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Iran arrests 17 professional CIA spies

TEHRAN — Iran's Intelligence Ministry announced on Monday that it had broken up a CIA spy ring and arrested 17 professional spies, some of whom have been sentenced to death by the Judiciary. According to the director general of the Intelligence Ministry's counter-espionage department, the spies were employed in sensitive and vital state and private sectors in economic,

nuclear, infrastructural, military and cyber centers, where they collected classified information. "Some citizens were trapped by the U.S. exploitation of their visa requests and were encouraged to spy in exchange for receiving a visa," the official said. "Some others were blackmailed by the CIA due to their need of maintaining or extending their visas." **→3**

Tehran's tanker seizure arguments more convincing than London's: Moscow

TEHRAN — The Kremlin says Iran's arguments for its recent seizure of a UK-flagged oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz were more convincing than those of London. "Arguments cited by the Iranian side to explain its actions are much more convincing than vague references to the European Union's sanction law that were used by the Gibraltar authorities with the United Kingdom's backing at the

moment of the arrest of a Panama-flagged tanker carrying Iranian oil," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said on Sunday, according to the Young Journalists' Club. "Iran's arguments are much more right than those of Gibraltar and London who are indulging in piracy," he went on to say. "Iran is taking care of the ecology in the Strait of Hormuz." **→2**

Nadler claims Trump is 'guilty of high crimes'

TEHRAN — U.S. House Judiciary Committee Chair Jerry Nadler discusses what new info Democrats hope to hear from Robert Mueller. On Wednesday, former Special Counsel Robert Mueller faces five hours of questioning before two House committees on his investigation of Russian interference in the 2020 campaign and possible obstruction of justice by President Trump. Some Democrats are counting on the testimony to convince Americans the House

should impeach the president or at least to damage his chances for reelection. Top Democrats have revealed how they plan to interview special counsel Robert Mueller when he testifies before the House Judiciary and Intelligence Committees this week. Their ultimate goal: To make Mueller's 448-page report on Donald Trump's ties with Russia and potential obstruction of justice vivid and interesting to the American people. **→13**



PERSPECTIVE
Hanif Ghaffari
Head of the Tehran Times
Politics Desk

The words that Amano did not say!

Yukiya Amano, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, died at the age of 73. There are no doubt about Amano and his performance at the IAEA, which should be taken into consideration: Today, less analyst in the field of international relations, recalls Amano as an independent person at the International Atomic Energy Agency. Many of Amano's decisions were taken under the influence of powerful lobbying at the IAEA.

Amano knew well that issues such as the diversion of the peaceful nuclear program of the Islamic Republic of Iran were merely unlawful allegations in the direction of limiting our country, but, nevertheless, he was never prepared to take any action in confrontation with the United States.

on 2017 Washington's pressure on the IAEA to inspect Iran's military sites was a real violation of the JCPOA and UN Security Council resolution 2231. Beyond that, it means Washington's public blackmail from Amano and other Agency officials.

During the nuclear negotiations between Iran and 5 + 1, the issue of inspection of Iranian military sites became one of the key issues in the talks. Even the controversy over the issue between the parties led to a prolonged process of reaching a nuclear deal. However, Ayatollah Khamenei at the time emphasized that the inspection of military places in our country is considered Iran's red line. After victory of Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election and his move to the White House, he set up a committee to examine how to quit and disrupt the nuclear deal.

Trump had the intention of breaking the nuclear deal under the pretext of organizing an inspection of Iran's military sites by the IAEA. Yukiya Amano's silence about Nikki Haley's trip had a clear message for many people who have watched his approach in recent years! The reality is that Amano's approach to the IAEA had been a function of pressures and political games, rather than being dependent on the legal principles.

Eventually, Amano never agreed to disclose the role of the United States to the IAEA and Washington's political pressures. Even in some cases, Amano himself became part of this incredible American game.

UN nuclear watchdog chief Yukiya Amano dies at 72

TEHRAN — Yukiya Amano, the Japanese diplomat who led the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for a decade and was extensively involved in negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme, has died at 72.

Amano, who had wide experience in disarmament, non-proliferation diplomacy and nuclear energy, had been chief of the key United Nations agency that regulates nuclear issues worldwide since 2009.

"The secretariat of the International Atomic Energy Agency regrets to inform with deepest sadness of the passing away of Director General Yukiya Amano," the IAEA said in a statement on Monday.

It said that Amano died on July 18. But his family had only informed the IAEA late on Sunday, "with the specific request not to disclose it until the family funeral had taken place on 22 July in



a quiet atmosphere".

No details were given on the cause of death.

The announcement was made on the day Amano was expected to announce his decision to step down due to an illness that had visibly weakened him over the past year.

His third term had originally been due to

expire in November 2021.

The IAEA said its flag over its headquarters in Vienna had been lowered to half-mast.

The European Union's foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, expressed sadness and called Amano "a man of extraordinary dedication and professionalism".

During his tenure, Amano oversaw the signing of a landmark deal in 2015 between Iran and six major powers - the United Kingdom, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States - under which Tehran agreed to curb its nuclear programme in exchange for the lifting of sanctions.

'Wisdom and foresight'

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, paid tribute to Amano in a Twitter post.

"My deep condolences... We worked very closely," tweeted Araghchi, who took part in the negotiations for the hard-won nuclear deal. **→13**

Iran ponders legal action against "Iran Modern: The Empress of Art" authors

By Manijeh Rezapoor

TEHRAN — Iran's Visual Arts Office director Hadi Mozaffari said on Monday that the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance is considering taking legal action against the writers of "Iran Modern: The Empress of Art" published in New York last September.

"Iran Modern: The Empress of Art" uncovers the last journey of Iran's former empress Farah Pahlavi, focusing on her contributions to the establishment of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA), its rare collection, and display of modern art in Iran before the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

The ministry claims that Iran's rights to the

topics discussed in the book written by Viola Raikhel-Bolot and Miranda Darling have been disregarded by the authors.

"When the book was published in 2018, it was translated into Persian and studied by the lawyers of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance," Mozaffari said in a press conference held at the TMCA to brief the media about a restoration process currently underway at the museum.

"The issue was also discussed with several lawyers residing in other countries and we will take legal action if necessary", he said

Director of the museum Ehsan Aqai also noted that the pictures published in the book

are of very low quality compared to the existing art books.

He also said that he believes the book is more political, aiming to introduce the Pahlavi family rather than present the treasure trove.

The TMCA is home to works by many august artists of the West, including Claude Monet, Francis Bacon, Pablo Picasso, Max Ernst, Georges Braque, Alberto Giacometti, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Donald Judd, Andy Warhol, René Magritte, Duane Hanson and Chuck Close.

"Iran Modern: The Empress of Art" was released by the Assouline Publishing House in New York in September 2018. **→16**



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Dried-out trees come to life again by "Wooden Memory"

A tree trunk turned into a statue in the courtyard of Kerman's Mathematics Park on July 21, 2019.

A group of sculptors has been commissioned by the Kerman Municipality to transform dried-out trees situated in the courtyard park into sculptures in an art project titled "Wooden Memory".



ARTICLE
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Analysis of second referendum and the Brexit in respect to British law

The separation of Britain from the European Union is an important controversy for Britain, Europe and the whole world, which will have important legal, political and economic consequences if it is realized. The United Kingdom held a referendum in 2016 in which people voted to leave UK from the European Union, and the British government took some time to negotiate with Europe and take the necessary measures to exit from the union, until March 29, 2017, and, in the event of a delay, it will eventually complete until March 31, 2019, but so far it has not happened. Clearly, the exit from the European Union, will have serious impacts on Britain, and so far, although Britain has passed the time-limit, did not exit the union. UK may have a new referendum on this issue. Holding of a new referendum is an important debate, firstly, is it a legal referendum? Secondly, is it democratic? Thirdly, what should be done in the event of a conflict between the outcomes of the two legal proceedings?

Brexit, which stands for the term of British exit from the European Union or the separation of the England from EU

which is a scheme followed by some lawyers, politicians, businessmen and, in general, supporters of the British exit from the European Union from long ago.

From a historical point of view, from the beginning of the British membership in the European Economic Community in January 1973 and the accession to the European Union in 1993, opponents of the issue of British membership in the European Union have always challenged it and tried to withdraw from the European Union, finally They have focused on debating a referendum in late 2015.

Following a referendum on June 23, 2016, Britain had set up an exit program from union of Europe. In the referendum, 51.89% of the votes, I mean 17,410,742 votes against 48.11%, 16,141,241 votes, cast a vote on the British withdrawal from the European Union. But the referendum was not in itself obligatory, and only the parliament could have made the referendum necessarily executive for the government. **→7**

Omani foreign minister to visit Iran on Saturday

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah is scheduled to visit Iran on Saturday, Bloomberg reported on Monday.

Alawi will visit Tehran to discuss “recent regional developments,” the Omani Foreign Ministry said on Twitter.

Following tension in the region over seizure of a British oil tanker by Iran in the Strait of Hormuz on Friday, Oman issued a statement on Sunday calling on all parties to exercise restraint and resolve differences diplomatically.

On July 4, Britain captured a supertanker carrying the Iranian oil by claiming that it was transporting oil to Syria in violation of the EU sanctions.

Japan to make every effort to reduce regional tension: Shinzo Abe

By staff and agency
Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Monday that Tokyo wants to make every effort to reduce tension between the United States and Iran in the region.

According to Reuters, Japanese media have said Washington’s proposal to boost surveillance of vital Middle East oil shipping lanes off Iran and Yemen could be on the agenda during a visit to Tokyo this week by U.S. national security adviser John Bolton.

Abe said that before making a decision on joining with the United States, Tokyo would like to fulfill what it sees as a unique role it has to play in reducing tension.

“We have a long tradition of friendship with Iran and I’ve met with its president any number of times, as well as other leaders,” Abe told a news conference after his coalition’s victory in a Sunday election for parliament’s upper house.

“Before we make any decisions on what to do, Japan would like to make every effort to reduce tensions between Iran and the United States,” he said.

Abe was in Iran on a two-day visit on June 12.
During a meeting with Abe on June 13, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dismissed Trump as a person not worthy of exchanging messages. The Leader said Iran has “no trust” in the U.S. and will not at all “repeat the bitter experience” it gained from the negotiations that led to the conclusion of the 2015 nuclear deal, which Washington later ditched.

“Iran engaged in talks with the U.S. and the Europeans for some five or six years, and achieved a result. The Americans, however, breached a done deal,” said the Leader, emphasizing that “no wise man” would enter talks with a country that has reneged on all agreements.

JCPOA parties to hold emergency meeting on July 28

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Foreign Ministry announced on Monday that the remaining parties to the JCPOA - the official name for the 2015 nuclear deal - will hold an emergency joint commission meeting in Vienna on July 28.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said the meeting will be attended by foreign ministry political directors and Helga Schmid, secretary general of the European External Action Service (EEAS).

The remaining parties to the agreement are Iran, Germany, France, Britain, China and Russia. The U.S. left the agreement in May 2018 and reimposed sanctions on Iran.

The meeting is taking place as Iran is limiting its nuclear commitments in retaliation for the U.S. exit of the deal and a failure by the remaining parties to protect Iran from Washington’s sanctions.

Mousavi said the JCPOA signatories believe that it is a proper decision to hold such a meeting prior to the meeting of the foreign ministers.

“This meeting is not an alternative to the coming meeting of the foreign ministers. It is an opportunity to raise issues and become better prepared for the meeting of ministers,” Mousavi explained.

Abdul Mahdi holds talks with Rouhani

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi, who arrived in Tehran late on Monday, held talks with President Hassan Rouhani on regional and international issues.

It is the second time that Abdul Mahdi is visiting Iran since he took over as prime minister in October 2018. He first visited Iran in early April.

Prior to his arrival in Tehran, the Iraqi-based Al-Forat news channel reported on Monday that Abdul Mahdi was scheduled to visit Tehran for talks with senior Iranian officials.

The news channel quoted sources as saying that Abdul Mahdi would discuss with Iranian officials the tension between Iran and the United States and Britain.

In recent remarks, Abdul Mahdi had said that his country was seeking a détente in the crisis between the United States and Iran. He also talked about sending two Iraqi delegations to Washington and Tehran to help contain the tension, stressing that Iraq is playing only a “calm role” and not mediation.

Abdul Mahdi said at the end of May that he would visit Washington and Tehran soon to discuss the situation in the region against the background of the crisis between the United States and Iran.

Tensions between Tehran and Washington have been rising over the past months as the U.S. started imposing harsh sanctions on Iran. In 2018, President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the Iran nuclear deal and imposed a raft of severe sanctions on Iran. Trump threatened secondary sanctions against companies operating in other countries, inviting corporate leaders to “make a choice” between doing business in Iran or the U.S.

In recent weeks, Iran has begun enriching uranium to a higher degree of purity than had been agreed under the deal, while building its stockpiles of fissile material - not least because under the sanctions regime, it can’t export what it produces anyway.

The sanctions were initially going to affect Iran-Iraq trade, Baghdad, however, managed to acquire some waivers from Washington.

Against the backdrop of the waivers, the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, hosted a joint meeting of Economic Cooperation Commission with Iran on Sunday and Monday.



Self-defense is not a joke for Iran: Kharrazi

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Kamal d e s k Kharrazi, chairman of Iran’s Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, has said that defending “territorial integrity” and guarding the country’s “dignity” is not a joke.

“Iran has not aggressed any country over the past 250 years. However, it plays no joke with anybody in defending its territorial integrity and credibility as it has shown during the past 40 years,” he told IRNA in an interview published on Monday.

Iran has always stood against aggressors and considers it a “national and religious duty”, he said.

Commenting on Britain’s threats of imposing sanctions on Iran, he said that various types of sanctions have been imposed on Iran and the people have resisted.

He noted that the Iranian people with-stand sanctions and pressure to defend their independence.

According to Reuters, British ministers are making plans aimed at targeting Iran with sanctions in the aftermath of the Iranian seizure of a British-flagged oil tanker in the Persian Gulf.

Iranian forces late on Friday 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 the Ports and Maritime Organization in the 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.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, in a tweet on Saturday, said Iran’s conduct towards the British tanker had

Palestine issue will surely end in favor of Islamic world:

Ayatollah Khamenei

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Monday that the issues of Palestine will definitely come to a conclusion in favor of the Palestinian people and the larger Islamic world.

“Victory cannot be achieved without resistance and struggle. Based on what God has promised, we believe that the Palestine issue will definitely end in favor of the Palestinian people and the world of Islam,” Ayatollah Khamenei said during a meeting with Saleh al-Arouri, deputy chairman of the political office of the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas.

The Leader received a letter from Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh in the meeting.

Ayatollah Khamenei praised Haniyeh’s stance in the letter and said, “Hamas is in the heart of the Palestinian movement as Palestine is in the heart of the world of Islam’s movement.”

The Leader said the resistance and resilience of the people of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank herald victory.

“God has promised help and victory to those who stand steadfast on his path, yet the realization of this promise has requirements, of which the most important ones include Jihad, struggle, and tireless efforts in various dimensions, including political, cultural, intellectual, economic and military aspects,” the Leader explained.

Elsewhere, he said that when it comes to the Palestinian cause, the Islamic Republic does not observe any reservations



in dealing with any country in the world.

“We have always announced our view on Palestine clearly and transparently. Even those friendly countries with whom we have different view in this respect, are aware that the Islamic Republic is very serious on the issue of Palestine,” he added.

Elsewhere, the Leader said that the final victory of the Palestinian people and the return of this holy land to the Islamic world will not be strange and unachievable.

“To us, Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah’s remark that ‘God willing, I will perform prayers at al-Aqsa Mosque,’ is absolutely achievable,” the Leader boasted.

The Leader also described the U.S.-devised “deal of the

Tehran’s tanker seizure arguments more convincing than London’s: Moscow

1 → On July 19, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy captured British oil tanker Stena Impero for violating international maritime laws when crossing the high-traffic Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf.

Iranian officials said the vessel had switched off its GPS locator, in contravention of international regulations, and was sailing into the strategic waterway in a wrong traffic pattern.

The taker was transferred to Iran’s port city of Bandar Abbas for maritime casualty investigation.

Iran’s seizure of the UK tanker came almost two weeks after London seized an Iranian supertanker for allegedly violating unilateral European Union sanctions on Syria.

UK Prime Minister Theresa May was to hold a meeting of Britain’s emergencies committee on Monday to discuss Iran’s seizure of Stena Impero in the Persian Gulf.

In one of her final important acts as prime minister before resigning on Wednesday, May will chair a meeting of Britain’s COBR emergencies committee at around 10:30 am (0930 GMT), a Downing Street office said.

A spokeswoman said in a brief statement that “as well as receiving the latest updates from ministers and officials, the COBR meeting will discuss the maintenance of the security of shipping in the Persian Gulf.”

It will be the third emergency committee meeting held in the UK since Iran seized the Stena Impero tanker on Friday.

Russia on Sunday also took Iran’s side



against the U.S. claim that Tehran should not be allowed to enrich uranium at any level.

Mikhail Ulyanov, the permanent representative of Russia to International Organizations in Vienna, said all signatories of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, commonly known as NPT, are allowed to enrich uranium.

That is their inalienable right, and no

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, 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.”

On July 4, Britain captured a supertanker carrying the Iranian oil by claiming that it was transporting oil to Syria in violation of the EU sanctions.

Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said on Sunday that the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) responded to piracy by Britain by seizing a British tanker in the Strait of Hormuz on Sunday night.

Last Tuesday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei condemned the British government’s illegal seizure of the supertanker in Gibraltar, saying the act of “piracy” will not go “unanswered”.

“The evil England conducts piracy and steals our ship,” the Leader said. “They carry out an atrocity and give it a legal form.”

“The Islamic Republic and the establishment’s pious elements will not leave these enmities unanswered,” he warned.

century” as a “treacherous” plan.

“The objective behind this dangerous plot is annihilation of the Palestinian identity among the Palestinian people and youth. It [the plot] should be countered and we should not let them annihilate the Palestinian identity through using money,” he noted.

Under the deal of the century, U.S. President Donald Trump has proposed to limit Palestine’s land to around half of the West Bank.

Ayatollah Khamenei also said that another way to counter this plot is for the Palestinian people to make progresses in countering the occupiers, and this is something which is happening.

“Not so many years ago, the Palestinians were fighting (occupiers by) using stones. But today, instead of stones, they are equipped with precision-guided missiles, and this is feeling of advancement,” he added.

For his part, Arouri said, “The defense advances made by Hamas and other resistance groups are by no means comparable to past years, and today all the occupied territories and the main and sensitive Zionist regime’s centers are within the reach of the Palestinian resistance’s missiles.”

“As you pointed out, we believe that based on the divine promise, Quds, and Palestine will be freed from the tyranny of the Zionists, and all of the fighters of God, and the Muslim Ummah will perform prayers at the Al-Aqsa mosque,” he said.

He also praised Iran’s support for Palestine.

one can deny them of that right, Ulyanov said, dismissing earlier allegations raised by the U.S. president’s national security adviser, John Bolton.

Bolton had claimed in a tweet on Friday that “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.”

In May, Iran began initiating a set of measures to respond to the U.S. departure from the JCPOA and the European partners’ refusal to guarantee Tehran’s business interests under the deal.

The measures have already seen Tehran surpassing the 3.67-percent cap set by the JCPOA on the level of its uranium enrichment.

White House narrative on JCPOA incoherent: analyst

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The founder of media company Bourse & Bazaar says the Trump administration’s approach toward the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers is incoherent.

“The Trump administration’s narrative on Iran’s nuclear program is incoherent and this reflects that different figures in the administration have different assessments of what satisfactory non-proliferation controls entail,” Esfandyar Batmanghelidj told Tasnim in an interview published on Monday.

Batmanghelidj is founder and publisher of Bourse & Bazaar, a media company that supports business diplomacy between Europe and Iran through publishing, research, and events, such as the annual Europe-Iran Forum.

Aside from his contributions to Bourse & Bazaar’s own platform, Batmanghelidj’s writing on Iranian business and politics has been published in Foreign Policy, Bloomberg Opinion, Al Monitor, Quartz, and Asia Times. His scholarship on Iranian political economy has been published in the Encyclopedia Iranica and the journal Iranian Studies. Batmanghelidj is a graduate of Columbia University.

On the European Union’s approach to Iran’s policy towards the JCPOA, Batmanghelidj said, “So far, European officials have understood that Iran’s moves to scale back its compliance with the JCPOA are intended to be gradual and reversible. However, there are risks to Iran’s approach. On one hand, escalation, whether around the nuclear deal or other points of tension, helps make sure that the Iran file remains a priority at the

highest levels in European governments, increasing the likelihood that Iran can get the significant political and economic support it needs to address U.S. pressure. But, on the other hand, reduced compliance with the JCPOA and actions such as the seizure of tankers will provide a justification to European officials and politicians who, like many U.S. figures, are skeptical of Iran’s non-proliferation intentions and concerned about its regional role. As the escalation continues, the voices who argue that Europe should join the U.S. maximum pressure campaign on Iran will gain influence.”

On U.S. President Donald Trump’s approach to the Iranian nuclear program, he said, “The Trump administration’s narrative on Iran’s nuclear program is incoherent and this reflects that different figures in the administration have different assessments of what satisfactory non-proliferation controls entail. But the lack of consensus presents an opportunity for Iran, which can use direct negotiations to shape the view of Iran’s nuclear program. It is likely that Trump could be personally convinced to accept a deal close in form to the JCPOA as he is simply looking for a political win. But some in his administration

“It would be a mistake to reject INSTEX because it doesn’t solve all of Iran’s economic problems—it is part of the solution.”

will try to prevent new negotiations for precisely this reason.”

When asked about his opinion of the EU’s financial mechanism for trade with Iran, i.e. INSTEX, Batmanghelidj said, “I have no doubt that Europe is serious about the INSTEX mechanism. Though its development feels slow, Europe has worked remarkably quickly to create a state-owned mechanism with ten shareholders and an innovative structure. Those who are disappointed that the mechanism will not be linked to Iran’s oil exports need to consider that INSTEX is a specific tool for a specific problem. The European companies operating in Iran employ thousands of Iranians, import and produce important products and technologies, and contribute hundreds of millions of euros to the Iranian economy as the result of direct investment. European executives have made it clear that INSTEX provides a payment solution and political protection which can help their companies remain in Iran in the face of huge pressure from the U.S. It would be a mistake to reject INSTEX because it doesn’t solve all of Iran’s economic problems—it is part of the solution.”

Elsewhere in the interview, he was asked whether the JCPOA could be saved, he answered, “Some say it is impossible to save the JCPOA. But it is important to remember that many believed it would be impossible to achieve the JCPOA when negotiations began years ago. At this moment, it remains achievable that the U.S. and Iran could enter into new negotiations—encouraged by Europe—based on a basic respect for the JCPOA. If talks begin, the impossible can happen again.”

Trump's lie on downing Iranian drone was so big we believed it first: general

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — An IRGC commander has said U.S. President Donald Trump's lie about shooting down an Iranian drone was so big that even Iran believed it at first.

"Trump's lie was so big that even we believed it at first that they had managed to shoot down one of our drones," Commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force Amir Ali Hajizadeh said on Sunday, according to ISNA.

Brigadier General Hajizadeh made the remarks after a meeting with Iranian lawmakers at the parliament.

"After Trump's claim about downing an Iranian drone, we checked with various units several times, because we could not believe that he himself would directly tell such a big lie to the media," he remarked.

"This is why we had a few hours of delay before rejecting the news and we finally watched that our unmanned aerial vehicle had monitored the activity of the [U.S.] strike group before it reached the Strait of Hormuz and after it got out of it," the general explained.

Last week, Trump claimed that a U.S. warship had shot down an Iranian drone over the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump added that the USS Boxer fired



on the drone on July 18, four weeks after Iran shot down a U.S. surveillance drone flying over Iranian waters near the Strait of Hormuz.

"The Boxer took defensive action against an Iranian drone, which had closed into a near distance, approximately 1000 yards, ignoring multiple calls to stand down threatening safety of ship and ship's crew," he said at the White House on the same day, claiming that Iran's drone "was immediately destroyed."

Iran later broadcast a footage which was filmed by the same drone to disprove Trump's claim.

Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi also reacted to the claim, saying, "We have not lost any drone in the Strait of Hormuz nor anywhere else."

"I am worried that USS Boxer has shot down their own UAS by mistake!" he tweeted on Friday.

Tensions between Tehran and Washington have escalated since the U.S. administration of Donald Trump adopted a distinctly hostile approach toward Iran, which included pulling out of the historic Iran nuclear deal and reimposing sanctions on Tehran.

