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Domestic manufacturers to supply RAI with rails, wagons

TEHRAN — Head of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) said domestic manufacturers are set to supply over 1000 locomotives and wagons and also 40,000 tons of rails to RAI by the end of the next Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2021), IRIB reported on Tuesday.

According to Saeed Rasouli, after

Mapna Group unveiled their first Iranian-made freight locomotive on the sidelines of the 7th International Exhibition of Rail Transportation, Related Industries and Equipment in mid-June, RAI ordered the company to manufacture a series of freight and passenger wagons and locomotives, which their production will begin soon. →4

Iran to unveil 'Bavar-373' air defense system on August 22

TEHRAN — Brigadier General Amir Hatami, Iran's defense minister, said on Wednesday that a homegrown long-range air defense system, named "Bavar-373", will be unveiled later this month.

The advanced air defense system will be unveiled on the National Day of the Defense Industry, which falls on August

22 this year, Tasnim quoted Hatami as saying.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet session, Hatami announced that the Defense Ministry will put on display some of Iran's latest air defense achievements on August 22, and promised to announce good news on the occasion. →3

IRCS, UNICEF to support flood-affected children

TEHRAN — Iran's Red Crescent Society (IRCS) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) have agreed to support the children residing in flood-ravaged areas across the country, Shahaboddin Sabounchi, an official with the IRCS has announced.

Under the agreement, child-friendly spaces, playgrounds and different places for children will be built in addition to

workshops and social activities to be held for these vulnerable group, Sabounchi said.

"Local forces will be employed to implement the plan in order to avoid communicating problems due to cultural differences with children in these areas," he added.

The issue of flood and natural disasters in general is not something to be forgotten in one or two months but only form of support will change. →12

PERSPECTIVE
Hanif Ghaffari
Head of the Tehran Times
Politics Desk

Trump likes EU destruction!

Although a new European Parliament is being formed after the European Parliamentary elections, there is still no sign of the European Union's resistance to US policies! European officials still seem to have forgotten that Donald Trump is trying to destroy the EU and the eurozone! They have also forgotten that some nationalist and extremist movements in Europe operate under the direction of the President of the United States of America. Many analysts of international affairs have recently had a special focus on US-EU relations! Some signals and speeches by the President of the United States which are addressed to the European authorities indicate the full opposition of the White House to the European Union. Over the past few months, there has been news about the specific talks between the President of the United States and some of the European Union member states. Trump called on French President "Emmanuel Macron" to leave the European Union and thus build wider bilateral relations with the United States!

One of the issues that has led to the frustration of European citizens from this collection is the European Union's dependence on the United States. While US National Security Advisor John Bolton and Trump have repeatedly expressed their opposition to the existence of the European Union and the Eurozone, Europe has not taken any steps towards independence from the United States. European officials have made mistakes in their calculations and attitudes toward the US government. This big mistake could lead to the loss of the European Union and the Eurozone. Undoubtedly, people like the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron once realized their mistake will be too late.

Of course, the European authorities are either very passive or very forgetful! They are sitting and watching their destruction by the White House. Some European leaders believe that if Trump is defeated in next year's presidential election, the situation in Washington and the European Union will be back on track! However, there is basically no guarantee that Trump will be defeated in the 2020 presidential election. There is also no guarantee that the next US administration (even if the Democrats win the election) will continue the same approach before Trump at the White House.

Iranian minorities live in sympathy with each other

By Seyyed Mostafa Mousavi Sabet

Part 1 Italian producer, director and writer Diego Vida, who has collaborated in numerous Hollywood productions such as "Fast & Furious" and "Mission Impossible", as well as in videogame projects like "Bomberman", and "AdventureQuest", has chosen to live in Iran. His studio is located on Kish Island as he visits other cities to raise his level of knowledge of Iranian culture and lifestyle.

Diego has shared his views about many issues in Iran and the world in an e-mail interview with the Tehran Times.

■ Diego, I have read a lot about your love for Iran and Iranian culture. Could you tell us how and when you became familiar with Iran? And where does this love of Iran come from? When did you decide to live in Iran?

Well honestly, the first time I was really scared

to come to Iran because of the Anglo-Zionist propaganda. I remember the moment of landing at Imam Khomeini International Airport I was just thinking, "Oh my God, what's going to happen to me? As I am a Christian-Catholic and a Westerner, what if the police officers dislike my crucifix necklace? What if they check the music on my iPod, or my cellular photos wearing a swim suit at sea? Maybe they're going to arrest me! Certainly, none of these things happened to me. Instead all of the Iranian personnel were kindly towards me in the airport. So my first impression was really good; moreover, days later, I could clearly see the lies spread by the Anglo-Zionist propaganda, because the real image of Iran was far different than the Western television spin.

Some people who hear my words may say "Okay dude, if you were afraid of Iran why did you go there?" Then, I would say that's probably

correct. Anyway, the real reason I came to Iran in the first place was because my contract with an Asian company was about to finish, so I had two options: either going back home, or else keep working for an Iranian-Turkish company specializing in visual effects. That's why I chose Iran.

I'm a European-Italian-Sicilian citizen, and in this last regard, I have noticed that the culture of Sicily is similar to Iranian culture. We are religious, we care about the family, we dislike divorce and we respect our women and close family. In addition, our food is like Iranian food: rice, kebab, kebab tabei, kuku sibzamani, kufteh, barbari bread, bastani - ice cream, and fish. Also our streets look like Iranian streets, too. Actually, every time I walk in Tehran it feels like walking around in my city, Catania, so I feel at home. Iranian people are nice, polite and places are clean; there aren't any illegal immigrants that bother Iranian citizens. →16

Saudi-led coalition must take threats seriously: Abdul Salam

TEHRAN — Yemeni revolutionary forces stepped up attacks against Saudi targets as the head of the Yemeni national delegation warned against Saudi-led coalition's going ahead with blockade imposed on Sanaa International airport.

Yemen's Al-Massirah Arabic TV channel reported that Yemeni forces fired three "Zilzal-1" missiles on Saudi-led forces gatherings in Asir front.

The missiles accurately hit the targets, inflicting heavy losses upon mercenaries, according to Al-Massirah.

Meanwhile, the Head national delegation Mohamed Abdul Salam warned Saudi-led co-

alition to take threats announced by the chief of Ansarullah revolutionary movement, Sayyed Abdul Malik Al-Houthi seriously.

Sayyed Houthi threatened Saudi-led coalition of painful strikes if it goes ahead with the blockade on Sanaa.

"Aggression forces must take seriously the latest threat made by Sayyed Abdul Malik in case the blockade of Sanaa airport continues," Abdul Salam wrote on his Twitter account.

"Blockade on Sanaa airport can't last forever," Abdul Salam said, pointing to the catastrophic repercussions on the humanitarian level.

"The siege on Sanaa airport has been for four

years before the very eyes of the entire world. It has made the suffering of our people greater."

The silence of the international community encouraged the aggression powers to go ahead with their "heinous" acts against the Yemeni people, the Yemeni official added.

According to Al-Massirah, Yemen has been since March 2015 under brutal aggression by Saudi-led Coalition, in a bid to restore control to fugitive Hadi who is Riyadh's ally.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed and injured in the strikes launched by the coalition, with the vast majority of them are civilians. →13

ARTICLE
Hamid Bayati
Tehran Times journalist

Desperate Bin Salman planning to down Turkey

The Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman who has been hastily involved in various regional developments, in another regional adventurism is now reportedly trying to overthrow the Turkish government.

Although Salman is now the king of Saudi Arabia but it can be said "Mohammed bin Salman" is the main ruler of the country given his performance over the past few years. Trying to reach modernity he has overlooked many of traditional Saudi principles and traditions.

Saudi prince has been involved in a range of acts from attacking Yemen, plotting against Qatar, engaging in the failed 2016 coup in Turkey, normalizing ties with Zionist regime to hostility towards Iran.

All these developments have caused Saudi Arabia to get caught in bad conditions, significant portion of the international news in the last week have been about the changes to bin Salman's policies to end the Yemeni war and exit from the quagmire, as well as trying to get close to Iran.

According to Israeli DEBKA file, the UAE and Saudi Arabia have quietly embarked on talks with Tehran.

In a report by Middle East Eye (MEE) on Tuesday 6 August, there are some documents that show Saudi Arabia has drawn up a plan to take Turkey down.

According to the report, it had received documents from a UAE delegation that underscored Saudi Arabia's direct action to implement a strategic plan aimed at restricting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Turkey's regional influence.

The intelligence report is one of a monthly series written by the Emirates Policy Centre, a think tank with close links to the Emirati government and security services. According to the report, Mohammed bin Salman took the decision to confront Turkey following the assassination of Khashoggi by a team of Saudi agents in their country's Istanbul consulate.

Riyadh had concluded that Erdogan failed in his attempt to politicize and internationalize the case and now is the time to mount the fight back, the report says. →13



Tehran hosts Islamic Human Rights and Human Dignity conference

TEHRAN — On Wednesday, Tehran was host to a conference on "Islamic Human Rights and Human Dignity".

The event, held at the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Conference Center, was addressed by Iranian officials and foreigners participating at the forum.

In a keynote speech, Ebrahim Raisi, the Judiciary chief, said the self-proclaimed human rights advocates are in fact the biggest violators of human rights. →2

Leader condoles demise of Afghanistan's Grand Ayatollah Asif Mohseni

POLITICAL TEHRAN — In a message on Wednesday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei extended his condolences over the demise of Muhammad Asif Mohseni, an Afghan grand ayatollah.

The Leader offered condolences to the bereaved family of the ayatollah and his followers in Afghanistan and Iran.

Sanctioning Zarif is violation of UN Charter: diplomat

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Majid Takht Ravanchi, Iran's permanent representative to the United Nations, wrote a letter to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday protesting the U.S. sanctions on Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, saying that this move signifies a "gross violation" of the UN Charter.

Following is the text of the letter published by ISNA:

I am writing to you to bring to your kind attention to yet another unlawful and undiplomatic move by the government of the United States against my country, i.e. the imposition of illegal sanctions against H.E. Dr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in gross violation of the fundamental norms and principles of international law, including the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Ironically, the officials of the current administration of the United States have claimed that the illegal sanctions have been imposed due to the role and position of our Foreign Minister, who is the responsible authority for the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Infatuated with rogue, unreasonable conducts at the international level, this well signifies that the U.S. regime despises diplomacy, which is one of the greatest achievements of humanity to preserve and uphold peace and security among nations. It reveals the deeply-rooted hypocrisy of the United States' authorities in their different but paradoxical claims.

Although the unlawful move is claimed to target Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs, considering the official and shameless claims of the U.S. administration, this illegal restriction is part of its overall policy in waging economic terrorism against the Iranian people and bringing pressure to bear on their representatives.

The Islamic Republic of Iran deems such illegal action a flagrant infringement of the fundamental principles of diplomatic law, in particular the principle of inviolability and immunity of high-ranking foreign officials, including immunity of incumbent ministers of foreign affairs, as a universally accepted norm and rule of customary international law.

Taking into account the restrictions imposed on the travel and activities of Minister Zarif during his recent visit to New York to participate in the United Nations events, the U.S.' illegal action is also in brazen violation of Article 105(2) of the United Nations Charter regarding the privileges and immunities of representative of Member States in exercising their functions in connection with the United Nations. In this context, any restriction on discharging the duties of Ministers of Foreign Affairs is also in contravention of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, the well-established customary principles enshrined in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, and the Agreement regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations.

Likewise, it is in contradiction with many relevant consensual resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, the latest of which is resolution 73/212 that, by underlining the obligation of the United States for the observance of the privileges and immunities of the missions accredited to the United Nations, "which cannot be subject to any restrictions arising from the bilateral relations of the host country", "urges the host country to remove without delay any restrictions applied" and "to ensure respect for such privileges and immunities".

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran, Cuba celebrate 40 anniversary of diplomatic ties

TEHRAN — The Cuban embassy in Tehran has issued a statement announcing that Iran and Cuba celebrate the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relationship.

The statement has detested economic sanctions on Cuba and Iran by Washington since the two countries "decided to take the path of independence and self-determination."

Following is the text of the statement:

On August 8, 1979, the Republic of Cuba and the Islamic Republic of Iran reestablished diplomatic relations. In this way Cuba became one of the first countries to recognize the new Republic that was born after the triumph of a historic Revolution. This fact marked the beginning of a friendship between both nations that lasts until our days.

Over the course of these 40 years, both countries have supported each other, and friendship relations have undergone an important development, favoring mutually beneficial cooperation in various areas such as biotechnology and health. In addition, they have maintained a close and positive coordination in the multilateral sphere.

The incessant consolidation and development of relationship between Iran and Cuba, continues in accordance with the fundamental interests of our governments and peoples, and also for the sake of safeguarding World peace and the promotion of common development.

Cuba highly values the traditional cooperative relations between our countries and recognizes Iran's right to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, without discrimination.

The current international scenario, in which both countries face a severe regime of sanctions imposed by the United States on its objective suffocate the economies of our countries and cause hardships to our peoples, it must become an opportunity to further develop the economic, commercial and cooperation relations, and going out more strengthened Iran and Cuba come to this new anniversary as a benchmark of resistance and dignity against a power that seeks at all costs to destroy the individual project of two countries that decided to take the path of the independence and self-determination.

Cuba strongly condemns the imposition of sanctions and coercive measures unilateral imposed by the government of the United States against Iran, which fundamentally damages its people, in flagrant violation of their rights.

We are sure that we will continue to reap victories against pretensions of our enemies, while continuing strengthening relationships of friendship and solidarity.

Tehran host Islamic Human Rights and Human Dignity conference

Raisi says the reasons behind Iran's full support for Palestine is that Palestinians gain their rights

I → "Today, the important thing is that those who pretend to human rights, are the biggest violators of it," Raisi said, according to Mizan news agency

The top judge said the reasons behind Iran's full support for Palestine is that Palestinians gain their rights.

Pointing to the fact that Palestinians are not given the right to determine their fate through a referendum, he said, "They do not allow free election in Palestine."

He added, "The solution of the Palestinian issue lies with a free election by including all Palestinians," referring to a proposal by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei according to which all inhabitants of the occupied territories be allowed to vote in a referendum to determine their fate.

Raisi also referred to letters to the youth by Leader of the Islamic Revolution, saying these letters have sparked search for truth.

He said all human beings have a right to decide their lives, their freedom of speech, and freedom of thought.

"If human rights is to be considered as a mere declaration, the result would be that one day Iraq finds American boots on its soil in the name of human rights."

He added, "The things that can hamper the monopoly of the monopolizing system is Islam. That is the reason why they decided to fight the Islamic Republic, which is the focal center of Islam."

■ People form the cornerstone of Iran's power, Zarif says

Another speaker at the conference was



Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who said that Iran's power is intrinsic, originating from people.

"Power of the Islamic Republic of Iran is the discourse that it has presented to the world. A discourse which considers people and not a foreign power the basis of power, legitimacy, security, progress and independence," he told the participants at the conference.

Referring to the 74th anniversary of the U.S. atomic attack on Hiroshima, Zarif said,

"We gain our security, progress and legitimacy from our people," Zarif says.

"A mentality that believes it should annihilate hundreds of thousands of women, men and children to end the war (Second World War), today its secretary of state announces that 'the Iranian people should decide whether they want to eat or continue the current policy.'"

Zarif said this mentality still persists in Washington. "It is the same policy and there has been no change in that view."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the foreign minister said, "We never buy security and

we never sell it, because we gain our security, progress and legitimacy from our people."

The foreign minister added that certain countries think their security comes from dependence on other countries and imagine that security can be purchased.

"Didn't Saudi Arabia provide Saddam's regime with \$75 billion to kill the Iranian people? Why it has not understood that money does not bring security? And after that Saddam used the same weapons against Saudi Arabia," Zarif remarked in an open reference to the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein's army in 1990 which involved Saudi Arabia as well.

The chief diplomat also said that the discourse of unilateralism and bullying is on the wane.

Elsewhere, he described the U.S. sanctions against Iran as "terrorism".

"They say we put so much pressure on the Iranian people so that they change their government. So if it is not terrorism what it can be called?" Zarif asked.

Zarif said it is a kind of terrorism that has targeted the 82 million Iranians, adding they want to deprive the Iranians of their own resources.

In May 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew his country from the 2015 nuclear deal and re-imposed the anti-Iran sanctions that had been lifted under the landmark deal in 2016. In line with "maximum pressure" policy toward Tehran, the United States has introduced a total ban on Iran's oil export, the main source of the country's income.

Do not let your talents stop, Leader tells winners of scientific and sports competitions

"Today's talented youth can make up for regressions left from the Qajar and Pahlavi eras"

POLITICAL TEHRAN — A hundred and fifteen medal winners of national and international scientific competitions as well as members of the National Youth Volleyball team met with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Wednesday morning.

In the meeting, Ayatollah Khamenei encouraged the young audience to push ahead with their talents, saying, "The gifted individuals have an endless path before them, and mankind's capabilities are endless and extraordinary. Do not let your capacity and talents stop at this level. When you win medals, you should continue to move forward."

Ayatollah Khamenei made a reference to underdevelopment imposed on the Iranian nation during the Qajar and Pahlavi eras, urging young intellectuals and gifted individuals to move beyond borders in achieving and developing advancements, the khamenei.ir reported.

"We have a lot to do; once we had a leading position in the world. Then, it began to decline. Yet, during the past couple of centuries, with the foreigners' intrusion into the country, the decline is no longer normal. Instead, it is imposed. We were held back and the world advanced."

"Despite all our efforts after the Islamic Revolution, especially

during the past twenty years, in the areas of technological and scientific dynamism, we are still suffering from much underdevelopment; and the most important duty of the young gifted generation, in addition to fast continuation of scientific success, is to break through the frontiers of science and technology."

Referring to Iran's leading position in nanotechnology, the Leader emphasized, "It is expected that the talented and future generations discover hundreds of new areas like nano and unknown phenomena in science, biology and technology, and not be satisfied with only continuing the scientific progress."

Sanctioning Iran's foreign minister is futile: FT

POLITICAL TEHRAN — In a commentary on Tuesday, the Financial Times criticized the U.S. sanctions against Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's foreign minister, saying the Trump administration has "probably blocked the best path back to mediation" by sanctioning Zarif who is "considered by his peers as one of the canniest diplomats around."

Following is the text of the article written by David Gardner:

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration tightened its cordon sanitaire around Iran last week, imposing sanctions on Mohammad Javad Zarif, the foreign minister who negotiated the nuclear deal Iran signed with six world powers in 2015 — and which the U.S. president unilaterally ripped up last year.

