

After almost a year of patience since US pulling out from the nuclear deal and European's inactiveness, Iran started reduction of its JCPOA commitments surpassing 3.6 percent uranium enrichment and having its stockpile surpassing 300 kilograms. The job was done to remind the world that Iran is not the only signatory to the deal and to urge other parties to comply with their JCPOA obligations. "If we see a reciprocal commitment on the other side, then JCPOA is a document that is worthy of resuscitating and we will do our best to keep it afloat," Iranian FM Mohammad Javad Zarif said. It is worth noting that JCPOA signatories have asserted that they do not see Iran's reductions in commitments as major non-compliance.

Regarding Iran's economic status in the past year and despite the great shock it suffered from, the country's economy seems to be reviving. Some even are talking about reduction in inflation rate and growth in domestic production. Under the toughest sanctions ever, Iran has been learning how to economically survive, some confirm.

"Although last year was difficult to Iran but the country has been able to manage it and as things are stabilized now, the economy will start to bounce back slowly. This does not mean that the situation is not difficult for Iranians. It definitely is. But is much obviously better than what the Americans were hoping," Dr. Marandi said.

Europe's stance towards Iran-US standoff, European dilemma

The role of the Europeans, their stance towards Iran-US relations and their own position towards Iran and the JCPOA, is a matter of attention.

Europeans have repeatedly expressed concern about the tensions between Iran and the US. They have expressed worry



about Iran's scaling down of its JCPOA obligations. The E3 established a financial vehicle to ease Iran-EU trade, known as INSTEX. But what Iran has gained from its European relations after US withdrawal from the nuclear deal, has always been criticized by Iranian officials.

Due to their economic dependence or political subordination to the US, Europeans are facing a dilemma in their Iranian relations. As Zarif said, "if Europe wants to pursue its own interests, it has to follow a different path. I don't think they have gathered the necessary political will in order to pay the price for that independence [from the US]. It's not going to be free of charge."

Standing in the same track with Zarif, Dr. Marandi said "Europe is obviously subordinate to the US. It does want to have some space in independence. But it so far, has not shown the will. The Europeans are in complete violation of the JCPOA although they have not left it. They claim that there is little that they can do and Iranians do not accept that argument."

"Iranians say that the EU has collected a larger economy of than of the US besides a larger population, which is enormous in average. On the other hand, the Russians and Chinese are resisting the US bullying over Iran. So, it is not really an acceptable argument by the Europeans to justify doing nothing. Europeans could work along with the Chinese and the Russians. The US cannot impose sanctions on all these countries and powers," Dr. Marandi said.

"Thus, Iranians believe part of the problem with Europe is that they are weak with no backbone, do not want to get into Trump's bad book and do not want to pay a price for implementing the nuclear deal with Iran. They, sort of, want to have their cake and eat it, too," he believed.

Future of the JCPOA

With the US out of the JCPOA and Iran stepping back from its commitments, the third part, i.e. the Europe, seems to have the power to determine the final destination for the nuclear deal. The part, whose strength to preserve the deal is under question.

According to Dr. Marandi, "future of the JCPOA, mainly depends on Europe more than anything else. They have a lot of commitments that they must carry out according to the deal and at the moment, they are violating all of them."

"Iran has been abiding by the nuclear deal for over a year on its own even though the Europeans were violating it and the Americans had left it. Iranians have done more than enough. They have shown an extraordinary great deal of good will and patience. If the Europeans do not begin to implement the nuclear deal, Iranians will gradually decrease their commitments and will ultimately leave it. Iran-EU relationship depends largely on Europe abiding by its commitments. If it fulfills its commitments the relationship will improve and if it does not, it will be the opposite," the expert said.

"The same is true for Iran-US relations. The US has walked away from the nuclear deal and the negotiating table. The only remaining way for the US is to abide the JCPOA and

stop hindering its implementation. If they do so, they can come back to the negotiating table," he added.

INSTEX, an empty vessel

INSTEX, the European mechanism to enable Iran to keep doing business under US sanctions, has become operational nominally and not in practice. To the present moment, INSTEX has been the most done by Europeans for Iran. Even in case of its full implementation, as some express, it cannot satisfy all of Iran's needs since economic needs of the country go far beyond what INSTEX can offer.

Iran calls the vehicle 'insufficient', pinning no hope to it. Iranian officials have repeatedly called for Europeans to purchase our oil or open credit lines for Iran.

"INSTEX is an empty vessel. It really is not important unless the Europeans carry out their JCPOA commitments. Europeans need Iranian oil especially regarding that some of their refineries are designed for Iranian oil. But Americans are bullying them to refrain from purchasing Iran's oil. If Europeans do not purchase Iranian oil, Iranian businesses cannot be active in Europe and European countries cannot work in Iran out of the fear of the US. Then what is INSTEX for if there is no money in it? It is just an empty vessel. If other EU countries joined the financial instrument, it could be a good thing but only in case the Europeans carry out their JCPOA commitments. They have to start sanding up to the US to protect their companies, businesses and their own citizens, purchase Iranian oil and normalize trade with Iran and then INSTEX could work. Otherwise, at the moment INSTEX does not mean much to Iran," Dr. Marandi told Mehr news agency.

In contrast to what Dr. Marandi believes about having other EU countries or non-European ones join the INSTEX, some in Iran warn that the country may repeat the bitter SWIFT experience with INSTEX. They believe that the financial mechanism can act as an instrument for Europeans to dominate Iran's trade transactions. In fact, Iran has its own financial channels to trade with non-European countries, which rely on mutual cooperation and commercial ties. Some of such transactions are even based on currencies other than euro or dollar. Letting its non-European financial transitions take place in INSTEX, Iran may jeopardize part of its economic independence.

Redemption road

As a matter of fact, no one can deny European's high reliance on the US and the interwoven financial relations the EU companies have with the Americans. EU is mingled with the US in financial aspects.

Regarding the present circumstances, if Europe wishes to have a word at the international arena and the authority to act independently from the US, rescuing the JCPOA seems an effective thing to do. Helping European companies to skirt the US sanctions and have transactions through INSTEX with Iran is the way to go for European officials. They are better also to convince Trump back to the JCPOA.

Riaz Karim: Riyadh afraid of awakening in Arab states

TEHRAN (FNA) — Riaz Karim, political analyst and activist, says Saudi Arabia seeks support from the US and Israel to avoid an uprising in the Arab countries, offering opportunity to Washington and Tel Aviv "to drive a deep rift between the Sunnis and Shias" and create an irreparable division among Muslims.

In an exclusive interview with FNA, Dr. Karim said Riyadh would fail to unite the Muslim countries against Iran and its hostile efforts would deepen the rifts in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East.

Riaz Karim, PhD, is the director of the London-based Veritas Centre for Strategic Studies. He is also director and co-founder of the Mona Relief Organization (Yemen Organization for Humanitarian Relief and Development.)

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ At Islam's holiest sites, the Saudi monarch makes statements against another Islamic country namely Iran. How do you assess the Arab countries' summit in Mecca?

A: This summit was demanded by Washington and specifically by President Trump's son in law and aide Jared Kushner who sees himself as the expert in Middle East issues. The axis of the US, Saudi Arabia and Israel want to ratchet up the rhetoric against Iran and what better way than to get the Sunni Bloc together in a summit at one of Islam's holiest sites under the auspices of the (P)GCC and the Arab League. With Israel playing a vital role in the background. This is a show of unity by the bloc to directly send a message to Iran that we are united against you; however, one kingdom has broken ranks with the league to register its dissatisfaction and that is Qatar, because the same nations who have come together to threaten Iran are the very same nations who have put a blockade on one of their own and because in its time of need Iran was the only country which defied all odds to send vital supplies to the tiny kingdom, Qatar has broken rank with the rest of the Sunni Bloc. One of their biggest fear remains that Iran may be successful in creating a Shia awakening in these Arab countries; thus they want to quash any potential uprising as well as keep their ties with Israel and the US intact. The sad part of this entire exercise is that these Arab countries do not realize that the US and Israel have successfully been able to drive a deep rift between the Sunnis and Shias which was fragile to begin with, but now the divide in Islam is irreparable.

■ The Mecca summit called for stopping Iran from "interfering in the internal affairs of its neighbors". However, there is significant body of evidence showing Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE armed and nurtured Takfiri Terrorists such as Daesh in Syria and Iraq, Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, waged war on Yemen and suppressed Shias in Bahrain. How do you view this contradiction?

A: Yes Indeed the Takfiris are a manufactured entity and so are the wars in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Libya. The Takfiris have the same extreme ideology and when it comes to the Shia or any other religious denomination, brutality and sadism was and are the order of the day. If Bahrain is any indication, then the Shia will always be second class citizens and oppressed at will. The US National Security Adviser and 'War Whisperer' John Bolton said he was sure that Iran was behind the attacks on the oil tankers in the Persian Gulf. Moreover, the US State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortugus said, "[Persian] Gulf unity is essential to confronting Iran's malign influence, it's essential to countering terrorism and, of course, in securing a prosperous future." "Teheran's support for Houthi rebels in Yemen is proof of Iranian interference in other nations' affairs, and this is something that Islamic countries should reject," Saudi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Assaf said. Despite targeting Iran explicitly, as part of the policy of switching the rhetoric to firmness, it does not really matter if they themselves are involved in destabilizing various countries. This is the highest order of 'Hypocrisy'.

■ Do you believe if Saudi Arabia will be able to unite the world against Iran?

A: Despite the firmness emphasized in Saudi Arabia's stance, it is not likely that the kingdom's struggle to convince every Muslim country to unify against Iran will succeed. As long as Saudi Arabia continues attacking countries through lobbying efforts in the West and employing means for economic sieges and attempts to undermine the credibility of other countries that disagree on regional policies, the division in the [Persian] Gulf and the Middle East will likely deepen and the discord between these countries will continue to the advantage of the US and Israel who sit ready to take advantage of this very opportunity.

Western pride and prejudice must stop

GLOBALTIMES — Zhao Lijian, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, posted several tweets Saturday in response to the 37 countries' support for China's governance in its Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, denouncing the mud which the 22 Western countries threw at China. Zhao pointed out that southeast Washington DC is a district where "the white never go" because "it's an area for the black and Latin."

His tweet triggered a furious response from former US ambassador to the UN Susan Rice. She called Zhao a "racist disgrace" who is "shockingly ignorant." Rice even urged Cui Tiankai, Chinese Ambassador to the US, to "send him home." But Zhao is based in Islamabad.

BBC published an article, saying China is trying out "wolf warrior" diplomacy. The opinion piece listed several other Chinese diplomats who criticized Western governments and politicians, saying that Chinese diplomats' language style is getting direct and tough.

It is a representative view in the West.

Many hate to see Chinese diplomats' sharp criticism of Western countries, and believe that being outspoken is Westerners' privilege in the field of public opinion. They prefer Chinese people's forbearance and compromise when being attacked and hesitance when responding. Once the Chinese touch a raw nerve, they would react strongly and put a label on China.

Zhao didn't criticize Washington's racial inequality for no reason. His remarks were made following repeated US accusations of China's "ethnic persecution" in Xinjiang, and the 22 Western countries' abominable conduct of attacking China at the UN Human Rights Council. Zhao explained China's Xinjiang policy, and pointed out the US weakness. He did everything with reason and restraint.

But Rice, as a former senior diplomat, lost her manners. She called Zhao "a racist disgrace," which is a personal insult rather than a debate. Never has a Chinese diplomat proactively said "you are a disgrace" to a US official.

Almost all of Chinese diplomats' criticism of the US and the West is a

response or counterattack when being provoked. Never have we provoked a war of words against these countries and their politicians.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Republican Senator Marco Rubio also maliciously attacked China. What China did was respond to set the record straight.

US and Western opinion has been demonizing China. Many Western politicians joined in to besiege China. China's forbearance and low-key attitude did not restrain them. Of course we will have our say. China is righteous to unmask Western opinion's lies against China.

It is not that Chinese diplomats were trying out "wolf warrior" rhetoric. They were just telling the truth and accurately revealing Western politicians' lies. China will not stay silent in the face of groundless accusations from the US and the West. We will not let them abuse their discourse hegemony and spread the fabricated charges against China to the world. Chinese media and diplomats will act more actively to make the truth known to all and unmask Western pride and prejudice.

First Announcement



1398.2463

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TENDER NO. : 08-38-9740017

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P/F "WENZEL" HYDRAULIC FISHING JAR 4-1/4 IN. I.D.; 2 IN. O.D. ID.; 2-7/8 API IF CONN. REF. WENZEL DOWNHOLE TOOLS LTD. VALVE HOUSING. VALVE MANDREL HOUSING. HYDRAULIC VALVE. PISTON	23
P/F "WENZEL" HYDRAULIC FISHING JAR 4-3/4 IN. O.D.; 2-1/4 IN. I.D.; 3-1/2 API IF CONN. REF. WENZEL DOWNHOLE TOOLS LTD. VALVE MANDREL HOUSING. VALVE HOUSING. HYDRAULIC VALVE.	19

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 2, available at: WWW.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 14,180 EURO or 677,274,500 RIAL, in favor of NISOC. Tender documents including the materials through technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: WWW.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab. ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P. NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHA JARI, IRAN PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D. SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

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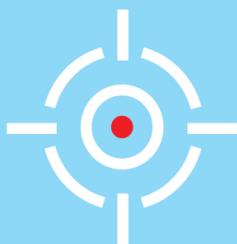
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Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin complains about current U.S. lunar ability

When President Donald Trump asked Buzz Aldrin, the second human ever to walk on the moon, what he thought about the United States' current ability to operate in space 50 years after the Apollo 11 mission, the ex-astronaut had a ready response.

"Actually, I've been a little disappointed over the last 10 or 15 years," Aldrin told Trump on Friday.

With the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing being celebrated this week, Trump brought into the Oval Office the surviving astronauts from that mission, Aldrin and Michael Collins, and relatives of the late Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon.

Trump, a strong supporter of a U.S. mission to Mars, quizzed Aldrin and the others, including NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine, in a way that suggested he would like to skip a moon mission on the way to embarking to Mars. He questioned whether the United States should use the moon as a jumping-off point to Mars, which is the current plan, or simply go straight to the red planet.

Aldrin said the U.S. space program achieved so much 50 years ago, but that



the recent era had been more troublesome, disappointing him. Aldrin said the United States' current plan

for the next moonshot does not allow for significant maneuverability of the spacecraft while in lunar orbit.

Trump turned to Bridenstine and asked him, "How do you feel about that, Jim?" "We're working on it, as a matter of fact," said Bridenstine.

He told Trump the Orion capsule being developed with the aim of getting to the moon in five years would attach to a small module in orbit around the moon, acting as a small space station.

Trump asked Bridenstine to take account of Aldrin's concerns.

"Well, I'd like to have you also listen to the other side," Trump told him. "Because some people would like to do it a different way. So you'll listen to Buzz and some of the other people."