Leader names new heads for two charity bodies

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has appointed new heads for the Mostazafan Foundation of the Islamic Revolution and the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee.

In two separate decrees on Monday, Ayatollah Khamenei said Parviz Fattah would replace Mohammad Saeedikia as the head of the Mostazafan Foundation for a five-year term. He also named Morteza Bakhtiari as the new head of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, IRNA reported.

Bakhtiari replaced Fattah, who served as the head of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, Iran's largest charity organization.

Fattah also served as energy minister under President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and as a local commander in the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

The Leader also thanked Saeedikia for his services and appointed him as the new chairman of the board of trustees of the Mostazafan Foundation. The Imam Khomeini Relief Committee was established in March 1979 based on a decree by Imam Khomeini as a charity



organization to provide assistance and support to the poor.

The body mainly relies on donations by people although it also receives some funding from the administration as well.

Iran arrests 17 professional CIA spies, some face death penalty

Iranian Intelligence Ministry breaks up CIA spy ring

1 → The official added that the move was in violation of the United States' laws and some of the CIA's victims succeeded to escape from the trap with the help of their lawyers.

None of the 17 arrested individuals were citizens of other countries, the official stated.

He also said since President Donald Trump assumed office, the United States' espionage measures against the Islamic Republic have intensified.

Judiciary spokesman Gholam Hossein Esmaili has said the death sentence against a number of the spies, who betrayed their homeland, will be carried out soon.



Esmaili said those on the death row were convicted of espionage at an extent that constitutes spreading "corruption on earth", a term used to describe capital crimes within the Islamic Republic's judicial system.

The news follows Tehran's announcement on June 17 that the country had dismantled a CIA-run "large U.S. cyber-espionage" network.

According to secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhani, the co-operation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and other countries has led to "the disclosure and dismantling of a network of CIA officers, as well as the detention and punishment of several spies."

Jack Straw says Iranians have good cause to call Britain 'cunning, colonial fox'

Jack Straw, the former British foreign secretary, has written an article saying that Iranians have "good cause" to be "resentful" against Britain and call Britons the "cunning, colonial fox".

In his article published in the Daily Mail on Sunday, Straw gives reasons why the Iranians will never trust Britons.

Following is the text of the article:

In October 2015, my wife Alice and I were visiting Iran on holiday with friends. Rarely seen by Western tourists, the country offers both dramatic scenery and wonderful cultural sites. We'd hired an interpreter and a driver and by the sixth day of our trip had visited the busy capital Tehran and Yazd, a desert city in the south.

Then, on our way to Shiraz, the heart of the country's rich Persian culture, we stopped halfway to see a celebrated 4,000-year-old cypress tree, the Sarv-e Abarkuh.

That's when we met the Basij, the volunteer militia attached to Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The black-clad young men were lying in wait for us, ready with a two-page petition.

'Although it is in our tradition as Iranians to welcome guests, this "welcome" gesture does not apply to you!' it began. 'The people of Iran do not have good memories about you and the British regime... 'You know better than us about the crimes and the ample plots that were orchestrated by your country against the people of this land.'

The document then set out in detail all the terrible things Britain had done to Iran, going back to the 1857 Treaty of Paris and the Anglo-Persian war.

This encounter was the start of a sustained campaign to make our trip as difficult as possible. At one point, we feared we would be kidnapped.

It turned out the men knew our itinerary from the IRGC, which had bugged our vehicle, intercepted our interpreter's mobile phone and bribed our driver. They knew exactly who I was. So serious was the risk judged to be, in fact, that we were given police protection — not against criminals or terrorists, but against the Basij and other agencies of the Iranian state. In the end, the hardliners won and we felt obliged leave four days early.

Yet I still have huge affection for the Iranian people. I've been back since and have now written a book about why Iran so distrusts the West and Britain in particular.

If we are to solve the current Gulf crisis in the Strait of Hormuz, then it is crucial to understand our shared history and why Iran today behaves as it does.

The book is called The English Job, for example, because of a ubiquitous phrase in Persian — 'it's always an

The whole of the West — America, France, the UK and Russia — backed Iraq in the 1980s

English job' — which Iranians use when things go wrong.

They have good cause to be resentful against the 'cunning, colonial fox', as they describe us. Iran never was a British colony but that didn't stop us exploiting the country for treasure and power.

At least our colonies got roads, sewers and railways. Quite the opposite was the case in Iran. Britain and Russia, after competing with each other for control of the country, eventually struck a deal which stopped all railway building right up until the 1920s.

We bribed and cajoled Iran to do our will throughout the 19th Century and early part of the 20th Century and, if that didn't work, we landed troops.

We invaded Iran in the First World War, helping cause a catastrophic famine in the process. In the Second World War, with the Russians, we jointly occupied the country for five years from 1941-6.

We deposed a Shah in 1941 and installed his weaker, more compliant son.

When the Iranian parliament waged an eight-year struggle to nationalise BP's huge refinery and vast network of oil wells, MI6 and the CIA responded by organising a success-



Bolton calculates that by strangling Iran through sanctions, Iran will collapse and the government will come begging for a deal.

ful coup against the elected prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, in August 1953.

We helped prop up the Shah in the mid and late 1970s, even when it was obvious that he was losing popular support. Catastrophically so, in fact. In 1979, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was overthrown in a revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini and that, in turn, led directly to the start of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

But the worst was to come in 1980, when Iraq's newly appointed president, Saddam Hussein, decided, without any justification, to invade Iran. Millions on both sides lost their lives in the bloody war that followed.

The whole of the West — America, France, the UK and Russia — backed Iraq (with only Israel, improbably, supporting Iran). For eight years, Iran was effectively alone. It managed to avoid abject defeat, but this searing experience has defined everything that has happened since and shaped the attitude of those in power today.

Iran's Supreme Leader since 1989, Ali Khamenei, never ceases to preach that the West cannot be trusted. In 1980, he came close to being assassinated by a renegade Iranian terrorist group, the Mujahedin-e Khalq — once supported by Saddam and now by John Bolton, President Trump's national security adviser — and lost the use of his right arm.

The single most powerful military figure in Iran is Major-General Qasem Soleimani, the man behind the Revolutionary Guards' seizure of the British-flagged tanker. His world view, too, was forged in the crucible of the war with Saddam.

It's Khamenei and Soleimani who now call the shots, both literally and figuratively. Iran, in their view, is fighting for its very survival.

Bolton calculates that by strangling Iran through sanctions, the Islamic revolutionary regime will collapse and the government, led by President Rouhani, will come begging for a deal.

This approach won't work. It is based upon a complete misunderstanding of the Iranian psyche. Already, American pressure has strengthened hardliners... and has weakened moderates.... An often discontented population has been unified. After two centuries of humiliation, what Iran seeks above all is respect and recognition.

As I know, having been involved for three years in negotiating the first phase of nuclear talks with Iran (2003-6), if Iran is shown that respect, a deal is possible.

Without that, the cat and mouse game in the Gulf and continued instability in the wider Middle East will continue.

We may not like the way Iran is behaving but comprehending why they do so could prove critical.

Araqchi voices regret over Amano's death

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has expressed his condolences over the death of Yukiya Amano, the chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), who passed away at the age of 72.

"My deep condolences for #Amano demise. We worked very closely. I commend his skillful & professional performance as DG of IAEA resulted in complete closure of so-called #PMD & 15 consecutive reports confirming Iran's full compliance to the #JCPOA. May the Almighty bless his soul," Araqchi said in a tweet on Monday.



Earlier on Monday, the IAEA secretariat said in a note to member states that "the Secretariat of the International Atomic Energy Agency regrets to inform with deepest sadness of the passing away of Director General Yukiya Amano."

Last week, the agency said that Amano's health problems had forced him to plan an early end to his term, which was originally set to expire in December 2021.

The 72-year-old Japanese diplomat had held the position of IAEA director general since 2009, taking over from Mohamed ElBaradei and steering the UN agency through a period of intense diplomacy over Iran's nuclear program.

His death coincides with a sharp escalation of tensions between Iran and the West following Washington's decision last year to quit a 2015 international deal under which Tehran agreed to some limitations on its nuclear program in return for termination of economic sanctions.

President Donald Trump has reimposed U.S. sanctions on Iran, and the fate of the landmark deal, which the IAEA has been overseeing, is unclear.

Amano had, on several occasions, reaffirmed Iran's compliance with its nuclear-related commitments under the deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Seizure of British tanker proved Iran is firm to respond to threats: Hatami

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Seizure of the British-flagged oil tanker in the Persian Gulf proved that the Islamic Republic of Iran possesses the willpower to respond to any adventurous act, Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami said on Monday.

When the British government seized a tanker carrying Iran's oil, "we immediately confronted their illegal action in the Persian Gulf, and this means that we have the resolve and power that are needed to respond to any threat," Mehr quoted Hatami as saying. Iranian forces late on Friday 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.



Ex-MP pushes for formation of bicameral parliament

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Former senior lawmaker Mohammad Reza Bahonar has reiterated his proposal for formation of a second chamber of parliament, saying the country cannot be governed unless a bicameral legislature is established.

"I've said many times and would say here as well that the country cannot be governed with one legislative chamber," Bahonar said in an interview with the Hamshahri newspaper published on Monday.

"We must surely become bicameral, with one national chamber and one regional chamber," he stated, adding, "Such system exists in the majority of countries."

Bahonar, who serves as secretary general of the Islamic Society of Engineers, made similar remarks in an interview almost a year ago, stressing the need for formation of a second chamber of parliament.

"The constitution needs to be changed and two chambers including a senate and an Islamic Assembly be established. This exists in the majority of countries," he said.

In his interview with the Hamshahri, the political figure added that the formation of a bicameral legislature needs a complementary change, which is the establishment of a party system.



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	253045.4
IFX	3274.78

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	rials 42,000
EUR	rials 47,120
GBP	rials 52,522
AED	rials 11,437

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	b/\$63.43
WTI	b/\$56.49
OPEC Basket	b/\$63.10
Gold	oz/\$1,427.60
Silver	oz/\$16.41
Platinum	oz/0\$853.0

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Chinese economy to grow further despite U.S.-China trade dispute: experts

Jordanian experts said Sunday that the Chinese economy will witness further growth despite the U.S.-China trade frictions.

According to ecns.cn, "China is a strong exporter and has strong ties with Latin America, Africa, Russia, Europe and Asia, and this enabled the Chinese economy to overcome the negative impact of the U.S. measures against the Chinese economy," economist Khaled Zubeidi told Xinhua.

According to the Chinese National Bureau of Statistics, the Chinese economy grew by 6.3 percent year-on-year in the first half of 2019 (H1) and reached 45.09 trillion yuan (about 6.56 trillion U.S. dollars). The growth is in line with the government's annual target of 6-6.5 percent.

The Chinese economic policies are drafted in a manner which makes them resilient and Washington's trade tensions with Beijing would eventually hurt the American economy, as they would undermine the U.S. export and U.S. economy's ability to grow, the Jordanian economist said.

Noting that the Chinese economy is growing in various sectors, including technology and the digital economy, Zubeidi said that the U.S. "tariff weapon" will not work effectively.

Khalil Haj Tawfiq, head of the Amman Chamber of Commerce, said China's economic growth in H1 showed that the country is able to absorb the impact of the trade tensions.

"China's openness to the world and the reform policies prove that the Chinese market is still flourishing and growing and China is headed to become one of the largest competitors in the fields of economy, commerce and investments," Haj Tawfiq told Xinhua.

He added that the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) creates a new multilateral trade system and boosts economic growth.

Iyad Abu Haltam, member of Amman Chamber of Industry, said the Chinese economy is considered a safe haven for investment.

Focusing on infrastructure development, China is expanding cooperation with the rest of the world within the BRI framework, and by contrast, Washington's protectionism measures will bring no benefit to itself, Abu Haltam said.

Fitch reduces Germany growth forecasts amid economic softness

Fitch Ratings on Friday lowered its growth forecasts for Germany on the back of a more persistent-than-expected economic soft patch.

As per Morningstar.co.uk, the AAA long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating has been held alongside a Stable outlook. Germany has a diversified, high value-added economy, Fitch continued, with strong institutions and a history of "sound" public debt management. Government debt, at 61% of gross domestic product at the end of 2018, is well above the 44% AAA rating, but Fitch said it is "firmly" falling.

However, Fitch said: The "soft patch of the German economy has proved to be more persistent than we expected at the time of the last rating review in January 2019. Therefore, Fitch has revised down its 2019 GDP growth forecast to 0.9%.

The "2020 and 2021 forecast is 1.4%, broadly in line with our assessment of medium-term growth potential. The relatively strong growth of 0.4% quarter-on-quarter in first quarter 2019 was boosted by one-off factors, but the underlying trend has remained weak, in particular in the manufacturing sector, reflecting persistent weakness in external demand," Fitch continued.

The "contribution of net exports to GDP growth was a negative 0.4 percentage points in 2018 and its contribution is forecast to remain negative over the forecast horizon for the highly open, export-oriented economy."

Despite this, Fitch said domestic economic fundamentals remain sound, helped by record-low unemployment and solid service and construction sectors.

There should be continuity in fiscal policy, the ratings agency continued, given Chancellor Angela Merkel's lasting influence and a fairly high degree of cross-party consensus. Merkel resigned in October 2018 as head of the Christian Democratic party after 18 years.

Looking ahead, Fitch does not see any developments that could lead to a rating change in the short-term. However, long-term risks include further state support to the banking sector or to fellow European nations, or a marked increase in government debt to GDP.

Govt. economic committee approves mechanism for mining cryptocurrencies

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian government's economic committee on Sunday approved a mechanism for mining cryptocurrencies as Iran rushes to bring its growing mining farms in line with national laws, Mehr news agency reported.

"The government's economic committee has approved a mechanism for mining digital coins and it will later be put to discussion at a cabinet meeting," the Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnaser Hemmati announced.

As reported, the committee also passed a proposal for applying export rates for the electricity used by the domestic miners.

According to Deputy Minister of Energy Homayun Haeri, "a plan to apply the exported electricity rate for mining farms was approved by the government's economic committee and will soon be discussed and voted on by the cabinet."

Iran has been recently wrestling with over consumption of electricity by crypto-



currency mining farms across the country as many have rushed to mine coins due to cheap electricity. Mining cryptocurrencies is, in nature, a very energy-consuming process. Some scholars even believe that due to its exponential growth it might consume the world's entire electrical energy by 2020.

In late June, Iranian Energy Ministry announced that due to bitcoin mining processes the country's electricity consumption increased by seven-percent this summer.

Consequently, the ministry proposed that the costs of electricity for cryptocurrency miners should be determined based on electricity export rates. Following the Energy Ministry, Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (known as TAVANIR) also announced that using electricity for mining cryptocurrencies is illegal and those household or commercial subscribers that use electricity for such activities will be cut off from the national grid.

Stock market value reaches \$285.7b

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The value of stock market in Iran reached 12.282 quadrillion rials (about \$285.714 billion) at the end of the third Iranian calendar year of Khordad (June 21), Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) published on its website SENA on Sunday.

As reported by the Statistics and Risk Management Group of SEO, the value of the country's four exchange markets, i.e. Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), and Iran Energy Exchange (IEE), has risen 9.3 percent in the third month compared to its previous month and 106.5 percent compared to the same month in the previous year.

Also, the statistics showed a 9.2-percent growth in TEDPIX, the main index of TSE, which stood at 234,879 points, and a 12.6-percent rise in IFX, the main index of IFB, which stood at 2,978 points at the end of the third month.

Based on the already released reports and data, Iran's exchange markets witnessed fruitful performances and results in the past Iranian calendar year 1397 (ended on March 20, 2019).

Applying new financial instruments in Iranian capital market was another achievements of the exchange markets during the past year, as TSE officially launched "futures" in mid-December 2018 for more risk management and IME launched "option" in early March 2019 in an approach to diversify financing methods for agricultural products.

This progressive trend is also continuing in the current year, as TSE Head Ali Sahraei announced on Saturday that TSE plans to launch a new market named "prime market" in which the price range for the shares increase.

He said that only companies with a minimum transparency score of 70 (out of 100) and floating stock of at least 25 percent would be accepted in the prime market.

Sahraei also said that there is no difference regarding rules governing market makers in this and other markets, adding that participation of market makers is mandatory in the prime market.

TSE main index TEDPIX has increased 56,220 points or 20.4 percent to 234,879 during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21).

As reported, some 258,055 billion securities worth 723.503 trillion rials (about \$17.226 billion) were traded through 17,999 million deals at TSE during the three-month period.

Also, on June 24, during the meeting of IME shareholders, IME Managing Director Hamed Soltani-Nejad said that this exchange has prepared ten macro plans to improve its performance during the current Iranian calendar year.

He mentioned development of underlying assets through existing instruments, development of financial instruments for commodity-backed securities, expansion of market size and depth, increasing cooperation with other organizations,



and strengthening IME brand as some of the mentioned macro plans.

Soltani-Nejad has previously announced that IME accounted for 39 percent of the value of the total trades in the Iranian capital market during the past Iranian calendar year.

He put the value of IME trades at 1.78 quadrillion rials (about \$42.3 billion) in the past year.

The value of trades at IME rose 52 percent in the past calendar year from its previous year

Over 24.84 million tons of commodities valued at 884.3 trillion rials (about \$21.05 billion) were traded at the physical market of IME, showing seven percent fall in the amount and 77 percent rise in the worth of trades year on year.

Quarterly sponge iron output up 13% year on year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— Production of sponge iron in Iran rose 13 percent during spring, which corresponds to the first quarter of Iranian calendar year, compared to the same period of time in the past year, IRNA reported on Monday.

As reported, domestic producers produced 7.101 million tons of the product during the first quarter of this year.

Also, production of iron concentrate has risen four percent to reach 12.207 million

tons during the three-month period of this year from that of the previous year.

Iranian mining sector witnessed some prominent growth both in production and export during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019).

According to the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), the value of Iran's minerals and mining industries' exports stood at \$9.226 billion in the past year.



The rising trend of growth in this sector is planned to be continued in the current calendar year, as IMIDRO Managing Director Khodadad Gharibpour has announced that projects worth \$3 billion are planned to be inaugurated in Iran's mining sector in the current year.

The official has previously announced that projects worth \$2.17 billion have been put into operation in this sector during the past year.

Russia vis-à-vis the globe: In counter-phase mode

By Yaroslav Lissovolik

The much anticipated G20 summit delivered some relief from the U.S.-China trade dispute, as the imposition of higher tariffs was postponed. Although there were also bilateral talks between the Russian and U.S. presidents, as well as meetings of the leaders of BRICS economies, the significance of the G20 summit largely amounted to a reaffirmation of its role as the key venue for maintaining policy dialogue among the largest powers on the world stage.

While the summit did not bring a definitive resolution to the China-U.S. trade dispute, there were in fact important breakthroughs in other areas, such as the announcement of the EU-Mercosur FTA deal, which took several decades to negotiate.

This agreement is set to create the largest free-trade area in the world, thus signifying the potential for regional integration to compensate in part for the trade disputes and mounting protectionism in bilateral country-to-country trade relations.

In this respect, Russia together with its partners in the Eurasian Economic Union (which includes Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan) is looking to further widen the array of free-trade accords.

This coming October, an FTA accord is set to be signed with Serbia, while the FTA with Singapore (which includes the liberalization of goods, services and investment) is due to be finalized by the end of this year.

The developing countries

Discussions on an FTA agreement are also under way with India, Israel, Indonesia and a number of other developing countries. Furthermore, on June 20 South Korean Trade Minister Yoo Myung-hee and Russian Economic Development Minister Maxim Oreshkin launched FTA negotiations in services and investment in Moscow.

Currently, more than 20 countries and blocs have expressed interest in creating an FTA with the Eurasian Economic Union, including the likes of Egypt, Jordan, Thailand and Chile. There are also memoranda signed with trade blocs such as Mercosur and ASEAN on joint cooperation and potential liberalization initiatives.

Overall, Russia together with partners from the



Eurasian Economic Union is starting from a low base in terms of the number of alliances — currently there are only the FTA accords with Vietnam (2015) and Iran (2018), as well as a non-preferential trade accord with China, reached in 2018.

Russia's momentum in trade negotiations, however, suggests that in the coming years it could play catch-up vis-a-vis developed economies in significantly expanding the geography of trade and investment alliances — something that may positively impact the conditions for foreign investment going forward.

In the monetary policy sphere, with seasonal deflation possibly to be observed in August and a zero reading for June, the CPI for the year could fall below the 4% mark as predicted earlier by Maxim Oreshkin. This, in turn, suggests that there could be more room for maneuver in further reducing the key rate from the current 7.50% to 7.00% or even less. This will be further facilitated by the Fed's change in stance this year, with the cycle of rate increases giving way to several potential cuts later this year.

Similarly, on the fiscal front, the relatively high degree of conservatism in Russia's fiscal stance that enabled it to accumulate sizable reserves in the National Wealth Fund (NWF) will likely give way to increasing spending. This will be in part due to greater financing of the so-called National Projects (in areas such as infrastructure and human capital) after a slow start in the disbursement of funds in 1H19, as well as investment of part of the NWF once its size exceeds 7% of GDP (most likely next year).

The scale of fiscal loosening will be tempered by the overriding need to maintain macroeconomic stability, but the room for maneuver appears to be sizable given the strength of the sovereign balance sheet.

The picture that emerges is that across the main strands of Russia's economic policy there is scope and momentum for using the reserves in fiscal and monetary policy as well as in structural policy measures to liberalize the external trade regime.

The Russia's economic position

In some respects Russia's economic position appears to be in a "counter-phase mode" to the global trends that are characterized by limited scope for fiscal loosening (given the prevalence of debt overhang), relatively low degree of monetary policy maneuver (after a protracted period of low policy rates) and growing concerns over intensifying protectionism.

Financial markets appear to be largely putting their hopes on monetary policy support from the central banks of the leading economies in warding off recessionary fears. The question is whether this monetary support factor is strong enough to continue to prop up the markets going forward and pass the tests of ongoing macroeconomic data from the U.S. and other leading economies.

In Russia's case part of the reason for this "counter-phase mode" and the buildup in reserves has to do with a combination of external constraints and a set of policy rules that evolved in Russia over the past several years that cover all three key areas of economic policy: the fiscal rule associated with a conservative cut-off oil price assumption, inflation-targeting with the 4% inflation target serving as a monetary policy rule and WTO membership and commitments serving as a structural policy anchor on the foreign economic policy side.

The task for the Russian government going forward will be to maintain the framework of these economic policy rules while at the same time allowing for the significant reserves to be deployed in counter-cyclical fashion as the rest of the world economy is facing a deceleration in growth and scarcity in the arsenal of policy instruments to support economic activity.

(Source: valdaiclub.com)

Iranian oil irreplaceable, Zanganeh says

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said no country can replace Iranian oil in the global market, Mehr news agency reported on Sunday.

“They have their own production, but they can’t replace our oil,” Zanganeh told reporters who asked whether Saudi Arabia, the UAE, or Iraq could replace Iran’s oil in the market.

Speaking to the press after a meeting with his predecessors, the minister mentioned recent vessel-related tensions in the region saying “the tension has not affected our oil exports and the oil price in the market, but we must consider the development carefully, because one of our tankers is involved and we have restrictions in this regard. The U.S. and allies are creating restrictions for us with this thought in mind, and we have to be careful.”

He was referring to the illegal seizure of an Iran-operated oil tanker, Grace 1, in Gibraltar by British Royal Marines on July 4, and Iran’s seizure of a trespassing British tanker ‘Stena Impero’



on Friday as it was passing through a prohibited maritime passage in the Strait of Hormuz, in breach of international regulations.

He also mentioned EU’s trade mechanism for Iran, formally known as INSTEX, and noted that the mechanism will only be useful to Iran if it covers the country’s oil

revenues. “Otherwise, INSTEX is of no use to us,” he said.

In late June, Zanganeh had said the U.S. won’t be able to realize the goals it’s pursuing by sanctioning Iran’s oil industry.

The minister, however, had emphasized the need for boosting exports of non-oil commodities, including petrochemicals, as the country’s most important economic strategy in countering the U.S. sanctions.

“We must take all necessary measures to pass through sanctions as we have done successfully so far,” he said.

The oil market is under strain from an escalation of U.S.’ pressure policy on Iran, which is a key OPEC producer with more than 2 million bpd.

In May last year, the U.S. brought back sanctions on Iran after withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal which was struck in 2015.

The United States told buyers of Iranian oil to stop purchases by May 1 or face sanctions, ending six months of waivers that had allowed Iran’s biggest customers to import limited volumes.