It came after the U.S. listed the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as terrorists in April and the extension of sanctions over the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in June.

These moves are the provocative packaging for a draconian U.S. effort to try to strangle Iran's economy, in particular by cutting off its oil and gas exports and threatening to lock countries and corporations that do business with Tehran out of the dollar system.

In light of this so-called "maximum pressure" policy, sanctioning Zarif looks less an escalation than a gratuitous gesture — possibly because the Iranian diplomat turned down

an offer from Trump of talks in the Oval Office. Zarif brushed off the move against him, thanking the U.S. president "for considering me such a huge threat to your agenda".

Zarif is considered by his peers as one of the canniest diplomats around. He would have to have been to negotiate the 2015 nuclear deal and overcome the visceral mistrust between Iran and the U.S.

That seems to be what so piques Trump and his extremist aides, John Bolton, national security adviser, and Mike Pompeo, secretary of state: that Iran can keep someone as plausible and articulate as Zarif in play alongside such figures as Qassem Soleimani, commander of the IRGC's Quds force, the foreign legion of the armed force.

U.S. tactics, insofar as it is possible to make sense of Trump's swings between tweeted offers of "unconditional talks" with Iran and threats to wipe the country off the map, appear to be to try to mirror this by keeping the threat of war and the prospect of diplomacy simultaneously in play.

Neither option looks to have substance. It is hard to see the U.S. — much less its regional

allies, Israel and Saudi Arabia — committing the sort of forces that would be necessary to bring down the government in Tehran. Ayatollah Khamenei and the IRGC will not talk while under sanctions and the threat of regime change.

Yet, as tit-for-tat skirmishing continues in the Persian Gulf, including sabotage and seizure of foreign oil tankers by the IRGC, and the shadowy war between Israel and Iran-aligned forces in Syria continues, the risk of a miscalculation that sparks a conflict rises alarmingly. To take one example, we still do not know why Trump in mid-June at the last minute cancelled air strikes in reprisal for Iran shooting down an American drone, but we do know the U.S. air force was on its way.

Ostensible U.S. incoherence, and a perception of Iranian imperturbability, is changing regional behavior — starting with American allies such as the United Arab Emirates.

The UAE, the most militarily extrovert Persian Gulf power, even if dwarfed in size by Saudi Arabia, is pulling in its horns. It is scaling back its intervention in Yemen's war with Iran-backed Houthis, maybe towards

The electrifying tensions in the Persian Gulf are lethal to the free-wheeling and free-trading economy the UAE depends on for its prosperity.

Oil trade, banking ties are Iran's basic rights, Rouhani tells Macron

POLITICAL TEHRAN — In a phone conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday afternoon, President Hassan Rouhani of Iran said oil export and banking transactions are the "most important economic rights of Iran" based on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official name for the 2015 nuclear agreement.

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

Rouhani also insisted on the need to explore "expert and fair solutions" to salvage the JCPOA from collapsing.

European partners to the JCPOA (France, Germany and Britain) have unveiled a mechanism for trade with Iran, known as INSTEX, but it falls far short of Tehran's expectations.

Iran has insisted that INSTEX should

include oil trade.

The Trump administration has illegally introduced a total ban on Iran's oil exports in line with its "maximum pressure" policy against Tehran.

Rouhani also said that Iran has reduced its nuclear commitments to persuade other parties to observe their own obligations so that Iran could enjoy the promised benefits.

Iran was open to new proposals for finding a solution on the current situation surrounding the JCPOA, Rouhani remarked.

During the phone call, Macron, for his part, reiterated France's commitments to stand by the JCPOA and to try to find a solution that could both benefit Iran and be accepted by all sides to the deal.

Emphasizing the need for more cooperation between Paris and Tehran on various issues, Macron welcomed Rouhani's proposal for formation of a panel of experts from Iran and France to find solutions for regional and

international disputes.

The Iranian president also touched upon a recent escalation in the Persian Gulf region where the United States is seeking to form a military coalition to allegedly police the Strait of Hormuz, saying the move was a clear provocation at a time when countries like Iran and France were doing their utmost to deescalate the situation.

"We insist on security and freedom of shipping in the region and in the Strait of Hormuz," said Rouhani, adding, "Tens of ships are freely navigating (the waterway) every day and Iranian forces are carrying out their supervisions based on the regulations."

Washington has been trying to persuade other countries, including its allies, to join a Washington-led coalition to supposedly provide "security" for merchant shipping in the Strait of Hormuz — which accommodates around a third of global seaborne oil traffic — and other strategic Middle Eastern shipping lanes.

Washington has lately adopted a quasi-warlike posture against Tehran, and intensified its provocative military moves in the Middle East, among them the June 20 incursion of advanced U.S.-made RQ-4 Global Hawk into Iranian airspace over territorial waters off the coastal province of Hormozgan.

The UK has also joined the U.S. in fueling tensions with Iran by seizing an Iranian-owned supertanker in the Strait of Gibraltar on July 4, under the pretext that the vessel had been suspected of carrying crude to Syria in violation of EU sanctions against the Arab country.

Reports, however, said the seizure took place at the request of John Bolton, an Iran hawk acting as national security advisor to Donald Trump.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif of Iran said Monday that the United States is unable to build the naval coalition because its allies are too "ashamed" to join it.

Iranian officials mark National Journalist Day

Rouhani says journalists should criticize without fear

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – President Hassan Rouhani as well as other senior officials underlined the importance of press freedom in remarks ahead of National Journalist Day.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, Rouhani said informing people is a very important job which is fulfilled by journalists, ISNA reported.

"The government's request from the media [outlets] is that they convey the society's realities to the people and convey the problems and comments of the society, especially the elites, youths and women, to the government," he said.

"If they see shortcomings in our job, they should articulate the shortcomings without stammer [out of fear]," the president said, adding that freedom of expression is a manifestation of a free society.

Rouhani also said criticism should be offered out of pure motives accompanied by solutions.

August 8 was designated National Reporter's Day in Iran after Taliban militants killed Mahmoud Saremi, the correspondent of the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), along with eight Iranian diplomats, in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif in 1998.

Iranians hold ceremonies throughout the country to pay tribute in the honor of



the martyred journalists.

Marking the occasion, the Guardian Council issued a message on Wednesday describing journalists as "the sincere border guards of the turbulent zone of news."

In its message, the Guardian Council commemorated martyr Saremi and other martyred correspondents, saying journalists are committed to observe truthfulness and

honesty in order to do their job.

"Without doubt, the media community's sincere narrators in the revolutionary Iran are among the important pillars and components of a shining element called the Iran of the Islamic Revolution," it added.

Other top officials also marked the National Journalist Day.

Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri said the

Iranian society is in constant need of free, ethical, professional, brave and independent journalists more than ever.

Jahangiri also commemorated the anniversary of Saremi's martyrdom, saying the incident revived the importance of journalism and media.

Mahmoud Vaezi, the president's chief of staff, said the Rouhani administration attaches great importance to the country's media community.

He thanked the media community for their efforts and services, and stressed the necessity of boosting the cooperation between government officials and journalists.

Culture Minister Abbas Salehi hailed the increasing pluralism in Iranian media sources, saying the country has moved beyond the initial turmoil created by the rise of media pluralism.

"We have moved beyond the period of media turmoil and entered the period of media reflection," Salehi added.

Ali Akbar Salehi, director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, described journalists as "Mujahideen in the way of Allah" and "tireless fighters of the campaign of light against darkness."

He said the teachings of Islam highlight the importance of criticizing wrongful acts and inaccuracies, especially criticizing power and power holders.

Zarif says saddened over death of former Indian FM

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has condoled the government and people of India over the death of former External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj.

"My deepest condolences to the government and the people of India on the passing of former External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj," Zarif tweeted on Tuesday night.

"I had many fruitful and useful discussions with her while she held office, and am saddened by her sudden passing. May she forever rest in peace," he added.

According to the Hindustan Times, late on Tuesday came the tragic news of the passing away of Sushma Swaraj, one of the most loved politicians of the first Narendra Modi

government. "A glorious chapter in Indian politics comes to an end," tweeted Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "India grieves the demise of a remarkable leader who devoted her life to public service and bettering lives of the poor."

Swaraj, 67, a senior leader of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), had opted out of contesting elections earlier this year citing health reasons.

A former Supreme Court lawyer, Swaraj was the most senior woman in Modi's cabinet in his first term, which ended in May.

She was also an active social media user, who often responded on Twitter and intervened to help people seeking assistance.



Top lawmaker likens INSTEX to an empty bucket

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – In its current form the European Union's financial mechanism for trade with Iran is like an "empty bucket", which is useless to the Islamic Republic, a senior MP said on Wednesday.

Speaking with the Mehr news agency, Mojtaba Zonnour, chairman of the Majlis Nuclear Committee Mojtaba Zonnour, criticized European parties to the 2015 nuclear accord for not fulfilling their commitments under the deal, saying they lack resolve to implement the trade mechanism, also known as INSTEX. INSTEX was put forward by European partners to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal, to compensate for U.S. sanctions.

Tehran insists that INSTEX falls far short of its expectations and that the mechanism should include oil trade.

According to Zonnour, INSTEX is said to only cover food and medicine, while it was supposed to facilitate Iran's economic ties with all countries in the world.

"In fact, our banking and monetary ties must be facilitated and we must be able to export our oil to all countries. But INSTEX does not cover our banking transactions and oil revenues and so, it is of no use to us," he remarked. Zonnour added that INSTEX would be useful only if it met all of Iran's needs.

He also said Europe and the U.S. are only playing the good cop/bad cop with Iran. "Europe is only buying time for the U.S. and has done nothing to preserve the nuclear deal."

The senior MP warned that Iran would take the third step in reducing its commitments to the JCPOA much firmer than previous steps.

On May 8, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from



the JCPOA, which Iran struck in July 2015 with six countries including the U.S., the UK, France, Russia, China and Germany. Under the JCPOA, Iran had agreed to limit parts of its peaceful nuclear program in exchange for the removal of economic and financial sanctions.

After the withdrawal, the U.S. imposed

what it called the "toughest sanctions ever" against Iran, despite the international community's strong objection.

On May 8, exactly one year after the U.S. withdrawal, Tehran said its "strategic patience" was over and announced a partial withdrawal from some aspects of the nuclear pact.

The announcement, which was declared by the Supreme National Security Council, stated that the country would no longer adhere to some of the limits on its nuclear activities as long as sanctions are in place.

It also threatened to step up uranium enrichment if an agreement is not made within 60 days to protect it from the sanctions' effects.

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

Iran to unveil 'Bavar-373' air defense system on August 22

1 -> Bavar-373 is a domestically built long-range mobile air defense system which was developed after the UN Security Council passed a resolution banning the sale of advanced weapons to the Islamic Republic, which in turn suspended Iran's purchase of the Russian S-300.

However, the restriction was lifted after Iran and six world powers signed a nuclear deal in 2015 that restricted some aspects of Tehran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

A distinguishing feature of Bavar-373 is its vertical launching system with square launchers, mostly used for air defense on warships.

The missile system uses a long-range, phased array fire-control radar, dubbed Me'raj-4.

It employs three different types of missiles to hit targets at various altitudes.

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

Tehran has always assured other nations that its military might poses no threat to regional countries, saying that the Islamic Republic's defense doctrine is entirely based on deterrence.



Enemies' weaknesses shown in U.S. drone, British tanker incidents: IRGC spokesman

TEHRAN (FNA) – Brigadier General Ramazan Sharif, the spokesman for the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), has lauded the IRGC for downing an intruding U.S. spy drone and seizing a violator British oil tanker in the Persian Gulf.

"The world arrogant powers, especially the Americans, had been attempting in the past few years to create discontent in the (Iranian) society by increasing military threats, but the enemies' empty power was displayed to the world by the shooting down of an intruding U.S. drone and seizure of a trespassing British oil tanker," General Sharif told reporters in the Southern city of Bandar Abbas on Wednesday.

On June 20, the IRGC shot down an intruding American spy drone in the country's southern coastal province of Hormozgan. The incident was not met with an immediate military reaction from the U.S.

On July 19, Iranian forces seized a UK-flagged oil tanker in the Persian Gulf after it



tried to flee the scene of a major collision with an Iranian fishing boat. It came weeks after British Royal Marines in Gibraltar stormed the Iran-operated supertanker Grace 1 off the coast of Gibraltar.

Referring to the IRGC's downing of the American drone, Commander of Civil Defense Organization Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali said the move showed that Iran is serious about defending its borders.

"Iran's deterrence power, especially in the military field, foiled their intimidation plots and games as destruction of an expensive spy drone by an indigenized (Iran-made) weapon showed that Iran's military can overcome the enemy, and they understood that Iran does not joke around with anyone on defending itself," General Jalali said on Wednesday.

He also underlined that the security in Iran is the result of the country's high defense-security power, which has thwarted the enemies' plots to conduct terrorist attacks against Iran.

Iran urges India, Pakistan to engage in talks on Kashmir

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi on Wednesday urged India and Pakistan to adopt peaceful ways and engage in talks over a rising conflict on Jammu and Kashmir.

"Iran expects India and Pakistan, as its regional friends and partners, to take effective steps in line with the regional people's interests through adopting peaceful ways and holding dialogue," he said.



Mousavi added, "The Islamic Republic of Iran is closely monitoring the recent decisions of the Indian government on Jammu and Kashmir and also attentively follow up the explanations presented by officials of India and Pakistan about the recent developments."

According to Press TV, the lower house of the Indian parliament approved on Tuesday a controversial bill that strips the Indian-administered portion of Kashmir of its autonomous status.

The bill, which had already passed the upper house of India's parliament, needs to be signed into law by President Ram Nath Kovind.

The measure had been introduced earlier this week by the government of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which announced that it was revoking Article 370, a constitutional provision that grants special status to Kashmir.

Kashmir has been split between India and Pakistan since partition in 1947. Both countries claim all of Kashmir and have fought two wars over the territory.

Experts have warned that the changes to Kashmir's status could further inflame tensions in the already restive region.

Pakistan was quick to denounce India's recent move as illegal, with Prime Minister Imran Khan saying he was weighing taking the matter to the United Nations Security Council.

The Pakistani military also said it would "go to any extent" to support people in Kashmir.

The two nuclear-armed states came close to war in February, when at least 40 paramilitary troops were killed in a bombing in Kashmir. New Delhi, which blamed Pakistan for supporting the militants behind the blast, launched retaliatory aerial raids inside Pakistani territory for the first time in decades.

Two IRGC border guards killed in Maku

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Two Iranian border guards were killed in clashes with terrorists in the Maku border areas in northwest Iran.

According to Tasnim, the two IRGC servicemen were killed in clashes in the city of Maku, in the province of West Azarbaijan, near the border with Turkey and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The funeral of the two servicemen, identified as Nasser Mah-



dizade and Nasser Soorvari, was held in Maku on Wednesday.

The IRGC is tasked with protecting northwestern and southeastern borders, which are occasionally targeted by terrorists.

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

IRGC chief says border security is 'red line'

TEHRAN (MNA) – Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Major General Hossein Salami, has said that the security in borders is a red line and all forces are ready to give a firm response to any aggression. "All Iran's military forces are ready to defend the country and will give a decisive response to any aggression," he said on Wednesday while paying a visit to western borders of the country in Kermanshah province.

"Today's border security is the red line of Iranian armed forces," he highlighted.



Earlier in the day, Commander of the Iranian Army's Air Defense Force Brigadier General Alireza Sabahi Fard warned the enemies of the consequences of making any mistakes in the region.

"Currently, neither our equipment nor our experience can be compared to those during the Sacred Defense years [Iraqi imposed war on Iran]; so enemies should be careful not to make any mistakes," he said on Wednesday while paying a visit to air defense bases in southern Iran.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	255163.3
IFX	3418.87

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,102 rials
GBP	51,075 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$58.58/b
WTI	\$53.33/b
OPEC Basket	\$60.54/b
Gold	\$1,492.70/oz
Silver	\$16.92/oz
Platinum	\$862.20/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

'Iran capable of exporting \$25b of technical, engineering services'

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Iran has the potential and capability to export technical and engineering services worth \$25 billion in a year, a member of the Association of Iranian Exporters of Technical and Engineering Services told Mehr news agency in a press conference on Tuesday. Farzin Mahdyar although mentioned the problems in the way of exporting these services specially to some of the neighboring countries. Iran is conducting technical and engineering projects in CIS countries and Iraq, but due to some barriers mainly related to the international limitations which make issuance of guarantees impossible for the both sides, the Iranian operators of those projects will have no choice rather than leaving those countries, the official lamented.

Building a Turkey-Italy partnership based on mutual interests

The solid cooperation based on one another's interests is the key formula for Turkey and Italy to boost their future cooperation and partnership. At a time when Turkey is suffering from problems in its relations with the West due to sanctions, Italy has confirmed itself to be a valuable partner. Daily Sabah reports in its article Building a Turkey-Italy partnership based on mutual interests that as often stated, the "relations between Ankara and Rome are more than a special friendship" and indeed friends prove themselves in critical times.

According to *vestnikkavkaz.net*, despite some disagreements on certain issues and files, mutual connections and sympathy remain solid and strong. Just in the last few months, there have been important institutional visits, a sign that relations and interests in Turkey are important to Italy. More recently, on July 22, Italian Economy and Finance Minister Giovanni Tria was in Istanbul for a meeting with his Turkish counterpart Berat Albayrak and with major industrial groups in Turkey. The meeting was defined by both sides as very positive and productive. "We agreed to initiate mutual efforts to increase the economic and commercial cooperation between our countries to the desired level," Albayrak tweeted, while Tria commented that "strengthening bilateral relations and mutual trust will only strengthen economic growth in both of our countries."

With huge investments

Indeed, along with huge investments and 20 billion euros (\$22.3 billion) per year, Turkey is a strategic partner for Italy to the extent that bilateral exchange reached its peak in 2018 with 506 billion euros. This put Italy at second place – after the Netherlands – on the podium of Turkey's European partners. Nowadays, the common goal is to strengthen bilateral economic and financial cooperation by exploiting further opportunities that both economies offer. Overall, Turkish and Italian economies share some similarities and the business complementarities are added values. Unlike other cases, such as Russia and China, which are Turkey's biggest global partners with imports winning out over exports, the bilateral trade with Italy is better balanced. Of course, this is a positive sign of how the economies are perfectly integrated and how cooperation works not only for what concerns the respective territories, but also with reference to third countries. In 2017 the Italian agency specialized in supporting Italian companies in the global market (SACE) and the Turkish export credit bank (Eximbank) signed cooperation agreements for supporting further bilateral activities in a wider spectrum of third countries, as cooperation is already going on in some African countries, Kuwait, Turkmenistan, etc.