"Yes, sir," Bridenstine said.

Trump asked Collins his opinion on whether to go to the moon first or just go straight to Mars. Collins, 88 and gripping Trump's desk for balance, had a ready reply: "Mars direct."

"It seems to me Mars direct, who knows better than these people?" said Trump.

Said Aldrin: "You're impatient."

(Source: Reuters)

Musk, Branson and Bezos: Why are three billionaires determined to go to space – and what's the danger to planet Earth?

Billionaire Jeff Bezos says he was inspired to enter the private space race after watching the Apollo 11 mission 50 years ago and seeing "Neil and Buzz land on the moon".

"I got infected by that," he told CBS News, referring to the 20 July 1969 landing, involving Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin. "You don't chase your passions, they chase you. So I've been dreaming and getting ready for this for a long time."

He added: "We humans have to go to space if we are going to continue to have a thriving civilization. We're in the process of destroying our planet. We've sent robotic probes to every planet in the solar system; this is the good one. We have to preserve this planet. We can do that using the resources of space."

Half-a-century after those US astronauts beat the Soviet Union in a Cold War showdown to be the first to set foot on the moon, the space industry landscape looks very different. China, India and Europe are challenging the US's once dominant position, and within the US, amid several dozen private entities, three major private players now dominate the space tourism and exploration sector – Bezos's Blue Origin, Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic and Elon Musk's SpaceX.

"The only reason we can do the things that we can do today is because we are, in fact, standing on the shoulders of giants," Bezos said this week, sitting alongside Caroline Kennedy, daughter of assassinated president John F Kennedy.

In 1962, Kennedy vowed to reach the moon by the end of the decade "because there is new knowledge to be gained". Bezos said what he and others were doing now was only possible "because all of the things that came before".

One would be forgiven for assuming a private space project was the ultimate ego trip for a middle-aged billionaire looking for kicks. But the projects of Branson, 68, Bezos, 55, and 48-year-old Musk began some years ago.

Bezos, the co-founder of Amazon and the world's richest man, established Blue Origin in 2000. Musk set up SpaceX in 2002 and Branson established Virgin Galactic in 2004.

Branson's inspiration, too, was watching the Apollo missions. "The moon landing is what inspired me to wish to go to space," he said earlier this year.

"I saw it on a black-and-white television set when I was very young, and this year is the 50th anniversary so it's a very great year to celebrate."

Iain Boyd, a space exploration expert and professor of engineering at the University of Michigan, says while the three billionaires are each very different, they were likely inspired by a similar frustration.

He says in the years and decades after the Apollo missions, with the limited success of the space shuttle program and fewer funds being awarded to NASA, there was a sense of an opportunity being wasted.

"There was a generation that saw people land on the moon," he tells *The Independent*. "But then they felt this sense of frustration."

As a result, he says, it was perhaps natural that private entrepreneurs such as Bezos, Musk and Branson would seek to fill the gap.

He says he was among a group of scientists Musk addressed in the first few years after SpaceX was established, and when he was a lesser known entity, and less frequently dominating the headlines. "He came across as someone who was just really, really interested in space," he says.

Branson's current project seeks to send six passengers and two crew to the edge of space, about 100km (62 miles) above the earth, by means of a two aircraft. One, named WhiteKnightTwo, will carry the second, named VSS Unity, to around 50,000ft when they will separate and the second will fire a rocket engine that carries it to speeds of up to 4,000kph (2,485mph), and a height potentially as high as 110km. Passengers are due to experience five minutes of weightlessness, before the second craft glides back to earth.

In February, Virgin Galactic, which in 2014 suffered a deadly accident during a test flight that killed the pilot and badly injured the co-pilot, carried out its first successful flight with a pilot on board. It was done over the Mojave desert in California. Pilots Dave Mackay and Michael Masucci, along with astronaut trainer Beth Moses, reached an altitude of 55.87 miles.

This was higher than last December's unmanned flight and above that used by the US Air Force as the definition of "space," though it did not exceed the so-called Karman line of 62 miles, used by the International Astronautical Federation defines as the start of "space".

"It was silent and beautiful and clear, and I was quite happy to be near the cockpit with our pilots, to celebrate apogee," Moses said afterwards. "And we all sort of marveled at how magic it was."

Virgin Galactic, which this summer announced a merger deal with Social Capital Hedosophia (SCH) and a plan to go public, says it has \$80m in deposits from more than 600 people able to pay the \$250,000 price tag. It says it will launch its first flight as soon as possible, and Branson had hoped to fly to mark Apollo's anniversary. Justin Bieber is said to be among those first 600.

Bezos's current plan involves using reusable rockets to send a crew in a capsule to an altitude of 307,000 feet. The rocket returns to its launch pad, and the crew capsule separates and descends by use of parachutes.

A spokesman told US media this spring, its "New Shepard" rocket had flown to space "a total of 11 times, with two of the New Shepard boosters flying to space and back five times each consecutively".

In many ways, Musk's plans are the most ambitious. While his SpaceX rockets are already restocking the international space station, again with reusable rockets, the South African-born entrepreneur also wants to send people to Mars. He has said his project could be ready to send people to the Red Planet – a vast undertaking that many scientists are sceptical about – as soon as 2026.

Musk, frequently accused of making claims he cannot back up, last year told *Axios* on HBO that he saw a 70 per cent chance "he'll live to ride one of his SpaceX rockets to Mars". "I know exactly what to do," he added. "I'm talking about moving there."

Bezos has also talked of sending humans to other planets. Last year, addressing an event to mark the 25th anniversary of the launch of *Wired* magazine, he said he hoped to see the solar system populated "by one trillion people".

"People are starting to bump up against the absolute true fact that earth is finite," he said.

Experts say the private space projects of Branson, Bezos, Musk and others throw up new challenges, not just for technology and science but for areas such as the law. Right now, the Federal Aviation Authority has no rules governing space travel, other than a prohibition on systems that have previously failed, says Boyd, the University of Michigan scientist. Branson says the FAA has granted his company a commercial space launch license.

(Source: *The Independent*)

Journal to investigate controversial study claiming global temperature rise is due to Earth moving closer to Sun

A highly respected science journal has said it will examine how it came to publish a study suggesting the climate crisis and rising temperatures around the world are the result of natural solar cycles and the Earth getting closer to the Sun.

The research, by four UK based academics from Northumbria University, the University of Bradford and the University of Hull, as well as the Nasir al-Din al-Tusi Shamakhi Astrophysical Observatory in Azerbaijan, was published in *Scientific Reports*.

However, it criticized by scientists for containing "very basic errors".

The paper's authors claimed the rise of global average temperatures by around 1C over the last two centuries could be largely due to a combination of cycles of solar activity, as well as the movement of the Sun around the center of mass in our solar system, known as a barycenter.

This movement changes the distance between the Earth and the Sun at different times, the paper contended.

Over the next 600 years it said temperatures could expect to rise by 3C as a result of the phenomenon.

But physicists have cast doubt on the accuracy of the science, leading the journal to acknowledge the concerns.

Ken Rice of the University of Edinburgh, UK, told *The New Scientist* magazine that the team had made an "elementary" mistake about the movement of the Earth in relation to the Sun.



"It's well known that the sun moves around the barycenter of the solar system due to the influence of the other solar system bodies, mainly Jupiter," he said. "This does not mean, as the paper is claiming, that this then leads to changes in the distance between the Sun and the Earth."

Professor Rice added: "The claim that we will see warming in the coming centuries because the sun will move closer to the Earth as it moves around the solar system barycenter is very simply wrong."

He urged the journal to withdraw the paper, saying it

was «embarrassing» that the article was published at all.

In response to the concerns over the quality of the paper, lead author Valentina Zharkova told *The New Scientist* the links between warming and the natural cycles of the sun's activity were enough to prove a pattern of warming, even without the additional impact of changing distances between the Sun and the Earth.

She said: "The close links between oscillations of solar baseline magnetic field, solar irradiance and temperature are established in our paper without any involvement of solar inertial motion."

She also described Professor Rice as a "climate alarmist", the magazine reported.

The findings of the paper had already been reported in *The Australian* – one of Australia's biggest papers.

Since the publication of the paper it has emerged Professor Zharkova gave a presentation to the Global Warming Policy Forum – a climate sceptic lobby group founded by former Tory chancellor Nigel Lawson.

The group's stated aims are to challenge "extremely damaging and harmful policies" envisaged by governments to mitigate anthropogenic global warming.

The group has reproduced *The Australian's* article on its website. *Scientific Reports* told *The New Scientist* it had begun an "established process" to investigate the paper it has published.

(Source: *The Independent*)

How fast is the universe expanding? The Hubble constant just took another blow



There may be fundamental flaws with our understanding of the Universe.

The problem came to light as scientists tried to calculate and measure a value called the Hubble Constant, which represents how rapidly the Universe is expanding outward.

The value was first calculated by astronomer Edwin Hubble in the 1920s. But since then, astronomers observing and measuring the Universe's expansion have arrived at different values of the Hubble Constant, none of which seem to agree with one another.

The discrepancy calls into question not only our idea of how old the Universe is, but also our ability to fundamentally understand the physics that drive its behavior.

"Naturally, questions arise as to whether the discrepancy is coming from some aspect that astronomers don't yet understand about the stars we're measuring, or whether our cosmological model of the Universe is still incomplete," University of Chicago astronomer Wendy Freedman said in a NASA press release.

"Or maybe both need to be improved upon."

Freedman is responsible for the latest measurement of the Hubble Constant, which she calculated using a different kind of cosmic landmark from previous experiments.

Her team measured the brightness of red giant stars in distant galaxies. Because these stars reach uniform size and brightness, their distance from Earth can more readily be calculated than some other stars.

Freedman's work, which has been accepted but not yet published by *The Astrophysical Journal*, found that the Universe is expanding at 69.8 kilometers

per second per megaparsec, per the press release.

That's a slower rate of expansion than was calculated in another recent study that focused on a different kind of star but a faster rate than was calculated in yet another study that measured light leftover from the Big Bang called the cosmic microwave background.

Freedman originally hoped her research would serve as a tie-breaker between those other two studies - but instead it added yet another, possible value for the Hubble Constant for astronomers to reconcile.

"The Hubble constant is the cosmological parameter that sets the absolute scale, size and age of the Universe; it is one of the most direct ways we have of quantifying how the Universe evolves," Freedman said in the press release.

"The discrepancy that we saw before has not gone away, but this new evidence suggests that the jury is still out on whether there is an immediate and compelling reason to believe that there is something fundamentally flawed in our current model of the Universe."

Further complicating the issue, statistical analysis validates both of those two previous studies, according to a *New Scientist* article published last week, before Freedman's study was announced.

There's just a one-in-3.5 million chance that their findings came from random chance.

In the middle of the next decade, NASA hopes to launch the Wide Field Infrared Survey Telescope into orbit, at which point scientists will be able to more precisely measure the distance of celestial objects, per the press release.

(Source: *sciencealert.com*)

Flying the final approach to Tranquility Base, the moon



As the Apollo 11 Lunar Module approached the Moon's surface for the first manned landing, commander Neil Armstrong switched off the autopilot and flew the spacecraft manually to a landing.

A new video, created at Arizona State University's School of Earth and Space Exploration, shows what Armstrong saw out his window as the lander descended -- and you'll see for yourself why he took over control.

A team led by Mark Robinson, principal investigator for the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter Camera (LROC) and professor in the School, recreated the view in a striking video. They used the crew's voice recording, the timings, a video taken on film, and images taken from lunar orbit by the LRO Camera over the last 10 years.

Said Robinson, "The only visual record of the actual Apollo 11 landing is from a 16mm time-lapse movie camera, running at 6 frames a second and mounted in Buzz Aldrin's window." Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin was designated as the LM pilot, although for the actual landing his role was to announce the LM's altitude and rates of descent and forward motion. He stood on the right side of the cabin.

"Due to the small size of the lander windows and the angle at which the movie camera was mounted, what mission commander Neil Armstrong saw as he flew the LM to the landing was not recorded," Robinson explained. Armstrong's place was on the cabin's left side.

The LROC team reconstructed the last three minutes of the landing trajectory (latitude, longitude, orientation, velocity, altitude) using lunar landmark navigation and altitude callouts from the crew's voice recording.

Robinson said, "From this trajectory

information, and high resolution LROC Narrow-Angle Camera images and topography, we simulated what Armstrong saw in those final minutes as he guided the LM down to the surface of the Moon."

As the video begins, Armstrong could see the autopilot was aiming to land on the rocky flank of West Crater (625 feet wide). This caused him to take over manual control and fly horizontally, searching for a safe landing spot. At the time, only Armstrong saw the hazard, and he was too busy flying the LM to discuss the situation with mission control.

After flying over the hazards presented by the bouldery flank of West Crater, Armstrong spotted a safe landing site about 1,600 feet ahead where he carefully descended to the surface. Just before landing, the LM flew over what was later called Little West Crater (135 feet wide). After landing Armstrong visited and photographed this crater during his extravehicular activity.

"Of course, during the landing he was able to lean forward and back and turn his head to gain a view that was better than the simple, fixed viewpoint presented here," said Robinson. "However, our simulated movie lets you relive those dramatic moments."

Robinson points out that because LROC's images were taken almost 50 years after the actual landing, the video shows the lander's descent stage on the surface. (It was used as a launch pad when the astronauts blasted off for their return to Earth.) And the video shows where they disturbed the lunar soil as they walked: look for dark thread-like paths.

"Obviously," says Robinson, "these weren't visible to Armstrong during the landing approach!"

(Source: *Science Daily*)

Nationwide crafts exhibit underway in Kermanshah

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A nationwide sales exhibition has brought together tens of Iranian craftspeople in Kermanshah, western Iran.

The six-day exhibit, which will be running through July 22, is providing an opportunity for visitors to browse tens of handicraft fields and live workshops under one roof.



A total of 120 stalls have been set up for the event, of which 55 dedicated to natives of Kermanshah province, and the rest to artisans who have come from other provinces, CHTN reported.

Woodwork, illuminated manuscript, miniature, textile printing, enamel, leatherwork, calligraphy, metalwork, mirrorwork, and marquetry are amid handicrafts that are under the spotlight there.

Organized by the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, the event also showcases potteries, ceramics, personal ornamentation, rugs and kilim carpets, among others.

Handicrafts exports from the Islamic Republic reached \$289 million in the past Iranian calendar year 1397 (ended March 20), showing three percent growth year on year, according to data compiled by the CHHTO.

Kermanshah embraces a variety of awe-inspiring historical sites including Bisotun and Taq-e Bostan, both registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Boeing will pay \$4.9 billion to airlines that had to ground the 737 Max

Boeing will pay \$4.9 billion to airlines that were forced to ground their 737 Max aircraft after two crashes that killed 346 people.