South Yaran field equipped with mobile oil separator

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — A mobile oil separator (MOS) has been installed in Iran’s South Yaran oil field which Iran shares with Iraq at the western part of Iran’s southwestern region of Karoun, Shana reported on Sunday.

According to Hamoon Kazemeini, head of the South Yaran oil field development project, using this system was put on agenda to reach maximum production levels from the wells of this joint field.

Mobile Oil Separator (MOS) is a device for separating gas from crude oil and pumping it to the pipeline during the drilling, repairing, acidizing and testing of oil wells.

“After installation, the oil is directed to the MOS and after hitting the distributing tray, the gas flows upwards and the oil downwards, and after the stabilization of the oil, the pump is set on,” Kazemeini said explaining the device’s performance.

“The oil level is tuned and controlled by an automatic valve,” he added.

So far, the companies providing this device (MOS) have

been chosen and the assessments are in their final stages by the Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC) which is the operator of the field.

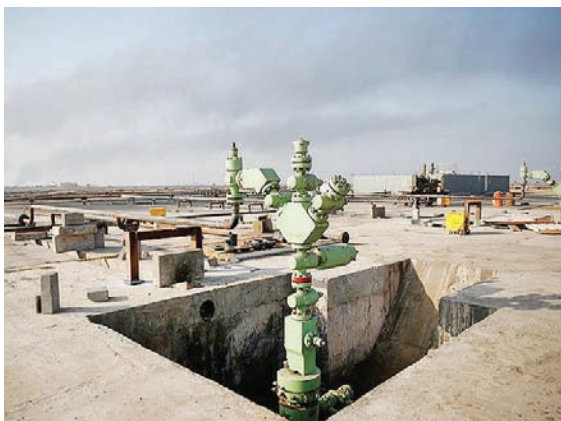
According to Kazemeini, the companies providing these services are completely Iranian and have been visited by experienced technical and engineering teams.

As emphasized in its name, MOS device is mobile and it is possible to utilize it on any needed oil well and then easily transfer and install it on another one. It is composed of three units which are installed on trailers.

Yaran is one of the five oilfields known as West Karoun oilfields. It is divided into two parts namely North Yaran and South Yaran, lies 120 kilometers west of Ahwaz, the capital city of southwestern province of Khuzestan, on the border line with Iraq.

The field is adjacent to Azadegan Field in east and to Iraq’s Majnoon Field in west.

West Karoun region which includes five major fields namely North Azadegan, South Azadegan, North Yaran,



South Yaran and Yadavaran is prioritized among the country’s top development projects.

Oil rises on Middle East Persian Gulf tensions; Libya field resumes output

Oil prices rose on Monday although gains were capped as Libya resumed output at its largest oil field.

Brent crude futures climbed 88 cents, or 1.4%, to \$63.35 a barrel by 0706 GMT.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were up 58 cents, or 1%, at \$56.21 a barrel.

WTI fell over 7% and Brent fell more than 6% last week.

“Falling global demand and rising U.S. stockpiles have helped turn oil charts very bearish, but that may not last as tensions

remain high in the Persian Gulf,” Edward Moya, senior market analyst at OANDA in New York, said in a note.

“Oil prices got a small boost this morning after Libya’s (NOC) declared force majeure on Sharara crude loaded at Zawiya port,” said Stephen Innes, managing partner at Vanguard Markets.

The Sharara oilfield resumed production at half capacity on Monday after being shut down since Friday, which caused an output loss of about 290,000 barrels per day (bpd).

Meanwhile, data late last week showed

shipments of crude oil from Saudi Arabia, the world’s top oil exporter, fell to a 1-1/2 year low in May.

Speculative money is flowing back into the oil markets in response to the escalating dispute between Iran and the United States and other Western nations playing out in the Persian Gulf waters along with the signs of falling supply.

Hedge funds and other money managers raised their combined futures and option’s positions on U.S. crude for a second week and increased their posi-

tions in Brent crude as well, according to data from the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission and the Intercontinental Exchange.

Goldman Sachs on Sunday lowered its year-on-year oil demand forecast for 2019 to 1.275 million bpd, citing disappointing global economic activity.

The forecast was still above the consensus of about 1.05 million bpd for 2019, it said, adding that “we see increasing scope for oil demand to finally start exceeding beaten-down expectations.”

Will there be progress in the switch to a low-carbon society?

By Sumiko Takeuchi

A searing heat wave in Europe, along with a severe drought in India and heavy rainstorms in Kyushu. These highlight the worry over how severe the problems of climate change have become. It is not scientific to conclude that these abnormal weather phenomena are caused by greenhouse gases emitted by humans, but there’s little doubt that climate change is an urgent problem that needs to be tackled.

Japan’s greenhouse gas emissions reached about 1.294 billion metric tons in fiscal 2017. Following the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011, emissions grew rapidly in the subsequent two years as nuclear plants, which had accounted for about 30 percent of power generation, shut down one after another and their losses were offset by an increased reliance on thermal power plants. After hitting a peak of about 1.490 billion metric tons in 2013, the nation’s greenhouse gas emissions have been steadily declining. But the power generation sector, which accounts for about 40 percent of Japan’s total emissions, has not succeeded in reducing emissions.

Emissions from the power generation sector were about 55 million metric tons more in fiscal 2016 than in fiscal 2010. Nuclear plants, which have the advantage of emitting no carbon dioxide during power generation, have taken multiple years for safety reviews to be conducted based on new safety standards, and only nine reactors have restarted so far.

Despite a steady increase in renewable energy, renewables including hydro power still account for only about 15 percent of the power mix. That should come as no surprise as reliance on thermal power generation still accounts for about 80 percent.

■ The renewable energy is disseminated

The key to reducing Japan’s greenhouse gas emissions is the decarbonization of power sources. That would require lowering the ratio of thermal power generation as renewable energy is sustainably disseminated and as nuclear plants that have passed new safety standards are steadily restarted.

There is also a call for the decarbonization of thermal power. There are three kinds of fuel feedstock in thermal power: oil, coal and natural gas.

Coal emits the most carbon dioxide, roughly double that of natural gas. From the standpoint of carbon dioxide reduction, it is imperative to abolish coal and switch to natural gas, but natural gas is more expensive than coal and more dependent on the Middle East, as opposed to coal, which is



more evenly distributed throughout the world and requires less attention in terms of energy security.

But it is mainly natural gas-fired power plants that have played a major role as a replacement for nuclear plants that shut down following the Fukushima disaster. Coal has increased its share of the power mix by only 4.1 percentage points to 29.1 percent in 2017 from 2010, but natural gas has raised its ratio by 9 points to 38.3 percent during that time period. Globally, the ratio of coal-fired power accounted for 38.4 percent of the power mix on average in 2016, compared with 42.5 percent in Germany and 31.5 percent in the United States.

The government aims to reduce the average emissions of all power sources to 0.37 kg per 1 kilowatt-hour of power generation by 2030, but achieving that will not be easy.

There are several reasons for that. Japan has fully liberalized the power market, but that brings about cuts on new investment toward large-scale power generation facilities. Under the Rational Use of Energy Law, the government sets efficiency standards that have to be cleared when building new facilities, but active new investments with an eye toward pursuing high efficiency are hardly to be expected. That is because power demand growth could stagnate and the diffusion of renewable power would lower the utilization rates of backup thermal power plants, making it more difficult for power utilities to project business prospects. In addition, we’re beginning to see a trend that financial institutions and investment firms are thinking twice about extending investments or loans to not only coal but also natural gas-

fired power projects.

■ Japan’s thermal power

It is hoped that Japan’s highly efficient thermal power technology will contribute to global decarbonization. For a long time, Japan’s coal-fired power generation has been considered the world’s best in efficiency with relatively low carbon dioxide emissions. In recent years, the technology of Chinese firms has been improving rapidly, but considering the advantages of Japanese technology as a whole — such as stable operation for an extended period of time and environmental standards that regulate nitrogen oxides and sulfur oxides in addition to carbon dioxide, Japan’s coal-fired power technology can still make a great contribution to the conservation of the global environment. Furthermore, the government has been taking part in developing Integrated Gasification Combined Cycle (IGCC) coal technology through a national project for many years.

Coal-fired power plants are currently considered the “enemy of climate change countermeasures” and it has become practically impossible to procure funds for building new coal plants in developed countries, but demand for coal will continue to be high in developing countries. According to the projection of the International Energy Agency, coal will continue to account for the biggest share in the global power mix for the foreseeable future. Even though coal’s share is set to decline to 26 percent in 2040 from 38 percent in 2017, it would still eclipse natural gas as the biggest share in the power mix. If coal consumption is required for the foreseeable future from the standpoint of cost and energy security, we need to use it as efficiently as possible.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s rules discourage the financing of inefficient coal-fired plants, but an increasing share of the finance sector has practically ended the support of coal plants regardless of efficiency. But denying current technology without securing an alternative that is not prohibitive in terms of cost would lead to the abuse of loopholes. About 60 percent of green bonds issued in abundance in China are said to be used to finance export projects of coal-fired power plants, and unless common global rules are created, effective decarbonization won’t be possible.

Though decarbonization of thermal power generation is a big factor in reducing carbon dioxide emissions, what is required now is not idealism but the creation of globally fair rules and a steady effort toward technology development.

(Source: japantimes.co.jp)

800km of gas pipelines to be added to national network by Mar. 2020

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Head of Iranian Gas Engineering and Development Company (IGEDC) said the company plans to build 800 kilometers of pipelines for gas transmission by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020).



According to Bahram Salavati, installing new pressure boosting facilities in the national network’s main pipelines was also on the company’s agenda.

In early May, Salavati had said that IGEDC was planning to connect 4,100 kilometers of new gas pipelines to the country’s national network by 2025.

The official said the company had also outsourced construction of 2,000 km of gas pipelines to private developers.

Most of the mentioned pipelines are aimed to connect the country’s rural areas to the national gas network.

Earlier this month, National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC)’s Gas Distribution Director Saeid Momeni said 73.6 percent of the country’s rural areas have been connected to the national gas network in the current Iranian calendar year’s first quarter (March 21-June 21).

According to the official, the NIGC has it on the agenda to supply gas to 10 villages every month. That means by the end of the current year 3600 villages will be connected to the gas network.

The number of the cities connected to the national gas network, has also increased to 1117, which is 96.9 percent of the country’s total urban areas.

Earlier in January, Iranian parliament (Majlis) approved a bill to allocate 50 trillion rials (about \$1.16 billion) for expanding the country’s gas network to new rural areas.

According to the bill, the banks would provide NIGC and provincial gas companies with the mentioned fund under the Oil Ministry’s guarantee.

Oil outlook sours as sanctions, global tensions fail to bring out bulls

Sentiment in the oil market has shifted dramatically in recent days, with hedge funds, producers and traders all taking a more bearish tack in response to what they see as weakness in worldwide demand.

According to reuters.com, the oil market has struggled to sustain a rally despite supply restrictions that generally would be considered bullish. OPEC extended a supply-cut deal into 2020.

Yet, Brent futures <LCOc1> have struggled to sustain a move above \$65 a barrel and slumped about 7 percent last week, while U.S. futures <CLc1> have rarely moved above \$60 a barrel.

“Given all the bullish news we’ve had, the flat price has hardly changed,” said Janelle Matharoo of InsideOut Advisors, a commodities trading and risk management consultancy. “Fifteen years ago, this kind of news would have shifted the price \$20, \$30 per barrel.”

Hedge funds and investors have exited bullish bets on the realization that demand may be weaker than anticipated while U.S. production surges. Producers, meanwhile, have rushed to lock in future prices, betting that this may be their best chance to protect against a selloff, oil traders and brokers said.

Front-month, or current, futures contracts have not had a massive selloff — but looking at later-dated contracts, the underlying weakness is apparent.

The premium on front-month Brent crude futures compared with oil to be delivered in half a year <LCOc1-LCOc7> has fallen from a six-year high in May at more than \$4 a barrel to less than \$1.50 last week. That is a signal that worries about tight supply have abated.

The steady rise in U.S. oil output and demand worries from a protracted Sino-U.S. trade war, however, have weighed on demand forecasts. The International Energy Agency recently cut its expectation for global demand through 2019 and 2020 and said it may cut it again if the global economy — and especially China — show further weakness, while Saudi Arabian exports fell to a 1-1/2-year low in May.

Traders said there has been “relentless” selling in bullish Brent call options as far as December 2021 and 2022, a reflection of growing expectations that demand for oil is weakening as supply grows.

“There’s a feeling on the margin that the current price is potentially unsustainable and the market structure supports that,” said Matharoo.

The price weakness presents challenges for oil producers, and many have started to hedge to protect against a damaging future downturn in prices.

With the recent weakness in the market, some consultants are warning about waiting too long to protect against future market moves by buying options to sell or buy oil at a certain price in the future.

“We’re telling producers it’s time to lock in,” said Thibaut Remoundos of London-based hedging consultancy CTC. “We’re less bullish than most of our clients ... we believe there is greater downside risk than is priced in.”

White House narrative on JCPOA incoherent: Analyst

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — The founder of media company Bourse & Bazaar said the Trump administration's approach toward the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers is incoherent.

"The Trump administration's narrative on Iran's nuclear program is incoherent and this reflects that different figures in the administration have different assessments of what satisfactory non-proliferation controls entail," Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj told Tasnim.

Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj is Founder and Publisher of Bourse & Bazaar, a media company that supports business diplomacy between Europe and Iran through publishing, research, and events, such as the annual Europe-Iran Forum. Aside from his contributions to Bourse & Bazaar's own platform, Esfandiyar's writing on Iranian business and politics has been published in Foreign Policy, Bloomberg Opinion, Al Monitor, Quartz, and Asia Times. His scholarship on Iranian political economy has been published in the Encyclopedia Iranica and the journal Iranian Studies. Esfandiyar is a graduate of Columbia University.



Following is the full text of the interview:

■ Iran, which had been fully complying with all of its commitments despite the US pullout from the JCPOA and the European shortfalls, announced on July 7 that it was set to increase enrichment purity to levels higher than 3.67 percent after the European parties missed the deadline. European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said recently that the signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal do not view Tehran's move to scale back some of its commitments under the agreement as significant noncompliance. The US, however, is trying to magnify this issue by insisting that Iran is moving toward atomic bombs and that its nuclear program is not peaceful. What are your thoughts on this?

A: So far, European officials have understood that Iran's moves to scale back its compliance with the JCPOA are intended to be gradual and reversible. However, there are risks to Iran's approach. On one hand, escalation, whether around the nuclear deal or other points of tension, helps make sure that the Iran file remains a priority at the highest levels in European governments, increasing the likelihood that Iran can get the significant political and economic support it needs to address US pressure. But, on the other hand, reduced compliance with the JCPOA and actions such as the seizure of tankers will provide a justification to European officials and politicians who, like many US figures, are skeptical of Iran's non-proliferation intentions and concerned about its regional role. As the escalation continues, the voices who argue that Europe should join the US maximum pressure campaign on Iran will gain influence.

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

A: The Trump administration's narrative on Iran's nuclear program is incoherent and this reflects that different figures in the administration have different assessments of what satisfactory non-proliferation controls entail. But the lack of consensus presents an opportunity for Iran, which can use direct negotiations to shape the view of Iran's nuclear program. It is likely that Trump could be personally convinced to accept a deal close in form to the JCPOA as he is simply looking for a political win. But some in his administration will try to prevent new negotiations for precisely this reason.

■ As you know, France, Germany, and Britain launched INSTEX in January. It only became operational last month and has been criticized by Tehran for having major limitations. Just 10 EU states are members and the mechanism's initial credit line of several million euros is a fraction of EU-Iran trade, which stood at more than €20bn annually before the US sanctions. How much do you think the EU is serious about this trade mechanism? What is behind this foot-dragging?

A: I have no doubt that Europe is serious about the INSTEX mechanism. Though its development feels slow, Europe has worked remarkably quickly to create a state-owned mechanism with ten shareholders and an innovative structure. Those who are disappointed that the mechanism will not be linked to Iran's oil exports need to consider that INSTEX is a specific tool for a specific problem. The European companies operating in Iran employ thousands of Iranians, import and produce important products and technologies, and contribute hundreds of millions of euros to the Iranian economy as the result of direct investment. European executives have made it clear that INSTEX provides a payment solution and political protection which can help their companies remain in Iran in the face of huge pressure from the US. It would be a mistake to reject INSTEX because it doesn't solve all of Iran's economic problems—it is part of the solution.

■ Do you think that the JCPOA could be saved? Do EU nations have enough authority to salvage the international deal?

A: Some say it is impossible to save the JCPOA. But it is important to remember that many believed it would be impossible to achieve the JCPOA when negotiations began years ago. At this moment, it remains achievable that the US and Iran could enter into new negotiations—encouraged by Europe—based on a basic respect for the JCPOA. If talks begin, the impossible can happen again.

American analyst: Oman gulf oil tankers attack standard false flag operation

TEHRAN (FNA) — Alexander Mericas, Journalist and Political Commentator, says the attacks on the oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman was done by the US or Israel proxies to ratchet up the drive to war with Iran.

In an exclusive interview with FNA, Alexander Mericas said Washington and Tel Aviv intentionally did this operation in a way that there remains no doubt it was done by them, to warn the world leaders that "the Israeli-American war machine is ready to use force against its own allies".

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ How do you find the attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman?

A: The attack on the Japanese tanker was a standard false flag attack, done by proxies of the United States or Israel. This had the standard goal of ratcheting up the drive to war. It did appear completely ridiculous on its face, but in America, we are dealing with a situation where anyone who questions the narrative put out by the Zionist media is censored, so the majority of the population is only ever exposed to very accomplished liars saying very absurd things.

Secondarily, attacking a Japanese ship while the Japanese Prime Minister is in Iran appears to be an attempt to menace Japan for daring to try to mediate this manufactured conflict. On that level, it was a threat not only to Japan, but to any third party who would dare interfere with Israeli-American foreign policy goals, and so I think they wanted it to be obviously fake. The US and Israeli intelligence services are highly sophisticated, and they absolutely could have staged a false flag that did not appear this ridiculous. This



was a low stakes event where there was no real risk of casualties, which can be easily forgotten as the news cycle switches gears. However, the leaders of the world got the message that the Israeli-American war machine is ready to use force against its own allies.

■ How do you perceive the future of a war between the United States and Iran, if it ever breaks out?

A: Iran will not lose this war because the US cannot win this war. The American people are simply not prepared for the kind of death

and destruction that would result from this war. The American military is accustomed to harassing and bullying much less sophisticated countries than Iran.

Launching a war against Iran will signal the end of the American empire. The United States will be humiliated on the global stage, and will eventually have to simply give up. However, there would obviously be huge numbers of casualties and large scale destruction of Iranian infrastructure. Various terrorist groups would be shipped into the country in the way they were shipped into

Libya and Syria, and the world would be told that they were "democratic freedom fighters." Iran would certainly not be better off when America eventually gave up and went home. The goal of the Zionists who dictate American foreign policy is simply to create chaos throughout the Islamic world, and they do not care what effect this has on America.

■ What do you think would be the impact of such a war on Trump's re-election?

A: The possible strikes on Iran are going to play an important role in how the 2020 presidential election process develops. Bernie Sanders is the only serious Democrat contender for the party's 2020 nomination who is running on an anti-war platform. If the Trump Administration begins bombing Iran during the Democrat primaries, this is going to help Bernie Sanders, and could potentially win him the nomination. If Sanders won the nomination, you would have an anti-war candidate running against Donald Trump and his war.

However, the other Democrat candidates are very closely linked to the Israel Lobby, and would not be running on anti-war platforms. Joe Biden or Kamala Harris would be arguing that they could fight Iran better than Trump, so the so-called "democratic process" would leave Americans with a decision about who is better at fighting Iran. In such a situation, voter turn-out would be low, and Trump would likely win reelection.

The threat of an anti-war candidate winning the Democrat primary is likely going to be factored into the timing of the first strike on Iran. This would explain why John Bolton flew to Jerusalem and told the Israeli people that they need only be patient.

The Situation Is Getting Worse in Afghanistan

TEHRAN (FNA) — Donald Trump's presidency has gotten so much attention that America's war on Afghanistan, now in its 18th year, has received only passing notice. Not anymore:

At least eight people were killed after a bomb detonated near university premises in Afghanistan's capital on Friday. Another 33 people were wounded in the explosion. Reports say the blast took place near Kabul University's southern entrance. There has been no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

The attack came days after intra-Afghan talks in Doha, Qatar, featuring Afghan leaders and Taliban representatives. Both sides called for the reduction of civilian casualties to "zero" amid the rising death toll in the war-torn country. The statement released after the conclusion of the July 7-8 talks pledged to guarantee the security of public institutions, such as educational institutions, religious schools, hospitals, markets, water dams and other working locations.

However, several attacks across the country continued during and after the talks, resulting in civilian casualties. This certainly qualifies as yet another reason why Afghanistan is better off without US-led occupying forces and why a perpetual war lacks legality under International Law and UN Charter:

- The United States and its NATO allies have lost the war on Afghanistan. To substantiate, President Trump says the US has squandered trillions of dollars on military operations in the Middle East over the past two decades without winning any of the wars. In his words, "We never win, and we don't fight to win." This includes the ongoing war on Afghanistan, which has turned the country into a "petri dish" for terrorists to blend, indeed a laboratory of terror.

- Trump is calling for a big increase in military spending to send "a message to the world" about America's strength and resolve. He wants to provide soldiers with



the tools to allegedly deter war. However, even then America is not going "to start winning wars again". It actually results in intensifying the fight.

- The Afghanistan war is messy, American troops target civilians, and weapons fall into the wrong hands. The Pentagon now believes that counter-terrorism (killing Taliban leaders) is more effective than counter-insurgency (allegedly protecting the Afghan population).

- Coverage of the long-forgotten war has become thinner in the US media, but it's enough to give us the general picture: The war is not going well. It does not seem "winnable" in a strictly military sense of the word. And of course, the Trump administration and a number of high-ranking military officials have also told us that. The inevitable outcome of the war is already clear. American and allied troops will be going home eventually, sooner or later.

- America will never win any other war the Middle East — after almost 18 years of fighting. The US has waged wars on Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Libya. Trump says the US has nothing to show for the money spent

in the Middle East, with terrorist groups still posing a constant threat.

It's a true statement only if he also includes the US army in the list of terrorist groups. Yet, what Trump says is an official acknowledgement of failure in America's global leadership. The entire international community agrees with Trump on that. But don't expect him to stop all wars. America might be in the biggest decline with economy since the Great Depression, but it's still business as usual for the Military-Industrial Complex and the War Party. The globalists want Muslim nations to be dysfunctional in order to "stay and entertain". Everything is going according to the plan.

President Trump is not their undoing either. He is condemned by his own words. He has promised "to defeat" the terrorist group of ISIL, but he didn't (this was Iran, Syria, Russia, Iraq and popular groups across the Middle-East that did so). Just like Obama and Bush, he will never do anything to stop the ongoing war on Islam — on the pretext of fighting terror of course. By signing an executive order to ban Muslims and refugees from traveling to the US, he has made that absolutely clear. That is indisputable. Trump is right on warfare — with new tactics though.

As previously, this kind of colonial mentality will only create more chaos with America's war of aggression in Afghanistan, a war that just won't end. There will be no "light at the end of the tunnel", the infamous metaphor from the Vietnam War years, as Trump is in a long war he says the US has already lost.

The prospects are dark, metaphors are not superfluous, and in the distance, victory will never be glimpsed — even if he stands tall, sends more troops to Afghanistan, and increases military spending. However, getting out is a win in certain ways by saving American lives and not spending trillions more on exporting terrorism, which will only multiply terrorists in the entire region.

Prayut's fragile coalition faces challenges

By Yu Qun

GLOBALTIMES—In 2014, then Thailand's head of the army General Prayut Chan-o-cha led a military coup and overthrew the elected Yingluck Shinawatra government. Prayut then became the prime minister as head of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO). At the beginning of his reign, Prayut promised to hold an election as soon as possible. However, the election kept getting delayed. The Thai people had almost lost hope of electing their prime minister.

The election was finally held on March 24. The NCPO held power for five years, longer than any elected government. But a new cabinet was not set up immediately because none of the parties won the majority to independently form a government. Thus the new government was bound to be a coalition one. Palang Pracharath Party (PPRP) and other parties that support Prayut's reelection contested for the right to form a cabinet with the opposition Democratic Front led by prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra's Pheu Thai Party.

On June 5, Prayut defeated Democratic Front's Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit with a clear margin of 500 votes to 244 and started his second term. Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn on Tuesday swore in Prayut's cabinet. After a drawn-out political jousting, Prayut's new cabinet

is finally in place. On Monday, Prayut delivered a speech broadcast nationwide, announcing the end of the NCPO. Prayut has also turned from a prime minister who used a putsch to seize power into an elected prime minister.