The close trust relationship is also proven by the recent concession to Yilport in managing the Italian harbor of Taranto. As the 13th world operator and the first operator in 2018, Yilport, along a 49-year concession issued by the Ionian Sea Port Authority, takes up a dock whose length is 1,900 meters, which in recent years has been subjected to works of expansion costing about 70 million euros of public funds.

After one year of hard negotiations, the task was reached and "Taranto is now ready to be a successful story," as Robert Yüksel Yildrm, president of Yilport, stated.

Enhancing bilateral ties

Hence, the glue of this activism enhancing bilateral ties is a "people to people" relation where dialogue and cooperation are the privileged tools. This closeness is furthermore shown by the huge amount of visas Italy issues for Turkey, which is the third beneficiary after China and Russia.

However, the recent diplomatic traffic shows that Italy and Turkey are as well connected on international files. Last June, the general secretary of the Italian Foreign Ministry visited Ankara to discuss regional issues with Deputy Foreign Minister Sedat Onal and Ibrahim Kalin, the senior adviser to the Turkish Presidency. Earlier, alongside the International Defense Industry Fair (IDEF) 2019, which was held in Istanbul, Defense Minister Hulusi Akar and his counterpart Elisabetta Trenta had a cordial meeting, where they shared the mutual wish to continue to strengthen bilateral cooperation by defending their mutual interest in the Mediterranean.

Domestic manufacturers to supply RAI with rails, wagons

1 → "Mapna will soon begin the manufacturing process and the wagons will gradually enter the country's rail fleet within the next two years," Rasouli said. "In the first four months of the current Iranian year (March 21-July 22), total domestic products entered into the country's rail freight fleet increased by 64 percent compared to the same period a year ago, and this trend will continue to increase," he added.

He also mentioned the manufacturing of rail segments in the country (in a project called National Rail) saying the manufacturing of national rail is also underway and the country is self-sufficient in this regard.

In December 2018, RAI's former head Saed Mohammadzadeh had said that development of Iranian railways requires more than 32,000 wagons and locomotives in the next four years when the railway infra-



structures are developed in the country. Speaking with the media, Mohammadzadeh said the national network fleet needs over 30,000 cargo wagons, 2,000 passenger wagons and 650 locomotives in the next four years.

The official emphasized the role of private sector in the country's railway industry, saying that the private sector can contribute to supplying the needed wagons and locomotives through supportive packages offered by the government.

Last year, during the 6th International Exhibition of Rail Transportation, Related Industries and Equipment, dubbed RAIL-EXPO 2018, Iran unveiled the first ever Iranian-made locomotive engine.

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

Launching integrated forex market postponed

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has postponed launching the integrated forex market which was due to start operation by mid-August, Tasnim news agency reported.

According to Tasnim, the reason for this decision is reported to be the incomplete registration of some member currency exchange shops as well as the failure of designated banks to participate in market operations.

CBI and the executives of the Integrated Foreign Exchange Market Corporation are aiming for a significant presence of exchange shops and banks to create a greater impact.

Currently over 120 exchange shops have joined the integrated market which means for the time being 40 percent of the country's authorized exchange shops are now members of the integrated market. In early January, Money and Credit Council (MCC), the

highest banking policy-making body of CBI, approved establishment of an integrated forex market as the CBI aims to explore the real volume of demand and supply in the foreign currency market through a new mechanism.

While, this mechanism is planned to organize the transactions in the forex market between the exchange shops, some also say that it may omit other exchange rates, including NIMA rate, gradually.

NIMA (Iran's Forex Management Integrated System) has been launched in early July to allow the exporters of non-oil commodities to sell their foreign currency earnings to importers of consumer products.

In late May, some news websites published that NIMA will be omitted once the integrated forex market is launched, although CBI governor dismissed those news, saying that NIMA is a pivot of the foreign currency exchange and trade related activities in



the country and it will not be omitted from the forex market at all.

While CBI does not support the idea of omitting NIMA, some are supportive to such approach and say that integrated forex market can replace NIMA.

Policymaking key to mitigating global economic threats, say experts

Faced with an uncertain global environment, country leaders and policymakers must strengthen democratic institutions, while addressing citizens' economic insecurities and social grievances, said an economics expert.

As stated by *hellenicshippingnews.com*, nations must also pursue policies to strengthen domestic and regional sources of growth and improve structural weaknesses, said Professor Jong-Wha Lee from Korea University.

This is important as "global growth will remain sluggish and downside risks are high," he said.

Prof Lee was speaking at the opening plenary – "Is the world under threat?" – at the Singapore Economic Review Conference (SERC), which began on Monday.

The three-day biennial conference will be attended by about 330 leading economists, business people, as well as past and present policymakers from nearly 40 countries, who will exchange ideas on how to accelerate the global economy.

The speakers at the opening session discussed the threats to the global economic system, including the impact of populist politics, aging populations, and the potential slowdown of China's economic growth.

Professor Danny Quah of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore spoke about the risks of countries' increasing unwillingness to engage in multilateral cooperation.

Quoting Greek historian Thucydides, he said that in both international and regional politics, the "strong do what they will, the weak suffer what they must".

Strong nations will decide the outcomes of the new world order, while small nations like Singapore will suffer the consequences, Prof Quah noted. But multilateral actions by all nations can help determine the form of world order forward, he said.

Long-term global economic threats

Kobe University's Charles Horioka, who specializes in macroeconomics, household economics, as well as Japanese and Asian economies, spoke about population aging as one of the long-term global economic threats.

"There is substantial diversity among countries and regions with respect to the speed and timing of population ageing, but all countries and regions will experience population ageing sooner or later," Professor Horioka said. Labor and capital shortages, as well as strain on government finances due to expenditure on

social protection schemes, are likely implications of an ageing population, he said, but added that adopting appropriate policy measures can alleviate these impacts.

Education Minister Ong Ye Kung, who was the guest-of-honor, said in his speech that the changing global economy – with trade disputes, low interest rates and technological contests – means it is an exciting time for economists, but a time of headaches for governments.

"Democratic governance will be put to the test, made more difficult by falsehoods that will cloud pertinent information and data, thus hampering collective decision making," he said. It is an opportune time for closer partnerships between academics and the government to tackle the biggest economic issues of the day, Mr. Ong added.

The SERC is the flagship event of the quarterly Singapore Economic Review, whose chief editor is Professor Euston Quah, head of economics at Nanyang Technological University and president of the Economic Society of Singapore.

Over 300 papers covering economic science, climate change, environmental and energy issues will be presented during the conference.

South Africa is running out of time to fix its finances

By Seán Mfundza Muller

South Africa's public finances are in a perilous state. There are four main reasons for this. First, economic growth is low or non-existent. Second, tax revenue collection is repeatedly below forecasts. Third, debt levels have risen rapidly and are now at their highest levels in the post-apartheid era. Fourth, the poor performance of state-owned enterprises is necessitating large-scale government support.

Recent developments since the tabling of the 2019/20 Budget in February 2019 have only made the situation worse. A downgrade of government debt to 'junk' by a third ratings agency will lead to an outflow of investment and exacerbate matters further. South Africa is, in fact, fortunate that this has not already happened. The state of South Africa's public finances is the outcome of different dynamics in three, overlapping periods. The first was the period after the 2008 global financial crisis. The second was the period under the continued presidency of Jacob Zuma. And the third has been the period since Zuma was succeeded by Cyril Ramaphosa. Careful consideration of these periods contradict widely-circulated claims in the political space.

Some have claimed that South Africa's woes began with Zuma but this is not true. The first shock to the economy under public finances was the global financial crisis. Others have claimed that Zuma is not responsible for poor economic and public finance performance, but this is also not true. South African economic performance should have been able to recover to a much greater degree than it did under the era of his leadership. Government revenue collection seems to have been negatively affected by institutional destabilization of the South African Revenue Service.

Deterioration of economic indicators

Finally, the deterioration of economic indicators (growth and employment), along with further underperformance of revenue collection and public finances more broadly, is being laid at the door of Ramaphosa's presidency. That is simply implausible.

The deterioration can often be linked to



factors that preceded Ramaphosa's replacement of Zuma in early 2018. Admittedly, Ramaphosa has not helped his case by making promises about job creation, for instance, that may be outside the ability of the state to deliver.

Understanding why such claims are likely to be wrong is important not just because of attributing blame, but in order to understand what the fundamental drivers are behind the country's current state and future trajectory.

Unfortunately, beyond blame, much of the policy discussion is characterized by recycled disagreements. These date to the era in which the African National Congress (ANC) government adopted the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy – which was opposed and resented by left-wing parts of the ANC alliance. That strategy was largely concerned with reducing the debt levels the new democratic government inherited from its apartheid predecessors.

For example, left-wing commentators have argued for expansionary fiscal policy. This basically means increasing government spending to a significant degree. They have also claimed that National Treasury implemented 'austerity' after 2008. This is incoherent. First, South Africa actually adopted a 'countercyclical' approach after 2008: government spending increased faster than revenue. That is how the country's debt initially escalated.

Second, increasing government expenditure in the manner proposed is, at best, a very

high risk strategy. With the country's public finances already under strain, an increase in expenditure that does not deliver significant increases in economic growth and tax collection will lead to a dramatic deterioration in public finances. That could cause harm for generations to come. These risks, which seem more likely than the benefits, are never mentioned by populists who simply regurgitate arguments from earlier eras. The reality is that even though Treasury attempted to maintain government spending to support the economy during the aftermath of the global financial crisis, and then attempted to stabilize debt levels using a policy of 'fiscal consolidation', it has been unable to do either. The economy has not recovered, arguably due in significant part to the ravages of state capture and other state failures in the Zuma era. Debt targets have been regularly missed. At one point national government debt was expected to stabilize below 45% of GDP, now it has gone above 60% and may reach 70% of GDP within a few years.

The size of the economy

There is no consensus among economists or other public finance experts on a specific threshold that is tolerable. What is clear though is that the higher the amount of debt relative to the size of the economy, the greater the risk. This is especially true where economic growth is lackluster, as it has been in South Africa for some years. Recent developments have only made the situation more dire. In

the 2019 Budget, Treasury indicated that it would have to breach its expenditure ceiling for the first time in order to give support to national power utility Eskom amounting to R23 billion per year for an intended 10 years. That was despite planned cuts to public service employment and additional tax measures.

Since then, Eskom was given a lower-than-expected tariff increase by the National Energy Regulator (NERSA). National government has also tabled an additional proposal to give Eskom a further R59 billion over two years.

It seems unlikely that government will be able to cut such vast sums in other parts of the state, not least at such short notice, with the result that debt targets will be exceeded again.

And despite the money being poured into Eskom, there is no clear indication of the overall plan to stabilize the utility's finances.

Meanwhile various other risks, like South African Airways, the Road Accident Fund and medical negligence lawsuits, continue to linger in the background.

Economic growth and job creation are virtually non-existent, and both are below population growth. This means a higher unemployment rate and less national wealth per person.

In the face of the crisis with Eskom, public finances and economic growth, the only way to proceed is to secure a societal agreement on the way forward that recognizes the need for sacrifices in the face of the crisis. Ramaphosa is uniquely equipped to secure a 'social compact' of this kind.

But he is moving too slowly. This may be due in part to incessant factional battles in the ANC and an unprecedented assault on Ramaphosa and close allies like Public Enterprises Minister Pravin Gordhan that is being conducted through the Office of the Public Protector.

The president is also heavily reliant on advisers, his Cabinet and senior government officials – few of whom have shown that they can deliver on such a weighty responsibility. But as others have noted: if the country fails to agree in time, decisions will be forced upon it. And under such dire circumstances there will be less opportunity to protect vulnerable citizens with the least to sacrifice.

(Source: *thefricareport.com*)

Petrochemical industry not affected by sanctions: PGPIC

E N E R G Y TEHRAN — Managing Director of Iran's Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGPIC) said U.S. sanctions haven't had a significant impact on the country's petrochemical sector.

"The petrochemical industry is in good shape and the sanctions have not had a significant impact on the industry," IRIB quoted Jafar Rabiei as saying on Tuesday. The official made the remarks in a press conference on the occasion of Journalists Day in Tehran.

"We cannot reveal what we are doing to counter sanctions, but we can say with certainty that the sanctions haven't stopped the wheel of production and exports of petrochemicals in the country, and the United States have failed to achieve that goal," he said.

The official also noted that the PGPIC holding currently has \$10-billion worth of petrochemical projects underway, adding this is an indication that the PGPIC performance has not also been impacted in the least.

The official further stated that most of the foreign currency which is injected into the country's domestic Forex Management Integrated System (locally known as NIMA) is being supplied by the country's petrochemical sector. As the United States sanctioned PGPIC on June



7, many analysts and officials believe them to have no significant impact on the country's economy in a broad sense. Washington imposed new sanctions on Iran's largest petrochemical

holding group, aiming to dry up yet another source of Iran's revenues in order to boost pressure on the country's economy.

The U.S. Treasury said in a statement that

it had sanctioned the PGPIC holding group's network of 39 subsidiary petrochemical companies and foreign-based sales agents.

However, experts and analysts believe this new sanctions to be more symbolic than practical.

Earlier in April, General Secretary of Iran's Association of Petrochemical Industry Corporation (APIC) had said U.S. sanctions are not going to have any significant impact on Iran's petrochemical exports.

"The mechanisms of petrochemical exports differ significantly from oil exports and therefore U.S. sanctions will have no impact on the production and export of petrochemicals," Ahmad Mahdavi Abhari said.

Petrochemical industry is one of the most important pillars of Iran's economy and one of the main suppliers of foreign currency especially euro for the country.

According to Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, the country is currently producing 63 million tons of petrochemical products annually and with the new projects going on stream the number is expected to jump to 66 million tons further cementing the Islamic country's stance as a major petrochemical supplier to the world markets.

'NIOC still negotiating South Pars phase 11 project with CNPC'

E N E R G Y TEHRAN — Managing Director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) Mohammad Meshkinfam said National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) is still in talks with China's CNPC regarding the phase 11 project of developing South Pars gas field, ILNA reported.

The official also noted that the negotiations for the development project of Farzad B gas field are also underway with the Indian side and the two sides are trying to reach common grounds on the matter.

Meshkinfam further mentioned the development of Kish gas field as one of POGC's top priorities, saying that the first phase of the Kish gas field's development project is being seriously followed up and good progress is achieved.

He pointed to engineering studies aimed at determining the pipeline route and destination of the gas produced in this field, saying "Once the results are determined, the gas sources will be transferred to the South Pars or Fajr Jam gas refineries."

The official further noted that the first phase of the field's development project includes drilling and construction of pipelines, adding that one billion cubic feet of gas (equal to one of the South Pars phases) will be produced in this phase on a daily basis.

In April, Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said NIOC is negotiating with a Chinese company for completing the South Pars phase 11 project.

"Representatives of the Chinese company are already in Tehran," Zanganeh said.

Total signed a contract in 2017 to develop phase 11 of South Pars field with an initial investment of \$1 billion, marking the first major Western energy investment in the country after sanctions were lifted in 2016.

The company was pressured to leave Iran after the United States threatened to impose sanctions on companies that do business in the country.

After the French company left Iran, the project was handed



to China's CNPC which was the second biggest member of the consortium that was supposed to execute the projects.

The offshore South Pars field holds the world's largest natural gas reserves ever found in one place.

Oil slips as U.S.-China trade tensions fuel demand concerns

Oil prices dipped on Wednesday as potential damage to the global economy and fuel demand from the intensifying Sino-U.S. trade dispute continued to cast a shadow over the market.

As stated by reuters.com, International benchmark Brent crude futures were at \$58.75 a barrel by 0642 GMT, down 19 cents, or 0.32%, from their previous settlement and trading near seven-month lows.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were down 12 cents, or 0.22%, from their last close at \$53.51 per barrel.

Brent prices have plunged more than 9% in the past week after U.S. President Donald Trump said he would slap a 10% tariff on a further \$300 billion in Chinese imports

starting on Sept. 1, sending global equity markets into a tailspin.

"Crude oil prices remained under pressure as investors grappled with the impact of the trade conflict," ANZ bank said in a note.

But Trump on Tuesday dismissed fears the trade row with China could be drawn out.

The "most significant outcome of the ramp-up in tariff measures will be through increased economic and trade uncertainties, negatively impacting physical oil and gas demand and market sentiment," Fitch Solutions said in a note.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih and U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry on Tuesday said both sides expressed concern over threats targeting freedom of



maritime traffic in the (Persian) Gulf as they met in Washington.

"There are concerns that an event could occur at any moment ... the risk might be shifting to the upside in the near-term for oil contracts," said Michael McCarthy, chief market strategist at CMC Markets.

Tensions in the Middle East have heightened, raising concerns over passing through the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping artery of global oil trade. Elsewhere, data indicating a larger-than-expected drop in U.S. crude stocks offered some support to oil prices.

U.S. crude inventories fell by 3.4 million barrels in the week ended Aug. 2 to 439.6 million barrels, compared with analyst expectations for a decrease of 2.8 million barrels.

LNG: The power to rise to a brighter future

By Dennis A. Uy

Never has energy security been a more pressing issue than now, given our increasing energy demand to meet the upward trajectory of our developing economy.

Sustainability, environmental impact, operational economics, and a clearer appreciation of the role of each energy source are what we need to take into consideration in the planning of our energy mix.

Liquefied natural gas or LNG is one such energy source that promises to play a large and important role in evolving the energy landscape of the Philippines for a number of key reasons.

Based on Department of Energy statistics, more than 50% of power generated in the country is made through coal and oil-based resources.

Natural gas, however, is far from being maximized, accounting for only about 15% of our energy mix.

This dependence on conventional resources posts a risk in sustaining our increasing energy demands amid volatile markets. Meanwhile, an opportunity to diversify our energy mix remains under-utilized.

There are several probable circumstances in the industry that could pull the carpet from under our feet. For instance, current geopolitical developments have created an unpredictable oil market, which urgently illustrates the dangers of being too dependent on conventional fuels.

These are traditionally sourced from the Middle East, and in instances when the supply chain is cut off or made difficult due to geopolitical or other reasons, we are left with inadequate supply and at the mercy of skyrocketing prices.