The planes have been grounded since mid-March and federal regulators are not sure when they will be approved to fly again.

The \$4.9 billion is an estimate of concessions for airlines who were forced to operate their summer schedules (and perhaps into autumn) without the aircraft. Boeing will compensate customers over the next several years but is taking the charge out of this quarter's earnings. The manufacturer did not specify which airlines would receive compensation.

"This is not inconsequential, even for a company the size of Boeing," Scott Hamilton, managing director of the aviation consultancy Leeham Company, told The New York Times.

At one point, it looked like the 737 Max was going to return to service by the end of June but the Federal Aviation Administration announced the discovery of a new issue with the aircraft on June 26.

Boeing believes that the 737 Max will return into service by the end of the year, but it could be later — which could pose a difficulty for holiday-season travel. Earlier this week, American Airlines joined United in canceling all 737 Max flights through November.

"We remain focused on safely returning the 737 MAX to service," Boeing Chairman, President and CEO Dennis Muilenburg said in a statement. "This is a defining moment for Boeing. Nothing is more important to us than the safety of the flight crews and passengers who fly on our airplanes. The MAX grounding presents significant headwinds and the financial impact recognized this quarter reflects the current challenges and helps to address future financial risks."

(Source: travellandleisure.com)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Portuguese City of Mazagan

A World Heritage, the Portuguese City of Mazagan (El Jadida), one of the first settlements created in Africa by Portuguese explorers on the route to India, bears outstanding witness to the exchange of influences between European and Moroccan cultures from the 16th to the 18th centuries, which are evident in the architecture, technology and town planning.



Mazagan was built as a fortified colony on the Atlantic coast at the beginning of the 16th century. Located 90 km south of Casablanca, it dominates a natural bay of great beauty.

The brothers Francisco and Diogo de Arruda built the first citadel in 1514. In 1541-1548, in accordance with the plans of the Italian architect Benedetto da Ravenna, Joao Ribeiro and Juan Castillo enlarged the citadel transforming it into a star-shaped fortification.

The Mazagan fortress with its ditch and inclined ramparts is one of the first testimonies in the Lusitanian period of the application by Portuguese technology of new architectural concepts of Renaissance adapted to the advent of the firearm.

Following the departure of the Portuguese in 1769 and the resulting abandonment of the city, the fortress was rehabilitated in the middle of the 19th century and named El Jadida (The New), and became a commercial center and a multicultural society, embracing Muslims, Jews and Christians.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran's spring foreign tourist arrivals surge 40.66 percent

TOURISM TEHRAN — The number of foreign visitors arriving in Iran surged 40.66 percent during spring, which corresponds to the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year, compared with the same period last year, data from the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization showed on Saturday.

A total of 2,030,523 million foreign nationals visited the Islamic Republic during spring that shows a 40.66 percent increase year on year. The country hosted 1,443,551 million travelers during the same period a year earlier, CHTN reported.

Outbound tourism of the country fell by some six percent during the three-month period, putting the number of outbound passengers at 1,759,749.

To encourage potential sightseers, the Iranian government has issued a decree ordering not to stamp the passports of foreign tourist to help them skip a U.S. travel ban introduced by the Donald Trump administration.

Moreover, the Islamic Republic has turned to ease traveling for its target mar-



People visit the mausoleum of Nader Shah in downtown Mashhad. Born Nader Qoli Beg in 1688, Nader created an Iranian empire that stretched from the Indus River to the Caucasus Mountains.

kets which are people from Iraq, China, Republic of Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Pakistan, and several other countries who arrive in Iran for medical, pilgrimage and cultural heritage purposes.

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

Iran also eyes to have a bigger share of Chinese tourism, as it, in a unilateral measure, recently approved to waive the visa requirement for the Chinese passport holders.

The 2019 Travel Risk Map, which shows the risk level around the world, puts Iran among countries with "insignificant risk", a category where the UK, Denmark, Switzerland, Norway, and Finland are placed in.

The country boasts hundreds of historical sites such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 22 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Scorching summertime: festival of ice-cream, cold drinks opens in Tehran

TOURISM TEHRAN — A festival of ice-cream and cold drinks opened to the public on Thursday at the Eshraq Cultural Center, north-east Tehran.

The event comes as some experts say with sweltering temperatures around the country this summer will beat the heat records.

The festival also holds live workshops, making visitors to be acquainted with the process of making various types of ice-cream, Mehr reported.

A diverse range of artistic cultural programs, including kite flying, contests, and painting sessions, puppet show and music performances is also on the timeline

of the festival, which will be running through July 31.

According to CNN, Iran's saffron ice cream or bastani, scented with saffron, rosewater and pistachios, is among the world's 50 best desserts.

"For the complete bastani experience, though, opt for a traditional Iranian ice cream sandwich of saffron ice cream between two thin wafers. The wafers' mild flavor and crispy texture are the perfect foil -- and conveniently shaped handle -- for the rich and aromatic ice cream."

From a lightly golden color to its distinctive aroma, the creamy treat is said to evoke an essence of spring. By tradition, this Iranian ice cream is a favorite at Noruz, the Persian New Year.



Austria promises to return ancient artefacts to Russia that were taken as war trophies

The Salzburg Museum plans to return to Russia five grave reliefs and three amphorae shipped home during the Second World War by an Austrian army officer who took them as trophies from a war-damaged museum in the port of Temryuk on the Sea of Azov near the northeastern coast of the Black Sea.

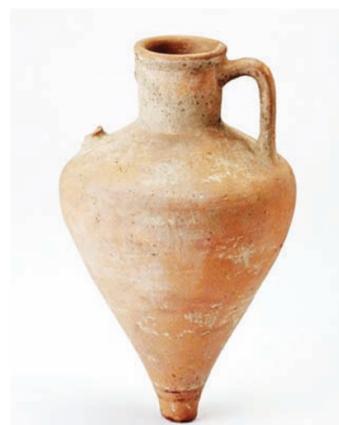
Some of the objects date back 2,000 years or more to the Hellenistic period, when Greek settlements sprung up around the eastern Mediterranean and spread to the Black Sea. Russia's President Vladimir Putin and the Austrian president Alexander van der Bellen agreed on the terms of their return to the Temryuk Historical Archaeological Museum during a May meeting in Sochi.

The officer was stationed in Temryuk with a Salzburg unit of the Austrian army. Museum staff had been aware for many decades that the objects were foreign to their collection. "As the Salzburg Museum, we are focused on art and cultural treasures from the Salzburg region," says Martin Hochleitner, the director of the Salzburg Museum. "It was clear that these objects

from the Hellenistic period didn't belong in our collection."

They were traced to the Temryuk Historical Archaeological Museum in the 1990s, but letters from Salzburg to Temryuk went unanswered, Hochleitner says. When the museum was preparing a 2018 exhibition on its history during the Nazi era, more detailed documentation about the provenance of the artefacts came to light, and the museum once again initiated restitution proceedings, this time via the Austrian Culture Forum and Austrian embassy in Russia.

The amphorae and three fragments of reliefs that once adorned opulent graves in the easternmost reaches of Greek colonization can be dated to between the fourth and first centuries BC. One shows a reclining couch typical of those used by Greeks to dine and relax. Another mixes local and Greek motifs, depicting a man mounted on a horse and bearing a lance wearing costume typical of the inhabitants of the steppe region. Two other reliefs reveal Roman influences and probably date from a later period.



This amphorae is among the artefacts being returned to the historical museum in Temryuk

Restitutions to Russia from western European museums are a one-way street:

Russia itself does not return cultural property seized by the Soviet Union's trophy commissions from Germany at the end of the Second World War. In 1996, the Russian parliament passed a law nationalizing the spoils of war, which it saw as reparations for Russian heritage losses at the hands of German troops.

Hochleitner says Russian policy is not relevant to the Salzburg Museum. "We are not giving back in order to have things given back to us," he says. "We want to right a past wrong."

The Salzburg Museum, which was itself destroyed in 1944, has recovered several items plundered by U.S. troops at the end of the war, including 94 rare, historic coins returned by the American Numismatic Society in 2017.

A ceremony for the handover of the eight Russian artefacts is expected in the coming months, though planning is currently on hold because of the collapse of the Austrian government and elections scheduled for September, Hochleitner says.

(Source: The Art Newspaper)

Passengers incensed: Vienna adds perfumed trains to €1 a day travel

The rush-hour subway train glides into the station, the doors snap open and passengers move forward to board. As they enter the crowded carriage, they are met not with a musty mix of human odours, but with the subtle aroma of citrus fruit.

A select few trains on Vienna's U-bahn are trialling perfumed carriages following complaints that the city's subway system was unpleasant during the summer, despite widespread air conditioning.

According to Wiener Linien (Vienna Lines), the city's public transport operator, feedback has been "mixed". But the fact that Vienna's biggest public transport debate this summer is over perfumed carriages is evidence of a broader success story.

A dense constellation of trams, buses, trains and subway cars, Vienna's system is widely regarded as one of the best in the world. And it is remarkably cheap for residents: just a euro a day for those who buy the €365 (£328) annual pass. For comparison, a similar pass is €761 in Berlin, or £2,020 for London zones 1-4.

Berlin is one of a number of German cities looking at copying Vienna's pricing policy, as municipalities across Europe look for innovative policies that will lower emissions and get more people on to public transport.

The euro-a-day ticket was the brainchild of the former Green deputy mayor of Vienna, Maria Vassilakou, who ran for office in 2010 promising €100 season tickets. Most other politicians thought this was crazy, pointing out that the existing €449 ticket was already cheap by European standards. After a long negotiation, a compromise price of €365 was agreed and launched in 2013. The effects have been considerable.

"For people with modest incomes the saving really made a difference, and for well-off people it became something you buy it to have it just in case," said Vassilakou.

Sales of annual tickets are up from 321,000 in 2011 to 822,000 this year. When children and students, eligible for cheaper passes, are added to the total, around 1.1 million of Vienna's 1.9 million population has a long-term pass.

The extra ticket sales meant that the already generous



city funding for transport infrastructure did not have to be increased too much to meet the shortfall. Wiener Linien receives around €700m a year in subsidies. There are no plans to raise the annual ticket price, which has remained static since 2013, even as short-term ticket prices creep up — a daily pass now costs €8.

Using Vienna's transport system is easy, with short interchanges, minimal distances between stations, and trains or buses that arrive at regular intervals.

"Time as we experience it is not about minutes, it's about our feelings. People say in Vienna it's quick. It's not, it's just clever," said Hermann Knoflacher, a professor and urban planning expert who has worked on the city's transport infrastructure since 1963.

The network is a mix of old and new, and ancient infrastructure forms part of a very modern system. The city's U-bahn system only began operating in the late 1970s, but still uses the ornate Jugendstil entrance pavilions and sleek platforms — designed by the architect Otto Wagner — that were part of an overground railway network constructed in the late 19th century.

The 71 tram that rolls along the famous Ringstrasse before a half-hour ride out to Vienna's vast main cemetery has been operational since it was horse-drawn and coffins were pulled along the tracks at night. "He's taken the 71" is still a slang

term akin to "kick the bucket". Now, it carries commuters from the suburbs and shuttles groups of tourists between the multiple historical landmarks on the Ring.

But much of the infrastructure is more recent and new stations and routes are still being added. All the U-bahn stations and most of the buses and trams have disabled access. Knoflacher, who has taught a generation of urban planners, said that for years he has made his students spend a day getting around Vienna in a wheelchair. "They never forget that," he said.

Almost everyone in Vienna lives within a five-minute walk of a public transport stop or station, and a bus or train will be along within three to five minutes, meaning door to ride almost never takes more than 10 minutes, and usually much less.

David Lansky, who works at EY, formerly Ernst & Young, has one of the longest commutes in Vienna, requiring a bus and two U-bahn trains, but he enjoys the 45-minute journey twice a day. "I like to read, or listen to podcasts; it's me time," he said. In two years of regular commuting, he did not recall a delay of more than a couple of minutes.

The love of the Viennese for their public transport system is so great that branded merchandise made by the operator has become the latest fashion trend in the city. "I see a lot of Wiener Linien apparel around the university and at parties. Somehow they've managed to hype their brand name and make it part of the youth culture here," said Sophie Spiegelberger, a 20-year-old politics and maths student at the University of Vienna.

The key to the success, said Knoflacher, lies not only in the impressive public transport infrastructure, but in making life more difficult for drivers as well, something Vienna has done gradually over recent decades.

"Cars are like water, they fill any space you give them," he said. "It's great that the Germans want to introduce the cheap subway fares, but it's only part of the solution. If you don't really go after the cars, it will never work."

(Source: The Guardian)

'Better Future' lies in prosperity of startups

Startups are stars in the sky of smart Iran

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi said during the opening ceremony of the event that as its name suggests, ELECOM Stars is a home to the startups which shine like stars in the sky of smart Iran.

He pointed to No-Afarin, a scheme introduced by the Information and Communication Technology Ministry to support startups last week, with the slogan of 'Smart Iran, brighter future', saying, "Today, many tasks can be done by a click and this digital transformation should be considered by managers in order to increase their efficiency and expand markets."

In the near future, the digital economy would be the prevalent kind of economy worldwide, he said.

"Despite U.S. sanctions, young entrepreneurs in the field of ICT can use the national digital economy in order to expand markets."

ELECOMP, hope for better future

As a gathering of innovation ecosystem of Iran, ELECOMP promises a better future which is realized by the motivation and energy of the young generation.

Startups and their services have a direct impact on everyday life of people and this is one of their strong points.

Being a part of the private sector, their efficiency is an important factor for their consistency and it is linked with their benefits for public.



ICT Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi gives five to an entrepreneur during his visit to ELECOMP 2019 on Thursday

Startups provide a market which benefits entrepreneurs and people at the same time and perhaps this is the key for their growth during recent years

As you can see, startups provide a market which benefits entrepreneurs and people at the same time and perhaps this is the key for their growth during recent years.

The good news is that the government has recognized their unique potentialities and abilities and plan to support them with no direct intervention, an approach that paves the way for development of innovation ecosystem in the future.

ELECOMP 2019

In addition to ELECOM Stars, ELECOM Talks, ELECOM Trends and ELECOM Games are other parts of the event, which runs until July 21.

This edition of ELECOMP has also designed ELECOM Tours in order to provide special programs for visiting the exhibition as well.

This edition of ELECOMP also provides a user-friendly place for startups that bring disability solutions to the market. Tech breakthroughs that empower people with disabilities have set up stands with special features.

Since its first edition in 1995, the event has been providing a unique opportunity for businesses to increase their share of this huge and ever-growing market.

The event provides an opportunity for companies to share knowledge, build vendor relationships and work with prominent companies, active in the field of electronics and computer to enhance their market spread.

Iran, Iraq plan to boost telecom network during Arba'een

TEHRAN – Iran's Information and Communication Technology Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi and his Iraqi counterpart Naim Tjhele Yousir Al-Rubaie discussed the ways to boost telecommunication network between the two countries during Arba'een pilgrimage.