But with the global economic slowdown and the ongoing US-launched trade war against China, Prayut's new cabinet is facing huge internal and external pressures, putting his leadership to test. The economy and living standards are of primary concern. According to an opinion survey by Suan Dusit Rajabhat University, or Suan Dusit Poll, most Thai people want the new cabinet to do away with economic issues. Sixty-four percent of respondents said they want the cabinet to control consumer goods prices and increase salaries. The IMF recently cut its economic growth forecasts for Thailand 2019 to 3.3 percent from 3.5 percent in January. The Thai baht's appreciation has further harmed Thailand's exports. International economic uncertainty has seriously impacted Thailand's development.

Pheu Thai Secretary-General Anudith Nakornthap believes the economic downturn and the increasing gap between the rich and poor should be dealt with. Meanwhile, the Democrat Party also urged the government to raise the daily minimum wage to 400 baht (\$13), the rate promised by PPRP during the election.

During the junta rule, an advisory board led by Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak was in charge of dealing with Thailand's economic issues. But in the new cabinet, many portfolios dealing with economic affairs have been taken up by representatives from other parties. For example, Democrat Party leader Jurin Laksanawisit became commerce minister.

In the past five years, the military-backed government was a cohesive whole, and all decisions were taken smoothly. But due to different understandings of economic affairs and various policy orientations, several political parties in the new cabinet will need more efforts to negotiate and coordinate to ensure the integrity and coherence of economic policies. This will be the new cabinet's top priority. The government's stability is another issue. Prayut's ruling coalition is cobbled together by 19 parties, setting a new record in Thai political history. But the coalition won only by a slim margin in the lower house. Hence, the new cabinet's proposals, which need to pass through the lower house, are likely to be obstructed by opposition parties. Not only that, the opposition may even propose a vote of confidence against Prayut's cabinet.

The new cabinet is likely to encounter obstacles in the future. Major proposals of the government are likely to founder, resulting in delayed plans, lower efficiency, and scarce political achievements. Many

political observers think Prayut's administration won't last long. In addition, internal coordination might be a problem. The 19 parties in the ruling coalition are an amorphous lot in terms of political ideas, party interests, and policy orientations. The reason why it took so long to form the new cabinet was precisely due to the parties' power games.

The Democrat Party and Bhumjaithai Party, two key middle parties, jointly bargained with the PPRP in a bid to maximize their political interests, and finally gained several significant positions in the government. Some small parties even left the ruling coalition and sat in the opposition simply because their political demands could not be met. The fragility of Prayut's ruling coalition is evident. In addition, the PPRP, which nominated Prayut as the prime ministerial candidate, was formed in haste and riddled with internal contradictions. There are major challenges awaiting Prayut in leading the new cabinet. Doing away with internal rifts, maintaining unity and harmony, administering efficiently, and building public confidence are a few of them. All in all, Thailand is now beset with troubles from within and without. The worsening international economic and trade environment, and thorny livelihood issues, and the ruling coalition's internal and external conflicts, have all laid out a rocky path for Prayut's cabinet.

Analyze of second referendum and the BREXIT in aspect of British law

➡ Indeed, due to the concerns of both groups of supporters and opponents of the exit from the European Union from the vagueness of the outcome of the referendum for the two groups, and the importance of this issue for the government, the opinion of the scholars led the referendum to be subject to parliamentary approval.

Now, after a few years after referendum and even the pass of time-limit for leaving the European Union negotiations between Britain and the European Union remain, Britain remains in the European Union, because in fact the issue of separation from the European Union It is a very important debate that will have many consequences for England, the European Union and the whole world which will be discussed further.

2- Historical Review

After World War II, many European countries dreamed united Europe benefits, finally an agreement achieved and the European Union was established.

The United Kingdom's approach to the European Union was not originally intended to be part of a united Europe which governed by a federation, with a unique money and a common parliament.

The British attitudes at that time were that England had never been occupied in contemporary times and had always been strongly independent in their domestic and foreign politics, and transfer of British national sovereignty to a transnational entity at that time was neither desirable nor necessary for England.

Later, the United Kingdom realized that it would not be able to meet its demands independently of Europe, and, as far as possible, it intended to play a leading role in Europe, particularly in the field of commerce, and also intended to play a significant role in relations between Europe and the United States, Britain desire a context which relationship between the two sides of the United States and Europe needs England.

To this end, the Conservative Party of England, on July 31, 1961, called for membership of the European Economic Community, which was faced with French opposition, and in 1967 a similar request was made by Britain, which France vetoed and after attempts of London, Britain was able to become a member of the European Economic Community, On January 1, 1973 and with the creation of the European Union in 1993, the United Kingdom became a member of the European Union.

During its membership in the European Union, the United Kingdom has consistently pursued its political agenda. For example, Britain did not enter into use of the euro or protested about the right to strike in the EU constitution, and now it is in the process of staying in or leaving the European Union.

3- The Consequences of British Exit from the European Union

Here are some of consequences.

A. The difficulty of the British people for travel in the green continent

According to the Guardian, the British will have to send their application and pay fee to travel in Europe, after leaving the European Union to.

The European Commission intends to establish a plan for travel in the Green Continent on the late of this year. The plan has been created in response to recent terrorist attacks in Belgium and France, and to improve Europe's security, and will be implemented in the case of the British when they leave the European Union.

The plan covers all trips to the European Union and member countries. According to this plan, travelers who do not require a full visa must register 72 hours before traveling and pay fee of 10 EUR.

As long as the British are members of the European Union, although Britain is not a member of Schengen, they can travel freely in the European Union with their passports, but they must sign up for transit through the United States, because they are not members of the Schengen Convention.

In 2018, British citizens had thirty million trips to other EU countries, which, if BREXIT happens, travel in EU will be a little difficult for them.

B-Scientific difficulties

Can the British government, after leaving the European Union, replace the budget received from the union in the field of research? It is budget of \$ 1.2 billion and 10 percent of its government funding for scientific research. Eliminating this budget, after the separation of Britain from the European Union, has created a wave of fear among British scholars and researchers.

UK research is nowadays global, with a high level of competition and a high cost, partly funded by the European Union. Staying at the European Consortium has helped England to be the first among the countries of the continent in the field of science.

Most British universities use foreign professors and most of them come from European countries. Meanwhile, many M.S. and Ph.D. students from other European countries easily travel to the UK, and as mentioned earlier, travel restrictions in case of UK separation from the European Union on this issue are also affected this situation.

C- The probability of Scotland's Independence from Britain

According to France-Press, Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon initiated a new consultation in support of Scotland's independence from England and announced that England's withdrawal from the EU threatened the Scottish interests.

While 52% of the British people voted to leave the country from the European Union, 62% of the Scottish people wanted to stay in the European Union, where the controversy and benefits of leaving the European Union are well seen in the UK and Scotland.

Sturgeon has said "the option for a new referendum on independence from the UK, after the 2014 referendum, remains "on the table."

In a lecture of Sterling, at the William Wallace Memorial Site, is said that "the Scottish Independence



Symbol, who defeated English troops in 1297, declared that Scottish interests were threatened. He added not only BREXIT lead to the departure of Scotland from the European Union, but also removes Scotland from the united market", and continued: "I do not want to stand here and watch without fighting."

Other consequences of British withdrawal from the European Union include the shrinking British market and economy, the loss of the role that Britain currently plays between the EU and the United States on many issues, the weakening of Britain in the world and even the UN Security Council and the issue of Northern Ireland about independence from Britain following the Scottish Independence Initiative, is particularly well-known for the desire of Northern Ireland to remain in the European Union and even to join the South.

BREXIT Agreement draft has some ambiguity about the boundary between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Northern Ireland is a part of the UK, and the Republic of Ireland, is an independent state and a member of the European Union.

Northern Ireland's Democratic Party has voiced doubts over the British Prime Minister's proposal. Theresa May, needed votes of the mentioned party to approve the plan in parliament. The British House of Commons has a total of 650 seats, and Theresa needed 318 votes to confirm his agreement.

Because it's not the purpose of this article to address all of the BREXIT's consequences, we only mentioned some in the above, although we know the consequences are beyond these, and we just wanted to discuss them in order to the reader's mind find the question of why the British exits is so much challenging for the government of the country that hold a another referendum and it is rational, legal, political and economic acceptable.

In the probable options due to the expiration of the maximum time limit for withdrawal from the union on March 19, 2019, as well as the rejection of the Teresa Plan for withdrawal, are existing from EU under the Article 50 of the Exit Agreement, or the withdrawal with the duration and necessary agreements with Europe or according to the same rule, the rejection of the first referendum and the implementation of re-referendum.

The International Bar Association also warned about the departure of the UK from the European Union and its Human Rights Commission.

4. Re-referendum

British parliamentarians disputed another referendum on March 23, 2013, but now the possibility of holding a new referendum is again in place.

The British Parliament voted no, on March 22, 2012, for a British withdrawal from the European Union without the consent of the union, proposed by Theresa May. The vote was one day after the parliament rejected the agreement of the government of Teresa May, t British prime minister of the mentioned time, with the European Union to leave.

British Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, on Sunday, March 23, again said that while many individuals and groups in Britain are in favor of another referendum on BREXIT, he does not agree with the second referendum, according to Doucheville, UK Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn.

A few months after the referendum on BREXIT, talks began on March 29, 2017 (April 9, 1396) to launch the "Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty", which defines the rules for the departure of a member of the European Union, but so far the departure of Britain from the European Union It is a possibility.

Teresa hard opposed the implementation of another referendum on the departure of Britain from the European Union, which failed, her plan was not accepted in parliament and she was forced to resign.

In Britain's law, parliament members, examine every request that is signed by 100,000. On the implementation of the referendum on BREXIT, in September 2017, four million British citizens requested a referendum on the issue of BREXIT.

There is a legal commission on this issue in the UK, but it can not give parliamentary members the authority to issue a new referendum, but a review of this issue in the commission show that disputes over exit from the EU still exist in the UK.

Theresa, the prime minister of the UK at that time, introduced changes to the law of BREXIT to the parliament, according to which the Parliament could decide

on a second referendum on BREXIT.

She suggested the "last chance" to approve BREXIT and said:

"The new plan of the government responds to opposition concerns about workers' rights, trade agreements, the European Union's customs union and environmental issues, and the British Parliament can also vote on the second referendum on BREXIT."

She continued: "I do not believe that we should have a new referendum, but it would be better to implement the results of the first referendum, but the thesis of some to restart the referendum on BREXIT is on the table and for this reason, to re-open the referendum on the new government plan is inserted. I will pay attention to the members who want to hold a second referendum, they must vote on the new plan. It is essential to implement the results of the referendum. We must think about a solution, and this is our last chance."

Under British law, if the government and parliament hold a re-referendum on BREXIT, the outcome of the second referendum will come into force, but many have argued whether it would be possible to implement a re-referendum and, in general is it democratic?

Different views have been expressed on this subject. There are examples of reprinting in Europe, most notably Irish re-vote on the approval and acceptance of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, Ireland's re-vote on the adoption of the Nice Treaty in 2002, and the rejection of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 in Denmark.

Nicholas Barr says:

"The second referendum is a non-democratic one and there are no democratic reasons because government does not think people of the society are right when they do not want to what the government wants, and government will vote again and vote again to reach their goal."

He continues that, as Bertolt Burt Mihjusselli stated about the 1953 re-referendum on the uprising of the East German people, the government will dissolve their votes and hold a referendum once they lose their confidence in the people's vote.

In contrast, proponents who support second referendum, believe that will vote of people will be effective again.

5- Conclusion

According to what has been said and overlooked, the UK will face major economic, political, border and even military challenges if it leaves the European Union. The young British population has many concerns about wages, employment, education, and even travel in the European Union if BREXIT occur.

The independent of Scotland and southern Ireland from England would leave a small population, and a small country for Britain, which would have a 100 percent decline in the United Kingdom status in the world.

Considering the importance of the recent issue and recent situations in Britain, it is possible to hold another referendum in the UK, and although some people consider it undemocratic and consider first votes ineffective, and it would be legal if it was accepted by the government and parliament, and the second referendum result is executive.

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France protests vs Hong Kong protests

TEHRAN (FNA) — On July 18, the European Parliament issued a motion calling for a resolution over Hong Kong's extradition bill. The motion condemned what it called interference by China in Hong Kong.



In yet another theater of absurd, the European Parliament also called for the release of "peaceful protesters" who have been detained for what it called "exercising freedom of expression."

The "exercising freedom of expression" the European Parliament supposedly calls as "reason" for the detention of protesters - read appalling violence, assaults on police, vandalising public property and disturbing the social order - largely consists of old information that has been repackaged for political purposes. It does nothing to help resolve the Hong Kong issue.

In response to these baseless allegations, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Lu Kang has urged the European Union to fulfill its commitment to the bilateral relationship. A spokesperson at the Office of the Commissioner of the Foreign Ministry in Hong Kong has also condemned the motion, saying it turns a blind eye to the appalling violence committed by the rioters. However, this is not the main focus of this write-up.

The question, however, is this: Violent clashes across France have been going on for months during which at least 24 people have lost an eye since the "gilets jaunes," or Yellow Vest, protests began in November 2018. How come we are yet to see the European Parliament issue a similar motion calling for a resolution and condemning France and the riot police for using water cannons, stun grenades and tear gas as they attempt to contain the protests?

The answer is obvious. In Brussels, some roads lead to ignorance, prejudice, hypocrisy and double standard. When media outlets in Europe give their opinion about protests in France, they are liberal. When media outlets in other parts of the western world give their opinion, they are lackeys. They urge the poor protesters to give up their rights and quest.

As for the ongoing protests in France, the same news networks and media lackeys urge angry protesters to accept the social order and reality, and stop engaging in violence. The professional propagandists even come up with solutions on how best to cope with what they call the post-truth social order in Europe.

As limited protests in Hong Kong continue sporadically, however, a chorus of influential voices in Western media and corridors of power cast the pointless violence as a battle for "democracy and freedom of expression" in which the real enemy is not the hooligans but Beijing. The result has been a growing tendency in Europe to view Hong Kong as simply one battleground in a larger conflict between China and its people, and to dismiss the legitimate concerns of Beijing over the rule of law or foreign interference as a mere smokescreen for state censorship and control.

This way of framing the violent protests in France and Hong Kong is both overly simplistic and agenda-driven. By overstating the importance of "freedom of expression" to the protesters, Brussels and its opinion-makers aim to increase internal problems for Beijing and to curtail any inclination to reach a peaceful settlement with protesters.

For some time, it has been a commonplace among certain Western governments that a rising China is the real source of opposition to their influence throughout the world, from Asia to the Middle East, Europe to America and Australia. After the failed trade war on China, prominent neoconservatives in Washington and their cohorts in Congress are also doing whatever they can to force Beijing to focus less on international trade and development, and more on its "for democracy protesters" in Hong Kong. It is against this backdrop that Brussels claims the rights of Chinese protesters have generally been upheld in Hong Kong, and that civil rights, political rights and press freedom have steadily deteriorated. It is also against this backdrop that Beijing has strongly opposed the European Parliament's interference in the Hong Kong issue, arguing rightly that the region's affairs are China's domestic affairs.

On that note, and if there is indeed no double standard here, the European Parliament should immediately issue a similar motion to express its deep concern over the ongoing violent clashes across France, in particular, to coverage of sensitive issues on immigrants and those who have lost their eyes or those concerning the Yellow Vests. In the prevailing environment, the international civil society should be very sceptical whenever they see motions, PowerPoint slides and figures shown by Brussels in the media that are only there to "confuse right from wrong." Simply put, telling lies about protests in Hong Kong or framing the issue as anti-democratic aggression by Beijing against its own people is a tendentious move that is meant to advance several covert political goals, including setting the scene for a pre-ordained conclusion of European Parliament elections and further a great distraction from domestic troubles in Europe and France.

For whatever reason, some Western media outlets and governments never go against realpolitik. In this bizarre juxtaposition (Hong Kong protests vs. France protests), violent clashes on the Chinese island are allegedly the hallmarks of a country with weak democratic system. Quite the contrary, in France these are just "public gathering," where protesters take pride in their "robust" electoral institutions and their centuries of continuous "democratic practice"!!!

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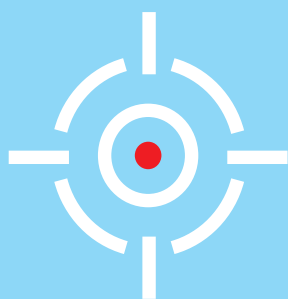
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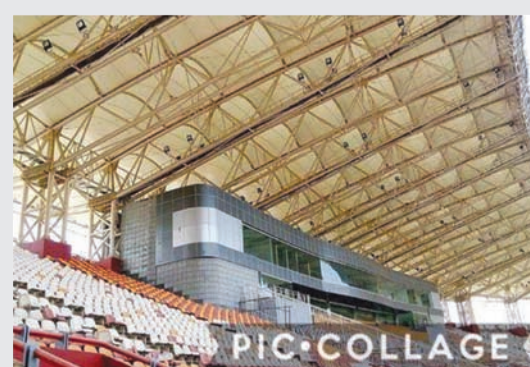
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Misshapen space voids can help us accurately measure the expansion of the universe

Strange voids out there in space – pockets of near nothingness between galaxies – could be crucial in measuring the expansion of the Universe with greater precision than we’ve ever managed before, new research says.

Experts have been able to use a new method to accurately measure the distortion caused by Doppler shifts on the shapes of voids – the way the light emitted by cosmic objects changes wavelength as they get closer to or further away from us – which in turn tells us more about how the Universe is expanding.

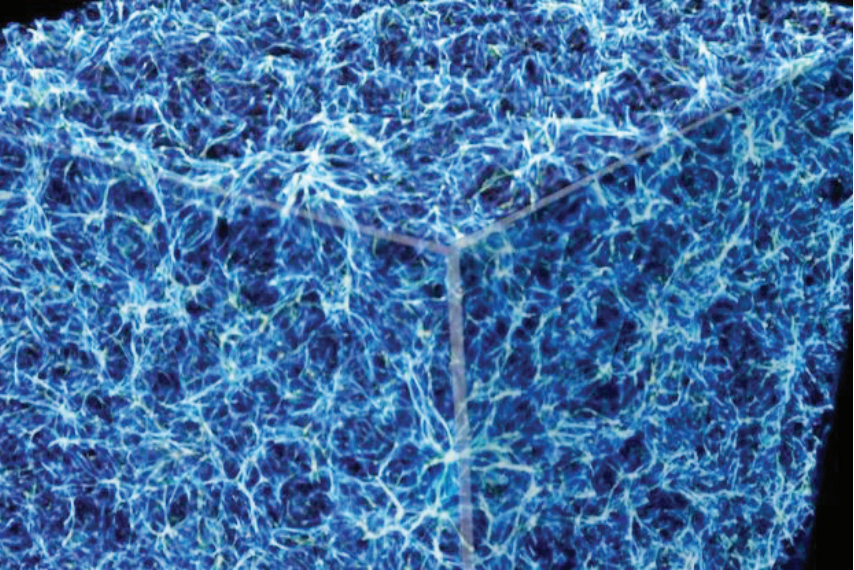
Importantly, measuring the shape of the voids could teach us more about the properties of dark energy and dark matter, the mysterious forces thought to make up 95 percent of the Universe.

Dark matter is thought to help hold galaxies together, while dark energy accelerates the expansion of the Universe.’

Below you can see the change in the average shape of voids caused by Doppler distortions and the effects of dark energy.

What’s especially exciting is that this technique could unlock extra information from the Baryon Oscillation Spectroscopic Survey (BOSS), a detailed chart of where galaxies are positioned based on the rippling of sound waves formed at the beginning of the Universe.

«This measurement tremendously upgrades the previous best results from BOSS.» says cosmologist Seshadri Nadathur, from the



Institute of Cosmology and Gravitation (ICG) at the University of Portsmouth in the UK.

«The precision is equivalent to getting data from a hypothetical survey four times as large as BOSS, completely for free. It really helps pin down the properties of dark energy.»

The work that Nadathur and his team have done has already answered some of the questions astronomers have got about the Universe – or at least limited the number of

potential answers, anyway.

Based on the readings taken so far, we’re living in the simplest model of a flat Universe, with a cosmological dark energy that’s constant and fixed. With so many competing hypotheses on the table, any way to rule out one or two can be helpful.

The new study relies on the Sloan Digital Sky Survey (SDSS) and a sampling of enough voids – while these voids are a variety of

shapes, they can be aligned in all kinds of ways, so if enough of them can be measured then scientists can end up with what an average void sphere should look like.

Any variations on that average are caused by travel through space, neighboring galaxies, and the influence of dark energy and dark matter. By measuring these variations, our picture of space becomes much more detailed.

The new approach marks a substantial upgrade over the baryon acoustic oscillation (BAO) technique currently in use, the sound wave measurements that BOSS is based on.

Previous research helped experts look into the pressure and the temperature of the voids that exist out in space, and the latest study adds even more to the picture, giving us the best look yet at why galaxies are moving the way they are.

And the researchers aren’t done with their new approach yet: It’s likely to improve on the results we get from numerous telescope observations and other studies, like switching from HD to 4K on a video stream.

«These results also mean that the expected science results from facilities such as the European Space Agency’s Euclid satellite mission and the Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument – in which the astronomy community have invested a lot of resources – can be even better than previously thought.» says Nadathur.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Scientists think they found missing evidence that explains how life started on earth

The question of how life first emerged here on Earth is a mystery that continues to elude scientists. Despite everything that scientists have learned from the fossil record and geological history, it is still not known how organic life emerged from inorganic elements (a process known as abiogenesis) billions of years ago.

One of the more daunting aspects of the mystery has to do with peptides and enzymes, which fall into something of a “chicken and egg” situation.

Addressing this, a team of researchers from the University College London (UCL) recently conducted a study that effectively demonstrated that peptides could have formed in conditions analogous to primordial Earth.

The study which details their findings was recently published in the scientific journal Nature. The research team was led by Dr. Matthew Powner, a Reader of Organic Chemistry with UCL’s Department of Chemistry, and included Pierre Canavelli and Dr. Saidul Islam – both of whom are researchers with UCL’s Organic and Biological Chemistry Section.

As Powner explained the purpose of their study in a recent interview with UCL News, “Peptides, which are chains of amino acids, are an absolutely essential element of all life on Earth. They form the fabric of proteins, which serve as catalysts for biological processes, but they themselves require enzymes to control their formation from amino acids. So we’ve had a classic chicken-and-egg problem – how were the first enzymes made?”

As they indicate in their study, considerable research in the past has been dedicated to finding out how peptides first formed and allowed for the emergence of life. However, all previous research has focused on amino acids, rather than the reactivity of their chemical precursors (known



as aminonitriles).

Whereas aminonitriles require harsh conditions to form amino acids (typically strongly acidic or alkaline), amino acids need to be recharged with energy to form peptides. However, the researchers found a way to bypass both of these steps by demonstrating that peptides could be made directly from energy-rich aminonitriles.

Their method took advantage of the built-in reactivity of aminonitriles with the other molecules that were a part of Earth’s primordial environment. The process consisted of combining hydrogen sulfide with aminonitriles and the chemical substrate ferricyanide in water, which yielded peptides.

What this demonstrated was that aminonitriles are capable of achieving peptide bond formation in water all on their own, and with greater ease than amino acids.

In addition, it showed that this could take place amid conditions and chemicals that are outgassed during

volcanic eruptions and which were likely present on Earth billions of years ago. Said Pierre Canavelli, the first author of the study:

“Controlled synthesis, in response to environmental or internal stimuli, is an essential element of metabolic regulation, so we think that peptide synthesis could have been part of a natural cycle that took place in the very early evolution of life.”

“This is the first time that peptides have been convincingly shown to form without using amino acids in water, using relatively gentle conditions likely to be available on the primitive Earth,” added co-author Dr Saidul Islam.

These findings could have significant implications for the study of abiogenesis, as well as the search for life on extrasolar planets. They may also be useful to the field of synthetic chemistry since amide bond formation is essential to the manufacture of synthetic materials, bioactive.

Compared to conventional chemical processes that are used commercially, this new method is more efficient and much more cost-effective.

Looking ahead, the research team is looking to further their studies by finding other ways in which aminonitriles can lead to peptides. They are also currently investigating the functional properties of peptides that their experiment produced in the hopes of better understanding how they could have helped trigger the formation of life on Earth ca. 4 billion years ago.