■ Natural gas abundant in many countries
Natural gas, meanwhile, is abundant in many countries and regions across the globe — in the United States, Russia, Africa, Oceania, and Southeast Asia.

Having multiple sources allows us the security of enjoying a steady supply, even if one or some should become unavailable. Such sustainability has drawn many nations to the appeal of LNG (liquefied natural gas).

Locally, our very own pioneering Malampaya gas field in Palawan has been powering our country for more than two decades now, and has brought in billions in revenue for our government.

However, supply from the Malampaya gas field is pro-



jected to start declining by 2022. Plans have been made to extend the current consortium's contract until around 2026 to 2029, but as of now, it is slated to end by 2024.

Hence, it is time to set our sights on the future and prepare for generations of Filipinos to continue enjoying the benefits of using LNG as a fuel source.

Climate change is another important development that is inspiring the global pivot toward cleaner sources of energy. In the Philippines, coal currently comprises over half of the country's energy mix.

As we incorporate renewable sources such as solar and wind in the equation, LNG power plants that are relatively more efficient, flexible, and quick-starting provide much-needed stability and responsiveness in our power grid.

LNG is versatile enough to serve many needs. Its cleaner-burning nature is useful not only for power plants but even for vehicles.

Many countries abroad are now reaping the benefits of natural gas-fed cars, which contribute up to 34% less emissions compared to diesel.

When brought back to its gaseous state, natural gas can

be used as fuel for household cooking and even air conditioning. In temperate countries, natural gas is also widely used for home heating.

Finally, efficiency in terms of costs and operations is another attractive proposition that LNG presents. It is a game-changer in terms of efficiency of transport. It is odorless and colorless, as well as non-toxic and non-corrosive.

The liquefaction process reduces natural gas to as much as 1/600th of its original volume, and almost half the density of water. Just imagine the possibilities of being able to provide reliable and continuous power supply to the whole archipelago.

Natural gas is also the prevalent fuel used in the manufacturing sector responsible for producing the items we depend on in our daily lives — from metal and paper to glass and clothing.

■ LNG a viable energy source
It is even used as raw material in everything from paints and dyes to plastics. Across continents, LNG has proven to be a viable energy source in varying industries.

The message is clear that we need to recalibrate the energy mix of our country. The goal is for a more balanced energy mix; one that could address our demands, while taking into account the capacity of the global supply chain.

We are far from achieving such balance, but we could definitely make substantial changes now to move us closer to a more sustainable energy future.

It is heartening that more and more Filipinos are sharing in this vision of a more secure energy future for the Philippines by expanding and fortifying LNG operations in the country.

A number of consortia and enterprises have taken concrete steps in supporting the call of the Department of Energy to ensure the place of natural gas in diversifying the country's energy mix.

At Phoenix Petroleum are one of those who are especially optimistic and excited to bring the full benefits of LNG to our countrymen. We see nothing but immense potential in making LNG an inextricable part of the economic activity in the country.

From imagining a nation with a secure, cleaner, and economically sound energy source, we are taking steps to turn this vision into reality. Just like a phoenix, a brighter energy future is rising with LNG.

(Source: bworldonline.com)

U.S. sanctions on Iran's oil industry hurting India: envoy

E N E R G Y TEHRAN — Indian Ambassador to the U.S. Harsh Vardhan Shringla said the U.S. decision on ending waivers for the purchase of Iranian oil is hurting India's economy, Sputnik reported.

"It [the sanctions] was an important priority for the U.S. and we went along with it. But we also expect the United States to show similar sensibility when it comes to our priorities," Shringla told Sputnik on the sidelines of an event hosted by the Heritage Foundation in Washington on Tuesday.

"It has been a challenge to find alternative sources of oil at the same price and quality, and it has affected the bottom line in India," he said.

India, which is the second biggest purchaser of Iranian oil after China has been looking for ways to resume imports of Iranian oil since the country was forced to stop oil imports from Iran after the six-month sanction waiver from the U.S. ended on May 2.

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

They told India and other countries to cut oil imports from the Persian Gulf nation to "zero" by November 4 or face sanctions. However, Washington granted a six-month waiver to India and seven other countries to buy oil from Iran. The waivers expired in May.

The world's third biggest oil consumer, meets more than 80 percent of its oil needs through imports.

The threat that will send oil down to \$10

By Nick Cunningham

Oil prices will need to trade at around \$9 to \$10 per barrel in the long run if gasoline is going to be able to compete with electric vehicles and renewable energy.

That startling conclusion comes from BNP Paribas, which warned in a new report that crude oil is facing an existential and likely mortal threat from renewable energy and EVs.

"We conclude that the economics of oil for gasoline and diesel vehicles versus wind- and solar-powered EVs are now in relentless and irreversible decline, with far-reaching implications for both policymakers and the oil majors," Mark Lewis, the global head of sustainability research at BNP Paribas Asset Management.

There is a crucial problem with crude oil that gets to the core of the challenge — one that all but dooms oil to decline. Mark Lewis argues that oil has an inferior energy return on capital invested (EROI), which compares the given amount of energy that comes from the same amount of capital spent. In other words, how much useful energy is produced when spending a dollar on different forms of energy?

BNP Paribas estimates that for the same amount of money invested, new wind and solar projects combined with EVs will produce "6x-7x more useful energy at the wheels than will oil at \$60/bbl for gasoline powered (light-duty vehicles), and 3x-4x more than oil at \$60/bbl for LDVs running on diesel."

■ Gasoline to remain competitive

Given that calculation, BNP Paribas says the long-term break-even price for oil needs to be \$9-\$10 per barrel, if gasoline is going to remain competitive with renewables plus EVs. For diesel, the



long-run break-even price is \$17-\$19.

Oil does have a "massive flow-rate advantage," the bank said, "but this is time limited." Oil can provide a huge burst of energy because production is so large and the global supply chain is so big, which makes consumption easy and convenient.

But over a 25-year operating life, wind and solar are much cheaper. "(W)e think the economics of renewables are impossible for oil to compete with when looked at over the cycle," Lewis wrote in the BNP Paribas report. Even when adding in the cost of building the infrastructure needed to power a network of EVs, the "economics of renewables still crush those of oil," Lewis concluded.

Or, put more simply, the world would need to spend \$25 trillion on gasoline needs for the next 25 years (extrapolating from 2018 levels), "whereas we estimate the cost of new renewables projects complete with the enhanced network infrastructure required to match the 2018 level of mobility provided by gasoline every year for the next 25 years at only \$4.6-\$5.2trn," Lewis wrote.

■ The renewable energy

To be clear, BNP Paribas is arguing that renewable energy combined with EVs easily beats crude oil before even factoring in the cost of climate change from fossil fuels.

Renewables simply win on price. Full stop. But after adding in the public health toll paid by air pollution, climate change, and other societal costs, the equation becomes that much more lopsided.

The "oil industry has never before in its history faced the kind of threat that renewable electricity in tandem with EVs poses to its business model," Lewis wrote.

He tallied up the multiple ways that oil falls short. First, renewables have a short-run marginal cost of zero, which refers to the fact that once solar and wind are built, the energy they produce on an ongoing basis is free. Second, renewables have an environmental benefit. Third, electricity is easier to transport than liquid fuels. And fourth, renewables can easily replace roughly 40 percent of global oil demand if and when it reaches scale.

The challenge for renewables is the massive incumbency advantage that fossil fuels currently enjoy. The global supply chain for oil and gas will be hard to overcome in the short run. However, because oil projects suffer from decline, new dollars invested going forward have to compete with new wind and solar. These new investments will be in the spotlight, and scrutiny is going to grow ever-more intense, "especially those with a break-even of >\$20/bbl," Mark Lewis wrote in the BNP Paribas report.

(Source: finance.yahoo.com)

Volunteer medical team: Zakzaky needs urgent transfer outside Nigeria

TEHRAN (FNA) – Dr. Pourrahim Najafabadi, MD, says Sheikh Zakzaky needs to be cured by an experienced medical team of physicians in a specialized multi-specialty hospital outside Nigeria, since there is no such medical center in the African country.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with FNA, he shed light on the medical conditions of Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky, top Nigerian Muslim cleric, who has been illegally kept and deprived of proper medical treatment by the Nigerian government. Hamed Pourrahim Najafabadi, MD, is the founder and spokesperson of a group of expert physicians who have volunteered to treat Sheikh Zakzaky.

Below is the full text of the interview:

Q: In what aspects does Sheikh Zakzaky need immediate treatment?
A: Based on the medical history, examinations and tests, plus



the clinical status of and the description of his health, he has been suffering from a number of chronic and acute diseases: poisoning by lead and cadmium is the main issue, making his health condition seriously deteriorating. The heart is in a dangerous condition with the high blood pressure. It has resulted in ischemic heart disease and enlargement of the left ventricle. Taking out the bullets from his body organs, including the eyes, brain, chest, and limbs has led to excessive level of lead in his blood. There are ophthalmology problems as an eye is completely blind and the other eye is exposed to blindness. The cervical spine is damaged, which has caused nerve and brain symptoms such as paralysis of the upper limbs (hands). The immune system has been suppressed; a simple infection may cause sepsis and irreversible consequences. There is also a disorder of liver and thyroid reported.

Q: Is it possible to cure Sheikh Zakzaky in Nigeria?

A: Based on investigations and reports, there are no specialized multi-specialty hospitals in Nigeria to provide the needed medical treatment to Sheikh. There needs to hire an extremely experienced medical team with expertise in all domains to provide all the needed medical treatments without any delay. Such services, medications and experienced medical teams are not available in Nigeria. Considering all the factors therefore Sheikh needs to be transferred to another country where high level medical treatment is available. We have formed a team of outstanding professors who are extremely experienced in all the fields, ready to give him all the necessary medical treatment in any country. As a matter of urgency, we therefore strongly recommend Sheikh be allowed access to such health facilities outside Nigeria, on medical and humanitarian grounds.

Q: How much would his clinical conditions aggravate if the Sheikh is not provided with urgent hospital treatment?

A: With the current physical condition of the Sheikh, especially the virulent lead poisoning, Sheikh's life is seriously at risk by delayed treatment. Meanwhile, there is a need for special medical care even in case of complete medical treatment. There is serious risk to Sheikh's life if he is kept under detention.

Gilad Atzmon: Ethiopian Jews' protests reveal real face of inheritably racist Israel

TEHRAN (FNA) – Gilad Atzmon, political activist, says racial discrimination in Israel is the highest in the world, and the black community is of the lowest classes, causing the black Ethiopians migrants to protest against the ruling white supremacist elite.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with FNA, Gilad Atzmon said, "There is a clear ironic skin-color related system. While Jews all over the world complain against white supremacy, Israeli is most white supremacist in the world. Israel is institutionally racist. It is ruled by Ashkenazy white elite."

Gilad Atzmon is a British musician, author and political activist. He was born in a Jewish family in Tel Aviv, Ashkenazi on his father's side and grew up in Jerusalem al-Quds. His articles and commentaries are published by various alternative news sources such as Counter Punch, Uruknet and the Palestine Telegraph.

Below is the full text of the interview:

Q: Ethiopians protest in Israel, demanding for rights equal to other residents of the occupied territories. How is the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian lands?

A: Israel is uniquely racist against not only Palestinian people, but also black community. There is a clear ironic skin-color related system. While Jews all over the world complain against white supremacy, Israeli is most white supremacist in the world. Israel is institutionally racist. It is ruled by Ashkenazy white elite. Within the Jewish continuum, the Ethiopians are really at the bottom. Their blood donation is thrown out and their population is restricted by the official birth control measures. Their protests have received a lot of attention in Israel, and attracted many more around the globe. This reveals the real face of Israel. The Israeli society is inheritably and culturally racist.

Q: What is the situation of the minority, especially the Ethiopians, in Israel?

A: A lot of people mistakenly argue that in Israel the Palestinians, Arabs or black migrants are second class. It is very misleading. Palestinians are more likely to be twentieth class citizens. Before them, you have Jewish Ethiopians, Moroccan Jews, Iraqi Jews or Algerian Jews. The Israeli society is a multi-layer racist system, and Ethiopians are of the last layers only because of the color of their skin. The more black you are, the less the changes for you to get to the top.

Q: Israeli security forces clashed with protesters, killing at least one black Ethiopian protester recently. Do you believe that the protester had been targeted for his skin color?

A: There is a possibility that the policeman mistakenly regarded this Ethiopian a member of the non-Jewish black African migrants, who are treated in Israel really badly. The other option is that the policeman intentionally targeted the black protester! In both cases, there is another proof that Israel is an extremely racist society. The point is when Jews protest racism all around the world, they create the Jewish state which is essentially the most clear form of racism. In Jewish Ashkenazy culture, there is institutional racism towards black people. The word "Schwarz" which is "Black" in German language is considered an insult in Ashkenazy culture, displaying inherited racism in Jewish Ashkenazy culture.

Zionist-Neocon groups in U.S. seeking to help Riyadh develop nukes: analyst

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – A former US army psychological warfare officer and counter-terrorism analyst said certain "Zionist-Neocon interest groups" operating inside the US want to help Saudi Arabia develop nuclear weapons.

Zionist-Neocon Groups in US Seeking to Help Riyadh Develop Nukes: Analyst

"There are certain Zionist-Neocon interest groups who no doubt want to assist Saudi Arabia in developing nuclear weapons, while at the same time stopping Iran from defending itself in any conventional way, because their plan is to destroy the government of Iran, overthrow its Islamic revolution, and disintegrate Iran into a meager and weak nation that can be used as a colony puppet regime of the West—as was done by the British-American oil companies after 1953," Scott Bennett told Tasnim.

Scott Bennett is a US Army Special Operations Officer (11th Psychological Operations Battalion, Civil Affairs-Psychological Operations Command), and a global psychological warfare-counterterrorism analyst, formerly with defense contractor Booz Allen Hamilton. He received a Direct Commission as an Officer, held a Top Secret/Sensitive Compartmentalized Information (TS/SCI) security clearance, and worked in the highest levels of international counterterrorism in Washington DC and MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. He has developed and managed psychological warfare theories, products, and operations for US Special Operations Command, US Central Command, the State Department Coordinator for Counterterrorism, and other government agencies.

His educational background includes a Bachelor of Science in Advertising and Spanish Minor from San Jose State University in California, a Master of Arts in International Business and Public Policy from George Mason University in Virginia, and a Ph.D. (ABD) in Political Theory from the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. He currently resides in California.

Following is the full text of the interview.

Q: The US Senate has stopped short of forming a majority required to override President Donald Trump's veto earlier in the month of three congressional resolutions aimed at blocking the country's arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. What is your take on this?

A: The saddest and most dangerous



element of this failure to override President Donald Trump's veto is that the Saudi Arabian terrorist regime will continue its genocide of the Yemeni people, and embolden the arrogance and recklessness of the Saudi Arabian dictatorship under Bin Salman to the point where he foolishly tries, once again, to launch military strikes against other peaceful nations in the region—specifically Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran. Another problem that may materialize out of the Saudi perception—or rather Saudi delusion—of them having a license to wage genocide against Yemen and the alleged absolute immunity from war crimes, is that the Saudi regime will engineer another 'false-flag' attack in the Persian Gulf, and blame it on the Iranians in order to try and draw in the United States into a larger regional war.

This would no doubt trigger a full diplomatic and military response from other nations supporting Iran, including Russia, China, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and the Shiite populations in Pakistan and India as well.

Q: The US Congress has been trying to intervene in Washington's untrammeled arms sales to Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, which have been leading an invasion of Yemen since March 2015. Congress' effort was also aimed at attempting to pressure the Saudi government to improve its human rights record. Why did Trump win the veto fight?

A: Money and the false promises of continual Saudi oil revenues supporting the America petrodollar were the primary motivator behind Congress' failure to stop

the U.S. from funding the Saudi "Genocide" war machine. Of course there are American political, media, and military figures who stand against the Saudi Arabian Wahhabist terrorist state, such as Senator Rand Paul, former Congressman Ron Paul, Virginia State Senator Richard Black, Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, Fox News Host Tucker Carlson, Retired General Doug McGregor, and this author (former 2LT Scott Bennett, US Army, Psychological Operations), but the Zionist dominated western media and American-British military-industrial complex often drowns out these voice of reason in preference for the cacophony of war.

The main soundbites used in the "information war" against the American people by the Zionist media and Saudi-Israel apologists is the constant claim of "Iran being a state sponsor of terror" and Iran's chant "Death to America".

These are effectively used to scare and enrage the American people, and must be therefore counteracted against using truth and historical fact, as well as the exposure of the terrorists such as the M.E.K. (the Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization) which is being falsely branded by the West as "freedom fighters", etc.

Q: Since President Trump won the 2016 election, a group of US businessmen has sought to profit on deals to build nuclear power plants in Saudi Arabia, while trying to avoid US restrictions designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, the House Oversight Committee said in a new report. Do you believe so? Please explain.

Abdul Mahdi's government is still faltering in its performance: Diyari Salih

By Damir Nazarov

In an Interview with Diyari Salih. An Iraqi academic. PhD in Political Geography. Post Doctorate in International Relations, we analyzed new political and economical developments in Iraq:

Q: How do you rate Government Adil Abdul-Mahdi?

A: Until now, Abdul Mahdi's government is still faltering in its performance. There are many internal and regional constraints that limit its ability to implement its governmental program. Nevertheless, this government has an acceptance among many moderate Iraqi circles. The problem now lies in the presence of political forces that want to overthrow Adel Abdul Mahdi because he is now threatening their interests and influence.

Q: Why Kurds break the law about oil supply in Baghdad?

A: Today, the Kurds are trying to bypass agreements signed with Baghdad within the framework of the fiscal budget for 2019. They believe that there is the possibility of producing some kind of trade-offs that serve their interests. For example, they propose a commitment to deliver 250,000 barrels per day to Baghdad in exchange for the latter pledging to solve the problems of Erbil's obligations with foreign oil companies as well as the subject of the return of Peshmerga forces to the disputed areas.

Q: In June Grand ayatollah Sistani fierce criticism against

corruption and conflicts between political blocks. What do you associate that problems, personally politicians or State system, after 2005 year? Why new premier repeating the same mistakes, as in former cabinet?

A: The problems of Iraq after 2003 lie in the fact that the political forces do not have a project to re-produce the state. Therefore, these forces used all their means to achieve material gains in illegal ways and thus led to produce a corrupt system of state. There are also external powers supporting this subversive league. These powers have many geopolitical objectives in Iraq. These objectives do not include anything concerning of the rise of a strong and healthy Iraq.