Arba'een pilgrimage, aka Arba'een trek, is a characteristic spiritual exercise in which hundreds of thousands of Iranians along with other nationals participate.

The long treks will be destined to Karbala, where Imam Hussain (AS), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), is laid to rest. It marks an end to the 40-day mourning period following martyrdom of the Imam and his loyal companions at the Battle of Karbala on Muharram 10 in the year 61 AH (680 CE).

"The Iranians are in love with Imam Hussain (AS) and I anticipate that about four million pilgrims from Iran will travel to Karbala during Arba'een," Azari Jahromi said during a meeting in Tehran on Friday.

Hence, the two countries should establish a joint committee to expand telecommunication network and solve

problems for Iranian pilgrims, he explained.

Iran is ready to decrease transit tariff between the two countries in order to develop bilateral cooperation, he said, adding, Iran has high-quality ICT services and products to offer to Iraq.

Al-Rubaie, for his part, said the imported low quality equipment for ICT infrastructure of Iraq has harmed the ICT systems in the country.

"During my last trip to Iran, I got acquainted with some Iranian producers of ICT equipment," he said.

He said that he welcomed boosting ICT cooperation with Iran, expressing hope over expansion of relations in coming months.

During last Arba'een pilgrimage, which fell on October 3, 2018, Iran's ICT Ministry's balloons brought internet access at the borders of Mehran and Khosravi, which offered free WiFi services to pilgrims.

In February 2019, the Iranian Space Research Center provided details of a successful test of its internet balloon system that took place over the city of Karaj, Alborz province.

Named "Baam 300", it was equipped with night-vision



Iraq's ICT minister Naim Tjhele Yousir Al-Rubaie (l) visits his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi on Friday in Tehran

cameras, the high altitude balloon went 350 kilometers above the Earth's surface with the capacity to transfer 300 kg of telecommunication packages.

Twitter suspends accounts of Iranian news agencies

TEHRAN – The twitter accounts of the Persian services of Mehr News Agency, Islamic Republic of Iran News Agency (IRNA) and Young Journalists Club (YJC) were suspended, Mehr reported on Saturday.

The accounts were suspended after releasing news on capturing a British oil tanker by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) for breaching international maritime law while crossing the Strait of Hormuz, Mehr reported. The IRGC's Public Relations

Department said in a statement on Friday that the vessel named "Stena Impero" had been confiscated "at the request of Hormozgan Ports and Maritime Organization when passing through the Strait of Hormuz, for failing to respect international maritime rules."

Technology, temporary help keeps farmers on job longer

At 79 years old, Art McManus says he's still able to hop on the tractor and maintain the 160 acres of cherry trees at his orchard in Traverse City, Michigan.

His children have gone on to start lives of their own, though he gets some help running his farmers market from his daughter-in-law. But he hires seasonal help to keep the cherry operation moving. "I've been at it all my life," he says. "I enjoy it."

For McManus and many farmers across the country, assistive technology, help from seasonal hires and family members, and a general improvement in the health of U.S. seniors in recent decades have helped them remain productive well into their 60s, 70s and beyond.

Farmers staying on the job longer can restrict land options of younger farmers, making it harder for beginners to crack into the industry, experts say. They worry that without the older farmers, there might not be enough younger people interested in agriculture to support America's food production needs.

"It's a problem," says Milt McGiffen, an agronomist, plant physiologist and researcher at the University of California, Riverside. "There isn't a magic bullet to fix it. And the other problem is you have less people going into ag and you need more food coming out the other end" with a growing U.S. population.

In the U.S. last year, the median age for domestic farmers, ranchers and other agricultural managers was 56.4 years old. That's the highest median age of any major occupation tracked by the government's Current Population Survey for which data was available. The age has ticked up by half a year since 2012, despite the median age of the entire labor force falling slightly over the same period.



Nearly 29 percent of farmers were at least 65 years of age last year, and less than 13 percent were under the age of 35. Experts say steep equipment costs, limited land availability and competition from older farmers are among the reasons younger workers struggle to establish themselves.

"With the cost of land and equipment, I don't know how you can make it work (as a young farmer). It'll cost \$1 million to get into it," McManus says.

Agriculture's age imbalance and the barriers to entry for young farmers have not gone unnoticed by U.S. lawmakers. A House subcommittee is planning a hearing Thursday to start addressing the challenges faced by new farmers.

With time and money invested in land and equipment, some older farmers are reluctant to cede their operations to younger workers. Technological advancements have made it easier for them to work longer, according to agriculture workers and experts.

"When it comes to machine work, climbing in and out of the (tractor) is about as much energy as it requires to do things. And in

terms of steering, auto guidance has just been a freaking game changer," says John Phipps, 71, a commentator for "Farm Journal" and "Top Producer" magazines who maintains more than 2,000 acres of farmland with his son in eastern Illinois.

McManus says cell phones have also been "a big help to keep track of the help and what's going on," though a recent car accident and subsequent back surgery have forced him to more actively consider stepping away from the operation.

Many farmers who need help because of aging or disability, turn to Agrability, a partially government-funded program that helps them more easily maintain their farms. Bill Field, a professor of agricultural and biological engineering at Purdue University and the project director at Agrability's national hub in Indiana, says more than 1,500 consultants were sent to individual farms last year to assess the need and determine what resources might be available.

For farmers with considerable mobility issues, Agrability may recommend equipment manufacturers of assistive technology. For

others who are battling arthritis or the wear and tear of age, there are a range of options that include different watering or harvesting methods, rigging additional lighting to tractors for improved visibility. The program also may recommend using more automated equipment or installing handrails to help workers better navigate the farm.

"Our biggest single call we get tends to be related to mobility because of arthritis and aging," he says. "It's sometimes little things. When you're working in the afternoon, (we tell older farmers to) keep your windshield clean. We lose about a third of our light-capturing ability by the time we're 70."

Field, 70, owns more than two dozen head of cattle and nearly a dozen tractors and says he has no plans to walk away from farm life. He says he isn't surprised by the growing number of older workers reaching out to the program, and he's encouraged older farmers are opting to stick around.

Mark Hosier, a 58-year-old farmer and Alexandria, Indiana, native who farms corn, beans and cash crops while breeding and selling show pigs, called on Agrability after a 2,000-pound bale of hay fell from the forks of Hosier's tractor in 2006, leaving him paralyzed from the waist-down. He's been able to keep his operation running thanks to assistive lifts on his tractor, on the back of his truck and on his combine that he says have been instrumental in keeping him on the farm.

"It does make you feel like a productive citizen. You go out here, and you're earning money."

He likes the fact that he can do it himself and that he doesn't have to rely on others to do his work.

"Farmers don't retire," he says.

(Source: absnews.com)

New achievements introduced at ELECOMP 2019

The application provides information in different fields of agriculture, tourism, road trips, and industry.

Meanwhile, information in different fields of meteorology are available at the website of the startup.

For the first time, eight space-based startups attended the event, introducing their ideas and services.

The Iranian Space Agency and the Iranian Space Research Center supported the startups for attending the ELECOMP 2019.

Internet balloon in the sky



The Iranian Space Research Center supplied an internet balloon for the ELECOMP 2019.

The aerial wireless network provided 4G-LTE speed WiFi free of charge for the visitors.

Electronic health record

The website of Iran's electronic health record (EHR) was introduced at the e-government pavilion on Friday.

EHR program, a systematized collection of patient and population electronically-stored health information in a digital format, was launched across the country in late June.

The EHR project was jointly implemented by the ministries of health and ICT, the National Organization for Civil Registration, the Statistical Center of Iran, the Iran Health Insurance Organization, and the Social Security Organization.

The FaceApp scare: how machine learning technology can put your identity in danger

As a software developer, I spend the majority of my waking (and sometimes sleeping) hours thinking about how data can make things work, especially in today's highly digitized world. I think most people are unaware that data algorithms are being used to learn and make decisions for us: from assigning the best driver for Grab and Angkas, recommending a purchase on Amazon, and plotting the best path to a destination on Waze.

Then comes something like Faceapp. It's been a viral sensation for the past weeks, and something our selfie-driven culture totally embraces: an app that uses AI to apply a filter to your photos, allowing you to see yourself in your old age. Although photo filter software have existed for years, the reason Faceapp works so well is it uses neural networks to create filters.

Neural networks are an example of "machine learning" — mathematical algorithms that allow computers to "learn" patterns from past data, and using these patterns provide recommendations or decisions using new data. Faceapp developer Wireless Lab trained neural networks to learn how faces age from millions of existing photos, to the point that given a new photo of a face, it can perfectly simulate how a person might age.

Aging is not the only filter for Faceapp, you can simulate gender (see how you would look like as the opposite gender), styles (see how you would look with a different hairdo), and smiles (see how a neutral or frowning photo will look if smiling). Given these scenarios, it's not surprising that Faceapp has become quite popular, especially with celebrities who have gotten buzz posting re-aged or re-styled versions of themselves and others on social media.

To Russia with love

More recently, Faceapp has received criticism from journalists and politicians who raised concerns about data privacy. The developer of Faceapp, Wireless Lab, is headquartered in Russia, and with commonplace news about hacking and spying, alarms were raised that people's personally identifiable data — their face — was being aggregated and stored in Russia.

Wireless Lab CEO Yaroslav Goncharov clarified and denied that any user data was being sent to Russia. He said Faceapp services use public clouds such as AWS and Google Cloud to store user photos and information. Other members of the security community have also come out to absolve the company of any privacy and security concerns.

Faceapp developer Wireless Lab trained neural networks to learn how faces age from millions of existing photos, to the point that given a new photo of a face, it can perfectly simulate how a person might age.

As a data professional, I don't think Faceapp is just about privacy and security. This is a whole different level of debate and concern over what I would call data ethics: which would include data privacy, data ownership, algorithmic bias, and data-driven liabilities.

Data ethics does not automatically imply legality — although there is an overlap. We might say for example that anything that is illegal would be unethical, but you might have something that is legal but could be grossly unethical.

For example, the Faceapp terms of service (the fine print that no one reads), involves statements that would make any person flinch if they stopped for a moment to consider what they signed up for, like: "You grant FaceApp a perpetual, irrevocable, nonexclusive, royalty-free, worldwide, fully-paid, transferable sub-licensable license to use, reproduce, modify, adapt, publish, translate, create derivative works from, distribute, publicly perform and display your User Content in all media formats and channels now known or later developed, without compensation to you."

Perpetual irrevocable rights

I'll have to defer to the lawyers for the legal interpretation of this, but I wonder — is it really possible to grant anyone perpetual irrevocable rights to your face and derivatives? On the one hand, in politics and the entertainment industry, contracts are negotiated over the use of a person's video, image, voice, to endorse products and brands in a commercial for instance. On the other hand, the cybercrime prevention act criminalizes any form of computer-related forgery and cyberlibel. Would you be liable if you used Faceapp to re-age or re-gender someone and posted their image without their permission?

It gets murkier when you consider the power of machine learning that Faceapp uses. Similar technology also creates Deep Fakes — images or video that are generated by supplanting the face of another person on another body or model. Machine learning also allows the mimicking of someone's voice and speech. With these technologies people can be made to appear to have said something or acted in a way that never really happened.

(Source: news.abs-cbn.com)

Bill on protection of animals and wildlife still awaiting consideration

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — While it has been over 3 years that a bill on protection of animals and wildlife has been proposed, it is still waiting to be discussed by the Majlis (Iranian Parliament), Khabaronline reported on Thursday.



Since 2016, some animal cruelty cases have been spotted in the country which mounted public criticism and pushed the Majlis to pass a law against cruelty to animals.

The Department of Environment (DOE) has made efforts to safeguard animals by proposing the bill, but the Majlis must take it into consideration, Asghar Daneshian, deputy director for legal and parliamentary affairs at the DOE has said.

The bill prohibiting animal cruelty initially must be approved by the presidential department for legal affairs and then to be submitted to the Majlis and in case of approval to be sent to the Expediency Council, he explained.

He expressed hope that the bill would be passed by the Majlis. Recently, two men killed a bear cub in Savadkuh, northern province of Mazandaran, by throwing stones at it and were summoned by the court.

Distracted driving main cause of road accidents last month

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Distracted driving was the main cause of traffic-related accidents being responsible for 34 percent of the crashes happened during the Iranian calendar month of Khordad (May 22-June 21), Nader Rahmani, a senior traffic police official has said.

With a share of 20.8 percent, driving at an unsafe speed was the second major cause of road accidents happened in the country during the last month of spring, he explained.

Running in the wrong lane with a share of 13.6 percent and failing to yield the right of way to other vehicles with a share of 12.2 percent ranked third and fourth, respectively, he noted.

He went on to say that drowsy driving also was the fifth cause of car crashes with a share of 5.1 percent. Reckless lane changes with 2.5 percent, failure to control the vehicle with 1.7 percent, and wrong way driving with 1.3 percent have also contributed to road crashes in the past month, he concluded.

Traffic police chief Seyed Kamal Hadianfar has said that road crash casualties amounted to 3,863 in the country during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21).

He explained that during the first two months of this year, 2,584 people have lost their lives due to road accidents, which means that some 25 people get killed immediately at the crash scene each day, while the number increases to 41 taking the deaths happening on the way to hospitals into account.

Nearly 1.25 million people die in road crashes each year, on average 3,287 deaths a day. An additional 20-50 million are injured or disabled. More than half of all road traffic deaths occur among young adults ages 15-44.

WORDS IN THE NEWS America rejects climate treaty

(April 2, 2001)
President Bush has defended his decision not to implement the Kyoto treaty on global warming. He did so publicly at a news conference and privately to the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, at the White House. Mr. Bush said he would work with allies on greenhouse gases, but would not accept a plan which hurt American workers. Mr. Schroeder said that they had disagreed about Kyoto. From Washington, Paul Reynolds reports. Mr. Bush is making no apology for his position. He is arguing that the United States is facing an **economic downturn** and an **energy crisis** and will not reduce CO2 and other emissions until it can use more natural gas and it lacks the **infrastructure** for that. Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office with Mr. Schroeder at his side, Mr. Bush made plain that **national interest** was guiding his policy.

«While I worry about **emissions** and we will work together to achieve efficiencies through new technologies, I'm also worried about the fact that people may not be finding jobs in America. I will consult with our friends, but it's going to be what's in the interests of our country **first and foremost**.»

Mr. Schroeder said **diplomatically** that they would work on other issues around global warming, such as encouraging **renewable resources**. But he did not hide their **disagreement** over Kyoto. President Bush has ordered a review of alternatives. In the meantime, though, there is a **policy vacuum**. This does not seem to worry him. Kyoto joins a growing list of policies in which the administration defines its interests and then accepts **arguments**, but no real change.