After many generations of trying (and failing) to recreate the building blocks of life, could it be that scientists have simply been going about it backwards? And does this mean that organic technology could be right around the corner? Only time will tell.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Scientists discovered a new species of tiny sharks that glow in the dark



Sharks are known to stalk and sniff out prey before they attack. But all this newly discovered shark species has to do is glow in the dark, and the prey comes to them.

The 5 1/2-inch American Pocket Shark is the first of its kind to be discovered in the Gulf of Mexico, according to a new Tulane University study. It’s less fearsome than it is wondrous.

Scientists stumbled upon a teeny male kitefin shark in 2010 while studying sperm whales in the Gulf. It wasn’t observed again until 2013, when National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) researcher Mark Grace found it in a pool of less luminous specimens.

It’s only the second pocket shark ever captured or recorded, Grace said in a statement. The other was found in 1979 in the east Pacific Ocean.

«Both are separate species, each from separate oceans,» he said. «Both are exceedingly rare.»

According to the paper, the shark secretes a glowing fluid from a tiny pocket gland near its front fins. It’s thought to help attract prey, who are drawn to the glow while the tiny predator, practically invisible from below, stealthily attacks.

A glow-in-the-dark ocean organism is hardly unique. NOAA estimates about 90% of animals that live in open water are bioluminescent, though research on deep sea creatures is scant.

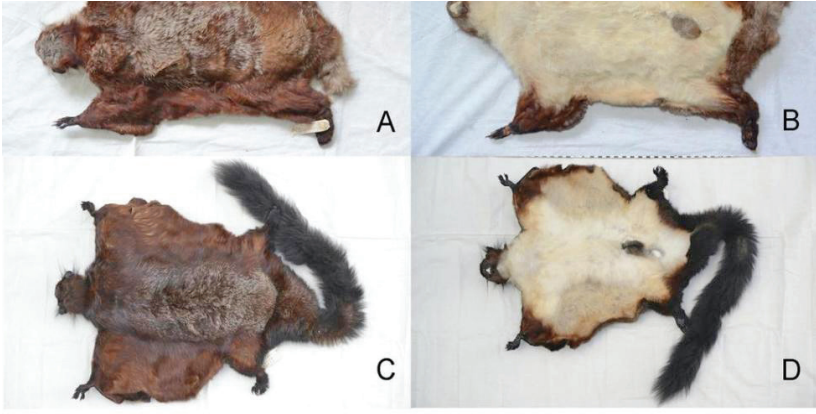
An animal’s glow is triggered by a chemical reaction that emits light energy, according to the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. Organisms light up to attract a mate, warn an attacker to stay away or, in most cases, make a meal out of a smaller swimmer.

Remember the fanged fish with the glowing antenna that terrorized Marlin and Dory in «Finding Nemo?» It’s called a black seadevil, and it’s very real and very terrifying. True to its name, it lures prey toward its jaws by dangling a bioluminescent spine from the top of its head, says the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute.

More charmingly, hordes of bioluminescent plankton turn oceans neon blue at night, a response that startles predators ready to munch on them. The results are less stunning during the day: The dinoflagellates discolor the water in a phenomenon known as red tide, according to the Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

(Source: CNN)

Extremely rare species of flying squirrel discovered in Southwest China



Scientists have discovered a new species of flying squirrel in Southwest China. The species is closely related to a pair of flying squirrel species on the “most wanted” list published by the Global Wildlife Conservation.

Until now, there were two flying squirrel species in the genus Biswamoyopterus, India’s Namdapha flying squirrel and Laos’ Laotian giant flying squirrel. Only a single specimen representing each species have ever been recovered -- in 1981 and 2013, respectively.

Recently, researchers discovered what appeared to be a Biswamoyopterus specimen while surveying collections of the Kunming Institute of Zoology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Though similar in appearance to the two most-wanted species, researchers determined the flying squirrel was anatomically unique, with a distinct skull and teeth structure, as well as different coloration.

Researchers determined the specimen represented a third species in the rare genus, naming the squirrel species Biswamoyopterus gaoligongensis. Scientists gave the species the common name of the Mount Gaoligong flying squirrel.

“The morphological features of B.

gaoligongensis are closer to the critically endangered and missing Namdapha flying squirrel, but is still readily identifiable as a distinct species,» researcher Quan Li said in a news release.

During a field survey, scientists collected a second B. gaoligongensis specimen and observed two more. They detailed their discovery this week in the journal ZooKeys.

While the three species remains extremely rare, the new discovery is good news -- offering conservationists hope that there are more flying squirrels out there.

“The new species was discovered in the ‘blank area’ spanning 1,250 kilometers between the isolated habitats of the two known species, which suggests that the genus is much more widespread than previously thought,» Quan Li said. “There is still hope for new Biswamoyopterus populations to be discovered in between or right next to the already known localities.”

Still, because the new species lives among lowland forests that often abut human settlements, habitat that is vulnerable to agricultural conversion, scientists suggest the species is vulnerable to anthropogenic threats.

(Source: UPI)

Astronauts less likely to faint on Earth if they exercise in space; findings may help others with fainting

Nearly 50 years after man’s first steps on the moon, researchers have discovered a way that may help astronauts spending prolonged time in space come back to Earth on more stable footing, according to new research in the American Heart Association’s journal Circulation.

“One of the biggest problems since the inception of the manned space program has been that astronauts have fainted when they came down to Earth. The longer the time in a gravity-free environment space, the greater the risk appeared,» said Benjamin Levine, M.D., the study’s senior author who is professor of Exercise Sciences at UT Southwestern Medical Center and director of the Institute for Exercise and Environmental Medicine at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas. “This problem has bedeviled the space program for a long time, but this condition is something ordinary people often experience as well.”

Orthostatic hypotension is the technical term for a temporary drop in blood pressure when a person stands up after sitting or lying down because blood rushes to the feet, away from the brain. Dizziness or fainting due to changes in blood flow can occur after lengthy bed rest, among people with certain health disorders or, in the case of astronauts, being in a low-gravity environment.

The study included 12 astronauts (eight men and four women age 43-56) who spent about six months in space. All performed individualized endurance and resistance exercise training for up to two hours daily during space flight to prevent cardiovascular, bone and muscle deconditioning. They also received a saline infusion upon landing.

The astronauts’ blood pressure was recorded with every heartbeat over each 24-hour period before, during and after their time in space. The researchers found that there was minimal impact on their blood pressure during all phases of measurement and none of the astronauts in the study experienced dizziness or fainting during routine activities 24 hours after landing.

This is the first study to demonstrate that astronauts do not experience dizziness or fainting during routine activity after landing, as long as they participate in certain types of exercise training while in flight and receive IV fluids when they return to earth, said Levine

“What surprised me the most was how well the astronauts did after spending six months in space. I thought there would be frequent episodes of fainting when they returned to Earth, but they didn’t have any. It’s compelling evidence of the effectiveness of the countermeasures -- the exercise regimen and fluid replenishment,» he said.

The researchers note that the sample size was small. Also, they could not clearly distinguish whether specific in-flight blood pressure readings occurred while the astronauts were awake or asleep, so the data were combined and examined over 24-hour periods. Since all the astronauts participated in the exercise regimen and received a saline fluid infusion upon landing, researchers do not know the blood pressure stabilization would have occurred without those measures.

Next, the researchers would like to study larger numbers of astronauts and those who spend longer than six months in space.

“Understanding the physiology of space flight can be helpful for understanding many conditions experienced by non-astronauts. For example, the exercise program our lab developed for the space program is already helping people with a fainting condition known as postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS),» Levine said. “As we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing, it’s exciting to think of how our exploration in and of space can lead to important medical advances here on Earth.”

The study was funded by a NASA grant to Drs. Levine and Bungo.

(Source: Science Daily)

Three original NASA moon-walk videos auctioned off for \$1.82M

The original NASA videotapes of the Apollo 11 moon walk were auctioned off for \$1.82 million on the 50th anniversary of the feat.

NASA intern Gary George paid \$217.77 for those three tapes and other NASA footage at a government surplus auction in 1976, Sotheby’s house said in a news release. Sotheby’s Space Exploration auction was conducted at its sale room in New York.

The buyer, who paid \$1,820,000 plus commission for first-generation NASA videotapes wasn’t identified.

“Fifty years ago today, we achieved the world’s greatest human accomplishment, and what we universally recall about that event is best documented on these tapes,» said Cassandra Hatton, vice president and senior specialist in Sotheby’s Books & Manuscripts Department, said in the news release. “We are truly over the moon about today’s outstanding result.”

Sotheby’s said the videos are the “earliest, sharpest, and most accurate surviving video images of man’s first steps on the moon.” They haven’t been restored, enhanced or remastered.

Network television broadcasts lost video and audio quality because of the 1,600-mile relay of microwave transmission towers to the major television networks in New York.

High-resolution TV images received at the Parkes Observatory in Australia were recorded onto a total 45 large-diameter reels of narrow-band slow scan videotape. NASA concluded they had been erased and recorded over.

The auctioned tapes contain the entire 2-hour, 24-minute moon walk, including Neil Armstrong’s first step, Buzz Aldrin descending the ladder after him and the astronauts planting the American flag and talking to President Richard Nixon more than a quarter million miles from Earth. The footage was the same seen by the Mission Control staff in Houston.

George was an engineering student at Lamar University when he interned at the NASA Johnson Space Center. In June 1976, bought about 1,150 reels of magnetic tape.

George sold and donated some of the tapes, but he saved three of them after his father noticed they were labeled “APOLLO 11 EVA | July 20, 1969 REEL 1 [–3]” and “VR2000 525 Hi Band 15 ips.”

In 2008, he found out NASA was trying to locate its original tapes for the 40th anniversary of the moon landing, Sotheby’s said.

These tapes have been viewed only three times since June 1976. George tapes were viewed twice in 2008 -- at DC Video and then digitized directly to 10-bit uncompressed files. Sotheby’s specialists viewed them to confirm their quality for this auction.

A collage of Apollo 11 memorabilia featuring a handwritten note by Aldrin that is believed to be the first autograph manuscript to be written on the lunar surface sold for \$225,000.

(Source: UPI)

Portuguese Castle of Hormuz undergoes urgent restoration

HERITAGE d e s k TEHRAN — The 16th-century Portuguese Castle of Hormuz Island, which is one of the last surviving monuments of the colonial rule in the Persian Gulf, has underwent some vital rehabilitation works.



Sealing the cracks, replacing worn-out stones with new ones, and clearing away the debris are among measures being taken in this phase of restoration, a local official said, CHTN reported on Monday.

History of the fortress goes down in time when Commander Afonso de Albuquerque ordered the construction of a fortress in 1507 after his troops captures the island in early 16th century.

Made from reddish stones on a rocky promontory at the north end of the island, the stronghold was cut off from the rest of the island by a moat, traces of which still remain. It involves arms depot, water reservoir, barrack, prison, church, command center and central hall.

Muscular-looking walls, chambers and archways as well as sets of rusting cannons in the courtyard still give the area a scenic beauty. In addition, upper levels of fort offers wonderful views of the island, its village, rugged mountains all surrounded by the blue waters of the Persian Gulf.

Travel back in time with the ‘Google Maps’ of Ancient Rome

Summer is now well-underway across Europe and many of us are planning our holiday escape with travel comparison websites and web mapping services.

Low-cost air carriers, fast trains, and cross-national motorways have made travelling across the Old Continent a quick and often cheap affair. But let’s imagine that cars, trains and planes haven’t been invented yet and that your options are limited to ox or mule cart and ships.

Researchers at Stanford University have used modern technology to answer by creating a web mapping version of Ancient Rome.

Their model, called ORBIS, consists of 632 sites spread across 10 million square kilometers of terrestrial and maritime space, covering most of modern Western Europe and the Mediterranean coast in North Africa and the Middle East.

The tool generates solutions for travel between any two sites depending on specific means and mode of transport and the months of the year, providing different options based on time and expense.

A journey that involved sailing across the sea or crossing a mountainous area, for example, would have been massively impacted by the weather.

A trip from London to Arles — in Provence, France — undertaken in the summer would have taken 24 days using the fastest route, which entails sailing down the Channel, then down to the Bay of Biscay to reach Bordeaux and then travelling by land.

(Source: Euronews)

ROUND THE GLOBE

Paphos

Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, Paphos is a vast archaeological area, with remains of villas, palaces, theatres, fortresses and tombs.

A coastal city in the southwest of Cyprus, Paphos has been inhabited since the Neolithic period. The city was also a center of the cult of Aphrodite and of pre-Hellenic fertility deities.



Aphrodite’s legendary birthplace was on the island of Cyprus, where her temple was erected by the Mycenaeans in the 12th century BC and continued to be used until the Roman period.

These illustrate Paphos’ exceptional architectural and historic value and contribute extensively to our understanding of ancient architecture, ways of life, and thinking. The villas are richly adorned with mosaic floors that are among the most beautiful in the world.

These mosaics constitute an illuminated album of ancient Greek mythology, with representations of Greek gods, goddesses and heroes, as well as activities of everyday life.

Paphos is a serial archaeological property consisting of three components at two sites: the town of Kato Paphos (Site I), and the village of Kouklia (Site II). Kato Paphos includes the remains of ancient Nea Paphos (Aphrodite’s Sacred City) and of the Kato Paphos necropolis known as Tafoi ton Vasileon (“Tombs of the Kings”), further to the north. The village of Kouklia includes the remains of the Temple of Aphrodite (Aphrodite’s Sanctuary) and Palaepaphos (Old Paphos).

■ Authenticity
Paphos is authentic in terms of its locations and settings, forms and designs, as well as materials and substances. The key elements of the property, such as the archaeological remains associated with the cult of Aphrodite, the rare mosaics, and the remains of civil, military, and funerary architecture, retain a high degree of authenticity with regard to the built fabric.

(Source: UNESCO)

Restored creamy tiles to be reinstalled on Iranian architecture masterpiece

HERITAGE d e s k TEHRAN — Some two eighths of delicately floral tiles, which for centuries adorned the creamy dome of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, have been restored and are ready to be reinstalled on the monument that is widely known as a masterpiece of Iranian architecture.

This phase of the restoration project entails two eighths of the dome’s surface (the dome has been divided into eight portions), and its associated glazed tiles have been fully restored and are ready to be reinstalled, Isfahan province’s tourism chief Fereydoun Allahyari said on Tuesday, CHTN reported.

The mosque is very famous for having a very picturesque dome that makes extensive use of delicate yet very intercalate cream-colored tiles, changing color throughout the day from cream to pink. Some say the sunset is usually the best time to witness the change.

“Each of the eight sections is composed of 24,000 pieces of glazed tiles, so in this phase restorers are to install 48,000 tiles on the dome,” the official explained.

The 17th-century Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque punctuates the middle of the two-story arcades that are encircling the enormous Imam Square, itself a UNESCO World Heritage site in Isfahan, central Iran.



In comparison to many mosques scattered across the country, it appears to be relatively unusual, having neither a minaret nor a courtyard probably because the mosque was never intended for public use, but rather served as a worship place for women.

Built between 1603 and 1619 during the reign of Shah Abbas I, the mosque was dedicated to the ruler’s father-in-law, Sheikh Lotfollah, a revered Lebanese scholar of Islam who was invited to Isfahan to oversee the king’s mosque (now the Imam Mosque).

The exterior panels boasts collections of arabesques and floral designs that have become a signature motif of the masterpiece. The portal itself contains some stalactite-type stone carving used to decorate doorways and window recesses with rich concentrations of blue and yellow motifs.

Inside the sanctuary, there are thousands of mosaics that adorn the walls and its extraordinarily gorgeous ceiling that features a series of shrinking, yellow motifs, itself a masterpiece of design. Photography is allowed but using a flash is not.

Also known as Naghsh-e Jahan (“Image of the World”), the Imam Square is a public urban square in the center of Isfahan, a city located on the main north-south and east-west routes crossing central Iran. The square is anchored on each side by four magnificent buildings: to the east, the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque; to the west, the pavilion of Ali Qapu; to the north, the portico of Qeyssariyeh; and to the south, the celebrated Imam Mosque.

According to UNESCO, the Imam Square was at the heart of the Safavid capital’s culture, economy, religion, social power, government, and politics. Its vast sandy esplanade was used for celebrations, promenades, and public executions, for playing polo and for assembling troops.

Exquisite Qashqai rugs to be unveiled at Tehran museum



HERITAGE d e s k TEHRAN — Four exquisite Qashqai rugs, handwoven by Iranian tribespeople, will be unveiled today at the Carpet Museum of Iran in downtown Tehran.

It is the first time that the Carpet Museum of Iran exhibits such gorgeous Qashqai rugs, the museum director Parisa Beizaei said in an interview with IRNA on Sunday.

A number of experts in Persian carpet and cultural heritage officials have been invited to the unveiling ceremony, in which twenty other Qashqai rugs will be also showcased, Beizaei added.

Qashqai people have a reputation of making the best rugs from the Shiraz district of Iran. They are the brightest

in coloring, with rich blues and reds and some use of golden yellow. Usually their designs are geometric, perhaps with a row of three diamond medallions against a background replete with tiny forms of all kinds, including stylized animals and birds, according to Encyclopedia Britannica.

The designs are often based on Persian urban sources. They are asymmetrically knotted on an all-wool foundation. Mecca-Shiraz is a dealers’ term for such rugs, with little apparent reason.

Persian carpets are sought after internationally for their delicate designs and high quality. Official figures show handmade carpets have a significant share in Iran’s non-oil exports.

IKAC plans to establish science and technology park

HERITAGE d e s k TEHRAN — The Imam Khomeini Airport City Co. is planning to establish a science and technology park within its vast premises, IKAC reported on Monday.

Mohammadreza Karimian, who is a member of the board of directors at IKAC and responsible for logistics management, has said that the IKAC plans to allocate 300 hectares of land to businesses. One of IKAC’s priorities is to host knowledge-based enterprises in this area to help increase domestic production, he added.

He explained that construction of a science and technology park is among IKAC’s im-



portant plans in line with the comprehensive goal of airport city’s development.

“The park will provide the proper platform for knowledge-based enterprises and startup companies operating in the field of logistics.”

Knowledge-based enterprises operating in Free Trade-Industrial Zones and Special Economic Zones at IKAC will benefit from special advantages of these areas, Karimian added.

Currently, an area of 6,000 square meters has been allocated adjacent to hotels at IKAC and knowledge-based enterprises can use the area for logistics purposes. These enterprises will move to the science and technology park in the future, he concluded.

Every travel tech company calls itself a platform: why that’s silly

Every online travel company is calling itself a platform. Travel tech businesses used to market themselves as mobile-first, or big data, or as driven by artificial intelligence. Now the hip marketing word is platform.

It makes sense to aspire to be a market-wide intermediary. Who wouldn’t want to build the next Airbnb, Amadeus, Expedia, or Uber?

“Platform” may soon lose its shine as a label, though. “The bubble of ‘everything is a platform’ will likely burst,” said Annabelle Gawer, a professor of digital economy at Surrey Business School in England. “That’s because of competition.”

A less loose definition of a platform is a company that is an intermediary, meaning it lets other companies buy and sell products and services, and that it is large enough it is marketwide and often global.

Gawer has spent a few years in researching platforms along with fellow academics Michael Cusumano and David Yoffie. The professors have summarized their work in a new book, “The Business of Platforms.”

The book says the golden age of platforms is here to stay in travel and other industries. “It is only starting,” Gawer said. “Platforms are going to play an increasing, not a decreasing role, in all industries — and in travel, too.”

However, not all of today’s aspiring platforms will succeed.

The researchers believe they know which types of platforms will tend to become true powerhouses. They also have advice to legacy companies struggling to adapt to the presence of large platforms.

■ Keys to platform success
The authors counted 43 platforms among the world’s 2,000 largest public companies. Of these, only a few are in travel, such as Booking Holdings, Expedia, and TripAdvisor.

Some of these platforms are transactional. They act as digital marketplaces, bringing buyers and sellers together.

Consumer-friendly transaction platforms like Airbnb — which brings travelers and rental accommodations together — have soared. Business-focused transactional platforms like Amadeus — which connects airlines with travel agents and travel management companies — have thrived, too.

Other companies are “innovation” platforms. Some offer software building blocks for companies to build services on them, such as how Amazon Web Services provides cloud-based storage and computing.

The best platforms mix both models. They create marketplaces, but they also stimulate the creation of products and services that would otherwise be less likely to exist.

■ Expedia’s and airbnb’s success
Exhibit A is Expedia Group, which calls itself “the world’s travel platform.” The giant did more than simplify consumer travel booking. It also helped travel businesses innovate with new tools and models, the researchers said.

Expedia created an affiliate program, sharing for resale its hotel, flight, and rental car inventory. Expedia then used methods of exchanging data called application programming interfaces, or APIs, to enable third-party developers to use its databases. Other businesses can re-use Expedia’s hotel imagery, descriptions of destinations, and other content as part of their own.

Airbnb is another example. From the start it encouraged property owners to rent out their urban homes by simplifying the process, the authors argued. More recently the company’s Experiences service has been persuading people who haven’t offered tours and activities before to start doing so, Gawer said.

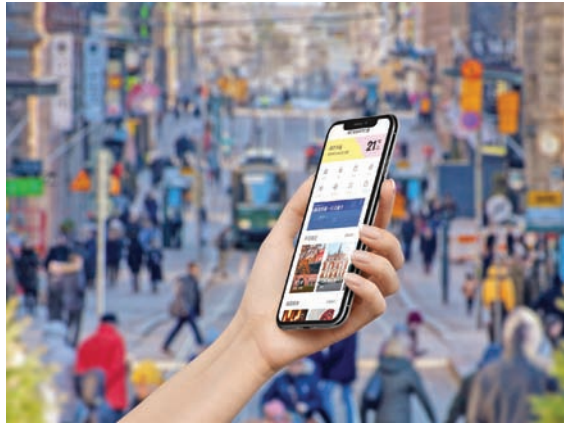
Some marketplaces have more momentum than others. These rare companies achieve skyrocketing growth and remarkable market power. One way they often do that is by combining transactional and innovation platforms like Expedia and Airbnb have.

Successful platforms also fight something called “multi-homing,” a term that refers to the habit of buyers and sellers to use more than one company for the same purpose. A case in point: riders and drivers often use more than one ride-hailing service.

Expedia has attempted to combat multi-homing by introducing a loyalty program, the researchers noted. It has also rolled out a series of other conveniences and tools that, in a never-ending game of oneupmanship, try to distinguish it from other marketplaces, like Booking.com’s and Ctrip’s. Airbnb has done the same in its segments.

Pricing can be hard for platforms to get right, too. Uber and its arch-rival Lyft haven’t priced their ride-hailing services sustainably. Profit pressures will likely force these companies to change or merge with other competitors worldwide.

Similarly, Oyo’s heavy subsidizing of budget hotel franchises in its new market of China isn’t profitable or sustainable.



We’d agree that while Expedia and its peers Booking.com and Ctrip are clearly platforms. But none of them truly deserve to be called “the world’s travel platform.” As of today, those three companies, for example, handle probably perhaps 5 percent of all travel transactions, as a group.

■ The enterprise software exceptions
The book isn’t perfect. It focuses heavily on consumer startups. It overlooks travel tech companies like Amadeus that are arguably platforms, too, only for businesses.

The rules may differ somewhat for business-to-business companies. Many enterprise software providers loosely use the word “platform” to describe their services though their models are slightly different.

“The B2B market traditionally takes a lot longer to change than the consumer market,” said Kevin King, the chief commercial officer of Shiji — a tech provider to hotels and restaurants.

“Things like service level, security, and integrations play a much larger role than in the enterprise market than the consumer market,” King said. “Our core work isn’t building a marketplace but building an infrastructure platform that hotel companies can leverage to grow.”

Shiji isn’t trying to scale quickly but is instead playing a longer game, King said. It aims to build trust through projects that sometimes take a great deal of work on its end.

Shiji’s approach is similar to many other enterprise software companies in travel.

(Source: Skift)

ICT ministerial meeting in Tehran stress ‘brighter future, end of monopoly’

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The final statement of the quadripartite meeting of ICT ministers of Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Russia highlighted attempts ‘to create brighter future for regional nations and deal with monopoly.’

“We attempt to create a brighter future for all the nations in the region and deal with monopoly,” the statement which was released on Sunday by the Iranian Information and Communication Technology Ministry’s website reads.

The Russian Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media, Konstantin Noskov, the Azerbaijani Minister of Transport, Communications and High Technologies, Ramin Quluzade, and the Turkish Information and Communication Technologies Authority, Omer Abdullah Karagozoglu, attended the meeting, which was held on July 17 in Tehran.