Q: We can say "Basra - city revolutionaries"? I mean people in Basra initiate changes in the government.

A: Basra in recent years has been a city that greatly affects the nature of political stability in Iraq. The revolt of protesters in Basrah greatly affected Haidar al-Abadi's chances to be the prime minister for the second time. It will also affect the political future of Adel Abdul Mahdi and his government. The conflicted parties and the government are unable to adopt effective mechanisms and decisions in order to respond to the demands of the protesters.

The beneficiary ultimately behind this image is the powerful parties competing for influence and interests. They want to use Basra's card to blackmail and overthrow the government of Adel Abdul Mahdi.



Q: In what sectors most developed Russian-Iraqi cooperation?

A: Iraq and Russia can cooperate effectively in many fields. Corruption in a period of time was also widely spreading in the structure of the Russian state, especially after the nineties of the last century, but Russia has been able to exercise effective policies and strong to confront corruption. Russia can be an important ally of Iraq in the strategic field, especially in terms of combating terrorism and its positive role in Syria affirms this matter. It can also contribute to the prosperity of the energy sector and the other economic fields.

Asia must be wary of U.S. missile plan

GLOBALTIMES – U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper said Saturday that he was in favor of deploying ground-based intermediate-range missiles in Asia. If that is the case, it will certainly trigger an intense arms race in the region.

The U.S. is greedily pursuing an absolute and all-sided military superiority to consolidate its hegemony. It refuses to accept any relative balance of power. Such a stubborn and overbearing country has become the largest source of Asia's instability.

U.S. deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Asia will break the status quo at the most extent. In addition to an arms race, geopolitical chaos is also likely to be triggered. Its impact will be much more serious than that of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense in South Korea, because intermediate-range missiles are undoubted offensive weapons. Any country accepting US deployment would be against China and Russia, directly or indirectly, and draw fire against itself.

It is foreseeable that Washington will

consider Tokyo and Seoul and ask them to accept the deployment. But compared with Europe which was antagonistic to the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact during the Cold War, Japan and South Korea will bear much more risks opposing China and Russia. China is among the two states' most important trading partners. If they assist the US to threaten China and Russia, China-Russia retaliations will cause no less loss to their national interests than those caused by the U.S. pressure.

Asia is the fastest growing region in today's world. Although interstate relations between Asian countries seem rather complicated, a network in which members support and propel each other has been established, and China is now at the center of such a system. Washington's intention to hit China is in fact a bid to smash the system which is creating prosperity. The US is turning its sense of crisis into confrontations among Asian countries.

Asian countries must collectively resist the US' attempt in creating new crisis in



this region and prevent it from provoking extreme arms races and forcing all countries to take sides.

Particularly Japan and South Korea must remain sober. Their interests have been diverse due to Asia's vigorous development. The U.S. is no longer their only source of benefits. The two countries' relations with both China and Russia have stayed largely smooth and economic cooperation is expanding. It will be their

nightmare if they follow the US to start a new Cold War.

The U.S. must accept the rise of China and other Asian countries. It should never strong-arm Asian states, including China and Russia.

In fact, we do not believe the U.S. can succeed in drawing its Asian allies over to its side even if Washington persists. Its Asian allies hope to maintain relations with both the US and China, and are reluctant to take sides.

China's economic strength can sustain a much larger defense budget than now. The U.S. should not start a new lose-lose game and let the Asian arms race grow out of control.

It will only force China to build a super weapons arsenal, certainly not in line with long-term US interests.

It is believed that China and Russia will strengthen strategic coordination and join hands to resist the US plan. It is hoped that Japan and South Korea will not turn themselves to cannon-fodder in the aggressive U.S. Asian policy.

Will Biden conquer the Republican nest? Controversial poll in Texas

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — The rising popularity of the former US vice president in Texas has led to deeply unhappy Republicans. On the other hand, internal Democratic polls show that Joe Biden is more popular than his other candidates. Here's a look at some of the polls and news about the upcoming US presidential election:

New poll: Biden leads O'Rourke in Texas presidential primary, race against Sen. John Cornyn wide open

Connect with Grover Jeffers Jr.

As Grover Jeffers Jr., wrote in Dallas Times. A new poll has former Vice President Joe Biden leading Beto O'Rourke in the Texas presidential primary and locked in a close race one-on-one with Donald Trump. The survey, conducted by Emerson College for the Dallas Morning News, had a 3 percentage-point margin of error, and Biden and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders each led Trump by only 2 percentage points.

The poll also signals that even with two favorite sons in the race, O'Rourke and Juli?n Castro, Lone Star State Democrats want a familiar face as their nominee. O'Rourke is trailing Biden in the poll, perhaps, because a clear majority of Texas Democrats would rather see him run for Senate against Republican incumbent John Cornyn.

Sanders, the 2016 runner-up to Hillary Clinton for the party's nomination, was third. The poll was conducted Aug. 1-3 among a sample of 1,033 registered voters with a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. For the Democratic presidential primary, about 400 people were surveyed with a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 percentage points. The poll also projects a wide-open Democratic primary race for the Senate seat held by Cornyn, the longtime incumbent. At 19%, "someone else" is leading the field, a blow to former Army helicopter pilot MJ Hegar, who's been campaigning for most of the year.

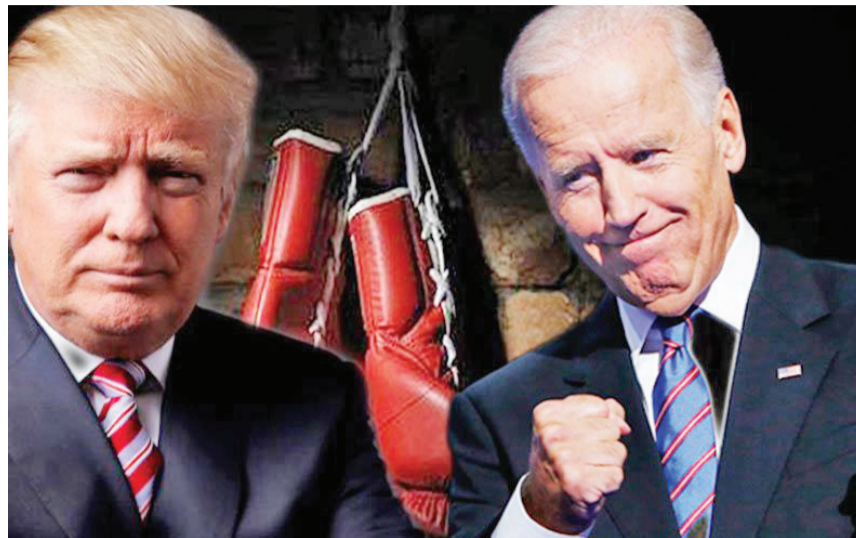
That "someone else" is leading the entire field is an oddity, but reflects the complexity of the primary race and the conundrum felt by many Democrats.

Hegar was the choice of 10% of those polled, followed by state Sen. Royce West at 8%, former U.S. Rep. Chris Bell at 7% and Houston City Council member Amanda Edwards at 5%. A whopping 51% of respondents were unsure.

West, Bell and Edwards are all relatively new to the race.

"I wouldn't be surprised to see other people jump into the race," said Spencer Kimball, the Emerson College polling director. "It's just that wide open."

The news is not great for Cornyn, the powerful incumbent who's held the seat since 2003. Only 37% approved of his job performance, while 31% disapproved. The polls found that 33% of Texans were neutral or had no opinion. "That's not a



good place to be. It shows that he's vulnerable," Kimball said of Cornyn's poll numbers, noting that Texas Gov. Greg Abbott had an approval rating of 50%, with only 27% not liking his performance. "The good news for him is that he doesn't have disapproval in the GOP," Kimball said, noting his rating was 57% approval and 16% disapproval among Republicans.

Battleground Texas

Texas could be the biggest battleground in the country, as Democrats try to win a statewide contest for the first time since 1994. In 2018, O'Rourke emerged as the party's savior, staging a dramatic campaign that came within 2.6 percentage points of beating Republican Sen. Ted Cruz.

Democrats had hoped O'Rourke would run for Senate against Cornyn, and it shows in the Emerson poll numbers. Forty-six percent of voters said O'Rourke should drop out of the presidential race and run for Senate, while 25% said he should keep running for president and 29% weren't sure. About 51% of Democrats said O'Rourke should run for Senate instead of the White House.

Before the mass shooting in El Paso caused O'Rourke to halt his campaign, he had been campaigning on his ability to win Texas' 38 electoral votes and defeat Trump for the White House.

O'Rourke also touted a University of Texas at Tyler poll that showed him beating all Democrats in Texas and leading Trump by 11 percentage points.

"Winning those 38 Texas electoral votes allows us not only to defeat Donald Trump in November of 2020, it forever changes the electoral landscape in the United States," O'Rourke told The Dallas Morning News. "This is incredibly important and we uniquely have the ability to follow through."

But the Emerson poll shows Biden ahead of O'Rourke by a 28% to 19% margin. Sanders was third with 16%, Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren had

14%, South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg was at 7% and California Sen. Kamala Harris had 5% support.

"Joe Biden has gone up 5 points since our April poll, and Beto O'Rourke has dropped a couple of points," Kimball said. Dallas pastor Richie Butler, who was an aide to former Massachusetts senator and 2004 presidential nominee John Kerry, said Texans -- at the moment -- feel that the well-known Biden is the best choice to beat Trump, not O'Rourke.

"A lot of people feel that Beto has a better chance of getting across the finish line in a Senate race, not a race for president," Butler said.

Though O'Rourke was highly competitive in the poll, former Housing secretary and former San Antonio mayor Castro barely registered. At 2%, he trailed businessman Andrew Yang (3%) and was tied with New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker. All other candidates had 1% or less.

The polls are in, and here's who won the second Democratic debate

Also Vox reported that Last week's second Democratic debate did little to change the race -- Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren continue to be the top candidates, per new post-debate polls.

National polls from Quinnipiac, HarrisX, Reuters/Ipsos, and Politico/Morning Consult -- and a New Hampshire poll from the Boston Globe/Suffolk -- all show Biden in first place, with somewhere between 21 and 33 percent of the vote.

Four of those polls show Sanders in second place and Warren in third -- however, one of the national polls, from Quinnipiac, showed Warren ahead of Sanders in second place.

Meanwhile, Kamala Harris appears to have declined from her significant bounce in the polls in late June following a tense exchange with Biden on busing in that first debate. Back then, she went from a distant fourth to, essentially, tied for second place with Sanders and Warren. But now she tends to poll closer to fifth-place Pete Buttigieg than to the top

three contenders. A HuffPost/YouGov poll asking Democratic and Democratic-leaning voters whether their opinion of each candidate improved or worsened from the debate showed Harris as the only top-tier candidate whose image suffered on net.

Warren: 50 percent improved, 6 percent worsened

Buttigieg: 32 percent improved, 8 percent worsened

Sanders: 28 percent improved, 16 percent worsened

Biden: 26 percent improved, 24 percent worsened

Harris: 25 percent improved, 30 percent worsened

Now the Politico/Morning Consult poll shows Harris in fourth place with 9 percent, and the Quinnipiac poll shows her in fourth with 7 percent (among national Democrats, in both cases). Other national polls have shown similar results. The Boston/Globe Suffolk poll of New Hampshire has Harris in fourth there, too, with 8 percent.

Biden, meanwhile, had declined a bit in national polls after the first debate, feeding questions about whether his support was shaky. But he remained in first place throughout, and even before the second debate, he'd recovered. The debate itself has done nothing to change that: The former vice president remains the man to beat.

Nobody else broke out

Beyond the top tier (broadly defined) of Biden, Sanders, Warren, Harris, and Buttigieg, there were of course 15 other candidates onstage last week.

Some commentators declared Marianne Williamson had a breakout performance; some thought Cory Booker deserved a bounce; some believed John Delaney's centrality on the first night would be good for him.

The HuffPost/YouGov poll that asked Democrats whether their opinion of each candidate improved or worsened showed a strong net improvement for Booker (20 percent net improvement) and Juli?n Castro (17 percent net improvement).

But when it came to whom Democrats would vote for, Booker, Castro, and the other bottom-tier candidates are all still polling at 3 percent or below in all the post-debate polls.

The next debate isn't until September. But the threshold for qualifying for that one is higher -- a candidate needs to hit 2 percent in four recent polls from approved organizations, and to have at least 130,000 donors.

Currently, only eight candidates say they've met that threshold: Biden, Sanders, Warren, Harris, Buttigieg, Booker, Beto O'Rourke, and Amy Klobuchar. A few more may make the cut too, but several will surely miss it -- and with no future national platform likely, they may decide to bring their campaigns to an end.

Trump to lose 2020 elections if he wages war on Iran: Analyst

IFP— U.S. President Donald Trump looks on during a rally at the Amway Centre

An Iranian analyst on international affairs maintains that US President Donald Trump is fully aware that waging a war against Iran will cost him losing the next presidential elections in 2020.



In an interview with Vatan-e Emrooz newspaper, Abu Mohammad Asgarkhani elaborated on the role that Iran-US ties can play in the result of the next US presidential votes.

"Trump knows well that entering into conflict with Iran will lead to his defeat in the presidential election," he noted.

"I think Trump suffers from a political bipolar disease. Today he says something but tomorrow makes a completely different move. But the Leader of the Islamic Revolution rightly made a resolute decision by rejecting his offer for talks," he said, stressing that Iran cannot trust such a moody person.

"Trump seeks to hold talks with Iran without conditions to gain more votes in the next election but it goes without saying that he would intensify his aggression against Iran in his next presidency," he noted.

"Trump will definitely adopt a more aggressive approach towards Iran after gaining victory in the next election. Iran's leader has got the point and said he doesn't see Trump deserving a reply."

He then referred to the latest visit of Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Iran who carried a message from Trump to the Iranian leaders and said the message was deceitful. "The message said that Israel and some Arab states of the region as well as the US Republicans are after war with Iran. It was aimed at pressurizing Iran into sitting for talks with the US to resolve the current conflicts," he said.

Regarding the Iran nuclear deal, he said Iran has already lived up to its pledges under the deal and now it is the US which should do so.

"Unfortunately, the U.S. has not yet fulfilled its commitments under the deal. So, how on the earth can we get back to the JCPOA? Does the US have the legal right to put sanctions on Iran's oil industry based on the JCPOA? How about its sanctions on Iran's Central Bank and oil tankers? So, the measures make returning to the JCPOA nonsense."

"It is not acceptable that the U.S. puts sanctions on the Iranian Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC). The Iranian force has been fighting the regional terrorists. The Americans are after undermining the IRGC. So, talks with the US have no justification," he added.

He also touched on the European Union mechanism for financial transactions with Iran, the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges, known as INSTEX, and said neither the US, nor the Europeans recognize the INSTEX as an efficient mechanism. "If Iran gets involved in a financial exchange with the EU within the INSTEX, it is not clear whether or not it can follow up any related dispute with the EU through international bodies. I think the response is negative because Iran is a government but the other side is not a government. It is a private company," he said.

According to the analyst, the Europeans are seeking to confine Iran within a certain framework and leave it empty-handed. "So, Trump is seeking to buy time on the one hand to exert more pressure on Iran and to gain victory in the next presidential elections on the other hand," he concluded.

China and ASEAN coming closer on South China Sea controversy

By Li Kaisheng

GLOBALTIMES — At the 52nd Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, which concluded Saturday, ministers reaffirmed promoting implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and strengthening cooperation with their dialogue partners. ASEAN members threw their weight behind multilateralism and free trade, promoted consultations and managed disputes, agreeing to further carry forward ASEAN economic integration.

Great strides forward have been made when it comes to the cooperation between China and ASEAN. The two sides have been jointly promoting the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and shaping rules for the region. China has been the largest trading partner of ASEAN for 10 consecutive years, while the bloc surpassed the US to become China's second-largest trading partner in the first half of 2019.

China and ASEAN have generally reached consensus on their goals. Although the two sides may have divergences on specific issues, they both agree to build a peaceful and mutually beneficial relationship. This is the foundation of China-ASEAN cooperation. Without such consensus, the two sides cannot make progress. China-ASEAN cooperation has been promoted in a variety of fields. Their collaboration is not achieved at one stroke, but is gradually and steadily advancing. For example, China and ASEAN members have recently finished the first reading of the Single Draft Negotiating Text of the South China Sea Code of Conduct.

Optimism can be anticipated when it comes to negotiations between China and ASEAN over the South China Sea issue. The two sides have reached a strategic consensus to standardize the international order and bilateral relations in the waters.

But on the other hand, China and ASEAN also face challenges in developing their ties. The US has been interfering in the region. China and ASEAN also have some disputes on some key issues including the exploitation of petroleum resources. Besides, some countries want to strive for more interests before negotiations take place, hence their moves



may impact the entire negotiation process. Generally, there are still uncertainties in the negotiations and both China and ASEAN need to treat them carefully.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday criticized China's dam building on the Mekong River, warning that the structure may harm the downstream countries in Southeast Asia. "The river is at its lowest levels in a decade, a problem linked to China's decision to shut off water upstream," Pompeo said. The US has always been interfering in the South China Sea region, directly or indirectly. Direct interference includes carrying out the so-called freedom of navigation operations in the waters belonging to China. Indirect interference includes sending US coast guard vessels to the region, holding joint military exercises with other countries in the region and inciting them against China.

Such US interference has somewhat worsened these countries' relations with China, which will influence the overall situation in the South China Sea. China and ASEAN need to further overcome external disturbances.

Relations between China and ASEAN face two challenges in the future. The first challenge is whether they can further reach a strategic consensus on international order and regional condition. The world is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century, so are current international relations. ASEAN members have their own views and concerns on China-US relations, China-Russia ties and regional order. Whether ASEAN will choose sides between China and the

US will be of great significance.

The second challenge is whether China and ASEAN can reach a consensus on specific issues over the South China Sea dispute and the BRI. The two sides should further develop more mechanisms to control and reduce divergences on these issues.

Second Announcement



N.I.S.O.C.

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National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

Items	Material Description	Quantity
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Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tender are requested to send their "intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following fax number / Email address along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: WWW.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 21,334 EURO or 1,004,766,960 RIAL, in favor of NISOC

Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: WWW.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P. NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHA JARI, IRAN PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D. SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

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Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

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Price: negotiable

Mr.Shayan: 09128440156

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2 parking spots

Price: negotiable

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sq.m commercial flat, elevator
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Parking, **\$1700**
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Explorers to sail ancient Black Sea route on reed boat Abora IV

An international team of archaeologists and explorers is preparing to set sail on a reed boat, hoping to prove that Greek Argonauts were not the first to trade on the Black Sea.