Words
position: here, position means an attitude towards a matter
economic downturn: if there is a downturn in an economy, it becomes less successful
energy: power obtained from sources such as coal, oil or water
crisis: a dangerous situation that could cause hardship
CO2: lower the amount of carbon dioxide, a gas produced by some chemical reactions
infrastructure: the structure that helps a country function effectively, including facilities, services and equipment
national interest: things that will benefit the whole country
emissions: when there is an emission of a gas it is released into the atmosphere
first and foremost: more than anything else
diplomatically: if you say something diplomatically, you say it without offending anyone
renewable resources: a renewable resource is one such as wood which is naturally replaced when it is used, rather than being destroyed
disagreement: the act of indicating that you object to something that you find unacceptable
policy vacuum: when plans to help future decisions are not being made
arguments: an argument here is a set of reasons or statements that you use to convince people that your opinion is correct

22% of classrooms nationwide made smart

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Smart classrooms constitute 22 percent of the total classrooms across the country, head of the department for information technology at the Ministry of Education has announced.

Smart classrooms are often considered as classrooms with a focus on ICT hardware and software and in particular the use of ICT-based enrollment and other online processes.

All schools are planned to be connected to the national information network and the national school network, Fars quoted Mehdi Sharafi as saying on Saturday.

He went on to say that the target community accounts for 50 percent of the entire country's population, because students, parents and teachers are the main users of the service.

It aims to provide online services for these groups of the society to prevent them from referring to the offices, he said, adding, it enables many people to



receive services virtually.

Pointing to the smart schools, he said, "We have signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology to provide the infrastructures and equip the schools with technological advances."

As per the MOU, the whole schools will be connected to the national information network as well as to the national network of schools, a hardware infrastructure for sharing content will be provided and classrooms will be equipped with software for electronic content, he explained.

"Special training courses on technological advances and electronic content have been held for the teachers to empower them for smart schools."

Currently, some 22 percent of the classrooms are smart and ICT-based, he noted.

He expressed hope that the rest of the schools would be provided with the necessary infrastructure of smart schools.

Tehran experiences clean, healthy air for 102 days



ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — According to the Air Quality Control Company, 102 days of clean and good air quality have been reported in the capital since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21).

An air quality index (AQI) is used to communicate to the public how polluted the air currently is or how polluted it is forecast to become.

The index categorizes conditions according to a measure of polluting matters into excellent (0-50), good (51-100), lightly polluted or unhealthy for sensitive groups (101-150), moderately polluted (151-200), heavily polluted (201-300) and severely

polluted (301-500).

During the aforementioned period, 25 days of excellent air quality was reported in Tehran, and the good air quality stayed in the capital for 77 days.

However, 19 days of unhealthy for sensitive groups haunted Tehran, in addition, air quality reached a level which was unhealthy for all the residents for 1 day.

This is while, last year in the same period only 8 days of clean air days were recorded, and 23 days were lightly polluted or unhealthy for sensitive groups.

But Tehraners did not breathe a single day of unhealthy air during the aforesaid period last year.

IRCS rescues over 3,800 from death in month



SOCIETY TEHRAN — The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) has saved some 3,878 individuals from June 21 to July 20 within the framework of a national rescue and relief scheme, IRCS director has said.

The national rescue and relief scheme aims at performing relief and rescue operations over a period of 94 days to help victims and the injured in natural disasters and accidents nationwide during summer vacations, Morteza Salimi said, IRNA reported on Saturday.

"To implement the scheme, some 559 fixed stations and 729 mobile stations are offering rescue services in different parts

of the country."

During the aforementioned period, some 4,429 relief and rescue operations have been made to rescue people in both natural disasters and accidents happened due to human errors, he added.

He went on to say that 49 percent of the operations conducted for traffic-related accidents, 5 percent for drowning incidents and 6 percent for the mountain climbing ones.

IRCS forces have provided various relief services to 12,374 people nationwide, he added.

"Some 375 operations also have been made to save 423 people from car rollovers, car fire and such happenings."

Cigarette butts causing 'serious damage to environment', study on impact to plant growth reveals

Cigarette butts are believed to be the most pervasive form of plastic pollution on the planet with trillions are discarded every year. Now new research has indicated they pose a significant risk to plant growth.

Usually made of cellulose acetate fiber, a type of bioplastic, cigarette filters can take decades to break down. An estimated 4.5 trillion are littered each year.

The presence of cigarette butts in soil reduces the germination success and shoot length of clover by 27 per cent and 28 per cent respectively, and in grass, germination success was reduced by 10 per cent and shoot length by 13 per cent, according to the new study published in the journal *Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety*.

The research from a team led by academics from Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), showed that the root weight was reduced by 57 per cent.

But filters from unsmoked cigarettes had almost the same effect on plant growth as used filters, indicating that the damage to plants is caused by the filter itself, even without the additional toxins released from the burning of the tobacco, their report stated.



As part of the study, the team sampled locations around the city of Cambridge and found areas with as many as 128 discarded cigarette butts per square meter.

Control experiments contained pieces of wood of identical shape and size as the cigarette butts.

Lead author Dr Dannielle Green, senior lecturer in biology at ARU, said: "Despite being a common sight littering streets and parks worldwide, our study is the first to show the impact of cigarette butts on plants. We found they had

a detrimental effect on the germination success and shoot length of both grass and clover, and reduced the root weight of clover by over half.

"Ryegrass and white clover, the two species we tested, are important forage crops for livestock as well as being commonly found in urban green spaces.

"These plants support a wealth of biodiversity, even in city parks, and white clover is ecologically important for pollinators and nitrogen fixation."

"Dropping cigarette butts seems to be a socially acceptable form of littering and we need to raise awareness that the filters do not disappear and instead can cause serious damage to the environment," said Dr Green.

Co-author Dr Bas Boots, added: "Although further work is needed, we believe it is the chemical composition of the filter that is causing the damage to plants."

"Most are made from cellulose acetate fibers, and added chemicals which make the plastic more flexible, called plasticizers, may also be leaching out and adversely affecting the early stages of plant development."

(Source: *The Independent*)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Female Asiatic lion to join male companion in Iran

Iran will play host to a female Asiatic lion from Ireland to accompany the recently returned male lion under a population management program aiming at endangered species reproduction by the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), a veterinarian at Eram Zoo has said. The female lion, born 4 years ago, now is coming back to its motherland after being extinct for 8 decades, YJC quoted Iman Memarian as saying on Saturday.

شیر ماده ایرانی به جفت نر خود می پیوندد

دامپزشک پارک پردیسان و مدیر باغ وحش ارم از پیوستن شیر ماده ایرانی از ایرلند به جفت نر خود تحت نظر برنامه تکثیر گونه‌های در خطر انقراض خبر داد.

ایمان معماریان در گفتگو با خبرنگار حوزه محیط زیست گروه اجتماعی باشگاه خبرنگاران جوان، اظهار کرد: شیرماده ایرانی که در باغ وحش دوبلین ایرلند به دنیا آمده و ۴ ساله است، پس از ۸۰ سال در راه بازگشت به وطن است.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ship”

Meaning: position
For example: True **friendship** is about trusting one another.

PHRASAL VERB

Pare something down

Meaning: to reduce something, especially by making a lot of small reductions
For example: The list was pared down for the final interviews.

IDIOM

On cue

Explanation: to happen at exactly the appropriate or expected moment
For example: My grandmother was blowing out the candles on her birthday cake when, right on cue, the flowers arrived.

Saudi crown prince stuck in Yemeni 'quagmire', seeking U.S. help

TEHRAN — Facing growing international and domestic pressure, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's military campaign in Yemen has further pushed Riyadh to plead for Washington's assistance, according to a report.

Despite waging a prolonged four-year war on Yemen, the Saudi-led coalition has failed to achieve its announced objective of installing an allied government and defeating the Houthi Ansarullah movement in the country, The New York Times cited various analysts as saying.

The frustrated Saudis have, however, turned to additional U.S. support in hopes of achieving a breakthrough, according to unnamed diplomats informed on the matter.

The U.S. already provides the Saudis with weapons and logistical support. Riyadh is seeking additional intelligence assistance and possibly the deployment of American special forces teams and advisers in Yemen, according to diplomats.

Despite being emboldened by the U.S. President Donald Trump's hawkish administration, Riyadh is, however, disgruntled with Washington's hesitation to provide the additional assistance.

"Why haven't the Americans carried out a single operation to help?" asked Mustafa Alani, a scholar at the Saudi-backed Gulf Research Center who is close to the royal court.

Washington's reluctance comes as the U.S. congress has pushed to limit U.S. assistance



in the Saudi military campaign following the gruesome killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in a diplomatic mission in Turkey in October last year.

On Thursday, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to pass resolutions that block certain arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

U.S. President Donald Trump has, nonetheless, strongly defended arm sales to the oil-rich kingdom. The president has vowed to veto any resolution banning the sales.

Decreasing Options

Facing an ever-decreasing set of options

in Yemen, the Saudis "don't have the luxury of walking out of Yemen," believes Farea al-Muslimi, chairman of the Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, a research institute in the Yemeni capital.

Washington-based AGS Institute analyst Kristin Smith Diwan also believes bin Salman's failure to finish the war, which was largely touted as the young crown prince's "personal investment", hurts his "credibility as a successful leader."

"Not many people in Saudi Arabia feel this is a wise investment for the future," she said. The hastily withdrawal of Saudi Arabia's

most prominent ally, the United Arab Emirates, which was made public last past month, has also prompted many experts to further question whether the kingdom's is able to continue the war on its own.

Known to be more efficient than the Saudis at commanding ground troops, the UAE helped maintain a fragile network of mercenaries and tribal militia to fight for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen's southern regions.

Speaking last week, an official of the Saudi Embassy in Washington said that the kingdom would rely more on "Yemeni allies" following the Emirati withdrawal.

However, experts believe that rivalries within different militia factions competing over the void left by Emirati forces, coupled with Saudi Arabia's lacking political appeal to militia south of the country, may lead to an ultimate collapse of the coalition's tribal forces.

According to the New York Times report, some Western and United Nations diplomats hope that the Emirati withdrawal, along with mounting international frustration over the war's impact on civilians, may pressure the crown prince to negotiate a deal with the Houthis.

However, bin Salman's hard-handed control over the country's media and opposition means the crown prince faces little domestic pressure to end the war, the paper explained.

Ex-Russia tycoon wields clout in UK PM race

TEHRAN — For almost a decade, Alexander Temerko, who forged a career at the top of the Russian arms industry and had connections at the highest levels of the Kremlin, has been an influential figure in British politics. He's one of the Conservative Party's major donors. He counts Boris Johnson, the front-runner to be Britain's next PM, among his friends. Temerko, born in what was then Soviet Ukraine, presents himself in public as an entrepreneur who opposes Britain's departure from the European Union because it's bad for his UK energy business, and as a dissident critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

But in more than half a dozen conversations with this reporter, conducted over the past three years as part of research

for a book, he showed a different side of his career and views.

Temerko revealed himself to be a supporter of Johnson's bid to lead Britain out of the EU, describing the 2016 public vote to leave the bloc as a "revolution against bureaucracy."

He praised senior Russian security officials, including the current and former heads of the Federal Security Service, successor to the KGB, and proudly recalled his past work with Russia's Defense Ministry.

These new insights into Temerko's private thinking about Johnson, Brexit and Russia come as the ruling Conservative Party is choosing its next leader, and as some British MPs are increasingly wary of possible Russian influence over British politics, Reuters reported.



Russia deploys, test fires new air defense missiles in Arctic region

TEHRAN — The Russian Navy has reportedly deployed and test-fired its new Tor-M2DT air defense missiles, designed to cope with the freezing temperatures of the country's Arctic region.

The first two vehicles carrying the anti-air missiles arrived in Russia's southern shores of Novaya Zemlya earlier in the week on board the Northern Fleet's Kondapoga amphibious ship sailing from the Kola Peninsula, Russian navy's press service in Severomorsk announced as cited in a Friday report by The Moscow Times.

First unveiled at the Victory Day Parade on Moscow's Red Square in 2017, the report further added that the Tor-M2DT vehicles

with anti-aircraft missiles were specially designed for use in Russia's frigid Arctic regions and can still function at temperatures as low as minus 50 degrees Celsius.

According to the report, the Tor-M2DT missile defense system is capable of detecting up to 40 moving aerial targets at a range of 15 kilometers and at altitudes of 12,000 meters.

It also plays a vital role in Russia's bid to re-arm its Arctic region, aimed at protecting its new military bases at Franz Josef Land, Novaya Zemlya, Severnaya Zemlya, the New Siberian Islands and Wrangle Island.

All of the islands and archipelagos are located along Russia's Northern Sea Route. Shooting drills were also conducted on

target drones flying at different altitudes, both within sight and while hidden behind clouds, the report added.

The all-terrain anti-air missile system consists of two wagons. The first contains the track and steering while the other consists of radar and missiles launchers, Press TV reported.

The development came nearly two months after Moscow launched a nuclear-powered icebreaker at the Baltic Shipyard in St. Petersburg, in what seemed to be an extension of Russia's efforts to boost its ability to tap the Arctic's commercial potential.

The ship, designed to be crewed by 75 people, is one of a trio, code-named Project

22220, which will be the largest and most powerful icebreakers in the world when completed.

"Today we are floating the third ship, or the second serial one of Project 22220 - the Ural. They are the ships from new generation icebreakers of that class that we pin our hopes on in exploration of the Northern Sea Route. It is a principally new ship," said Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov during the launching ceremony on May 25.

The advanced icebreakers are powered by a new module nuclear reactor, which is far more powerful than those mounted on previous vessels of Project 22220, said Baltic Shipyards Director General Alexei Kadilov.

Historic election in Pakistani former tribal districts

TEHRAN — Pakistanis in the country's northwestern tribal districts were voting in provincial elections for the first time in the country's history, marking a key step in the merger of these areas into Pakistan's administrative and constitutional mainstream.

Polls opened across the seven districts that composed the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) on Saturday morning, with 16 seats in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial assembly up for grabs.

FATA, where the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) once thrived, was ruled directly by Pakistan's president under British-era colonial laws until last year, when the territories were merged into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province by a constitutional amendment.

The move fulfilled a long-standing demand in the tribal districts, home to some five million people.

"We are very happy to vote in the tribal areas for the first time in elections for the provincial assembly," said



Rahidullah Afridi, a 29-year-old voter at a polling station in Jamrud area of Khyber district.

"We are getting an opportunity to get the same rights as all other people [in Pakistan]."

More than 280 candidates, including two women, are

standing for election, according to Election Commission data. The majority of the contenders are independents, but all the major national parties are represented in the historic polls.

Some 2.7 million people are eligible to vote, with large turnouts reported at polling stations as polls progressed through the day.

Composed of seven main districts, the territories flank Pakistan's border with its northwestern neighbour, Afghanistan. In the past, they have been a haven for armed groups such as the TTP and its allies.