“With political will, resistance and multilateral participation most complicated problems can be solved and effective



From left to right, Azerbaijan ICT minister Ramin Quluzade and his counterparts Iran’s Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi, Russia’s Konstantin Noskov and Turkey’s Omer Abdullah Karagozoglu pose for a photo during quadripartite meeting in Tehran

“With political will, resistance and multilateral participation most complicated problems can be solved”

practical approaches can be implemented”, according to the statement.

The meeting was held aiming to expand ICT and economic relations between regional countries. The four ministers shared their latest national achievements in the field of ICT.

The ministers agreed on holding eight regional startup events, two events in each country, in the near future.

Development of industrial cooperation, meeting educational demands of startups to expand their markets, development of ICT services and education for local and regional businesses, reviewing different methodologies by each country to boost its startup ecosystem, and boosting links between investors were amongst the issues that were also discussed during the meeting.

During the Bakutel 2018 exhibition, which was held in December 2018 in Baku, Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia and Turkey planned to invest \$500,000 each on establishing a regional startup center.

Iran able to produce 90% of needed pharma raw materials: VP

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian companies can produce 80 to 90 percent of pharmaceutical raw materials which are imported annually at the cost of around 600 million dollars, the vice president for science and technology Sourena Sattari said, IRNA reported on Sunday.

He called biotechnology accelerator centers as important places that support young entrepreneurs who have ideas about producing medicines.

“We hope that the new measure taken in the field of poultry and livestock would help decrease the country’s dependence regarding medicines and vaccines,” he added.

There is a good biotechnology ecosystem in Iran and there are powerful companies in this field, he explained.

He also pointed to development of probiotics industries as one of the programs which are supported by the vice presidency.

Last week, biotech development center (BioDC) at the vice presidency for science and technology announced that eight human vaccines and 17 livestock vaccines will be produced by the end of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 19, 2020).

By the year end, 50 raw pharmaceutical materials and 14 biotech medicines will be also manufactured, the production of which, will save the country \$375 million and create 830 new jobs.

Among all 18 main vaccines for humans in the world, eight are produced inside the country and the rest are imported but the number of vaccines Iran produces for the livestock only fulfil a quarter of the country’s requirements.

There are currently 140 biomedicines in the global market, of which, 21 items are available in Iran. Although, out of all these 140 medicines, only production of 50 of them are economically justified in Iran; that is, some medicines are more necessary in certain areas because of the high prevalence of some diseases or the environmental parameters.

In July 2018, Sattari announced that Iranian startups meet 98 percent of the domestic market’s need to biotechnology medicine.

According to economywatch.com, the benefits of biotechnology in medicine are without doubt staggering. Although many exciting developments have taken place in the past few



years, with continuing research, it is expected that more and more revolutionary procedures, substances, and devices will be developed to improve and enhance human life.

Meaningful meet ups: Is VR the future of social connection?

With an estimated 3.5 billion users globally, social media has revolutionized how we connect with each other. Through the likes of Snapchat, Facebook, and Twitter, people from different parts of the world can share snapshots of their lives and hang out in the digital world. But, where will people connect in the future?

Virtual reality allows us to connect and to share on a whole new level. It enables us to gather with friends anywhere on the globe and share experiences that would never be possible in the real world (think fighting dragons), or you can just hang out watching movies together. Not only can people enrich existing friendships, but they can also make new friends through the ever-growing catalog of social VR experiences.

Jerry Gottheil marketing director of Altspace, a social platform for VR, revealed, “When you meet with somebody in VR, there is a sense that you are together, that you experience something with that person in a way that you wouldn’t [otherwise].”

Facebook acquired Oculus back in 2014, with a vision to connect the world in a more meaningful way. The ambition is huge - Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has previously said he wants to connect a billion people in virtual reality. Facebook Spaces was the company’s first foray into social VR, giving users the ability to draw 3D objects with virtual

markers, video call friends outside of VR, share selfies of VR memories on Facebook, and interact with friends through avatars.

Now, there’s a whole host of VR experiences that let you connect with others...

■ VRChat

VRChat offers a wide collection of social VR experiences by giving the power of creation to its community. VRChat allows users to play, hang out, and (of course) chat, using spatialized 3D audio, expressive lip-synced avatars, multiplayer VR games, and virtual space stations where users can watch YouTube videos with friends.

■ Oculus home

Oculus Home allows users to create and customize their own VR space from a library of items, objects, and decor that vary according to seasonal celebrations. The best thing about this app is that you can create public rooms where you can invite friends to check out your place and relax. You can also host public meetups within the app - anyone can make their Home public and connect with like-minded fans and members of the community.

■ Big screen

This platform aims to revolutionize the way people work, play, hang out and collaborate within the VR space - with virtual movie nights, LAN parties, PC games, and many more multiplayer activities. In Bigscreen

VR, you can use your Windows computer in virtual reality to view your desktop on huge monitors, as well as share your desktop with other users. Rooms can hold up to 12 people from all over the world, and you don’t have to worry about compatibility - Bigscreen is available over PSVR, Oculus Rift, HTC Vive and WMR. Recently, Bigscreen added 50+ streaming TV channels, including sports, gaming, movies, anime, news, and more to the service - all for free!

■ Rec room

Rec Room is a free platform that consists of thousands of player-created rooms, each with a different multiplayer activity to participate in. Team up with friends or meet other VR users from all over the world, across all types of devices including PSVR, Oculus Rift, HTC Vive and WMR. Customizable avatars make sure you look the part when you participate in virtual laser tag, paintball, and many other games. Creators of Rec Room, Against Gravity, told TechCrunch that it secured \$24 million last month over two rounds of funding led by Sequoia and Index Ventures. With this investment, CEO Nick Fajt is looking towards in-game purchases: “I think a direction that we’re actually excited about is that we want to let the users creating some of this content charge tokens to play them. I think that’s one that we’re kind of on the cusp of doing and we’re hoping to get that out later this year.”

■ Sports bar VR

This application does just what it says on the tin - it’s a virtual sports bar where up to eight players can play classic bar games including pool, darts, and air hockey. In addition, you can take on daily challenges to earn tickets which allow you to customize your avatar, customize your pool cue, and decorate the environment around you with unlockable items. It’s also cross-platform, so you can play with all your friends on HTC Vive, Oculus Rift and Valve Index. Or, if you’re feeling adventurous, join a random session and hang out with people you don’t know!

■ AltspaceVR

AltspaceVR is the “easiest way to meet people from around the world”, not only can you play interactive games but you can also attend free live events with comedians, DJ’s, authors, and celebrities from the comfort of your own home. See which of your friends are online at the touch of a button and get reminders for events you’re interested in. The audience in Altspace is diverse and ranges from 13-60, so no matter your age you can join in any conversation that takes your fancy. Again, this one is cross-reality, so no need to worry if you’re an Oculus user but your best friend uses a Vive - you can both enjoy this one.

(Source: Forbes.com)

Exporting Iranian knowledge-based products to Azerbaijan discussed

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Managers of Iran’s National Innovation Fund (INIF) held a meeting with a group of Azerbaijani ICT delegates in Tehran, discussing ways for exporting Iranian knowledge-based products to Azerbaijan.

The meeting, held on July 18, was attended by representatives of Azerbaijan’s Innovation Agency, the INIF deputy director Siavash Malekifar, representative of the agency holding showroom for Iranian knowledge-based products in Azerbaijan and also representatives of knowledge-based firms that their products are on display at the Azerbaijani showroom.

During the meeting, Malekifar referred to recent changes in the INIF approach towards supporting knowledge-based firms through boosting exports, saying that the INIF supports the participation of knowledge-based companies in foreign events by paying non-repayable financial facilities.”

“We have already established permanent exhibitions in some countries. We hope this will be the starting point for boosting exports to other countries,” he said.

Photo editor FaceApp goes viral again, prompting security concerns

A photo editing app has introduced a few new wrinkles to the faces of celebrities — and to the ongoing discussion around personal digital security.

FaceApp, a more than 2-year-old app created by a Russia-based developer, has seen a recent spike in use due to some celebrities and influencers taking part in the “FaceApp Challenge.”

The app has a host of image-altering features such as adding a smile or appearing to change a person’s gender. Those taking part in the challenge are using the app to make themselves appear elderly, giving fans a preview of what their favorite athletes or celebrities would look like once they become senior citizens.

The recent spike in traffic to FaceApp has also given way to memes about certain famous faces who never seem to age, like the actors Paul Rudd and John Stamos.

But the sudden popularity of the app has also triggered growing concerns about how apps use the data and images supplied by users, particularly those that are owned or operated outside the U.S. One such concern for FaceApp centered on whether the app could access user photos without permission. Researchers found that those concerns were unfounded.

Despite the exoneration, security experts have mixed feelings about the app. They said it isn’t likely the app is stealing entire camera rolls of photos from its users, but added FaceApp is not completely risk free.

The Democratic National Committee felt the app posed enough of a risk to send an alert to its party’s presidential campaigns on Wednesday, warning against using the app that was “developed by Russians,” according to a source familiar with the alert who was not authorized to speak publicly. The warning was first reported by CNN.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., also sent a letter to the Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, asking the agencies to investigate the app.

Schumer wrote that he has “serious concerns regarding both the protection of the data that is being aggregated as well as whether users are aware of who may have access to it.”

Justin Brookman, director of privacy and tech policy at Consumer Reports, said the app’s user agreement should concern its fans.

“I would be cautious about uploading sensitive data to this company that does not take privacy very seriously, but also reserves broad rights to do whatever they want with your pictures,” said Brookman, a former policy director for the Federal Trade Commission’s Office of Technology Research and Investigation.

Brookman said that FaceApp’s privacy policy allows the company to do whatever it pleases with photos uploaded to its server, and the app’s terms of use gives the company broad license to use the photos as it sees fit.

“They could turn them into stock photos or advertisements in Russia,” Brookman said. “But I don’t know how much the Russianness is concerning, although Russia has been known to use personal information in the past.”

(Source: nbcnews.com)

Tips on effectively charging your devices

Back in the good old days of the early 2000s, every device had one charger. Some gadgets were a little more practical and used one of a variety of USB connections, but it almost felt like there were as many standards as manufacturers. Almost 20 years later, most of the industry is moving toward USB-C, and even Apple, known for doing its own thing, uses USB-C for its latest MacBooks and iPad Pros. Now, it’s possible to plug the same charger into your smartphone, tablet, laptop, and soon, I’m sure, your toothbrush.

While this is largely a good thing, it’s not without pitfalls. Have you ever tried to charge your computer from a phone charger? Or an iPad from your computer’s USB port? It happens at a crawl. If you want to charge all your devices efficiently, you need to understand what’s going on.

■ Use the right charger

Most devices ship with the best charger for them, especially laptops and phones made by any company that trumpets the benefits of fast charging in their press materials. There are, however, a few exceptions (looking at you, Apple). When you get a new device, it’s worth doing a little research to see if the manufacturer is providing the fastest charger, or if there’s a better option out there.

■ Be careful with generic chargers

If you’re replacing a first-party charger with a generic third-party one, be careful and make sure to buy a reputable brand from a reputable store. USB power devices have a long history of being counterfeited, and if you end up with one, the best-case scenario is that it probably won’t operate as well as it claims to. At worst, it could set your house on fire.

USB PD is now the most widely supported fast-charge standard, and even some others, like Qualcomm’s QuickCharge, are compatible with many manufacturers’ devices. However, a few companies, like LG, Huawei, and OnePlus, still use their own standards that will work best with their devices. If your device is one of those, make sure to use the proprietary charger.

(Source: msn.com)

How re-engineering an old technology could give us EVs with 700 miles of range

One of the challenges facing the electric vehicle industry is battery supply. In May of this year, Tesla’s global supply manager stated that the company is planning for a shortage of key battery materials. Automakers are working to vertically integrate battery manufacturing into their business to ensure that they will have access to batteries when needed.

In large part, this is happening because Lithium-ion batteries are the standard for rechargeable cells. They’re used in everything from cameras and phones to EVs. In addition to being expensive and dependent on scarce resources, Li-ion batteries carry a danger of overheating and catching fire or even exploding. That’s why airlines don’t want these batteries in their cargo holds. On top of that, building new factories to make Lithium-ion batteries is expensive and time-consuming. Tesla invested \$5 billion in its Nevada Gigafactory to produce batteries for the Model 3 in-house. Tesla’s capacity is at about 24 GWh today, and up to 35 GWh when completed in the next year.

What’s needed is a new battery architecture that’s easier to make. Ideally, the new battery design would have higher energy density and a faster recharge time to make it ideal for vehicle use.

You already know what comes next: a company called XNRGI based near Portland, Oregon says they have the answer. That’s not uncommon in itself. Many people have claimed to have a miracle battery, but they always seem to

say they can’t tell you about it yet.

The difference with XNRGI is that they’ve got a portfolio of published patents tied directly to their Powerchip battery technology, and they’ve applied for several more. The company has also received funding from the U.S. Department of Energy for their research. With patent protection and funding in place, XNRGI is eager to tell the world what they’ve got.

“We believe that we can now simultaneously address all of the issues with Lithium-ion batteries,” said XNRGI CEO Chris D’Couto.

The key difference between a conventional Lithium-ion battery and an XNRGI Powerchip battery is its composition. Where conventional Lithium-ion batteries use a graphite slurry on a two-dimensional conductor as a building material, the XNRGI battery uses lithium metal in a three-dimensional porous silicon wafer. There’s nothing new or different about the wafers; they are the same discs that have been made for decades by the semiconductor industry.

“We’re taking proven chip manufacturing steps and applying them to this battery,” D’Couto said. “We’re taking something from one industry and applying it to another industry. We’re not inventing anything on that front. We can buy the wafers, so we don’t have the large capital investment in a factory.” The best part is that XNRGI batteries are made with older, thicker wafers that are no longer in demand. Worldwide



infrastructure already exists to manufacture these wafers cheaply, and in great quantity.

The advantage of using silicon wafers to build a battery depends on another well-established semiconductor process. The XNRGI design uses perforated wafers to create a waffle-like surface. Each 12-inch silicon disc can carry up to 160 million microscopic pores. Then the wafers are coated with a non-conductive surface on one side. The other side of the wafer is coated with a conductive metal to carry the electrical current.

“The metal coatings we use are taken from the chip industry,” D’Couto said, “and the insulating coatings are taken from the chip industry and used here. We are not inventing anything on the process side.”

(Source: Digital Trends)

300 rangers to join forces defending protected areas

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Some 300 rangers will soon join the forces defending the environment across the country, Fars news agency reported on Monday.

According to the report, 800 individuals have passed the preliminary required tests but only 300 will be chosen to defend the country's protected areas.



They must also pass fitness, medical and psychological tests in addition to assessments related to defending and emergency operations.

It should be ensured if they have the ability to withstand different weather conditions while living in difficult conditions or different places, or they can act appropriately in difficult situations.

Rangers are charged with protecting and preserving protected lands; who may face multiple deaths and injuries while trying to safeguard the environment and wildlife. Rangers who risk their lives protecting the environment and wildlife sometimes fall victims by getting into fight with poachers and may either suffer severe wounds, get killed, or charged with involuntary manslaughter.

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

Relief foundation providing houses to 6,500 underprivileged families

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation has started providing residential units to 6,500 financially struggling families residing in deprived areas across the country, the foundation's deputy director has announced.



"The houses have been built as per a memorandum of understanding signed between the relief foundation and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps," ISNA quoted Ebrahim Bazian as saying on Sunday.

"In the first phase, 5,000 housing units have been transferred, and through the second phase of the project some 6,500 houses are being transferred to those in need," he explained.

Since past three years, the foundation has earmarked over 30 trillion rials (about \$715 million) to provide 100,000 residential units for the families under its coverage, he noted.

He went on to say that during the past three years the foundation has retrofitted and repaired some 250,000 houses owned by the underprivileged.

Referring to the houses affected by flood, he noted that some 30,000 housing units owned by those under the foundation's coverage have been destructed, 12,000 of which have been beyond repair.

He concluded that reconstruction of flood-hit houses will be completed by the next two months.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

American spy lane

(April 9, 2001)

President Bush has written to the wife of the Chinese pilot who, it is believed, died in collision with an American spy plane over a week ago. The White House has described the move as a humanitarian gesture. It came as senior officials in administration warned of harm to US-China relations if the standoff over the spy plane continues. From Washington, Jon Leyne reports. President Bush wrote in response to a **bitterly critical** letter from the wife of the Chinese pilot. The pilot's wife accused the President of **cowardice** for his refusal to apologize for the incident. The **White House** has not released details of the President's reply beyond saying it is a **humanitarian** gesture. So it's not clear whether it has any **significance** in the **intense diplomacy** that is continuing behind the scenes.

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

bitterly critical: the letter expressed intensely severe judgements against President Bush

cowardice: cowardly behavior- someone who is cowardly is easily frightened and avoids doing dangerous things

White House: the official residence of the President of the United States

humanitarian: if a person has humanitarian attitudes, they try to avoid making people suffer

significance: the significance of something is its importance or special meaning

intense diplomacy: diplomacy is the management of relations between countries, here, a lot of discussions are happening between China and the United States

renewable resources: elements that can be replenished over time through natural processes

alternative: available as another possibility or choice

policy vacuums: it occurs when there is an absence of specific policies relating to a specific situation

argument: an exchange of diverging or opposite views, typically a heated or angry one

Hyrcanian forests to be equipped with technological support

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Hyrcanian forests will be equipped with modern technology devices such as camera traps, drones and fire-detection sensors, the deputy director of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization has said.

Recently designated as a World Heritage site by UNESCO, the Hyrcanian Forest cover the northern slope of the Alborz Mountain in Iran at the southern edge of the Caspian Sea and it contains very rich ecosystems due to the particular orographic and climatic situation (precipitation rich, warm-temperate, high moisture from the Caspian Sea and damming effect of the Alborz Mountain range).

According to UNSESO, the forest contains the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or



conservation. It also contains superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.

The technological devices will be installed in the forest as soon as the fund is provided, Fars quoted Mohammad-Hassan Talebian as saying on Monday.

"We will use surveillance drones as well as fire detection sensors to timely detect forest fires and speed up extinguishing process, in addition to monitor and protect the precious natural resource," he noted.

Referring to waste disposal in the region, he said that waste management is also one of the major issues that needs to be addressed and solved using new technologies.

He further called on the related officials to register a national day for Hyrcanian forest in the country's official calendar and a national celebration to be held annually on the day.

He also suggested that the name of Golestan province to be changed with its previous name Hyrcan.

Kaveh-Deh in northeastern Tehran defined protected area

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Kaveh-Deh, a hunting prohibited region in northeastern Tehran, has been defined as a protected area, being included in the Department of Environment (DOE) list, Fars news agency reported on Sunday.

In Iran, areas protected by the Department of Environment cover 8.2 million hectares which fall into four categories: national parks (11 sites), wildlife refuges (25 sites), protected areas (47 sites), and national nature monuments (5 sites).

Any interference with the protected areas is subject to special regulations, and the DOE is the responsible body which has absolute authority over all of the related organizations.

Kaveh-Deh stretching to 90,000 hectares is located in Firouzkuh county, northeastern part of the capital, which awaited an inclusion in the DOE list as a protected area for 18 years.

It is home to over 40 percent of Tehran wildlife species, in addition to being considered as an important



corridor for wildlife migration between the provinces of Mazandaran, Tehran and Semnan, Kioumars Kalantari,

Tehran province's DOE chief said.

Since 17 years ago, it has been proposed to be a hunting prohibited area, which has finally been approved 7 years later, and after 18 years it is defined as a protected area, he added.

Kaveh-Deh has a significant vegetation diversity and vertebrates in the area are also biodiverse, Kalantari stated.

It also holds a great share of valuable species such as leopards, bears, red sheep, wild goat, corsac fox, and also bird species of Caspian snowcock, bearded vulture, as well as marine species of brown trout which classified as threatened or endangered, he explained.

The frequent observation and population estimation of the Persian leopard in the area through camera traps in the past years, indicates that the area needs to be protected appropriately, he also noted.

Currently, there are 2 monitoring stations in the region, which will increase to 4 after being named a protected area, he concluded.

Over 4,000 Iranians killed in car crashes within 3 months



SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Traffic-related accidents claimed lives of 4,129 Iranians during the past 3 months (April 21-July 22), traffic police chief Seyed Kamal Hadianfar has said.

"Some 80 percent of the accidents happened mainly due to unsafe speed, overtaking, distracted and drowsy driving," he added.

"During the Noruz holidays (starting on March 21) for 20 days, we dispatched some 107,000 traffic police and relief forces to ensure the road safety for the passengers, which ended up reducing the road crashes by 17.6 percent," he highlighted.

Although, dispatching 107,000 forces to stay guard for 365 days a year is not possible, and such incidents again increases after special occasions, he added.

"To reduce car crashes, we must develop facilities and emergency fleet, both in emergency medical services and traffic

polices," he noted, adding, actually, 33 organizations are responsible for traffic accidents reduction.

"Last year, some 17,318 were killed and 365,000 injured in road crashes, showing a slight decline [year on year]," he stated, noting, "We must still try to decrease the number of road accidents."

Hadianfar in June said that road crash casualties amounted to 3,863 in the country during the first three months of the current year.

Although, road fatalities occurred in suburban areas have dropped by 9 percent during the first two months of this year compared to the same period last year, it increased by 4.6 in urban areas, he regretted.

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.

Air travelers may have to pay carbon charge to offset emissions



Air passengers may have to pay an extra "carbon charge" on flights as part of a government initiative to reduce CO2 emissions and tackle the climate crisis.

Passengers could choose to pay more for travel tickets, which would then be used to offset greenhouse gas emissions. Or the scheme could work on an "opt-out" basis and also be applied to trains, buses and ferries.

Ministers hope the plans will raise awareness about the effects of public transport on the environment. The extra funds could be used to spearhead eco-friendly projects such as planting trees to reduce the carbon footprint.

The government said it hoped the initiative would "drive consumer choices towards less polluting journey options".

However, the transport secretary, Chris Grayling, has launched a call for evidence on offsetting carbon emissions produced by public transport. In addition, the government has expressed concerns consumers may not trust that their payments are

supporting worthwhile causes.

Grayling said on Thursday: "Climate change affects every one of us and we are committed to ensuring that transport plays its part in delivering net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

"An offsetting scheme could help inform travelers about how much carbon their journey produces and provide the opportunity to fund schemes, like tree planting, to compensate for those emissions. However, our focus remains to target the development, production and uptake of zero emission technology across all modes of transport."

A report by the Department for Transport said: "One way to increase uptake could be to follow an opt-out rather than opt-in model, under which the cost of offsetting carbon emissions would be automatically included for consumers."

In the past year, a third of carbon dioxide emissions came from transport alone in the UK.

(Source: The Guardian)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → €

Iran to implement food safety program

A food safety document will be approved and implemented in the future in the country, Vahid Mofid, an official with the Food and Drug Administration has stated.

The document is consisting of standards through which food safety is best ensured; the whole food production process from cultivation to markets will be under control, it also identifies and controls hazards in the production, manufacturing and handling of food rather than relying on end product standards alone, he explained.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ate”

■ **Meaning:** become

■ **For example:** the disease has been **eradicated** from the world.

PHRASAL VERB

Poke around

■ **Meaning:** to look for something, especially by moving a lot of things around

■ **For example:** James began poking about in the cupboard, looking for the sugar.

IDIOM

On the cusp

■ **Explanation:** a point in time that marks a transition or the beginning of a change

■ **For example:** Some people think the world is on the cusp of a new era.

Syrian air defenses thwart ‘hostile’ fire near Hama

TEHRAN — Syrian air defenses have thwarted what the state TV called “hostile” fires in the northwestern city of Masyaf in the Arab country’s Hama governorate.

According to government-affiliated sources, explosions heard in Masyaf were a result of shells launched by anti-Assad militants in the western countryside of Hama.

The city of Masyaf is known to be one of the places where the Russian air defense system S-300 is deployed.

The explosions came a few hours after a cargo train carrying phosphate through central Syria was targeted and derailed by a “terrorist” attack, the Syrian transport ministry announced.

The train’s crew suffered “various injuries” when it came off the tracks in Homs province, spilling the loads from two cars and starting a fire, it said.

A bomb placed by “unknown people” on a stretch of track east of Palmyra had exploded as the train passed, the UK-based Syrian

Observatory for Human Rights reported.

The train was put “entirely out of service” as a result of the incident, the war monitor added.

Meanwhile, the Syrian army’s airstrikes against militants’ positions in Idlib region killed at least 18 people in the northwestern region, the Observatory said.

Idlib is a final flash point and the last bastion for foreign-backed militants.

The Syrian army warned civilians to leave Idlib before the campaign began to flush terrorists out of the region.