Crew members are adding the final touches to the 14-metre Abora IV at Beloslav lake near Varna, Bulgaria.

Its unique design is inspired by old Egyptian paintings and constructed using only totora reed and wood.



The reeds were harvested near Lake Tatikaka in Bolivia almost a year ago, tied into huge rolls and transported to Bulgaria earlier this year.

For the past ten weeks, bundles of reeds have been tied with ropes to create the boat's body.

The purpose of the expedition is to sail the routes that connected the Mediterranean with the Black Sea in ancient times, the time of the Chalcolithic necropolis of Varna.

"We have new archaeological evidence that, long before the Greek people, possibly people from the Minoan civilization, also from Egypt and very likely also people from the Varna culture sailed these waterways six thousand years ago and this is what archaeologists are always doubting," said Dominique Goerlitz, German archaeologist and explorer.

The Abora IV's 12-strong crew includes volunteers from Germany, the USA, Bulgaria, Bolivia, the Netherlands.

They will live in two reed huts added on top of the main deck.

Teodor Rokov, from the Varna Museum of Archaeology, said: "The idea is to show how people of different backgrounds, cultures, and mentalities can coexist and work together."

"The motto of this journey is 'Voyage for Peace' because we can see that the current political situation in the Black Sea is strained, and this reed ship could be a perfect ambassador of peace across all seas."

The planned expedition comes on the 50th anniversary of the reed boat trip in which Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl sailed across the Atlantic.

However, despite the similarities with ancient vessels the Abora IV has a huge advantage – it is equipped with up-to-date satellite and radio communication devices.

Goerlitz plans to set sail from Varna through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, then through the Aegean Sea to Athens.

From there, the manoeuvrability of the raft will be demonstrated through Greek island hopping to Crete, before heading for the Egyptian port city of Alexandria.

He hopes to demonstrate that Egyptian merchants used such vessels to travel far and wide, and were not confined to land.

The Abora IV will have to stay in the harbor in Beloslav for several days to soak before it departs on its trip.

(Source: euronews)

Chinese envoy says wants to be 'tourism ambassador' for Iran

TOURISM TEHRAN — Chinese Ambassador to Iran Chang Hua has said that he wants to be "a tourism ambassador" for Iran in order to help expand bilateral ties.

"I intend to work as an [Iran's tourism] ambassador to China to develop traveling relations between the two countries," Mehr quoted Chang as saying on Tuesday.

"Iran has unilaterally waived visas for Chinese citizens and we are also seeking ways to facilitate traveling of Iranians to China."

Every country has its own consular policies and this [matter] should be done in coordination with the two sides, he noted.

Nearly 100,000 Iranian nationals visited China in 2018, he said.

He underlined that his mission is to try to deepen bilateral ties, particularly in the tourism sector.

"China is a large country with lots of complexity, so it is rarely possible to sign a visa waiver agreement with another country, but Iran is a friend of China. So we are trying to make it easier for Iranians to travel to China," the envoy explained.

"In a meeting with Iranian Majlis speaker [Ali Larijani], I said that I will act as an ambassador to China and I will make efforts to develop tourism ties between the two countries."

"Iran has numerous tourist areas. It has 22 cultural world heritage sites and two natural UNESCO-registered properties that have



Chinese Ambassador to Iran Chang Hua poses for a photo during his visit to the Tehran-based Mehr news agency on August 6, 2019.

caused Iran to be ranked world's tenth in terms of travel attractions. However, ordinary Chinese people are not familiar with Iran's tourism potential," he noted.

"The embassy of the People's Republic of China is tasked to develop tourism relations between the two countries and introduce Iran's tourism areas to the Chinese. I will

meet with the head of the cultural heritage organization and will talk about it," Chang said.

In late June, the Iranian government, in a unilateral measure, approved to waive the visa requirement for Chinese passport holders, a measure that took effect as of July 16.

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

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

In a recent move, the country has also extended visa-free validity for Chinese visitors from a previously announced 15 days to 21 days.

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

Iran is home to hundreds of historical sites such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, mansions, as well as very changing natural sceneries, and above all, millions of its hospitable people.

Tourism flourishing despite sanctions: VP

TOURISM TEHRAN — Iran tourism chief on Tuesday said that that country's tourism sector is gaining momentum despite U.S.-led sanctions.

"Thanks to the country's high potential in tourism industry, we are now witnessing that the industry has registered a dramatic growth despite unfair economic sanctions imposed by the enemies," IRNA quoted Ali-Asghar Mounesan, who doubles as vice president, as saying.

Nearly 2,000 tourism projects are being implemented in the country with a total investment of 180,000 trillion rials (about \$42 billion), which is a sign of its growth, the official told reporters during his visit to northern Gilan province.

Talking about the number of inbound passengers, the official said that foreign arrivals in Iran jumped from 4.7 million in [the Iranian calendar year] 1396 (March 2017-March



2018) to 7.8 million in 1397 despite economic sanctions and shrinkage of direct flights.

The Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization allocated 80 billion rials (about \$1.9 million) to development of tourism in Gilan, of which ten billion rials will be allocated for the implementation of the tourism project in Steel Lake or other tourist areas in Astara region.

A foreign investor has also announced readiness to invest one billion dollars in the Iranian tourism industry, and one of the proposed areas will be the Astara Steel Lagoon, he said.

Astara lies on the border with Azerbaijan Republic and on the Caspian Sea. It is a relatively important border trade center between Iran and the Caucasus.

It has a wide but litter-strewn beach and could make a base to visit the forested Talesh mountain hinterlands or be a gateway to other touristic cities such as Ardabil and Rasht.

Meet designer who brings contemporary architecture to ancient Iran



In his latest project, Iranian designer Mohammad-Hasan Forouzanfar has made a series of photomontages titled "Retrofuturism", which fuse icons of the world's contemporary architecture with their ancient Iranian counterparts.

Similarly to his previous projects, which have included introducing skyscrapers to Iranian villages, "Retrofuturism" considers how to restore the historic buildings with additions from world renowned architects such as Zaha Hadid, Daniel Libeskind, and Norman Foster, designboom.com reported.

To fulfill his project, Forouzanfar has selected places in Iran including pre-Islamic royal palaces and castles in Fars, Sistan-Baluchestan, Khuzestan and Isfahan provinces. The insertions of contemporary Western architecture offer a contradictory mix that links Iran's past to the future and present of the West.

His works create an intriguing combination of materials, styles and eras. Elements of contemporary buildings, characterized by cool glass and metal, extrude from the desert landscape and historic stone buildings, resulting in a striking set of images.

"In essence, the project presents a new definition of restoration, one that provides a critical and avant-garde look at Iranian architectural artifacts," the digital-architecture-and-



design magazine reported.

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

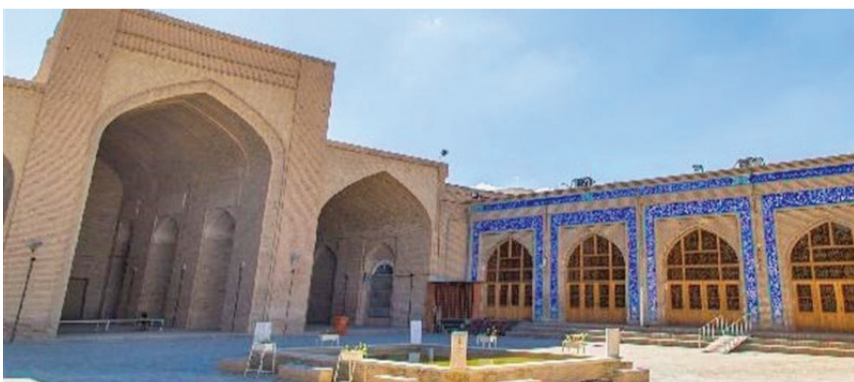
HERITAGE TEHRAN — There have been many innovative ways to introduce cultural heritage sites to avid sightseers and potential travelers, one may be creating photomontages in order to make them even more inspiring!

Jame Mosque in Damghan: A Tourist Attraction of Iran

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Damghan Jame Mosque is located northeast of the city and is a 35-meter long and 18-meter wide structure with two rows of pillars with brickwork decorations.

The exact age of this structure is not known but it appears to have been originally built shortly before or around the beginning of the Seljuq era (1038-1118). The current mosque was built over the original structure in the Qajar era (1785-1925).

There are three iwans (vaulted halls, walled on three sides and open on one side) on the southern part of the mosque's courtyard. The middle iwan is taller and



wider than the other two and holds the mosque's Mihrab (prayer niche). The Shabastans (inner sanctums) of the mosque are located in the eastern and western part of the courtyard.

The mosque's minaret is the only part of the original structure that still stands today. This minaret was originally 35 meters tall and had 105 steps. This minaret is currently 26.5 meters tall and has delicate brickwork decorations.

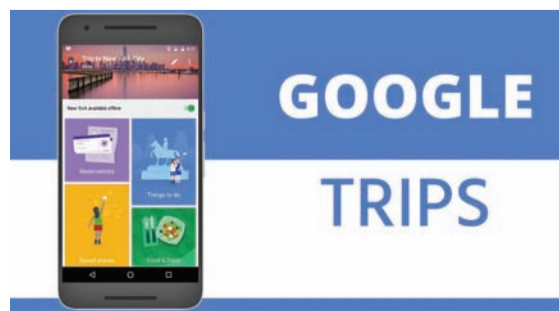
The minaret also has a brick inscription with Quranic verses. Damghan Jame Mosque was registered as a National Heritage Site in 1931.

Google shuts down its Trips travel planning app

Google is killing yet another app, although you might not mind quite as much with this one. The company is shutting down its Trips travel app as of August 5th in favor of steering users to both its reworked travel search as well as Google Maps.

Your information and tools aren't going away -- you will, however, need to look for them in other places.

Notes, saved places and reservations will still exist in search as long as you sign into your Google account. You'll "soon" have the option of adding or editing notes through the search site's travel portal. you'll also find things to do, saved places and (in the near future) trip



reservations in the Maps app, and your bookings will automatically become available offline.

The switch-up is unfortunate if you liked having all your vacation info in one place. However, it's not hard to see why Google might shutter Trips three years into its existence. Many of its once-special features are now available in a web browser or the Maps app you likely already have on your phone. There's not much incentive to devote resources to a specialized app, especially when search and Maps offer more tools for adventurers.

(Source: engadget.com)

ROUND THE GLOBE

Late Baroque Towns of the Val di Noto

Registered on UNESCO World Heritage list, the Late Baroque Towns of the Val di Noto is comprised of components of eight towns located in south-eastern Sicily (Caltagirone, Militello Val di Catania, Catania, Modica, Noto, Palazzolo Acreide, Ragusa and Scicli).



These historic centers and urban environments reflect the great, post-seismic rebuilding achievement of the decades following the catastrophic earthquake of 1693, which ravaged towns across south-eastern Sicily. The rebuilding, restoration and reconstruction of these communities resulted in the creation of an exceptional group of towns, all reflecting the late Baroque architecture of the 17th century in all its forms and applications.

The eight components of the property differ in size and represent a range of responses to the rebuilding needs. They include the entire old town of Caltagirone, Noto and Ragusa; specific urban areas of Catania and Scicli; and isolated monuments in the historic town centers of Modica, Palazzolo Acreide and Militello Val di Catania.

The towns exhibit a plethora of late Baroque art and architecture of high quality and of a remarkable homogeneity as a result of the circumstances of time, place, and social context in which they were created. However, they also display distinctive innovations in the town planning and urban rebuilding. The property also represents a considerable collective undertaking in response to a catastrophic seismic event.

Integrity

The property includes all the attributes required to express its Outstanding Universal Value, as it encompasses the most representative centers of the late Baroque period in the Val di Noto. The eight components of the property reflect the range of architectural and town-planning developments resulting from the post-seismic reconstruction in the Val di Noto after the 1693 earthquake. This earthquake created an opportunity for an enormous artistic, architectural, and anti-seismic renewal of the cities.

(Source: UNESCO)

No one can sanction smart Iran: ICT minister

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — No one can sanction smart Iran which is developed based on innovation, thought and technology, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi said, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

Digital economy is the main theme of the future national economy which will be created by the young generation, he added.

"We should join hands in the field of telecommunication speed up the process of development."

He said that the digital transformation will change the ICT distribution network as well.

Today, the digital transformation creates different capacities for the young generation and economic development by digital technology, he explained.

He pointed to the No-Afarin scheme, developed by the ICT Ministry to support startups, as one of the measures taken by the ministry in order to support young entrepreneurs.

According to the scheme, startups are supported for three years in order to increase their annual income to 5 billion rials (about \$120,000), he said.

"The No-Afarin scheme can create 68,000 job opportunities each year and develop digital economy in order to replace oil economy."

The digital transformation causes some changes in people's lifestyle and some kinds of jobs are replaced by others as a result of this development, he said.



"I do my best to be in contact with people and inform them about our responsibilities and activities." Social media provide a chance for officials

The digital transformation causes some changes in people's lifestyle and some kinds of jobs are replaced by others as a result of this development

to know more about people's ideas and comments, he concluded.

■ **Long way to go, but steps were taken**

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

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

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

The ICT Ministry announced that the goal of e-government has been realized by 62.8 percent in the country before the first Iranian month of Farvardin, which began on March 21.

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

Iranian robotic teams to attend FIRA 2019

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — Iranian robotic teams will attend the Federation of International Robot Sports Association World Cup and Summit, FIRA 2019, which will be held from August 11 to 16 in Changwon, South Korea.

The competition will be held in two junior and student sections, the head of the Iranian FIRA National Committee, Soroush Sadeqnejad, said, adding that 27 junior robotic teams and 11 student robotic teams from Iran will attend the event.

The student teams are from Amir Kabir University of Technology, Sharif University of Technology, Yazd University, University of Isfahan and Technical and Vocational University, he noted.

The junior teams will come from Salam, Danesh, Allameh Tabatabaee, Khatam, Allameh Helli and some other schools and academies, he added.

"The attendance of Iranian teams in international robotic events paves the way for more interaction and cooperation with other universities."

According to FIRA website, the FIRA RoboWorld Cup 2019 includes competitions in FIRA AIR, that includes the use of autonomous flying vehicles in urban and disaster scenarios, FIRA Sports, the goal of developing robot athletes that can compete against humans in Olympic events, FIRA Challenges, focuses on complex challenges in industrial, rescue, and service robot set-

tings and FIRA Youth, competitions for our younger participants such as the mission impossible events.

FIRA also introduce a new set of challenges in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) with a specific focus on developing software.

FIRA AI is a new league that will explore developing software to solve problems in AI, ML, and robotics.

The event aims to take the spirit of science and technology to the young generation and laymen, promote the development of the autonomous multi-agent robotic system that can cooperate with each other and to contribute to the state-of-the-art technology improvement in this specialized field.



How to boost small business SEO?

How can you improve the SEO of your business without spending lots of budgets? Do you know the secrets to get your website on the top of search engine results? For many owners of small business, paying for the right to be on top is out of reach. But the good news is that's not your only option.

According to the result of a recent survey, small business owners are doing below tactics to boost their SEO.

Around one-third (36%) of small businesses have a strategy for SEO. In addition, about 38% more will invest in SEO in the future.

Some tactics that small businesses use to improve their SEO are social media marketing: 63%, design a mobile-friendly website: 54%, research about keywords: 51%, producing high-quality content: 48% and optimizing website for voice search: 21%.

Now, you are interested to know which of these tactics make the biggest difference in your website's search engine results position and which ones are less likely? So follow me.

■ Social media marketing

The important part of your overall marketing strategy is social media marketing. It can raise awareness of your business, build your brand and help get some customers in the door. But when it comes to SEO, it's hard to understand exactly how much social media marketing actually helps. This means relying on social media marketing to improve your SEO which most owners of small business in the recent survey are doing probably won't get the results you want.

■ Design a mobile-friendly website

Keep in mind, Google uses mobile friendliness as an important factor in its search rankings. If you want good SEO, you need to know that a mobile-friendly website has become essential. Do you know why mobile-friendliness matters because many people use their phones for search? You need to test how your website is mobile-friendly by using this link and also make sure that your website loads fast on mobile devices.

■ Try keyword research

As you know keywords are the words most searched on search engines. Keywords vary for every type of business website. For instance, for Startupik, our keywords are a startup, social media marketing and so on. The Guidelines of Google's Webmaster, which advises businesses how to increase search engine rankings, primarily recommends making your site informative and use all of the related keywords online searchers are most likely to enter when looking for businesses like yours.

Remember, the secret here is to use keywords in your website



content but not to overdo it. Search engines will penalize you because they know when you're throwing keywords in just for ranking ("keyword stuffing"). Don't even consider cloaking and doorway pages as using underhanded tricks to improve your SEO.

Try using some tools such as Google Ads Keyword Planner to get the best keywords for your business, which is free, or you can pay for a tool such as KeywordSpy or Wordtracker which both offer free trials that you can test to find out how they work for you. Also, follow the other tactics in Google's Webmaster Guidelines, for example, using lots of text links, making sure don't have any broken links in your pages, and submitting a site map to Google so they can learn about your website.

■ Producing high-quality content

Try to attract your audience to your website by featuring high-quality content related to those keywords after you've identified your keywords. You need to try to produce great content by identifying the common questions that your customers have and producing content that answers those queries.

For example, if you have an auto service station and your customers ask about how often they should bring their cars in, you can post a cheat sheet for how often cars should be serviced and what needs to be checked when. If you are the owner of a hair salon and your customers always ask how to do French braids, just post a video presenting a French braid updo.

■ Try to optimize your website for voice search

You should know there are just a few numbers of small businesses that are optimizing for voice search and wise to get out in front of the trend. Remember, lots of voice-activated

smart devices used in homes and in business, people around the world are just as likely to search by speaking natural language queries ("Where's the best restaurant near me that delivers?") as by typing in search terms.

You need to understand user intent if you want to create content and find keywords optimized for voice search requires. For example, when a person asking his smartphone, "Where can I get lunch?" this means that a person needs to find a restaurant, not grocery stores.

■ How to measure the results of SEO?

The small businesses in the study look at traffic from search engines (25%), backlinks (14%) and leads and conversions (19%) to measure the success of their SEO efforts. However, these factors aren't essentially the most important metrics to measure.