A series of military operations undertaken since 2007 has seen the country retake control of the districts, with most remaining elements of the Pakistani Taliban driven into Afghanistan, according to the Pakistani military.

Afghanistan and the United States, however, allege that elements of the Afghan Taliban continue to find safe haven in parts of the region, Al Jazeera reported.

King Salman OK's deployment of 500 U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia

TEHRAN — Saudi King Salman has approved hosting of hundreds of US troops in the kingdom amid rising tensions in the region between the United States and Iran.

According to the kingdom's defense ministry, King Salman has given his approval "based on mutual cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the United States of America" and Washington's "desire to enhance everything that could preserve

the security of the region and its stability."

CNN reported on Thursday that around 500 troops were expected to be dispatched to the Prince Sultan Air Base, located in a desert area east of the Saudi capital Riyadh.

Two US military officials told CNN that a small number of troops and support personnel are already in the air base, with initial preparations being made for a US-made

Patriot missile system as well as runway and airfield improvements.

Washington is expected to fly stealth, fifth-generation F-22 jets and other fighters from the air base, the unnamed US officials said.

The kingdom has not hosted US forces since 2003 when they pulled out following the end of the war with Iraq. The US troops were present in Saudi Arabia for 12 years,

starting with Operation Desert Storm in 1991, when former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

According to Press TV, at the peak of the Iraq war, 200 U.S. aircraft were stationed at the Prince Sultan air base, which is situated around 80 kilometers south of Riyadh. As many as 2,700 missions a day were also handled by the headquarters in Saudi Arabia.

Dutch state partially liable for Srebrenica

➔1 During the Bosnian conflict in 1995, several hundred Dutch peacekeeping troops had been assigned to protect a UN-designated "safe area" where thousands of Muslims had sought refuge from Bosnian Serb forces - among them 350 men who made it into the Dutch base.

The Supreme Court found that the Dutch forces could have allowed those men to stay in the base and that, by handing them over, they had knowingly and unlawfully sent them to possible abuse or death at the hands of the Bosnian Serb troops.

"They took away the men's chance to stay out of the hands of the Bosnian Serbs," it said.

Kada Hotic, one of the Mothers of Srebrenica group of survivors present in court, told Reuters that the Dutch government was responsible for the beginning of the genocide in Srebrenica.

"No matter if it's 1 percent, 10 percent or 100 percent, they are responsible," she said.

A lawyer for the victims said he would study the verdict to see if there are possibilities to fight the case further at the European Court of Human Rights.

While the Supreme Court upheld the partial liability of the state, it rejected a second charge - that the assistance given by Dutch forces in removing those gathered outside the base had been unlawful.

"Their accountability can never be erased. We won't leave it here, we will go to the European court to see if we have the right to justice as Muslims," said Munira Subasic, another plaintiff in the case.

The amount of the damages was not specified by the Supreme Court Friday, but in an earlier case the Dutch state paid tens of thousands of euros to several survivors.

Hotic said the amount of compensation was not the priority for the Mothers of Srebrenica. "We want justice."

Yemenis launch retaliatory drone attacks on Saudi air base

➔1 The fresh Saudi air raids came one day after Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud approved hosting hundreds of US troops in the kingdom amid rising regional tensions.

According to Press TV, Saudi Arabia and its allies have been waging a brutal war on Yemen since March 2015 in an attempt to reinstall the country's Riyadh-allied former regime and crush the Houthi movement -- objectives that have failed to materialize due to a strong resistance put up by the Yemenis.

The Western-backed military aggression, coupled with a naval blockade, has killed tens of thousands of Yemenis, destroyed the country's infrastructure and led to a massive humanitarian crisis.

Earlier this week, The New York Times cited various analysts as saying that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the architect of the war, has been stuck in Yemen's "quagmire."

The frustrated Saudis have turned to additional US support in the hope of achieving a breakthrough, according to the report.

Israeli forces wound nearly 100 Gaza protesters

TEHRAN — Israeli forces have attacked Palestinians taking part in the weekly "Great March of Return" rallies, injuring 98 Gaza protesters, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

The Gaza Health Ministry also said that 49 of the injured protesters had sustained bullet wounds from Israeli live fire.

Four paramedics were also among the wounded.

The rallies have been held every week since March 30 last year. The Palestinians demand the right to return of those driven out of their homeland by Israeli aggression.

Israeli troops have killed at least 305 Palestinians since the beginning of the rallies and wounded nearly 18,000 others, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

In March, a United Nations (UN) fact-finding mission found that Israeli forces committed rights violations during their crackdown against the Palestinian protesters in Gaza that may amount to war crimes.

According to Press TV, Gaza has been under Israeli siege since June 2007, which has caused a decline in living standards.

Israel has also launched three major wars against the enclave since 2008, killing thousands of Gazans each time and shattering the impoverished territory's already poor infrastructure.

Maduro offers to establish permanent peace dialogue with Venezuelan opposition

TEHRAN — Venezuela's government has offered opposition to maintain contact dialogue for peace in the country during the latest round of talks in Barbados, President Nicolas Maduro said.

"Yesterday, the Venezuelan delegation returned from the second round of negotiations in Barbados... Our key proposal is to create a permanent 'table' for dialogue with the Venezuelan opposition for peace and Venezuela", Maduro said during a meeting with his United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), Sputnik reported.

Earlier in July, the Venezuelan authorities announced that the government and the opposition had agreed to engage in a permanent peace dialogue.

The sides have been holding the talks in Barbados with economy, politics, culture and the social sphere being the main topics of discussions. Maduro has said that he was optimistic about their outcome, while Communications Minister Jorge Rodriguez has called them successful.

Last May, Maduro offered the opposition, which currently controls the parliament, to hold snap elections in order to legitimize the legislature, which is currently practically abandoned by other government branches since legislative functions are implemented by the pro-government National Constituent Assembly.

On Friday, Maduro suggested that the elections were "around the corner". The president added that he expected to receive a plan, detailing all actions for winning Venezuelans' votes, on Monday to prepare PSUV for the coming elections.

The situation in Venezuela has been tense since January, when anti-government protests, fueled by opposition leader Juan Guaido's move to proclaim himself the country's interim president, erupted. The United States recognized Guaido and started imposing sanctions on Venezuela and freezing billions of dollars of Venezuela's assets.

N. Korea continues to develop nukes, missiles, U.S. commander claims

TEHRAN — A top U.S. military commander has claimed that North Korea continues to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles even though it has stopped testing them.

Speaking at a security forum in Colorado, Admiral Phil Davidson called North Korea the "most immediate threat," and said there is "no doubt" that Pyongyang is still developing nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles.

The commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command also

pointed to the short-range missile launch North Korea carried out in May, denouncing the move not as a provocation but a test.

Elsewhere in his speech, Davidson supported diplomatic negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang over the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and underscored the need for U.S. military presence in the region.

There are close to 30,000 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea, and their annual drills with thousands of South

Korean soldiers have always infuriated the North.

The commander said the U.S. launches major exercises on the Peninsula twice a year, in February and August, and that the upcoming exercise will be executed next month.

According to Press TV, North Korea has strongly denounced joint military exercises between South Korea and the U.S., saying the drills pose an "all-out challenge" to efforts towards peace on the Korean peninsula.

Bulgaria handed partial stadium ban for fans' racist behavior

Bulgaria have been ordered by UEFA to play their next two home Euro 2020 qualifiers in a partially-closed stadium due to racist behavior by their supporters.

European soccer's governing body opened disciplinary proceedings against the Bulgarian Football Union after incidents involving their supporters during qualifiers against Kosovo and Czech Republic earlier this year.

The UEFA Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body announced on Friday that Bulgaria must close a section of 5,000 seats at the Vasil Levski national stadium when England visit on Oct. 14.

A section of 3,000 seats will be closed when Bulgaria host Czech Republic on Nov. 17.

The blocked sections for both matches will display a banner with the wording "#EqualGame" and the UEFA logo on it.

(Source: Reuters)

Argentina hero Bilardo in serious condition after brain surgery

Argentina's 1986 World Cup winning coach Carlos Bilardo is in a serious condition in hospital following brain surgery, the center treating him has confirmed.

The 81-year-old was taken into intensive care at the Argentine Institute of Diagnosis in Buenos Aires on July 4 due to a "deterioration in his underlying disease," the center said in a report on Wednesday.

He is suffering from Hakim-Adams syndrome, a neurodegenerative disease common in men over 60, for which he was twice hospitalized in 2018.

"He is currently in the intensive care unit while his prognosis is reserved," the report said.

He underwent a procedure to drain blood and puss from around his brain. It was the second intervention in a little more than a month, according to Argentine press and those close to Bilardo.

He was the coach when a Diego Maradona-inspired Argentina lifted the World Cup for the second time with a 3-2 victory over West Germany in the 1986 final in Mexico.

Earlier in the competition, Argentina had knocked out England thanks to Maradona's infamous "hand of God" goal, and his iconic solo effort widely considered one of the greatest goals of all time.

"I want to thank Bilardo eternally for having inculcated in us respect for the Argentina jersey, what it meant to be an international player, the prestige of wearing this shirt," said Sergio Goycochea, who was goalkeeper under Bilardo at the 1990 World Cup in Italy.

A gynaecologist by profession, Bilardo took over as Argentina coach following the 1982 World Cup in Spain and stepped down after losing the Italia 90 final 1-0 to West Germany.

(Source: France 24)

Cup of Nations Golden Boot Ighalo retires from international football

Nigeria striker Odion Ighalo announced on Saturday his retirement from international football after winning the Golden Boot at the Africa Cup of Nations.

The 30-year-old Shanghai Shenhua striker struck five times as the Super Eagles finished third in Egypt, bagging him the top scorer honours with two goals more than Sadio Mane, Riyad Mahrez and Cedric Bakambu.

"It's been an amazing 5 years journey, but after the due consultation and extensive discussion with my family, I have decided it's time for me to retire from the national team," Ighalo said in a statement.

"It's been an eventful and most memorable opportunity to serve my country with pride, passion and contribute my quota to the development of our football.

"It's now time to concentrate on club football and give the younger players a chance to learn and grow."

Ighalo almost quit Nigeria duty after last year's World Cup following sharp criticism and even death threats, but was encouraged to stay on by Gernot Rohr, who Ighalo says stood by him "against all odds".

He repaid in full Rohr's faith in him, finishing top scorer in qualifying for the tournament before his impressive showing in Egypt, which featured a standout display as Nigeria knocked out defending champions Cameroon in the last 16.

Ighalo scored twice and set up Alex Iwobi's winner in a thrilling 3-2 win. In total Ighalo scored 16 goals for Nigeria in 35 appearances, and he also captained the country's Under-20 team to the 2009 World Cup, also held in Egypt.

(Source: AFP)

Zlatan scores perfect hat-trick after claim he's 'best by far' in MLS

When you claim you're "like a Ferrari" in a league full of "Fiats" you'd better back it up.

Well yet again, Zlatan Ibrahimovic has proved he's as good as his word.

Earlier in the week, the 37-year-old LA Galaxy striker was asked whether he was still the best player in the MLS, given Los Angeles FC forward Carlos Vela is the top scorer this season.

Answer: "By far. Because if he's [Vela] in his prime. How old is he? 29. And he's playing in MLS and he's in his prime. When I was 29 [I was in Europe]. Big difference."

So on Friday night the two strikers featured on opposite sides of the Los Angeles derby - 'El Trafico' to locals - and you can probably guess what happened next.

Vela scored twice to take his tally to 21 goals for the season. Ibrahimovic scored a hat-trick. And a perfect hat-trick at that - right foot, left foot, header.

"When you play against a rival like that, in a full stadium, I get pumped. I get adrenaline. This is considered to be the biggest game in the league and I show up in the biggest games," said the Swede after the match.

"I am in play-off mode every day."

The former Manchester United, Inter, and Ajax, striker now has 41 goals in 44 MLS games and 520 career goals across all leagues.

(Source: BBC)

Algeria crowned Africa Cup of Nations champion after beating Senegal

Algeria was crowned Africa Cup of Nations champion for only the second time in its history, edging past Senegal 1-0 thanks to Baghdad Bounedjah's early deflected goal.

After going behind, Senegal dominated for the remainder of the match but was unable to find an equalizing goal.

Midway through the second half, it looked as though Senegal had been handed a lifeline after referee Alioum Alioum awarded a penalty for handball.

However, after being advised by the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) to review the incident on the pitch side monitor, Alioum overturned his original decision.

It was yet more heartbreak for Senegal, which is still yet to win the greatest prize in African football.

But it will be the manner of this defeat that will hurt the most. Algeria's goal came from its one and only shot of the game and few would argue that Senegal was the better side for the other 88 minutes of the match.

Less than two minutes in -- 79 seconds to be exact -- you got the sense this was just going to be Algeria's night, after the Fennec Foxes took the lead in bizarrely fortuitous circumstances.

Bounedjah silkily spun his defender and latched onto Riyad Mahrez's through ball, cutting inside onto his right foot and firing at goal from range.

Senegal center-back Salif Sané got across to make a block and appeared to have done enough, but the ball looped high into the Cairo night -- almost comically high -- and somehow kissed the underside of the crossbar and nestled into net.



Presumably, like thousands of others in the stadium, he thought the ball must have been going behind for a corner.

Once in a generation

It was the perfect start for the Algeria fans who had traveled to Egypt in their thousands for this once-in-a-generation chance at making history.

Not since 1990 had the Fennec Foxes made it to the AFCON final, beating Nigeria 1-0 on home soil in front of 105,000 fans.

The Algerian government had reportedly subsidized more than 5,000 plane tickets for Algeria supporters to make the four-hour flight to the Egyptian capital.

However, hundreds of fans with legitimate tickets -- including local Egyptians as well as Algerians -- were reportedly refused entry and left to wander the perimeter of the stadium, trying to find a way in after being told by officials that some sections were already full.

After Algeria's bright start -- Bounedjah almost made it 2-0 just moments later -- Senegal grew into the final and was by a considerable distance the better team for the remainder of the half.

But despite their dominance, the Lions of Teranga were unable to produce any clear-cut chances, largely due to Algeria's consistent tactical fouls that prevented

Senegal finding any sort of rhythm.

The closest they came to opening the scoring was M'Baye Niang's sharp turn and long-range volley that whistled inches over Rais M'Bolhi's crossbar.

Led by Liverpool star Sadio Mané, Senegal was not willing to simply let this opportunity pass it by. Having never previously won the Africa Cup of Nations and only once making it to the final, these players knew they were on the brink of immortality.

This final had been billed as Mané vs. Mahrez but so far the Premier League duo had been upstaged by their less illustrious teammates.

VAR controversy
In the semifinal against Tunisia, Senegal was on the right end of a controversial call that saw VAR overturn a decision to award their opponents a penalty in extra time.