According to Press TV, Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups that are wreaking havoc in the country.

The government forces have already managed to undo militant gains across the country and bring back almost all of the Syrian soil under the government control.



UK minister quits before Johnson becomes no-deal Brexit PM

TEHRAN — A British minister quit Monday, the latest resignation before the country’s presumed new prime minister Boris Johnson takes office and could launch a policy to lead Britain out of the European Union without a deal.

The resignation of Alan Duncan, a junior foreign office minister who has long been critical of Johnson, underlines the strength of feeling in the governing Conservative Party and parliament against a no-deal Brexit which many businesses say would be catastrophic for the economy.

His move follows last week’s resignation of Margot James, a culture minister when she described Johnson’s do-or-die promise to leave the EU by Oct. 31 with, or without, a deal as “quite incredible” for going against business organizations.

On Sunday, finance minister Philip Hammond also said he would resign rather

than be sacked by Johnson, promising to fight with others in parliament to stop a no-deal Brexit.

A Foreign Office spokesperson confirmed that Duncan had resigned.

If the polls and bookmakers are right, Johnson will become Britain’s new prime minister Wednesday and will immediately face the riddle that is Britain’s Brexit negotiation.

Johnson, a former London mayor, has said he will ramp up preparations for a no-deal exit to try to force the EU’s negotiators to make changes to the agreement that Prime Minister Theresa May sealed and British lawmakers voted down three times.

But opposition in parliament to leaving without a deal is growing and the EU is refusing to budge over the withdrawal agreement, Daily Star reported.

Ukraine president on course for unprecedented majority after election win

TEHRAN — President Volodymyr Zelenskiy looked set on Monday to become Ukraine’s first leader since the fall of communism to command a single party majority in parliament, in what would be an unprecedented mandate to deliver promised reforms.

His party’s victory in Sunday’s snap parliamentary election caps a meteoric rise for the former TV comedian who has tapped into widespread anger over entrenched corruption and low living standards in one of Europe’s poorest countries.

Zelenskiy’s Servant of the People party, named after the satirical TV series where he played a humble history teacher who accidentally becomes president, was on course to win 246-249 seats out of 424 seats, his party estimated.

That would give Zelenskiy, 41, the power to decide the make-up of the next

government and control over a parliament that had previously been loyal to his predecessor Petro Poroshenko and blocked his legislative agenda.

Since defeating Poroshenko by a landslide in April’s presidential race, Zelenskiy has promised to keep Ukraine on a pro-Western course and seek a new aid-for-reforms program with the International Monetary Fund.

He has also pledged to find a lasting peace in eastern Ukraine’s Donbass region, where war between Kiev’s forces and Russian-backed armed separatists has killed 13,000 in five years since Moscow’s annexation of Ukraine’s Crimea peninsula in 2014.

His back-to-back election victories “create the necessary support for the newly elected president to implement much-needed and long-delayed reforms,” a note by Citi said.

19 villages north of Baghdad purged of Daesh terrorists

TEHRAN- Iraqi army troops, supported by allied fighters from Popular Mobilization Units, have successfully purged more than a dozen villages north of the capital Baghdad of Daesh Takfiri terrorists.

The media bureau of the volunteer fighters, commonly known by the Arabic name Hashd al-Sha’abi, announced in a statement on Sunday that they, together with government troops, had cleansed four villages, including al-Anaz, Arab Rashid Mahmoud and Arab As’af, in al-Moshahedah region of the extremists following multi-pronged military operations there.

According to Press TV, Hashd al-Sha’abi fighters and army soldiers had earlier purged fifteen villages surrounding Tarmiyah town, located about 25 kilometers north of Baghdad, of Daesh militants.

Also on Sunday, pro-government Iraqi forces could wipe Daesh Takfiri terrorists off Basatin’Awad and Hurrah districts west of Tarmiyah.

Second-in-Command of the Joint Operations Command (JOC), Lieutenant General Abdul Amir Rasheed Yarallah, said in a statement on Saturday that Iraqi military forces had launched the second phase of a major operation to hunt down the remnants of the Daesh terror group north of Baghdad and areas nearby.

The statement noted that the offensive aims to “to beef up security and stability in areas north of Baghdad and surrounding areas in the provinces of Diyala, Salahuddin and Anbar.”

It said that units from the Baghdad Operations Command, command operations from Diyala, Samarra and Anbar, the Federal Police Command, rapid response teams, voluntary Hashd al-Sha’abi fighters and the special forces regiment of the Operations Department of the Chief of Staff of the Army as well as the Special Task Force of the Directorate of Military Intelligence were participating in the offensive.

Iraq’s army and the voluntary forces began the first phase of the Will of Victory Operation early on July 7, the military said in a statement, adding that the operation would last several days and was aimed at securing the province of Anbar and the central and northern regions of Salahuddin and Nineveh.

“We press on the hands of our heroic forces that will achieve victory with the will of its heroes against the gangs of Daesh,” Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi said.

“May God protect you and make you victorious,” he added.

Former Iraqi prime minister Haider al-Abadi declared the end of military operations against Daesh in the country



on December 9, 2017.

On July 10 that year, he had formally declared victory over Daesh in Mosul, which served as the terrorists’ last main urban stronghold in Iraq.

In the run-up to Mosul’s liberation, Iraqi army soldiers and volunteer Hashd al-Sha’abi fighters had made sweeping gains against Daesh.

Iraqi forces took control of eastern Mosul in January 2017 after 100 days of fighting, and launched the battle in the west on February 19 last year.

China says U.S. criticism over South China Sea is slander

TEHRAN — Remarks by U.S. officials on China’s role in the South China Sea are slanderous, its foreign ministry said on Monday, after the United States voiced concern over reports of Chinese interference with oil and gas activities in the disputed waters.

China’s claims in the South China Sea, through which about \$5 trillion in shipborne trade passes each year, are contested, all or in part, by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

On Saturday, the U.S. State Department said China’s repeated provocative actions aimed at the offshore oil and gas development of other claimant states threatened

regional energy security and undermined the free and open Indo-Pacific energy market.

U.S. President Donald Trump’s hawkish national security adviser John Bolton also said on Twitter that China’s coercive behavior towards its Southeast Asian neighbors was counterproductive and threatened regional peace and stability, echoing earlier comments by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said such comments by Bolton and Pompeo were baseless, adding that the United States and other “external forces” were stirring up trouble in the South

China Sea.

“This is slander against Chinese and Southeast Asian countries’ efforts to uphold peace and stability in the South China Sea and properly manage differences,” Geng told a news briefing on Monday. “Countries and people in the region will not believe their words.”

He added, “We urge the United States to stop such irresponsible behavior and respect the efforts of China and ASEAN countries to resolve differences through dialogue and work for peace and stability in the South China Sea.”

U.S.-based think tanks have reported

that Chinese and Vietnamese vessels have engaged in a standoff for several weeks near an oil block in Vietnam’s exclusive economic zone.

Vietnam, which for years has been embroiled in a dispute with China over the potentially energy-rich region, on Friday accused a Chinese oil survey vessel and its escorts of violating its sovereignty and demanded that China remove the ships from Vietnamese waters.

The busy waterway of the South China Sea is one of a growing number of flashpoints in the U.S.-China relationship, Reuters reported.

Turkey will retaliate if U.S. imposes sanctions over S-400s: minister

TEHRAN — Turkey would retaliate against what it called an unacceptable threat of U.S. sanctions over Ankara’s purchase of Russian S-400 missile defenses, its foreign minister said on Monday, adding he thinks President Donald Trump wants to avoid such measures.

Turkey began receiving deliveries of the surface-to-air S-400 systems earlier this month, prompting the United States to begin removing the NATO ally from its F-35 stealth fighter program over security concerns.

“If the United States portrays an adversarial attitude towards us, we will take retaliatory measures, as we’ve told them. This is not a threat or a bluff,” Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said in an interview with broadcaster TGRT Haber.

“We are not a country that will bow down to those who show a animosity towards Turkey,” he said, reiterating a threat of retaliation that Turkey made last month.

Cavusoglu added that he did not expect the U.S. admin-



istration to take such action.

“Trump does not want to impose sanctions on Turkey and he frequently says that his administration and the previous

U.S. administration is also responsible for Turkey not being able to buy Patriot systems. This is true,” Cavusoglu said.

Last week, The United States announced that it was beginning the process of removing Turkey from the program for the F-35 stealth jets, the most advanced aircraft in the U.S. arsenal, which is used by NATO and other partner countries.

According to Reuters, Turkey, like other partners in the F-35 program, was part of the manufacturing supply chain for the high-tech jet aircraft, producing some 900 parts. A U.S. official said it would cost some \$500 million to \$600 million to shift F-35 manufacturing from Turkey.

Separately, the TASS news agency cited Sergei Chemezov, head of Russia’s Rostec state conglomerate, as saying that Russia and Turkey were in talks about the possibility of jointly manufacturing some components of Russia’s S-400 missile defense system in Turkey.

UN nuclear watchdog chief Yukiya Amano dies at 72

→1 “I commend his skillful and professional performance... [that] resulted in complete closure” of the nuclear accord.

“May the Almighty bless his soul,” he wrote in English.

In Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he “always admired his wisdom and foresight - his ability to make informed decisions in the most difficult circumstances”.

In addition to the Iran nuclear talks, Amano contributed to the 1995, 2000 and 2005 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Review Conferences, and chaired the 2007 Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Review Conference.

According to the agency’s biography, Amano was Japan’s representative to the agency from 2005 until his election as director general in July 2009.

A graduate of the Tokyo University Faculty of Law, Amano joined the Japanese Foreign Ministry in 1972 and was posted to jobs in Belgium, France, Laos, Switzerland, and the US.

In a statement on Monday, Japan’s Foreign Ministry also praised Amano, saying he not only tackled international non-proliferation issues but also contributed to development with “atoms for peace and development” as a goal, Al Jazeera reported.

Pope’s envoy tells Syrian leader of concern for Idlib civilians

TEHRAN — Pope Francis has expressed concern for the humanitarian situation in northwestern Syria and urged a negotiated end to years of fighting, in a letter delivered on Monday to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The Vatican said the letter was handed over by Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, who heads the Vatican department for promoting human development.

According to Reuters, the letter called for the safe return of millions displaced by years of fighting, the humane treatment of political prisoners and the resumption of negotiations to seek a political solution to the conflict.

India’s moon mission lifts off, hopes to probe lunar south pole

TEHRAN — India launched a rocket into space Monday to perform a soft landing of a rover on the moon, the country’s most ambitious mission yet to cement its position as a leading low-cost space power.

The 10-billion rupee (\$146 million) mission, if successful, will enable India to carry out studies on the presence of water on the south pole of the moon. Only the United States, Russia and China have been on the moon.

The rocket, carrying the unmanned Chandrayaan-2 spacecraft, blasted off from a southern Indian space center to cheers from thousands of onlookers, a live telecast showed. The launch had been delayed by a week due to a technical snag, Daily Star reported.

Nadler claims Trump is ‘guilty of high crimes’

→1 House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff said Sunday on Face the Nation that doing so is important because most Americans haven’t read Mueller’s summary of his two-year-long investigation.



Schiff called the report “a pretty damning set of facts that involve a presidential campaign in a close race welcoming help from a hostile foreign power,” but admitted it is “a pretty dry prosecutorial work product.”

“Who better to bring them to life than the man who did the investigation himself?” Schiff asked.

House Judiciary Chairman Jerry Nadler explained Democrats on the committees plan to get around this reluctance by having Mueller read from his report, and by asking him for commentary about what he’s read.

According to VOX, on Fox News Sunday, Nadler gave an example of how this line of questioning would work: “Look at page 344, paragraph 2, please read it. Does that describe obstruction of justice? Did you find that the president did that?” Nadler said.

“We want the American people to hear directly from Special Counsel Mueller what his investigation found. The president and the attorney general and others have spent the last few months systematically lying to the American people about what the investigation found. They’ve said they found no collusion, they found no obstruction, that it exonerated a president, all three of those statements are absolute lies.” Nadler said.

It found a great deal of collusion. It found a great deal of obstruction of justice by the president. And it found -- pointedly refused to exonerate the president.

Dinamo Bucharest coach Neagoe suffers heart attack

Dinamo Bucharest coach Eugen Neagoe suffered a heart attack during his club's match against Universitatea Craiova in the Romanian league on Sunday but later was stable in hospital.

The 18-times Romanian champions said that the 51-year-old was taken to Floreasca Hospital in an ambulance and is able to communicate.

"Doctors said that Eugen Neagoe's condition is stable at the moment," Dinamo said in a statement.

Local media reported that the first words spoken by Neagoe to the doctors at the hospital were: "What's the score?"

Dinamo were beaten 2-0 at home to remain winless after the first two rounds of matches.

Former striker Neagoe has been repeatedly criticised by Dinamo's hardcore fans, known as 'ultras', since taking over last month. The supporters want him to quit as they were against the sacking of crowd favourite Mircea Rednic.

According to reports in Romanian media, Neagoe "couldn't eat for two days, drank loads of coffees and smoked like crazy" due to the criticism from the fans.

"We were very close to a tragedy," Dinamo chairman and former Romania keeper Florin Prunea said. "I can't understand the level of hate at this club. I can't believe it! It's just impossible, this can explode!"

Dinamo's Cameroon international Patrick Ekeng had died after collapsing on the pitch during the league match against Viitorul in 2016.

An inquiry into Ekeng's death revealed that the ambulance company that took him to hospital had faulty equipment and medicine beyond its expiry date in some of its vehicles.

Dinamo are one of the two most successful teams in Romania alongside city rivals FCSB, formerly known as Steaua Bucharest. *(Source: Reuters)*

Ajax face awkward Champions League qualifier against PAOK

Last season's Champions League semi-finalists Ajax were on Monday drawn to face Greek champions PAOK Thessaloniki in the third qualifying round for this year's group stages.

The Dutch side do not get automatic entry into the group stages despite winning the Eredivisie for the 34th time and coming within seconds of reaching the Champions League final.

If they beat PAOK, Erik ten Hag's team will still need to win a play-off to join the likes of Liverpool, Real Madrid and Juventus in the main competition.

It is not the easiest of ties for Ajax who have already lost several players from their exciting young squad.

Central defender Matthijs de Ligt has left for Juventus while midfielder Frenkie de Jong has joined Barcelona.

PAOK went unbeaten on their way to winning the Greek Super League, finishing five points ahead of Olympiakos as they conquered their first league title in over three decades.

The first leg will be played at PAOK's Toumba Stadium on August 6 or 7 with the return in Amsterdam a week later.

Two-time European champions Porto, who finished two points behind champions Benfica in Portugal, will face Krasnodar, who finished third in Russia while Belgian runners-up Club Brugge will meet their Ukrainian counterparts Dynamo Kiev. *(Source: Mirror)*

Peaty wins third consecutive 100m breaststroke world title

Adam Peaty won his third consecutive 100 meters breaststroke world title on Monday in Gwangju.

Peaty, who set a world record on Sunday by swimming 56.88 in the semi-finals, touched home in 57.14, ahead of compatriot James Wilby (58.46) and China's Yan Zibei (58.63).

Having achieved 'Project 56' - the first man to go under 57 seconds for the 100m breaststroke - British Olympic champion Peaty was solely focused on winning gold on Monday - but he turned inside a record pace of 26.60 as he led his rivals by more than half a body.

Having won in 2015 and 2017, the 24-year-old is now unbeaten in five years over 100m in major competitions.

Peaty ploughed through the final 15m to seal a third world triumph - and after competing in the 50m on Tuesday, defending his Olympic title in Tokyo in just over a year will be his next target.

Meanwhile, Canada's Margaret MacNeil won the women's 100 meters butterfly world crown in Gwangju to deny Sarah Sjöström a fifth title in the event.

The Swede was on world record course at the halfway point but was overhauled by MacNeil, who touched home in 55.83 ahead of Sjöström (56.22) and Australia's Emma McKeon (56.61). *(Source: Guardian)*

Real Betis to sign Lyon captain Nabil Fekir

Lyon captain Nabil Fekir has arrived in Seville ahead of undergoing a medical to complete his €20m move to Real Betis.

The report claims a fee between €20m and €25m has been agreed for the France international, with the potential of Giovanni Lo Celso leaving the club this summer in excess of €70m.

Fekir has been pictured in Seville and posing with a Real Betis scarf ahead of undergoing his medical on Monday.

Last week, Canal+ in France outlined the reports that an agreement has been reached, following on from similar claims in Le Parisien, with a deal expected this week.

The 26-year-old is in the final year of his contract at the Ligue 1 club and it is within this context that Los Verdiblancos have sought to do a deal.

Fekir, a left-footed playmaker, was reportedly primed to join Liverpool a year ago for €60m but the move broke down and he remained at the French side, but an exit may prove more likely this summer.

The France international is a key player for Lyon and it is unlikely they will allow him to leave on the cheap, but Betis could have their transfer power greatly inflated by the sale of Lo Celso.

Tottenham are favourites to sign the Argentine midfielder and may spend in excess of €70m for the 23-year-old, who joined Betis permanently for just €22m from Paris Saint-Germain in April. *(Source: Football Espana)*

Fearing Olympic chaos, Tokyo tells workers: stay home



Japan's famously diligent workers spend more hours at the office than employees in almost any other country. But to avoid traffic chaos at next year's Olympics, authorities have a message: stay home.

Hundreds of thousands of people are expected to attend Olympic and Paralympic events in Tokyo during the 2020 Games, putting additional strain on the city's already notoriously crowded commuter routes.

Officials also hope that promoting working from home during the Games will encourage a more easy-going approach in a country known for its cases of 'karoshi', or death from overwork.

"We are expecting... up to 920,000 spectators and Olympic staff members a day," said Kasumi Yamasaki, who oversees transport issues for the Games at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

Experts expect a 10 percent rise in passengers on trains, and a 20 percent increase in express highway users, which could result in lengthy delays and even dangerous crowding.

Railway operators are planning to put more trains into service but "railway transportation is already at full capacity during the rush hours from 7 to 9am", Yamasaki told AFP.

On July 22, one year before the Games, Tokyo rolled out a month-long "Telework Days" campaign, with government offices and private business committing to avoiding peak commuting hours.

Nearly 3,000 companies including auto giant Toyota and trading house Sumitomo Corp. are taking part.

■ 'Stress-free lifestyle'

The efforts have run up against various

obstacles, said Kanako Nakayama, an internal affairs ministry official in charge of telework.

"Concerns over the security of sensitive information, the difficulty of controlling working conditions, and the fact that corporate culture stresses the importance of face-to-face communications have deterred" some firms, she told AFP.

Officials hope the campaign will show firms that employees can actually "work even more effectively" when they stay home, she added.

That has been Yoshie Midorikawa's experience.

She starts her day by opening her laptop at home and sending her colleagues a message on a smartphone app, letting them know she is online after dropping her daughter at a nearby nursery.

"You can save lots of time and energy that would have been used for commuting, especially when trains are delayed or carriages are crowded," said Midorikawa, 42, a sales manager at technology firm Kunai, Inc.

Experts and government officials hope that Olympic efforts to expand telework might serve as something of a legacy for the Games.

Bale agrees to join Jiangsu Suning in £1m-a-week transfer, claim reports in China



Gareth Bale has agreed to join Jiangsu Suning for a staggering £1million per week, according to sensational reports in China.

The Chinese Super League club are thought to be ready to splash the cash to lure the Welshman, 30, to the Far East - with Bale allegedly ready to move.

Journalist Bai Guohua made the staggering revelation on social media platform Weibo this morning.

He wrote: "Congratulations to fans of Suning Club!"

Guohua then added that Jiangsu had beaten off competition from rivals Beijing Guo'an to sign the Real Madrid star.

Bale is expected to leave the Bernabeu after boss Zinedine Zidane said it would be "best for everyone" if he moved on after six years with the club.

But his high wages, currently around £600,000, have priced out plenty of potentially interested club.

A move to China or Bayern Munich is most likely with a Premier League return seemingly off the cards financially.

Local media outlet Sina Sport say that both Jiangsu Suning and Beijing Guo'an offered lucrative contracts to Bale.

Suning are based in the city of Nanjing,

the capital of Jiangsu province in East China. They finished fifth in the Chinese Super League last season and currently sit in sixth position with 11 games remaining this term.

Their Instagram page - which has not been verified and has just 13.1k followers compared to Bale's 40.5m - follows just 34 users, but one of those is that of @garethbale11, the winger's verified account.

Chinese clubs have until July 31 to complete a deal for Bale this year.

Guohua added: "Fans of Sunning Club please don't write messages to me. The boss Zhang is so powerful!"

Billionaire Zhang Jindong is the president of Suning Group which owns the club and his company also holds the majority of shares of Italian football giants Inter Milan.

The details of Bale's reported contract in China are unclear but with the Welshman offered the chance to become the first £1m-a-week footballer in Beijing, he is likely to have been offered the same at Jiangsu.

If Bale completes his move to Jiangsu Suning he will join Brazilian former Shakhtar Donetsk midfielder Alex Teixeira and Italian striker Eder as the team's other foreign stars.

(Source: Sun)

Liverpool players brand Sevilla a 'disgrace' for combative approach



Liverpool's players branded Sevilla 'a disgrace' for their combative approach to a warm-up game that forced one of their promising teenagers to leave Fenway Park on crutches.

Left back Yasser Larouci was carried off with what looked a serious injury after a shocking challenge by Sevilla's Joris Gnagnon. Gnagnon was sent off after a forceful swipe at Larouci's shin and issued an apology, acknowledging his 'odious act'.

Jürgen Klopp said Larouci was 'lucky' as the initial diagnosis was not serious, but the player departed with his knee in a brace and on crutches ahead of a scan.

The challenge was not the only contentious incident in Sevilla's 2-1 victory in the Boston home of Liverpool's owners. Earlier, Harry Wilson received an elbow in the face from Ever Boneya.

James Milner led the condemnation. "There were some disgraceful tackles," he said. "We know it was a friendly but you don't see many red cards in a friendly. If you want to foul, pull a shirt. Don't take a young lad by the knee. Seeing it again it is a disgrace."

Virgil Van Dijk was also unhappy with

Tokyo 2020 "is a chance to actively introduce telework, which can create a stress-free lifestyle," said Azuma Taguchi, a professor of engineering at Chuo University.

He is among the loudest voices urging authorities to take serious measures to tackle Olympic traffic, warning of potentially "fatal congestion" in railway stations if action is not taken.

■ Take a 'workation'

Others also see the Olympics as a chance to break existing work habits.

"This is a chance to make telework a legacy of the Games that will take root" in Japanese society, Industry Minister Hiroshige Seko said in a recent forum to promote flexible work.

And some officials are hoping that a more open-minded approach to work could encourage people to take "workations" -- working remotely from far-flung locations with attractive leisure options.

Several towns have already used government subsidies to build offices intended to attract people for temporary "workations" or encourage companies to set up satellite hubs.

Shirahama, a small town in western Japan, now has two business office buildings packed with workers.

"We made sales pitches to companies that we have beaches, hot springs, and good access to an airport that connects with Tokyo's Haneda airport," local official Masakatsu Ogawa told AFP.

The town's revenue from corporate tax has skyrocketed "but we also received benefits that can't be expressed in figures -- a vibrant community with young people from the cities," he said.

(Source: AFP)

Chinese swimmer Sun to rival Mack Horton: 'You must respect China'

Australian swimmer Mack Horton has reignited his feud with Chinese swimming star Sun Yang -- and most of China -- by refusing to share the podium with his longtime rival.

Horton came second to Sun in the 400-meter freestyle event at the 2019 World Aquatic Championships in South Korea on Sunday, then refused to acknowledge his Chinese competitor, who he has previously called a "drug cheat."

Sun received a three-month ban after testing positive for a banned substance in 2014, and is facing renewed allegations according to ABC.

"I just won't share a podium with someone that behaves in the way that he has," Horton said after the race. When asked how he felt, the 23-year-old Australian summed it up as "frustration," the ABC reported.

According to Chinese state media CGTN, Sun responded to Horton's actions, saying: "You could choose not to respect me, but you must respect China."

The pair have a long, bitter rivalry.

Before the 400m freestyle race at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Horton said his rival was a "drug cheat."

After the race, Horton described his win as "one for the good guys." Sun broke down in tears surrounded by Chinese media after his defeat, while the Chinese swim team manager Xu Qi demanded an apology.

Australia's chef de mission Kitty Chiller said Horton



had every right to express his views -- and the team had no intention of making an apology.

Horton's 2016 comments went viral in China, where many believed he had deliberately tried to psych out Sun. Horton's Instagram page was bombarded with derogatory messages, and an op-ed published by the nationalistic tabloid Global Times described Australia as a country "at the fringes of civilization" and referred to its history as "Britain's offshore prison."