When lots of people look in your store window, it's like increasing search engine traffic. These people are just visiting, but not always buying. You should look at your lead and conversion rates, which demonstrate to you how many visitors actually take the next step to show interest or make a purchase. Some reports also suggest measuring search traffic retention that is, your website bounce and exit rates—to see if users are sticking around on your site. Finally, focus on paying attention to the quality, not just the quantity, of backlinks, looking for some from sites with high domain authority (DA).

■ Use PPC to improve your SEO

If you want to improve the results of your organic SEO efforts is a smart move, try to use online pay-per-click (PPC) advertising to. About Sixty percent of small businesses that have SEO strategies also use PPC advertising, an increase of around 15% from 2018. An additional around 17% plan to insert PPC advertising to their strategy in this year.

As you know, the top of search engine results pages gets so crowded with maps, answer boxes, videos, and more, therefore organic search results get pushed further down the page. That's a real problem, especially when people search on mobile phones with limited real estate. If you are trying to make your business more visible above the fold, the PPC advertising can it.

You can get more benefit from PPC advertising. Keep in mind, you can learn from that to improve your SEO. For instance, some reports demonstrate that tracking which ads users click on the most will create ideas for meta tags, keywords, and content you can use on your website.

(Source: startupik.com)

Makran science and technology park opened

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The Makran science and technology park was opened during a ceremony in Chabahar, southeastern Iran, on Tuesday, IRIB reported.

The Makran science and technology park, affiliated to the International University of Chabahar, provides an opportunity for the activity of innovative entrepreneurs in the region, said Sourena Sattari, the vice president for science and technology.



Vice president for science and technology Sourena Sattari cuts the ribbon during opening ceremony of Makran science and technology park

He added that preliminary measures have been taken for the establishment of a science and technology free zone in the region.

By the next three months, 10,000 square meters will be added to the park's area, he noted.

Sattari paid a visit to some knowledge-based firms at the park and attended the unveiling ceremony of a project for online examination of patients.

A center for educational courses on content creation for animation and video games was also opened at the park.

Sattari also visited Chabahar Maritime and Marine University's achievement in manufacturing solar panels and water desalination systems.

Startups to help Iran National Library and Archives

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The Iran National Library and Archives (INLA) plans to introduce digital library technologies and startups active in this field in the near future, Shanbepress reported on Tuesday.

The INLA, as the biggest database in Iran, held a one-week entrepreneurship event, during which it called entrepreneurs and startup owners and Artificial Intelligence (AI) experts to use the INLA resources for emerging businesses and also meet the needs of the library.

Library expansion needs increasing capacities and human resources who have applicable knowledge, the INLA head Ashraf Boroujerdi said on Tuesday.

Several workshops on big data management, deep learning, data visualization, pattern recognition, recommendation system, social network analysis, name entity recognition and blockchain were held on the sidelines of the event.



The automatic processing for listing new books, collecting Persian web data, using new technologies for preservation of digital data, improvement of searching methods, co-founding for data collection and digitalization of resources at the library were also discussed during the event.

There is a great amount of data collected in the national library, which can be used by startups, Boroujerdi said.

Meanwhile, INLA and the vice presidency for science and technology signed an agreement to establish an accelerator center in the field of librarianship and digital archive.

According to businessnewsdaily, libraries have proprietary information and access to the 'hidden Web,' which gives a competitive advantage to tech entrepreneurs.

The 'hidden' or Deep Web refers to the vast amount of information and data that is unavailable on the open Web, and can only be accessed through special software or internal networks, such as those used by libraries. This can include proprietary government data, in-depth research articles and analytics tools for otherwise useless raw data.

Rocket Lab will reuse its rockets by catching them with a helicopter

SpaceX won't be the only company reusing its rockets for payload deliveries. Rocket Lab has unveiled plans to recover the first stage of its Electron vehicle. The strategy's first phase will have Rocket Lab recovering the stage from the ocean and refurbishing it for later. A second phase will be more... audacious. The company intends to have the stage "captured mid-air" by a helicopter, with the aircraft hooking on to the rocket's parachute array during the descent. It won't be as elegant as SpaceX's rocket landings, but it will be efficient if it works as planned.

The motivation is quite clear: this should lead to more launches and lower costs. Instead of having to build rockets from scratch for every launch, Rocket Lab could reuse vessels and have a turnaround time measured in days instead of weeks. It might not have to produce as many rockets in the first place, for that matter. As company chief Peter Beck told CNBC, even a single reuse for each rocket would double the effective production rate.

You may have to wait a while to see a real recovery. Rocket Lab has started including instrumentation on its missions to "inform future recovery efforts," but you won't see major changes to the Electron until three launches from now -- and that doesn't mean it'll attempt a recovery. It's only promising a bid sometime in the "coming year." Should this prove successful, though, reusable rockets may become downright commonplace.

(Source: engadget.com)

Robotic jellyfish takes to the water without a tether

Although jellyfish may not be the fastest animals in the ocean, they do swim in an energy-efficient manner — a manner that underwater robots might do well to copy. With that in mind, Chinese scientists have created a robotic jellyfish that may someday autonomously explore the briny depths.

Real jellyfish swim by jet propulsion, expanding and contracting their bell-shaped bodies to push water out behind them. And while we have previously seen underwater robots that emulate this technique, most of them have had to be tethered to a surface-located power source and/or control system.

Researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing decided to address that situation, designing a free-swimming robo-jelly.

Modelled after the large Aurelia aurita (or "moon jellyfish"), the device features a bell-shaped rigid head along with a cylindrical body underneath. The latter is covered in a soft rubber skin, and incorporates four separate six-bar linkage mechanisms.

■ A diagram of the jellyfish robot

Forward motion is achieved by bending and straightening those mechanisms (kind of like fingers), causing the body to

push out water as it expands and contracts. Additionally, by moving two weights located in its body cavity, the robot is able to be steered both vertically and horizontally.

The scientists are now developing reinforcement-learning-based software, that would allow the device to learn which weight movements result in which changes in direction. Assisted by various onboard sensors, the robot could then move through the water along a given course while avoiding obstacles, without any human control. It could even carry small payloads, such as environmental sensors, while doing so.

(Source: New Atlas)

Plan on protection of southern coasts to be prepared

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — A comprehensive plan for environmental conservation and management of coastal areas in southern Iran will be prepared by the next year, Mehr news agency reported on Wednesday.

A special working group has been established in this regard, which has held eight sessions to address the issues and threats being imposed on the coastal parts in southern areas of the country.

The eighth session was held on August 7-8 with the Department of Environment representatives, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) representatives, and other responsible bodies in attendance.

"Unfortunately, we have not preserved and protected the country's natural resources, especially the marine areas and forests which we have undergone irreparable damage due to poor management and policies," Ahmad Lahijanzadeh, head of marine environment affairs at the Department of Environment, said.

Referring to the importance of marine environment, he noted that marine environment affairs has long been conducting scientific studies on marine ecosystem in the southern and northern parts of the country, which are still being pursued.

Criticizing the insufficient budget being earmarked for marine protection, he said that to conduct efficient studies for preventing these precious ecosystems from disappearance, a sufficient budget should be allocated.

Less plastic in oceans would make most people happier, poll claims

Less plastic in the oceans is top the chart for things that make people happy, a poll has claimed.

One third believe the seas being free of rubbish would increase their happiness levels.

Others say their general mood would improve if Brexit was cancelled, Donald Trump stepped down and friendlier people ran the world's strongest states.

Receiving gifts, having good skin days forever and someone offering to cook would also place a smile on the faces of Britons, the OnePoll.com survey found.

A further 13 per cent would find lifelong contentment by knowing if there really is a heaven, it claimed.

Just nine per cent of Brits polled claim to be 'extremely happy', but finding a fiver in their pocket, enjoying longer summers and getting a bonus at work would help to temporarily improve their state of mind.

Researchers found many also wish for high exchange rates, a reduction in traffic, a reduction in mortgage payments or a surprise tax refund.

Others surveyed said something as simple as the family pet sitting on their lap, or being able to get out of bed an hour later would suffice.

However, the survey found the average adult is discontent with the state of the world, with seven in 10 admitting their overall happiness is reduced by climate change.

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Britain's new Foreign Secretary

(June 11, 2011)

Following his victory in the general election, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has appointed Jack Straw as Britain's Foreign Secretary in place of Robin Cook. Rick Fountain reported for the BBC.

Jack Straw has **travelled a long way** from very **modest** beginnings. His childhood home was a post war **council maisonette** in the outer reaches of working class London, and his path seems set to continue upwards. Nowadays, **in the wake** of his four-year term as Home Secretary, the public perception of Straw is that of a man **austere** and correct, a **sober-suited authoritarian**, the natural ally of any police chief constable. He wasn't always like that. Thirty years ago, before starting a career as a lawyer, Jack Straw often **made the front page** of national newspapers as an anti-establishment **firebrand** president of the National Union of Students. But already he was showing a talent for organization, and an ability to master detail.

Mr Straw's appointment as Foreign Secretary, in place of Robin Cook, has **triggered** speculation in London about the Prime Minister's **motives** for the change. It seems likely to be linked to the **overriding** foreign policy question, at the moment - whether Britain should **abandon** sterling and become part of the Euro Zone. Mr Cook was widely perceived as strongly in favor; Mr Straw argued in Cabinet, it is said, for a **skeptical approach**. **In the aftermath** of the election and the general distrust of the voters for such change, such caution seems to have **paid off**.

Words

travelled a long way: if you say that someone has travelled a long way you mean that their circumstances have changed from one time in their lives to the present

modest: something that is modest is quite small in size or amount. Here the word means humble or not special

council maisonette: a maisonette is a small flat on two floors of a larger building. A council maisonette is owned by the local town council and rented to people to live in

in the wake of: if one thing follows in the wake of another, it happens as a result of it

austere: strict and serious

a sober-suited authoritarian: someone who wants to control other people rather than letting them decide things for themselves

made the front page: became well known in the media

a firebrand: you describe someone as being a firebrand when they are very active in politics and always trying to get people to take strong action

triggered: if something triggers speculation or some other process, it causes it to happen

motives: your motives for doing something are your reasons for doing it

overriding: more important than anything

abandon: to abandon something means to leave it permanently or for a long time

a skeptical approach: if you have a skeptical approach to doing something you do not really believe in doing it

aftermath: the aftermath of an important, usually harmful, event is the situation that results from it. The election is presumably seen here as having been harmful to the main opposition party

paid off: if an action pays off, it is successful

(Source: BBC)

Low birth rate unprecedented over past three decades

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iran's birth rate has been declining since last year up to now, which was unprecedented over the past three decades, head of committee on population studies affiliated to the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution has stated.

"The number of births in our country is drastically decreasing," IRIB news agency quoted Mohammad Javad Mahmoudi as saying on Wednesday.

In the Iranian calendar year 1394 (March 2015- March 2016), a maximum of 1,570,000 births occurred in the country, while a year later the population growth rate increased by 1.24 percent, he said.

During the Iranian calendar year 1395 (March 2016- March 2017), some 1,527,000 babies have been born in the country, and a year after, the number of registered births was reported 1,480,000, a difference of roughly 100,000 per year.

However, last year, the births reduced to 1,366,000, which was one of the largest declines in the history of birth rates, he lamented.

The number of births registered during the first three months of this year (starting on March 19), has declined by 13 percent compared to same period last year, he regretted.

He went on to add that during the first three months of this year, some 299,000 infants have been born, while during the same period last year the number of babies was reported 344,000, which is unprecedented in the past three decades.

He also emphasized that the trend shows that the general population policies and other relative measures should be taken seriously.

Ali Akbar Mahzoon, deputy director for the Statistical Center of Iran, for his part said that statistics show that population has grown to about 83 million since this year, which demonstrates an increase of 1.24 percent between the last two censuses.

Life expectancy increased to 74 years since the Iranian calendar year 1359 (March 1980- March 1981), as life expectancy at birth for males is 72.5 years, while that of females raise to 75.5 years, he noted.

Currently, there are 25.6 million households in Iran with an average size of 3.2 persons; almost two persons smaller than 5.1 persons reported in 1360s (1981-1991), Mahzoon stated.

Population estimates demonstrates that about 24.6 percent of the country's population are below 15 years old, 22 percent amounting to 18,269,000 are between 15 and 29 years old, he said, adding, and population aged 30 to 64 constitute 47 percent of the total population.

Elderly population aged 65 or above also accounts for 6.4 percent, while individuals above 60 years old amounting to 8,231,000 constitute 9.9 percent of the whole population, he stated.

Some 23 years ago, the major population were below 15 years old accounting for over 40 percent of the population,



Several socioeconomic factors led to fertility rate decrease and reproductive behavior in the country, including urbanization, education, financial issues, first marriage age, as well as increased access to family planning services along with increased time gap between the first born and marriage.

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Some 23 years ago, the major population were below 15 years old accounting for over 40 percent of the population,

however, it decreased and now the country is facing elderly population growth, he concluded.

Iran's population reached up to 80 million, while its growth rate declined to 1.2 percent a year. Censuses in 1350s-1360s (1971-1991), showed that population grew from 34 million to nearly 50 million, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 3.9 percent (3.2 percent from births and 0.7 percent from net migration).

The country experienced the highest population growth rate over a 5-year period between 1980 and 1985, when the population grew by nearly 4 percent per year.

However, in the Iranian calendar year 1374 (March 1996- March 1997), the results of census showed a rapid decline in the population growth rate due to fertility decline, which dropped from 6.2 births per woman to 2.5 births per woman, over a decade.

Several socioeconomic factors led to fertility rate decrease and reproductive behavior in the country, including urbanization, education, financial issues, first marriage age, as well as increased access to family planning services along with increased time gap between the first born and marriage.

Iran currently achieved a demographic window of opportunity which must be seized now before its working-age population starts to shrink and get older in 2050s.

This is while, in a letter to the heads of medical science universities and colleges across the country, Health Minister Saed Namaki has ordered the formation of a special committee aimed to prevent the country's population from declining, by development of infertility treatment centers, holding training courses of couples who refuse childbearing years after marriage, and intensifying prenatal care in less developed areas.

IRCS, UNICEF to support flood-affected children

for example in the early days, relief and rescue operations are top priorities and sometimes the restoration and rehabilitation process is then put on the agenda, he explained.

"In the early days when flood hit some provinces, the Red Crescent Society forces were active in rescue teams while alongside them, psychological support teams started focusing on children and women," he noted.

He went on to say that the forces are still offering services in the areas affected by flood, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

In addition to contributions of benefactors and volunteers, campaigns have been held to provide stationary packages for children, which will soon be distributed among the flood survivors prior to the new school year (September 23), he concluded.

Heavy rainfall, beginning on March 19 led to flooding in 28 out of 31 provinces of Iran affecting 42,269,129 inhabitants in 253 cities and causing widespread damage to municipal facilities, including health centers and hospitals.



Alaska's waters are now ice-free, scientists warn

Alaska's waters are now completely free from ice, with the nearest ice shelf more than 240km away, scientists have warned.

Following the warmest July on record, Arctic sea ice has been left 2 million sq km below the long-term average. Scientists warn this latest shrinkage is part of an Arctic-wide phenomenon that will lead to ice-free summers every year.

Rick Thoman, a climate specialist at the Alaska Centre for Climate Assessment and Policy, tweeted: "Alaska waters now completely clear of sea ice as last ice in the Beaufort Sea offshore Prudhoe Bay melted away."

"The closest ice to Alaska is now about 150 miles (240km) northeast of Kaktovik."

On average, September sea ice has declined by more than 13 per cent per decade over the past 40 years since satellite records began.

"This is a decline of around 85,000 square km per year - equivalent to losing an area of sea ice each year greater than the size of Scotland," said Ed Broekley, a Met Office expert on Arctic sea ice.

The melting of sea ice across the Arctic is not necessarily even and melting in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas in the northeast of Alaska has been particularly worrying.

The overall decline is consistent with worrying changes seen over the past few decades.

Professor Peter Wadhams from the University of Cambridge said: "At this time of year 'normally' (ie 30 years ago) there would be sea ice in southern Alaska waters but, more importantly, sea ice across the north coast of Alaska leaving only a narrow slot between ice and land for ships attempting a northwest passage."

"The latest shrinkage is part of an Arctic-wide phenomenon which is leading towards an ice-free summer as the future norm," he said.

In the immediate future, warming ocean temperatures are leading to rapid environmental and ecological changes which could threaten the livelihoods of people living in

coastal communities. Experts say many coastal communities are already looking at the prospect of relocating due to increased flooding.



(Source: The Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

\$1.2m donated to provide the underprivileged with warm clothing

Iran's Welfare Organization has managed to collect a contribution of 50 billion rials (nearly \$1.2 million) to provide the underprivileged with warm clothing, Tasnim news agency reported on Thursday. Within the framework of a campaign dubbed "kindness smile" from December 10, 2018 to January 9 some \$1.2 million was solicited from the public for procuring warm clothing for the financially struggling children in underprivileged areas, an official with the Organization has said.

Mohammad Ali Kozezgar explained that some 50,000 packages of warm clothing were obtained by the money and distributed among the children.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"-oid"

Meaning: a word ending that indicates resembling
For example: The robot was **humanoid** in appearance.

PHRASAL VERB

Tear at somebody/something

Meaning: to pull violently at someone or something
For example: The children were screaming and tearing at each other's hair.

IDIOM

See eye to eye

Explanation: if two people see eye to eye, they agree with each other
For example: I don't always see eye to eye with my father.

کمک ۵ میلیاردی برای تامین لباس زمستانی کودکان در مناطق کم برخوردار

به گزارش خبرگزاری تسنیم سازمان بهزیستی کشور با هدف تامین تهیه لباس گرم برای کودکان مناطق کم برخوردار مبلغ ۵ میلیارد تومان جمع آوری کرده است. رئیس مرکز مشارکتهای مردمی و توانمندسازی سازمان بهزیستی کشور با اشاره به اتمام پویش لیخند مهربانی با هدف تامین تهیه لباس گرم برای کودکان مناطق کم برخوردار اظهار کرد: این پویش از ۱۹ آذر با مشارکت خیرین و نیکوکاران آغاز شد و تا ۱۹ دی ماه ادامه داشت و در این طرح یک ماه ۵ میلیارد تومان جمع آوری شده است. محمد علی کوزه گر گفت: ۵۰ هزار بسته لباس گرم به ارزش ۵ میلیارد تومان تهیه شده است و در اختیار کودکان قرار گرفت.

At least 14 killed, 145 wounded in Kabul suicide attack

TEHRAN — At least 14 people have been killed and more than 140 wounded after a Taliban suicide attack outside a police station in the Afghanistan capital of Kabul.