As the final entered the second half, Senegal found itself in Tunisia's shoes as referee Alioum awarded it a penalty after Adlène Guedioura was adjudged to have handled in the area.

It seemed harsh as the time; Sarr's cross was fired from close range at Guedioura who had both arms behind his back. Alioum briefly consulted the pitch side monitor and overturned his original decision.

Though Senegal's players were perplexed at the time, in hindsight they will have few complaints.

As the final whistle got ever nearer, Aliou Cisse's side continued to press for an equalizer as Algeria sunk further and further back towards its goalkeeper.

(Source: CNN)

Tomic's appeal against fine rejected, receives stinging rebuke



Australian Bernard Tomic's appeal to overturn a fine for not playing to "required professional standards" at Wimbledon earlier this month has been denied in a stinging rebuke by the Grand Slam board.

Tomic lost his first round match 6-2 6-1 6-4 to France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga at Wimbledon and was fined his entire winnings of 45,000 pounds (\$56,241) after organisers ruled he had put in minimal effort in the 58-minute defeat.

The 26-year-old Tomic appealed the decision, citing the fact he was unwell before the match, while Tsonga added that he felt his victory had been devalued.

The board, however, refused to overturn their original decision and heavily criticised Tomic's attitude to tennis.

"A review of your historical record of misconduct at Grand Slams, never mind elsewhere, provides little justification for an adjustment," board director Bill Babcock wrote in the decision letter that was published by the New York Times.

"In your case, Bernard, I am sure you would agree there is no historical evidence to give comfort to the theory that you can reform your behavior."

Babcock added that if Tomic goes without a sanction in his next eight

Grand Slam events then he would be refunded 25 percent of the fine.

"Admittedly, I am sceptical that you can achieve this reform of Grand Slam on-court behavior," Babcock added. "Many others, no doubt, would be even more than just sceptical."

"Good luck and I hope to be pleasantly surprised in the future by your successful reform."

Tomic, however, said he would appeal the decision further.

"I don't care about this 25 percent; I care about the right thing for players in the future," he told the newspaper.

This year's tournament was not the first time Tomic has run afoul of tennis officialdom.

He was nicknamed 'Tomic the Tank Engine' after accusations he 'tanked' -- or failed to try his best -- in a loss to Andy Roddick at the 2012 U.S. Open.

Tomic also said after his first round loss at Wimbledon in 2017 that he was 'bored' during the match.

He has also been periodically suspended from Australia's Davis Cup team over the last five years for what Tennis Australia have called "ongoing disrespect".

(Source: Reuters)

Beckenbauer probe to be split from World Cup investigation



Swiss prosecutors plan to separate Franz Beckenbauer's case from the broader investigation into corruption in Germany's successful 2006 World Cup bid. It's not clear why, though Beckenbauer has been in poor health.

Switzerland's federal public prosecutors' office on Friday confirmed that it would split investigations into Franz Beckenbauer from the broader case against Germany's successful World Cup bid in 2006.

The Swiss authorities said that they had "informed all affected parties of the intention to split the investigation against the accused Franz Beckenbauer and to continue it separately."

Investigators did not comment on their reasons, but Beckenbauer is known to have been in poor health and reports have circulated that he may not be deemed fit enough to stand trial or potentially face prison. Beckenbauer has undergone two heart operations (in 2016 and 2017), a 2018 hip replacement, and shared news of an eye infection in the past week.

The former president of Germany's DFB football association, Theo Zwanziger, told German news agency dpa that he would challenge any bid to ring-fence investigations into Beckenbauer.

"Of course we will massively contest

this attempt at separation with the Swiss prosecutors' office," Zwanziger said. "It's not okay to absolve one of the accused of responsibility."

Zwanziger was head of the DFB at the time; Beckenbauer -- who would later take a place on FIFA's executive committee -- was in charge of organizing the 2006 World Cup bid, and later the competition itself.

Another of the accused, Wolfgang Niersbach, declined to comment on developments in an ongoing investigation.

Swiss prosecutors are looking into potential charges including embezzlement and money laundering.

The investigation revolves around a €6.7 million (\$7.5 million at today's exchange rate) payment from the DFB. The money was declared as partial financing for a gala, which never took place. The money allegedly went instead to the former Adidas CEO Robert Louis-Dreyfus, via FIFA. Three years prior, the same sum was allegedly transferred by Beckenbauer and Louis-Dreyfus to Qatar's Mohamed bin Hammam -- a former candidate for the FIFA presidency who was issued a lifelong ban for corruption in 2012, after evidence emerged of him trying to buy votes for the presidency.

(Source: DW)

Hamilton urges F1 to consult with drivers on track selection

Lewis Hamilton believes Formula 1's managers should take drivers' opinions into consideration before adding new venues to the sport's calendar.

Hamilton is all for racing at new circuits, but the five-time world champion insists all tracks are not equal when it comes to their potential for providing thrilling action.

As a case in point, last month's French Grand Prix at Paul Ricard was decried as perhaps the most boring procession in the history of the F1 world championship, while Austria and Silverstone delivered electrifying and gripping racing up and down the ranks.

Of course, the current generation of cars and the restrictions they induce in terms of overtaking are also a factor that determines the quality of the track action.

But a good race starts with a good track, and Hamilton contends that no one is better placed to judge a venue than the drivers.

"Probably in the history of the sport, the drivers have never been a part of the decision making in terms of advising on tracks, but we know better than anybody which tracks



we can overtake and which we can't," said the Mercedes star last weekend at Silverstone.

"I don't know who does the selection but there are tracks being selected for the future which won't have such great racing."

"People always ask me my favourite tracks and this [Silverstone] is one of them because you can follow. It is just spectacular with the high speed."

"And then we've got places where you can't follow and it's like a train. What would you prefer? Having a race in those countries for the sake of having a race? Or do you want a great race like this?"

"If so, then we need to look at the different options in the different countries."

Next year, Formula 1 will return to Zandvoort for the first time in 35 years. Despite its rich F1 heritage, it's feared the venue won't add much value in terms of riveting track action.

Hamilton hopes that in the future, the Grand Prix Drivers Association will be part of F1's efforts in selecting new venues or tweaking the layout of existing circuits.

"We can be a part of advising on that," the Briton said. "We're there to help make the sport better."

"We're happy having the grands prix in these different countries but if they're open to the idea of changing or adapting some of the circuits or using a different circuit in the countries, then we should look into that."

(Source: F1.com)

Iranian athletes win three gold medals at Asian AKF Championship

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iranian athletes claimed three gold medals at the 2019 Asian Karate Federation Senior Championship on Saturday.

Zabihollah Poorshab defeated Jordan's Mahmoud Sajan 1-0 in the final bout of the Male Kumite -84 Kg.

Taravat Khaksar claimed a gold medal at the Female Kumite -55 after beating Uzbekistan's Sevinch Rakhimova 6-0.

Hamideh Abbasali also seized a gold at the Female Kumite +68kg, beating Kazakhstan's Sofya Berultseva 4-2 in the final.

Female Team Kata and Rozita Alipour won two silver medals.

Alipour lost to China's Xiaoyan Yin at the Female Kumite -61kg.

Iran also won four bronze medals in the competition.

Bahman Askari Ghoncheh came third after beating Dastanbek Otabolaev from Uzbekistan 1-0 at the Male Kumite -75 Kg.

Sajad Ganjzadeh won a bronze in the Male Kumite +84kg after beating Kyrgyzstan's Adilet Shadykanov 5-2.

Fatemeh Sadeghi Dastak and Male Team Kata also claimed two bronze medals.

The competition has brought nearly 400 competitors from 33 countries together in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Last year, Japan topped the overall standings with 11 medals, made up of eight golds, one silver and two bronzes.

They were followed by Iran with four golds, one silver and three bronzes, and Jordan with two golds and one silver.

This year's edition of the AKF Senior Championship is the 16th, with the first having been held in Taiwan's capital Taipei in 1993.



Iran aim to be group winners at FIFA World Cup Qualifiers: Marc Wilmots



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iranian national football team head coach Marc Wilmots says that they want to progress as Group C winners at the Asian Qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup and the 2023 AFC Asian Cup.

Team Melli have been drawn along with Iraq, Bahrain, Hong Kong and Cambodia.

"First of all, I have to say it is certainly not easy at all. All teams will participate at the competition armed to the teeth. And it will be a top-level competition," the Belgian coach told Iran Football Federation's website.

"We respect all our opponents in the group; however, we are doing our best to win the group," Wilmots added.

Iran will start the campaign with a match against Hong Kong on September 10.

The eight group winners and four best runners-up will advance to the AFC Asian Cup China 2023 Finals and the final round of qualifying for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

The next best 24 teams from the second round of the joint qualifiers will compete in a separate competition for the remaining 12 slots in the 24-team AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

Iran ease past Czech Republic at FIVB U21 World Championship



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran overpowered Czech Republic in straight sets (29-27, 25-18, 26-24) at the 2019 FIVB Volleyball Men's U-21 World Championship on Saturday.

Porya Yali had 20 points for Iran. "We are very happy to defeat strong Czech Republic volleyball team. It was an important match and we had to beat them," Ataei said.

"My boys were under pressure because we needed a win against Czech Republic. It was an important match for both teams," he added.

"I hope we do well in the next round," Ataei stated.

The Iranian team, headed by Behrouz Ataei, had started the competition with a 3-0 win over Tunisia in Pool C and lost to Russia 3-2.

The top two sides in each pool will qualify for Pools E and F, which will in turn offer two places each in the semi-finals.

The final will be held on July 27.

The 20th edition of the FIVB Volleyball Men's U21 World Championship is taking place in Riffa, Bahrain.

Spain's Marc Gasol excited to be carrying NBA title success into World Cup

Marc Gasol has had a lot of special years in his basketball career, enjoying success with both his club, and his country.

This year could end up being the best of all for the Toronto Raptors center, who recently captured his first NBA crown. A strong showing at the FIBA Basketball World Cup in China would certainly make the year even better.

"I'm going to try to keep this successful streak going by coming back home from China with something, a medal for example, that would be amazing," he said with a smile to FIBA basketball. "I just won an NBA title, and I really want more and more. I've won a lot with the national team since I first played at senior level, but I want to keep winning and be with the guys to keep making history for Spanish basketball."

Gasol has always posed a lot of problems for opponents in international competition because not only is he big, but skilled.

Gasol has already assured his place in history with Spain, helping it capture the country's first and only world title in 2006, in Japan. Two years later and he played in the team that reached the Beijing Olympic Gold Medal Game, where Spain fell in a thriller to the United States.

Then Gasol and his teammates won FIBA EuroBasket 2009 in Poland. He also reached the top of the podium at FIBA EuroBasket 2011 and played against the USA in a second straight Olympic Final, which was even closer than the first, but still had to settle for a silver medal.

Add a FIBA EuroBasket second-place finish in 2007 and third-place finishes at FIBA EuroBasket 2013 and FIBA EuroBasket 2017 and it all adds up to a legendary career with his national team.

He's hungry for more.

"I'm always very motivated to play with the national team, and my love for the game is huge," he said. "I'm driven by the goal of winning and having the most complete career I can have, and I still feel that passion and motivation to



keep working hard and playing to win medals and titles. I'm very motivated for this summer and I can't wait to compete with the guys in China.

"It's going to be a very competitive tournament, probably one of the best ever, and we are all very excited to wear the national team jersey and try to make another great run at a FIBA World Cup."

In the First Round, Spain will play in Group C against Puerto Rico, Tunisia and Iran. They must have a top two finish to advance to the Second Round, where they would play in Group J against the top two from First Round Group D that is made up of Serbia, Italy, Angola and Philippines. The sides that finish first and second in Group J will progress to the Quarter-Finals.

Gasol will keep close tabs on Canada, who recently put his Toronto Raptors coach Nick Nurse in charge of their national team.

"It's going to be a very exciting tournament for them as they are building a very competitive team and they can go far in the tournament," he said. "They have many talented players,

a great mindset, and they want to show the world their talent.

As for Nurse, he said: "Coach Nick is very talented and he wants to help Canada basketball continue to improve. He has worked in the past with Great Britain (2012 Olympics) and they have shown improvement. Nick loves FIBA basketball. I am sure he is going to have a lot of success with Canada, and that the guys are going to love working with him."

The World Cup has not been kind to Spain since their great triumph of 2006. They lost in the 2010 Quarter-Finals, in Istanbul to a Milos Teodosic three-pointer at the buzzer, and then in 2014, France upset Gasol and Spain in Madrid, again in the last eight.

In 2010, Gasol's brother, Pau, the MVP of the 2006 triumph, didn't play and the same will be the case in 2019 with an injury robbing the country of their superstar.

"I know he is disappointed at not being able to play this summer, but he'll support us and be our first fan," Gasol said. "We're going to construct a very good roster, and despite Pau's absence, we'll have a lot of talented players and will play with the same goals of winning and making Spain shine at international level once again. I love to play with my brother in the national team, and we have to do our best to qualify for the next Olympics so we'll wear the national team jersey together again."

The tournament expanded from 16 to 24 teams in 2006 while this summer, the World Cup will have 32 teams for the first time.

"A lot of good teams can make good runs in China," Gasol said. "Every game is going to be a tough battle, and none of the teams are going there to just play and go home after the first round. Every team has the motivation to go to the next round, and we all have to be careful and play at 100 percent to have our best chances of going far in the tournament. Teams like France, Australia, Serbia and many more can have great runs."

(Source: FIBA)

Bento: Objective remains the same for Korea Republic

Korea Republic will remain true to the style they have developed under Paulo Bento, the Portuguese head coach said after Wednesday's Asian Qualifiers draw for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023 at AFC House.

Drawn alongside Lebanon, DPR Korea, Turkmenistan and Sri Lanka in a logistically-challenging Group H, Bento said that, while the approach may vary slightly for individual opponents, Korea Republic's overarching philosophy will remain.

"Preparations, until now have, been good," said the 50-year-old, who led

Sporting and Olympiacos to silverware in European club football.

"One of the goals we've had was to create a style for the team, and we've achieved that aim. Now, the aim is still the same: to try to improve our game model and choose the best strategy against each opponent, and of course, because football demands results, try to win the games we're going to play."

"The team is in a good moment. We didn't achieve the aim we would have liked to achieve in the Asian Cup. The only game we've lost 'till now was in the quarter-finals of the Asian Cup.

"We've played against strong teams in our friendly games, and for most parts of the games, we played well and that's what we want to keep doing."

In a football sense, there is little to suggest Bento's side should fear their Group H opponents.

Ranked 37th in the world, and boasting a number of the continent's biggest stars including Tottenham Hotspur forward Song Heung-min, Lebanon (86th) are the only one of Korea Republic's opponents to feature in the global top 100, and even they were beaten at home and away by the Koreans at

this stage of Russia 2018 qualifying.

But while his side's path forward may seem simple enough on paper, Bento knows the logistical challenges of away matches in four distinctly different regions will challenge his side.