■ Taking a stand or disrespecting China?

Once again, Horton's Instagram posts have become the target of pro-China users, who left comments such as "You don't deserve to shake Sun's hand" and "You will lose forever."

The issue was also one of the top trending topics on Chinese microblogging site Weibo on Monday -- although Chinese media did not mention the drugs context, and used a picture that made it appear that Horton was kneeling at Sun's side.

"Horton is a man with a small heart," wrote one person on Weibo. "Being this dramatic because of his bad performance -- Sun Yang should stay away from this kind of toxic rubbish," said another.

The response was very different in Australia, where fellow swimmers praised Horton's stance.

In an Instagram story, Australian Olympic medal-winning swimmer Cat Campbell called Horton a "legend." "Taking a stand for clean sport," she captioned a photo of Horton standing to the side of the podium. "Mack Horton, we salute you."

David McKeon, another Australian Olympian, tweeted: "Absolutely awesome to see Mack Horton protesting clean sport by not getting up on the podium next to Sun Yang."

Sun is not the first Chinese swimmer to be accused of doping. In 2012, then 16-year-old swimmer Ye Shiwen won gold at the Olympics and set a new world record, prompting allegations of doping. International Olympics Committee spokesman Mark Adams called doping allegations against Ye "sad" and "pure rumor."

(Source: CNN)

Vahid Hashemian turns 43: The gentleman of football

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Former Iran striker and current Team Melli assistant coach Vahid Hashemian has turned 43 on Sunday.

Hashemian started his playing career in Fath Tehran and joined Pas a year later. But he wanted more and joined Hamburger SV in 1999 along with his compatriot Mehdi Mahdavia.

He played for four German top-flight football clubs for nearly a decade.

Hashemian once again returned to Iran and joined Iranian popular football club Persepolis in 2010. And announced his retirement from football after 16 years.

Hashemian also represented Iran at the 2006 FIFA World Cup.

He had already helped Team Melli book a place in the prestigious event with his eye-catching performance in the competition's qualification.

Hashemian, nicknamed "The Helicopter" because of his strength in the air, gained B and A coaching licenses when playing in Germany.

On 26 October 2012, he was appointed as coach of Regionalliga side SV Halstenbek-Rellingen in the Hamburg Oberliga but after a successful run with the team, he announced his resignation at the end of the season.

In 2014, he continued his UEFA Pro License under Pep Guardiola at Bayern Munich.

Hashemian, now, has returned to Iran to share his experiences with the Iranian youngsters.

"I am very happy to be appointed as assistant coach of Team Melli. Mr. Wilmots called me and we talked about our cooperation in the team. I've returned to Team Melli after many years as a coach and I hope to help the team the best I can," Hashemian said after he was appointed as Team Melli coach.

Now, Iran football is proud of one of the best players



who has worked with great coaches in Germany.

Hashemian can be a role model for the Iranian players

who are looking for a bright future.

He is a "true gentleman of football".

Iranian athletes claim five golds at Asian Junior Taekwondo C'ships

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian athlete claimed five gold medals in the opening day of the 10th Asian Junior Taekwondo Championships.

The two-day competition is being held at the Princess Hamza Hall in Amman, Jordan.

The Iranian taekwondo athletes won five gold medals, three silver and one bronze.

Ali Tavakoli took a gold medal at the Juniors Male -51 after beating Ahmad Al Tamimi from Jordan.

The bronze medal was won by Seong-Bin Im from South Korea and Lebanese Raphael Kodusi.

Amir Sina Bakhtiari claimed a gold at the Juniors Male -59, beating Shaolong Chen from China.

Thailand's Setthawut and Ghulam Morteza Saleh from Afghanistan won the bronze.

Mobina Kalivand seized a gold after defeating South Korean Seo-Rin Oh in the final match of the Juniors Female -42.

Jordan's Raseel El Shqeriat and Orawan Ratsameprapa from Thailand claimed the bronze medal.



Ghazal Soltani snatched a gold medal at the Juniors Female -52, defeating Hala Malkawi from Jordan in the final. Kazakhstan's Balnur Spabek and South Korean Solla Kim had to settle for bronze medal.

Anahita Tavakoli also won a gold medal at the Juniors

Female -68 after beating Sarah Abu Alhaj from Jordan.

Gayeon Jin from South Korea and Kazakhstan's Nurriza Turarova won the bronze medal.

Iran's Amir Motavalede Shahrestani lost to Tae-Joon Park from South Korea in the final match of the Juniors Male -45.

Mongolian Ekho Erdenebaatar and Mahmoud Tarayrah from Jordan took the bronze medal.

Pedram Jamshidi from Iran earned a silver medal after being defeated by Uzbekistan's Jasurbek Djaysunov in the Juniors Male -68 final.

Justin Mark Agno from the Philippines and Thailand's Athi Sararat won the bronze medal.

And Tina Modanlou won Iran's third silver in the competition, losing to Korean Min-Seo Nam at the Juniors Female -59 final.

China's Wanchen Wang and Ting-Chi Wu from Chinese Taipei claimed the bronze medal.

Ali Akbari also claimed Iran's only bronze medal in the tournament at the Juniors Male -78 weight category.

Iranian para athletes win medals at Polish Open Grand Prix

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian sportspersons claimed four medal at the Bydgoszcz 2019 World Para Athletics Grand Prix.

Amir Khosravani won a gold medal at the Long Jump M T11-13 with 7.09 meters.

Cuban Luis Felipe Gutierrez Rivero claimed a silver medal with 6.85 meters and the bronze medal went to Ronan Pallier from France with a 6.26 meters jump.

Ozra Mahdavia took a gold medal at the Javelin W K F12-13. 40.46.64 with a throw of 35.04 meters.

Katarzyna Piekart and Faustyna Kotlowska from Poland claimed silver and bronze medals with 33.92 and 26.57 meters, respectively.

Ali Shamshiri also claimed a gold medal at the Discus M F11-13. He finished in first place with a throw of 43.22 meters.

Poland's Marek Wieteci (41.96m) and Yury Buchkou from Belarus (38.17m) won silver and bronze medal respectively.

Shamshiri had also won a bronze medal at the Shot Put M F11-13.

Nasser Hassanpour claimed a gold medal at the 200 m M T12-13 – 1 with a time of 24.59 seconds.

Poland's Przemyslaw Mlynski won silver with 28.43 seconds.

Sajad Nikparast seized a bronze medal at the Javelin M F12-13 with a 56.83 throw.

Marek Wieteci from Poland won the gold medal with 58.02 meters and the silver medal went to Cuban thrower Uliser Aguilera Cruz who threw 56.84 meters.

Bydgoszcz in Poland made its debut on the World Para Athletics Grand Prix circuit from Friday to Sunday as around 320 Para athletes from nearly 40 countries lined up for the penultimate Grand Prix of the season.

The three-day meeting took place at the city's Zdzislaw Krzyszkowiak stadium – last month the venue was also



announced as the host for the 2020 Para Athletics European Championships.

Kashima raring for Guangzhou showdown

Kashima Antlers will be targeting revenge when they face Guangzhou Evergrande in the quarter-finals of the 2019 AFC Champions League, with Shoma Doi determined to turn the tables on the Chinese side following elimination by the same opponents in the 2017 edition.

Doi played in both legs when Kashima slid out at the Round of 16 phase at the hands of the Chinese Super League club – and two-time AFC Champions League winners – as Antlers continued a dismal record of failing to advance to the last eight for the fourth time since 2009.

But, with their confidence since boosted by their first-ever title win last year, Doi is convinced he and his teammates can avenge that loss and keep alive their dream of claiming back-to-back AFC Champions League crowns.

"We played against them in 2017 and we lost the first game 1-0," said Doi of the opening leg at Guangzhou's Tianhe Stadium two years ago. "At home we scored the first goal but we conceded a second goal and we lost."

"So we have to make sure that doesn't happen again. We'll be looking for some revenge this time."

Kashima have yet to hit the heights of their run to a first AFC Champions League title last year and it was a brace from Doi in the return leg of their meeting with fellow J.League side Sanfrecce Hiroshima that ensured they progressed to the quarter-finals.

Injuries have taken their toll on the eight-



time Japanese champions, who staggered through the group phase before taking second place in Group E behind Shandong Luneng. Despite several key absences Kashima still managed to book their place in the last eight, but only after seeing off Sanfrecce on the away goals rule in a dramatic second leg in Hiroshima.

"We've had some players who have been injured who played last year, so our squad is different," Doi said. "Of course we feel we're under pressure as defending champions but personally I enjoy this kind of pressure. I'm motivated and in good condition. What I want to do is just enjoy the game and get to the next stage."

"In the group phase many young players had the chance to play and we were able to get through. We have been able to show our strength as champions. There have been

some players who have been injured and we haven't been able to field our best team, but that's often the case in sport. Any player who is on the field playing for Kashima Antlers should be proud to be there at any time."

"Scoring the first away goal is very important in the AFC Champions League. We won the first leg against Sanfrecce 1-0 and in the second leg in Hiroshima we scored the first goal and that made things a bit easier. That was the plan for us."

"Hiroshima were a tough team, tougher than we thought. When they scored it gave them more energy. It was important for us to get a second goal and in the second half I got that goal and that was very influential for us."

Having seen off Hiroshima, Doi is relieved not to be facing Japanese opposition again next month after Kashima avoided

Urawa Red Diamonds, the other remaining J.League side left in the draw.

"The technique of Japanese teams is much higher than the other teams in the AFC Champions League, but the other teams make up for that technique with their power and the physical side of the game," he said.

"They are always motivated when they play against us and that's an important point because it's something that we don't experience when we play in Japan. When we play Chinese teams they have very good foreign players and we don't see these kind of players in the J.League and we have to deal with that."

"To be honest, we can play Japanese teams at any time so we want to play against opponents from somewhere else, from China or Korea Republic."

With the idea of broadening their horizons in mind, the ultimate goal, stressed Doi, is to retain the AFC Champions League trophy and make a return to the global stage at the FIFA Club World Cup in Qatar in December.

"This club has won many titles and last year we won the AFC Champions League title for the first time," he said. "If we can get the AFC Champions League title two years in a row then we will have shown the rest of Asia our value. Everyone here thinks that. And personally I'd love to go to the FIFA Club World Cup again and that's great motivation for all of us."

(Source: the-afc)

Iran beat Argentina at FIVB U21 World Championship

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran defeated Argentina 3-1 (25-19, 23-25, 25-22, 32-30) in Pool F of the 2019 FIVB Volleyball Men's U21 World Championship on Monday.

The Iranian team, headed by Behrouz Ataei, earned two 3-0 wins over Tunisia and Czech Republic but lost to Russia 3-2 in Pool C.

Iran will face Italy on Tuesday.



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.

Zob Ahan Signs Nigerian striker Macauley Chrisantus

Iranian football club Zob Ahan signed Nigerian forward Macauley Chrisantus.

The 28-year-old has penned a two-year contract with Zob Ahan for an undisclosed fee.

Zob Ahan FC have signed Chrisantus from Spanish club Conquense.

Chrisantus will be joined by fellow Nigerian compatriot Ebi-abowe Baker, who signed with Zobahan two days ago.

Zob Ahan are preparing for a new top-flight campaign in Iran and the AFC Champions League Round of 16 clash with Al Ittihad of Saudi Arabia.

Zob Ahan will face Al Ittihad in the first leg of the encounter on August 5 in Al Maktoum Stadium in Dubai, the UAE, and play the Saudi team on August 12 in the second leg at the Grand Hamad Stadium in Doha, Qatar.

(Source: the-afc)

Brazilian Marcelino Lopes Arruda signs for Tractor

TASNIM — Iranian football club Tractor signed Brazilian forward Marcelino Júnior Lopes Arruda.

The 30-year-old striker penned a one-year contract with the Iranian club on Sunday with the option of extending for a further year.

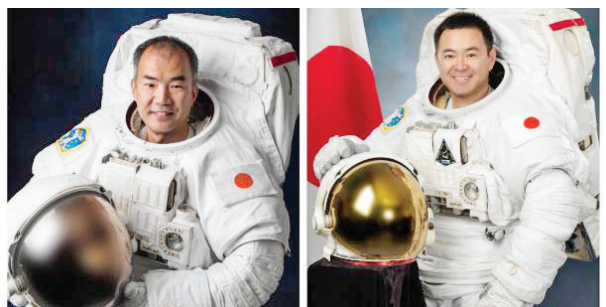
The details of Marcelino's contract have not been revealed.

He started his playing career in São Paulo in 2008 and has played in Brazilian clubs Toledo, Paulista and Guarani.

Marcelino has also played in Japanese team Urawa Reds, Chinese club Hangzhou Greentown and Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors from South Korea.

Tokyo 2020: Astronauts become Torch Relay Space Ambassadors

The Tokyo Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Tokyo 2020) has announced the appointment of Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronauts Soichi Noguchi and Akihiko Hoshide as Tokyo 2020 Torch Relay Space Ambassadors for both the Olympic and Paralympic Games.



In this role, they will support and enliven the torch relay while in space by broadcasting supportive messages for the Olympic and Paralympic torchbearers from the International Space Station (ISS). During their orbits of the earth the astronauts will also undertake various initiatives aimed at bringing an extra-terrestrial dimension to the torch relay and boosting global awareness of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games as the build-up to them continues.

Noguchi commented, "I am delighted to have been appointed Tokyo 2020 Torch Relay Space Ambassador. The flame is a symbol of peace and hope and I am looking forward to sending messages of peace from the ISS and cheering on those participating in the torch relay."

"I believe that the light of the flame will encapsulate the "power of recovery" emanating from Japan's recent natural disasters, as well as the "tolerance" that allows us to accept diversity and the "dynamism" uniting local communities in a global festival, and that it will herald the sunrise of a new generation. To everyone in Japan, I say please join with us astronauts and help create a road of hope illuminated by flame."

Added Hoshide, "I am glad to have been appointed Tokyo 2020 Torch Relay Space Ambassador. When I heard about this opportunity, I felt very honored, and I realized how much closer the Tokyo 2020 Games are getting."

"The Olympic and Paralympic Games are great events involving top athletes from all over the world striving to win, to achieve a world record or achieve a personal best with the support of their team. Astronaut Soichi and I look forward to engaging with the torch relay as it delivers the flame to the opening ceremony and helps to connect everyone's hopes for the future."

(Source: Paralympic.org)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A distressed man needs benediction more than a sound man who is not safe against distress.

Imam Ali (AS)

Reza Mirkarimi’s “Castle of Dreams” premieres in Tehran

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Iranian director Reza Mirkarimi’s drama “Castle of Dreams” premiered during a special ceremony at Tehran’s Charsu Cineplex on Sunday.

The film’s cast and crew and a large number of cineastes, including Asghar Farhadi, Majid Majidi, Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, Kamal Tabrizi, Homayun Asadian, Mohammad Rahmanian and Fereidun Jeirani, attended the ceremony.



A scene from “Castle of Dreams” by Reza Mirkarimi.

Actors Reza Kianian, Masud Rayegan, Saeid Rad, Amin Tarokh and Azita Hajian were also among the guests.

In his brief speech, Mirkarimi extended his thanks to the filmgoers and cinema experts, and asked them to promote his film.

“Castle of Dreams” is about two young children whose mother has just died, and their father, Jalal, after long years of absence, returns to sort things out, but he does not want to take the children with him.

The film won three main honors, including best film and best director awards, at the 22nd Shanghai International Film Festival in June.

The film’s star, Hamed Behdad, also shared the award for best actor with Chinese actor Chang Feng at the event.

“Among Waters” on Afghan refugees on stage in Tehran

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — The Tehran-based Afghan director Samereh Rezaei staged “Among Waters”, a play about Afghan refugees, at Tehran’s City Theater Complex on Monday.

She is also the writer of the play, which recounts her life story. The play gives a real insight into Afghan refugees who are born in Iran but cannot get Iranian citizenship. Therefore they do not have a bright future as they have no identity.

The only way open to them is to be smuggled into European countries via the Mediterranean Sea, in order to live a better life or to die on the way.

Mojtaba Musavi and Rezaei herself are the members of the cast for the play that will remain on stage until August 7.

Iran ponders legal action against “Iran Modern: The Empress of Art” authors

1 → The 200-page book contains a foreword by Farah Pahlavi who unveiled it during a ceremony in London in November 2018.

Raikhel-Bolot is also the managing director and co-founder of Art Advisory, an international firm that works with some of the biggest names in modern art and collecting.

Elsewhere, Mozaffari gave some details of the restoration process of the museum, and said that 60 percent of the renovation has been accomplished.

Studios from Czech, Italy, Ukraine join Iranian director to make “Blue Land”

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Iranian director Ali Fakhr-Musavi is making his new drama “Blue Land” in a co-production deal with film studios from Czech, Italy and Ukraine.

Shooting of the film has recently been completed on location in the northern Iranian town of Savadkuh, and the post-production phase will be pursued in Czech, Italy and Ukraine, a public relations team of the movie announced on Monday.

The film, which has been produced by the private sector in Iran, will have its world premiere in Europe and North America in the near future.

Starring Manuchehr Azar, Sahar Abdollahi and Mohammadreza Rahbari, the film is about Dr. Arash Peyro who has to leave Tehran to live in a remote border village where he finds out pieces in the puzzle of his past life.

“I didn’t want to make anymore films showing an Iranian family with a lot of children, all of whom must take turns wearing a single pair of shoes,” Fakhr-Musavi once said in an interview with the Persian daily Saba.

“I am bored with such images that movies are portraying about my country,” he added.

“Unfortunately, Europeans still deem us as nomads while they once knew us by Abbas Kiarostami’s ‘Taste of Cherry,’” he lamented.

“I have frequently told Iranian officials that if we don’t enter the international current, our



A scene from Iranian director Ali Fakhr-Musavi’s new drama “Blue Land”.

cinema will fade away,” noted Fakhr-Musavi, who has previously made “Autumn Memories” along with film studios in Czech and Ukraine.

The film is an anti-war love story about a young girl who loses her home and family in terrorist attacks but tries to find peace and love among the people of another war-torn area.

It won the Best Narrative Feature Film Award at the October edition of the Barcelona Planet Film Festival, a monthly international event in Spain.

Movies from Iran competing in Rainbow Film Festival



Niki Karimi acts in a scene from Mohammad Hamzei’s drama “Azar”.

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Two films by Iranians are competing in the 20th Rainbow Film Festival underway in East London.

“Azar” directed by Mohammad Hamzei has been selected to be screened in the feature film category and “Video Check” co-directed by Mahyar Seyfuri and Masud Mohammadi is competing in the short film section.

“Azar” is about a woman who is trying hard to manage a cafe-restaurant she has

opened with her husband who is now in jail. She also tries to compromise to get her husband released but things are not going as she has planned.

“Video Check” tells the story of a disabled child who loves volleyball.

The festival opened on July 21 and will run until July 28. It is organized every year by the Rainbow Film Society, a non-profit charity organization in the UK that promotes cultural awareness.

Tehran theater to host “The Man-Trash”



A poster for the play “Deconstructed Theater or the Man-Trash” Iranian director Amir Ramezani will stage in Tehran next week.

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Iranian director Amir Ramezani plans to stage Romanian-French playwright Matei Visniec’s play “Deconstructed Theater or the Man-Trash” at Tehran’s Shahrzad Theater on July 28.

Written in 1993, the texts in the play are a collection of dialogues and monologues without any order as theatrical modules.

The pieces are parts of an original material as are the pieces of a broken mirror that needs to be repaired. The director tries to put the pieces together and every time the result is a new story. It also gives the director absolute freedom.

Mehdi Radinkhah, Siamak Soltani, Fariba Saremi, Sima Najafizadeh and Darya Vahab are the main members of the cast for the play, which will remain on stage until August 21.

‘The Lion King’ rules with \$185 million debut

LOS ANGELES, (Variety.com) — Simba and Mufasa reigned supreme this weekend as Disney’s “The Lion King” dominated box office charts. Director Jon Favreau’s remake of the animated classic collected a massive \$185 million from 4,756 North American theaters during its first three days of release.

In yet another win for Disney, the movie landed the best domestic launch for a PG film and set a new record for the month of July. That figure represents the second-best domestic debut of the year behind Disney and Marvel’s “Avengers: Endgame” (\$357 million). The Buena Vista company now holds five of the top six biggest movies of 2018 so far.

Overseas, “The Lion King” felt the love with \$269 million for a global start of \$433 million. The film launched in China last weekend and has since earned \$98 million, boosting the worldwide haul to \$531 million.

“We have a lot to celebrate,” Cathleen Taff, Disney’s president of global distribution, said on a Sunday morning call. ““The Lion King’ has such a resonance in pop culture that you see all different types of people coming out. People want to be part of this.”

The state-of-the-art technology used to bring the Pride Lands and its inhabitants to life drew a polarizing response from reviewers, but the newest version of Disney’s crown jewel proved to be critic-proof, and the prospect of hearing Donald Glover’s Simba and Beyonce’s Nala harmonize to Disney classics was irresistible. Moviegoers flocked en masse to see Simba’s grand return to the big screen, and to much enthusiasm. “The Lion King” holds an A CinemaScore.

Audiences also shelled out to see the hyper-realistic movie in the best quality possible. Imax theaters accounted for \$25 million of tickets sold, while 36% of global ticket sales came from 3D screens.

“The Lion King” provided a much-needed jolt to the domestic box office. Heading into the weekend, box office receipts were pacing over 9% behind last year. Now, theatrical earnings are down just over 7%, according to Comscore.

“The Lion King” is already one of the most recognizable stories across the world, but the remake



Cast member Donald Glover poses as he arrives for the World Premiere of “The Lion King” in Los Angeles, California, U.S., July 9, 2019. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni/File Photo)

benefited from an equally buzzy voice cast including Glover as Simba, Beyonce as Nala, Chiwetel Ejiofor as Scar, and Billy Eichner and Seth Rogen as Timon and Pumbaa. James Earl Jones reprised his role as Mufasa from the original movie. The updated version also includes a new song from Beyonce.

Disney has re-imagined five of its classics to mostly consistent success. Outside of “The Lion King,” 2017’s “Beauty and the Beast” had the strongest start with \$174 million, followed by 2010’s “Alice in Wonderland” launched with \$116 million. In 2016, Favreau’s “The Jungle Book” earned a strong \$103 million in its inaugural weekend. In May, Guy Richie’s “Aladdin” debuted with \$91.5 million and is approaching the \$1 billion mark globally. However, Tim Burton’s “Dumbo” stumbled with \$45 million earlier this year.

In a banner weekend for Disney, the studio is now home to the highest-grossing movie in history. “Avengers: Endgame” crossed \$2.7892 billion at the

global box office, officially dethroning the 10-year record of James Cameron’s “Avatar.”

Since other Hollywood studios refrained from releasing a movie against “The Lion King,” a number of holdovers filled out domestic box office charts. In a distant second place, Sony’s “Spider-Man: Far From Home” collected \$21 million during its third weekend in theaters, lifting domestic ticket sales to \$319 million. The web-slinging superhero adventure has generated \$569 million at the international box office.

Disney and Pixar’s “Toy Story 4” landed in third with \$14 million. In five weeks, the animated movie has generated \$375 million in North America and \$859 million globally, making it the seventh Pixar film to surpass the \$800 million mark.

At No. 4, Paramount’s alligator thriller “Crawl” generated \$6 million for a domestic tally of \$23 million. Rounding out the top five is Universal’s musical rom-com “Yesterday,” which pocketed \$5.1 million during its fourth weekend of release. The movie has grossed \$57.5 million to date.

Among specialty releases, Sony Pictures Classics opened its documentary “David Crosby: Remember My Name” in four locations, where it earned \$41,050.

Meanwhile, A24 expanded Lulu Wang’s “The Farewell” to 35 locations in its second weekend, generating a promising \$1.17 million. The comedic drama starring Awkwafina debuts nationwide on Aug. 2.

In honor of the 50th anniversary of the moon landing, Neon’s documentary “Apollo 11” returned to theaters, making \$75,000 from 107 venues. With \$9 million in North America, it’s now the highest grossing non-fiction film of 2019. Neon owns the three biggest docs of the year so far with “Amazing Grace” (\$4.5 million) and “The Biggest Little Farm” (\$4 million).

“It’s remarkable to see ‘Apollo 11’ cross \$9 million to become the highest grossing doc of 2019 and on the 50th anniversary of the moon landing,” Elissa Federoff, Neon’s head of theatrical distribution said in a statement. “A true testament to an extraordinary piece of cinema and one of the best reviewed films of the year.”