"The draw is what it is," he said. "After the draw was decided, we have to accept what the draw set and (we have) to try to find and fix the best possible solutions, in order for the players to play as well as possible. We will try to win the games we're going to play and go to the next round."

(Source: the-afc)

Iran come fifth at 2019 IFCPF World Cup, Russia win title

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran defeated the U.S. at the 2019 International Federation of Cerebral Palsy Football (IFCPF) World Cup to finish in fifth place on Friday.

The Iranian team, who had lost to the U.S. 3-2 in the preliminary round, defeated their rivals 4-3 this time.

Russia also defeated titleholders Ukraine 3-1 in the final match. Earlier on the day, Brazil won the bronze medal after defeating England 4-1.

The prestigious competition brought 16 top teams together in Sevilla, Spain.

Siamand Rahman to set new record at Tokyo 2020

Iranian legend Siamand Rahman says he is going to set a new record at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics.

He might not have broken the world record in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, but he still stole the show by winning his third World Para Powerlifting Championships title on Friday.



Reassuring his status as the strongest ever Paralympian, Rahman comfortably lifted 265kg in his second attempt to take gold in the men's over 107kg.

It was an Iranian one-two as Mansour Pourmirzaei (236kg) claimed silver, while Iraqi Faris Al-Ageeli (235kg) completed the podium.

"I am very happy. It was a strong competition today. My coach suggested the weight here. So I didn't go for the record today," said two-time Paralympic champion Rahman, whose world record stands at a massive 310kg.

"My main goal is the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics and I will set a new record there."

Rahman also tipped his fans that "it will be a different Siamand that they will witness in Tokyo."

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Iran to play Kazakhstan in Men's Indoor Hockey Asia Cup final

TASNIM — Iran defeated Uzbekistan 9-1 in the 2019 Men's Indoor Asia Cup semis on Saturday.

Team Melli will play Kazakhstan, who edged past Malaysia 4-3, on Sunday in the competition's final match.

The 2019 Men's Indoor Asia Cup is the eighth edition of the men's Indoor Hockey Asia Cup, the biennial international men's indoor hockey championship of Asia organized by the Asian Hockey Federation.

The competition is being held alongside the women's tournament in Chonburi, Thailand from 15 to 21 July 2019.

Iran's men's team are the defending champions having won the 2017 edition.

Iranian referees to officiate at 2019 AFC Cup semi

TASNIM — Mo'ud Bonyadifar has been chosen to officiate a match at the 2019 AFC Cup semifinals.

North Korean football team April 25 will host Dhaka Abahani from Bangladesh on August 28 at the Kim Il-sung Stadium in Pyongyang in the second leg of the 2019 AFC Cup semifinal.

Bonyadifar will be assisted by his countrymen Mohammad Reza Abolfazli and Saeid Alinejadian in this match.

The AFC Cup is an annual International association football competition between domestic clubs run by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

Qualification to the competition is available to clubs from AFC-affiliated countries that fall into the AFC's 'developing nations' category as laid out in their 'Vision Asia' document.

Countries which are 'emerging' nations are eligible to participate in the AFC Cup, whereas countries which have better infrastructure and football prowess are entered into the AFC Champions League.

Nishino wants Thailand to soar

Akira Nishino knows what his target as Thailand head coach is - that the Southeast Asians reach Japan's level.

"I want to build up the team so we can compete well against Japan," said Nishino, who guided Japan to the Round of 16 at the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia.

"I was honored to receive this offer. I went to Thailand in June and I could recognize their great passion. Thailand has potential. First, we will work to become leaders in Southeast Asia."

Football Association of Thailand President Pol.Gen. Somyot Pumpanmuang was present at Nishino's unveiling in Tokyo on Friday.

Nishino's first assignment will be to prepare Thailand for the second round of the Asian Qualifiers for the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar and AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

Thailand are in Group G with the United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia.

"I want to contribute and guide them to the World Cup," Nishino said. "I need to build a solid understanding of how things are in Thailand."

Nishino will also be in charge of Thailand's U23 team.

(Source: the-afc)

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

He who wishes to keep his honor, should abstain from opposing the ignoble. Imam Ali (AS)

Leader meets Iranian satirists

TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei met a number of Iranian satirists in his office on Thursday evening.



Some of the poets recited their poetry, but the meeting was mostly spent exchanging views and opinions about the current condition of satire in the country, the office of the Leader has announced in a press release published on Saturday. Omid Mehdinejad, Hojjatoleslam Mehdi Parnian, Abdorreza Qeisari, Qasem Rafia, Ali Doosti and Shahram Shakiba were among the participants. The Leader asked the satirists to center on Britain's 200 years of hostility toward Iran in their works.

Four cineastes to receive lifetime awards at Iran Cinema Celebration

TEHRAN — The organizers of the 21st Iran Cinema Celebration announced on Saturday that four veteran cineastes will receive lifetime achievement awards during the gala.



A combination photo shows makeup artist Bijan Mohtashem (above L), actor Akbar Zanjanpur (above R), sound engineer Hassan Zahedi (below L) and director Sirus Alvand (below R).

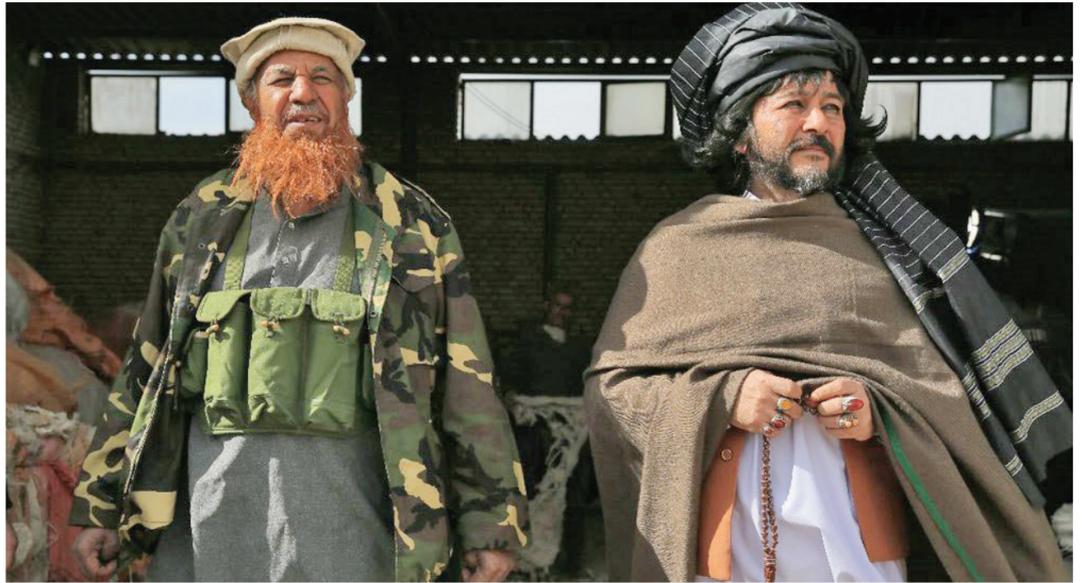
Stage and screen actor Akbar Zanjanpur, makeup artist Bijan Mohtasham, sound engineer Hassan Zahedi and director Sirus Alvand will be honored at the celebration, which will be held at the Eyvan Shams Hall on August 20. The Iranian House of Cinema organizes the celebration every year to commemorate Iran's National Day of Cinema, which is September 12. However, this year's celebration will be held a few weeks earlier due to its coincidence with the Muharram mourning season.

César Pelli: Architect of Malaysia's Petronas Towers dies at 92

LONDON (BBC) — The Argentine-American architect César Pelli, designer of the Petronas Towers in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur, has died at the age of 92. The towers were the world's tallest buildings at their inauguration in 1998 and kept the title for six years. His other works included London's One Canada Square tower and the National Museum of Art in Osaka in Japan. Pelli's death was reported by the governor of Argentina's Tucuman province, where the architect grew up. "With much regret we receive the sad news of the death of the great architect César Pelli," Juan Manzur said in a post on Twitter. "I want to convey my condolences to his whole family, his friends and his team. He was without doubt a creator and his legacy will endure forever in each of his works." Also writing on Twitter, President Mauricio Macri said Pelli's legacy was "a pride for all Argentines". Pelli was a graduate of Tucuman University and moved to the U.S in 1952, settling in New Haven, Connecticut.

Iran, Bangladesh team up for thriller "Nirvana"

TEHRAN — Iran and Bangladesh are co-producing a thriller named "Nirvana" set in Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey, a public relations team announced on Saturday. Morteza Atashzamaz, the Iranian director of "Buddha's Shame" about Rohingya refugees, is helming the project. Chotku Ahmed is the writer of the screenplay. The film is about a Bangladeshi policeman who is assigned to free a number his compatriots who have been taken captive by a gang of drug traffickers working in Afghanistan, Turkey and Europe. He arrives in Iran to get some help from Iranian police and Interpol in his mission. "This film is a true co-production between Iran and Bangladesh, because all the members of the crew and cast have been selected equally from both countries," Atashzamaz said. Bangladeshi actor and producer Ananta Jalil and his colleagues Barsha and Sumon Faruk are also collaborating in this project. Majdi Machmouchi, the Lebanese actor of acclaimed movies such as "Out of Life" and "A Man of Honor", also star in the film. Iranian members of the cast include Amir-Hossein Seddiq, Mohammadreza Hedayati, Hassan Aklili and Mohammad Fili. The director of Iran's Farabi Cinema Foundation, Alireza Tabesh, has recently met the cast and crew on location in Iran. "Reports on this co-production have



Mohammad Fili (L) and Amir-Hossein Seddiq act in a scene from "Nirvana".

been warmly received in Bangladesh and I hope the film becomes a box office hit in Iran convincing the countries to carry out more joint projects," he said at the meeting.

Shooting on location in Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Iran has been completed and the crew will soon be in Turkey to take the rest of the scenes.

Atashzamaz's "Buddha's Shame" was screened at the 17th Dhaka International Film Festival in Bangladesh in January 2019.

IIDCYA to entertain children with traditional puppet show "Mobarak and the Flying Carpet"



A poster for the puppet show "Mobarak and the Flying Carpet" by Iranian director Hamed Zahmatkesh.

TEHRAN — A traditional Iranian puppet show titled "Mobarak and the Flying Carpet" will be staged by Iranian director Hamed Zahmatkesh at the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) today. The play tells the story of Mobarak, an Iranian traditional comic character with a black face and red costume, who intends to show his morshed (mentor) that everything has changed over the past few years. He also decides to advance himself, but he faces problems and obstacles. The play went on stage at the 16th Mobarak International Puppet Theater

Festival in August 2016. Puppeteers Mona Sarbandi, Tahmures Iranshahi, Rasul Qanbari and Marzieh Dehqanpur will be collaborating in this production. The Mobarak character mostly appears in the performances of ru-hozi and kheimeh shab-bazi, two forms of traditional Iranian puppet and dramatic performances. Tombak music and rhythmic narrations are the key elements in the ru-hozi performances. Kheimeh shab-bazi is performed in a small chamber by a musical performer and a person called a morshed. The dialogue takes place between the morshed and the puppets, including Mobarak.

"Master Noruz, the Cobbler" republished to celebrate 100th anniversary



Front cover of the new edition of the play "Master Noruz, the Cobbler" by Iranian playwright Mirza Ahmad Khan Kamalolvezareh Mahmudi.

TEHRAN — A new edition of the Iranian play "Master Noruz, the Cobbler" has been republished 100 years after its first publication in 1919. Iranian stage artists are scheduled to come together on Monday at Tehran's City Theater Complex to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the play, which was penned by Mirza Ahmad Khan Kamalolvezareh Mahmudi. The play is about Master Noruz, a poor, middle-aged cobbler, who falls in love with a beautiful young woman, while he already has two wives.

The new edition of the book will be unveiled during the meeting. Iranian actors Behzad Farahani and Davud Fathali Beigi are also scheduled to deliver speeches. Director Rahmat Amini is currently staging the play at the Qashqai Hall of Tehran's City Theater Complex. Theater critics Reza Ashofteh and Javad Roshan will also review his work at the meeting. Navid Jahanzadeh, Sara Allahyari, Ailar Noshahri, Morteza Jafari, Hiva Amini and Erfan Masumi are the main members of the cast for the play, which will remain on stage until July 31.

Netflix sinks on subscriber losses, analysts still see growth



The Netflix logo is seen on their office in Hollywood, Los Angeles, California, U.S. July 16, 2018. (Reuters/Lucy Nicholson)

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Wall Street brokerages stuck to a positive outlook on Netflix Inc (NFLX.O) on Thursday, betting that a strong content slate for the rest of 2019 would reverse shock second-quarter losses in U.S. subscribers that sank its stock price. Netflix shares fell about 11% on worries about its earnings report on Wednesday that showed lower-than-expected global growth and signs of trouble in its U.S. base ahead of Walt Disney Co's (DIS.N) much-awaited launch of a rival service later this year. Netflix, whose price-to-earnings ratio is by

far the largest of the five big U.S. tech companies making up the so-called FAANG group, has quadrupled in value since 2015 but at \$321 per share is down \$100 from 2018 peaks. The other FAANG companies are Facebook Inc (FB.O), Amazon.com Inc (AMZN.O), Apple Inc (AAPL.O) and Alphabet Inc (GOOGL.O). The April-to-June period tends to be seasonally weak for Netflix in the United States, where warmer weather and longer days keep viewers outdoors. Brokers Cowen & Co said Netflix had missed expectations for second-quarter subscriber numbers three times in the last four years.

Tom Cruise delights fans with first look at "Top Gun: Maverick"



Tom Cruise presents a clip from "Top Gun: Maverick" on day one of Comic-Con International on July 18, 2019, in San Diego. (AP)

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — "Top Gun" roared back on Thursday when Tom Cruise made a surprise appearance at Comic-Con to show the first trailer for the long-awaited sequel to his military action movie. "Top Gun: Maverick", due for release in June 2020, sees the return of Cruise's cocky fighter pilot more than 30 years after the original movie launched his career as a global action star. "I was always asked 'When are you going to do another one?' Well, you've been very patient with me. I felt like it was my responsibility to really deliver for you," Cruise told fans gathered for the annual

Comic-Con movie, television and comic book event in San Diego, according to entertainment website Deadline. The trailer shows Cruise wearing Pete "Maverick" Mitchell's famous leather jacket, racing on a motorcycle and flying a fighter jet through a narrow snow-filled canyon. The sequel picks up decades after the 1986 box-office hit and features actor Miles Teller as the son of Anthony Edwards' pilot Goose, who is killed during a training exercise in the first movie. "Top Gun: Maverick" also stars Jon Hamm, Ed Harris and Val Kilmer, who reprises his role as Maverick's rival Iceman.