The blast occurred about 9am (04:30 GMT) in western Kabul on Wednesday, interior ministry spokesperson Nasrat Rahimi said before adding that the bomb went off when a vehicle was stopped at a checkpoint outside the station.

"Fourteen were martyred, 145 injured in today's explosion," deputy interior minister General Khoshal Sadat told reporters, hours after a huge blast shook the Afghan capital.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.

The explosion sent a massive plume of smoke over the Afghanistan capital.

"I heard a big bang and all the windows broke with glass flying everywhere," shopkeeper Ahmad Saleh told the AFP news agency.

"My head is spinning and I still don't know what has happened but the windows



of about 20 shops around one kilometre from the blast site are broken," he added.

According to videos on social media and witnesses, small arms fire could be heard

following the blast.

The attack came a day after the Taliban called for the boycott of a presidential election scheduled to take place on September

28 and threatened to attack election rallies.

The Taliban, who have been staging near-daily attacks across the country, usually target Afghan forces and government officials or those seen as loyal to the government.

On Tuesday, a bomb targeting a van carrying employees of the Interior Ministry's counter-narcotics division killed five people and wounded seven in Kabul.

U.S. officials and the Taliban met in Qatar's capital Doha this week for the eighth round of talks aimed at striking a peace deal that would slash the American military presence in Afghanistan, Al Jazeera reported.

Despite negotiations, the fighting has not subsided, as the civilian casualty rates across Afghanistan jumped back to record levels last month.

According to the United Nations, more than 1,500 civilians were killed or wounded in the Afghan conflict in July alone, the highest monthly casualties so far this year and the worst single month since May 2017.

Outrage in U.S. as photo shows police leading black man by a rope



TEHRAN — Outrage has erupted across the United States after a photo of two white police officers mounted on horseback walking a handcuffed black man by a rope - recalling the long history of violence, slavery and racism against African Americans during the era of segregation - went viral.

Vernon Hale, the police chief of the U.S. city of Galveston in Texas state, issued an apology following the incident, but his statement drew more criticism for being "weak".

Hale said the black man in the photo, Donald Neely, who was arrested on Saturday for trespassing, should have been taken to the station in a police car, instead of horse-mounted officers.

Neely was then escorted on foot, led by a length of rope and flanked by the two police

"Although this is a trained technique and best practice in some scenarios, I believe our officers showed poor judgment in this instance," said Hale, in a statement published on Monday on Facebook.

"First and foremost I must apologize to Mister Neely for this unnecessary embarrassment," Hale said, adding that policy had been changed so that the technique would no longer be used.

Neely is free on bond. He has no listed telephone number and could not be reached for comment.

Hale told The Galveston County Daily News that he regularly talks to his officers about how their actions affect people's perception of the department.

Philippines declares national epidemic after 622 dengue deaths



TEHRAN — The Philippine government has declared the country's outbreak of dengue a national epidemic following the death of at least 622 patients since January.

The country's health department announced late on Tuesday that Francisco Duque III, the health secretary, made the declaration to improve the response to the outbreak by allowing local governments to draw on a special Quick Response Fund.

It said the Philippines recorded 146,062 cases of dengue from January through July 20 this year, 98 percent more than the same period in 2018. That is roughly 5,036 cases every week.

Among the worst-hit areas are central Philippines as well as some regions in the northern island of Luzon and the southern island of Mindanao.

Duque said a campaign is being launched focusing on the destruction of mosquito breeding sites.

Dengue is a mosquito-borne viral infection found in tropical countries worldwide. It can cause joint pain, nausea, vomiting and a rash, and can cause breathing problems, hemorrhaging and organ failure in severe cases.

While there is no specific treatment for the illness, medical care to maintain a person's fluid levels is seen as critical.

According to Al Jazeera, the Department of Health said that starting on Tuesday, it was conducting a campaign to focus on finding and destroying mosquito breeding sites, which is a primary means of containing dengue.

Turkey says U.S. getting closer to its views on north Syria safe zone

TEHRAN — Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said the United States is shifting closer to Ankara's views on a proposed safe zone in northeast Syria, and that its plans for a military deployment there are complete.

Turkey and the United States, allies in NATO, have been deadlocked for months over the scope and command of the zone, given the presence of Kurdish YPG militia that fought alongside U.S. forces against Islamic State militants but which Ankara sees as terrorists who pose a grave security threat.

Ankara has accused Washington of stalling on setting up the safe zone spread over hundreds of km (miles) along Syria's northeastern border and has demanded that the United States sever its ties with the YPG.

On Wednesday, the third day of fresh Turkish-U.S. talks on the safe zone, Akar described them as "positive and rather constructive", and that he expected them to finish within hours.

"In the meeting, we were glad to see that our counter-

parts approached our viewpoint," Akar said, according to state-owned Anadolu Agency.

Akar did not give details on that point. He added, "Our plans, preparations, the deployment of our units in the field are all complete. But we said we wanted to act together with our friend and ally, the United States."

Washington has proposed a two-tiered safe zone, with a 5-kilometre (three-mile) demilitarized strip bolstered by an additional 9 km cleared of heavy weapons - stretching in total less than half the distance into Syria that Turkey is seeking.

Turkey has also said it must have ultimate authority over the zone, another point of divergence with the United States.

Three Turkish officials who spoke to Reuters this week expressed impatience that the talks have yet to yield results, and warned that Ankara was ready to act on its own.

Turkey has twice sent forces into northern Syria in the last three years, citing security concerns caused by Syria's



eight-year-long civil war, and President Tayyip Erdogan said on Sunday a third incursion was imminent, targeting YPG-controlled territory east of the Euphrates river.

Britain faces food shortages in no-deal Brexit scenario, industry body says

TEHRAN — Britain will experience shortages of some fresh foods for weeks or even months if a disorderly no-deal Brexit leaves perishable produce rotting in lorries at ports, Britain's food and drink lobby warned on Wednesday.

Retailers such as Tesco have warned that leaving the European Union on Oct. 31 without a transition deal would be problematic as so much fresh produce is imported

and warehouses are stocked full ahead of Christmas.

The industry - which employs 450,000 people in the United Kingdom - views Brexit as the biggest challenge since World War Two, dwarfing previous crises such as the horse meat scandal of 2013 and the mad cow disease outbreaks of the 1980s and 1990s.

"We're not going to starve but there will

be shortages of fresh food and some specialist ingredients. It's going to be a little bit unpredictable," the Food and Drink Federation's Chief Operating Officer Tim Rycroft told Reuters.

"Given that food very often is perishable and has a short shelf life, we expect that there will be some selective shortages of food in the weeks and months following no-deal Brexit," Rycroft said.

"There will be some shortages and price rises."

Part of the problem is that Brexit could change everything - or, possibly, nothing.

Ahead of the original Brexit deadline of March 29, supermarkets and retailers spent millions of pounds preparing for Brexit and working with suppliers to increase stocks of dried goods including pasta, bottled water and toilet paper.

Venezuela: Asset freeze by U.S. equals economic terrorism

TEHRAN — Venezuela says the United States is practicing "economic terrorism" against the Venezuelan people by ordering a freeze on all Venezuelan government assets in America.

In a statement on Tuesday, Venezuela's Foreign Ministry strongly censured the U.S. move as "another serious aggression by the [U.S. President Donald] Trump administration through arbitrary economic terrorism against the Venezuelan people."

Trump issued an executive order on Monday blocking "all property and interests in property of the Government of Venezuela that are in the United States."

The measure, the first of its kind against a government in the Western Hemisphere in over 30 years, also banned transactions with the Venezuelan government.

Venezuelans are suffering from a lack of basic necessities under U.S. sanctions. According to United Nations statistics, a quarter of Venezuela's 30-million-strong population is in need of humanitarian aid.

In its statement, the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry further said that the move was an attempt by Washington to derail political crisis resolution talks between the Caracas government and the opposition.

The measure, it said, showed that Washington and its

allies are "committed to the failure of the political dialog" because "they fear the results and benefits."

However, it said, the Venezuelan government "won't allow this biased escalation of aggressions" to affect the talks.

According to Press TV, since May, the government of President Nicolas Maduro has engaged in negotiations with the opposition in a bid to resolve sharp political differences.

Maduro said earlier last month that he was certain a peace agreement would be reached until the end of the year.

Desperate Bin Salman planning to down Turkey

TEHRAN — Following the assassination of Khashoggi by a team of Saudi agents in their country's Istanbul consulate, the relations between Riyadh and Ankara have been highly tense. But Tensions between Saudi Arabia and Turkey have increased since Ankara supported Qatar during 2017 Qatar diplomatic crisis, as well as turned to Iranian side diplomatically.

The aim of the Bin Salman's plan is to use "all possible tools to pressure Erdogan's government, weaken him, and keep him busy with domestic issues in the hope that he will be brought down by the opposition, or occupy him with confronting crisis after crisis, and push him to slip up and make mistakes which the media would surely pick up on," the report added.

According to MME: "Saudi authorities blocked 80 Turkish trucks transporting textile products and chemicals from entering the kingdom through its Doha port".

Three hundred containers carrying fruit and vegetables from Turkey had also been held in Jeddah's port, according to a Turkish official who spoke to MEE on condition of anonymity.

The number of Saudi tourists visiting Turkey decreased 15 percent (from 276,000 to 234,000) in the first six months of 2019, according to official data released by the Turkish tourism ministry.

Saudi Arabia is planning to uproot Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan following his pressure on the Kingdom after the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, according to a new report published in EXPRESS.

Saudi-led coalition must take threats seriously: Abdul Salam

TEHRAN — The coalition, which includes in addition to Saudi Arabia and UAE: Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan and Kuwait, has been also imposing a harsh blockade against Yemen.

5 Yemeni missiles hit targets in Saudi Arabia's Najran, Asir

Meanwhile, Yemeni forces have targeted gatherings of Saudi-led mercenaries in Saudi Arabia's southern provinces of Najran and Asir with at least five domestically-manufactured missiles.

Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah news website, citing a spokesman for the Yemeni army, reported that Yemeni missile defense units targeted the gatherings of the Saudi-led mercenaries in the al-Sadis area in Najran with two Zelzal-1 (Earthquake-1) missiles on Tuesday.

The report added that Yemeni forces also hit similar gatherings of Saudi-led mercenaries in the mountainous al-Majaz area of Asir with three missiles of the same type.

The source also told al-Masirah that all missiles successfully hit their designated targets, leaving an unspecified number of mercenaries either dead or wounded.

On Sunday, Yemeni forces pounded gatherings of Saudi-led mercenaries in al-Sadis and al-Soh areas in Najran with four Zelzal-1 missiles, and a day earlier, they hit a newly-built military base in the southern parts of the Saqqam area in Najran with a Badr-F ballistic missile.

Separately on Tuesday, Yemeni snipers also shot dead at least six Saudi-led mercenaries in al-Sadis area and five others in the vicinity of Qais mountain in Saudi Arabia's southwestern province of Jizan. Yemeni forces regularly target positions inside Saudi Arabia in retaliation for the Saudi-led war on Yemen, which began in March 2015 in an attempt to reinstall a former regime and eliminate the Houthi Ansarullah movement, which has been defending the country along with the armed forces.

The US-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, estimates that the Saudi-led war has claimed the lives of over 60,000 Yemenis since January 2016.

The years-long military aggression has also taken a heavy toll on Yemen's infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories. The United Nations has warned that more than 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme levels of hunger.

Pakistan decides to downgrade diplomatic ties with India over Kashmir

TEHRAN — Pakistan's National Security Committee, chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan, decided on Wednesday to downgrade diplomatic relations with India and suspend bilateral trade following New Delhi's move to revoke the special status of its Jammu and Kashmir state.

"The committee discussed the situation arising out of unilateral & illegal actions by Indian govt, situation inside Indian Occupied J&K and along LOC," the Pakistani government said in a statement in its official Twitter blog.

According to the statement, the committee also decided to take the matter to the United Nations, including the Security Council.

Earlier on Wednesday, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan called a national security committee meeting to discuss the situation in Kashmir, following India's decision to revoke the state's autonomous status, Sputnik reported.

Israel approves plans for 2,304 new settlement homes in occupied West Bank

TEHRAN — Israeli officials have advanced plans for the construction of more than 2,300 settlement homes in West Bank, as the Tel Aviv regime presses ahead with its land expropriation policies in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Israeli non-governmental organization Peace Now, which monitors settlement activity in the West Bank, said in a statement on Tuesday that the so-called Higher Planning Committee, which is affiliated to the Israeli ministry of military affairs, had issued approvals for 2,304 housing units while meeting over the past couple of days.

"The approval of settlement plans is part of a disastrous ... policy designed to prevent the possibility of peace and a two-state solution, and to annex part or all of the West Bank," the statement read.

Last week, Israeli officials approved the construction of 6,000 new settler homes in the West Bank's Area C, where the Israeli army has full control over the management of resources, planning and construction, and strictly limits Palestinian construction or development to less than one percent of the area, Press Tv reported.

Iron Man Khalil Oghab bemoans lack of respect

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Khalil Tariqat Peyma, known as Khalil Oghab, says that he has been forced to leave Tehran after he failed to pay his container's rent.

The Iranian Iron Man was staying at a container at the Velayat Park in south of Tehran but he was forced to return to his hometown Shiraz.

Oghab was famous for bending heavy metal beams, scrolling, support feats and getting ran over by cars. In his best performing days in Iran, he was able to attract a crowd of as much as 50,000 people in a single event in the 1960s.

He emigrated to Ireland in 1971 at the invitation of the Faust Circus.

The Iranian strongman then went to England's Jerry Cattle Circus. He was able to carry 450kg in teeth and achieved the Guinness World Records.

He also lifted 1408kg elephant twice a night with his feet at the age of 50.

After long journey of about 20 years, Khalil Oghab settled down in Italy where he founded a circus called "Iran and Italy". He has performed athletic performances in more than 37 countries.

Oghab came back to Iran in 1991 after being invited by the Iranian government, along with sixty performers working for him in a circus.

"After the closure of Rushen Circus, I was staying at a container but the municipal employees kicked me out after I was not able to pay my rent. My livelihood is at stake and I have no source of income," the 96-year-old Pahlevan said.

It's weird to hear that Khalil Oghab is being pulled into poverty since he has worked in so many circuses!

However, Oghab says that he has spent his money in order to support the people who need help.

"I have so many fans in Iran and in the world but I don't want to beg. I deserve to be treated with more respect. I'm under pressure due to high medical expenses and have no



money in savings," the father of Iranian circus added.

The Iranian top athletes are supported by the Sports Ministry but Oghab says that it does not include him.

"I've been told that I am not a medal winner and they don't pay me salary. They don't know anything about the Guinness Book but I wish them all the best," Oghab concluded.

Saman Ghoddos on verge of joining Brentford



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran international winger Saman Ghoddos will complete a move to Brentford. Brentford have lined up a deal for the Iranian to replace Neal Maupay following his departure to Brighton earlier this week, Football Insider understands.

Ghoddos, who played for Iran at the 2018 World Cup, is now set for talks and a medical at Griffin Park as Brentford look to finalize the move before Thursday's transfer deadline.

Ghoddos can play in an attacking mid-field role or anywhere across the frontline and Brentford have been tracking him for some time.

The Bees' Championship rivals Fulham and Queens Park Rangers tried to sign Ghoddos before he joined Amiens last summer from Swedish club Ostersunds.

Ghoddos scored four goals and provided four assists in 27 games in his debut season in Ligue 1 last season, while he has 18 caps under his belt for his country.

IPL: Start date of 2019/20 season announced



S P O R T S TEHRAN — The start date of the Iran Professional League's 2019/20 season will take place on Monday Aug. 19.

At the draw ceremony held in Mashhad on Tuesday, the dates for the mouthwatering Tehran derby between Persepolis and Esteghlal have been confirmed.

Defending champions Persepolis start their campaign with Pars Jonoubi at home, while Esteghlal are away at Machine Sazi in Tabriz.

Persepolis and Esteghlal will play on Matchday 4 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

The Iran Professional League is the highest division of professional football in Iran. The league was also known as the Persian Gulf Cup from 2006. It is the top-level football league in Iran since its foundation on Nov. 2, 2001.

Each year, the top finishing team in the league become the Iranian football champions, and the lowest finishing teams are relegated to Azadegan League.

Xavi disappointed not to win on managerial debut

Al Sadd head coach Xavi expressed disappointment with his side's 1-1 draw against domestic rivals Al Duhail in the first leg of the 2019 AFC Champions League Round of 16 on Tuesday.

The former club captain got his managerial career underway against the same side he ended his playing career against just two months earlier before transitioning from the pitch to the dugout.

In June's Amir Cup final, Al Sadd where on the receiving end of a 4-1 defeat, but on Tuesday they walked away with a valuable away goal and a draw.

Akram Afif struck first for Al Sadd after half an hour at Al Janoub Stadium, drilling home Jung Woo-young's chipped pass. Msakni levelled the scoring in the second half to set up an intriguing return leg in Doha next week.

"I am satisfied with the performance," said the 39-year-old. "We could have won but now there is another game



remaining, which will be played at our home ground and we are thinking about that game now."

Korean playmaker Nam Tae-hee made his debut for Al Sadd against his former team, lasting 65 minutes on his return from an Anterior Cruciate Ligament injury, before being substituted.

"Nam is returning from a seven-month injury lay-off, but he came back strongly and gave a good performance today. I am proud of what he had to offer."

"My only disappointment today is that we didn't win," added Xavi, reflecting on his first competitive match as coach of the side he represented for the past four years.

"It is not a bad result as we scored an away goal, but we deserved more than that. What makes me happy is how the players performed on the pitch."

(Source: the-afc)

Iran hopeful of winning a place at 2020 Olympic

Following the excitement, suspense and drama of last weekend in the women's qualifiers for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, more of the same is anticipated this weekend as 24 men's teams set off in search for six available tickets to the ultimate sporting event on the planet starting on Friday.

The 24 teams are divided into six pools of four each, with the top teams by Sunday evening punching their tickets for the Japanese capital next year.

They will be joining Japan, who as hosts have already secured one of the 12 available berths.

A further five teams will emerge in January from the Continental Olympic Qualifying Tournaments, to complete the Tokyo 2020 lineup.

The men's tournaments, scheduled for this weekend:

• **Pool A (in Varna):** Brazil, Egypt,

Bulgaria, Puerto Rico.

• **Pool B (in Rotterdam):** USA, Belgium, The Netherlands, Korea.

• **Pool C (in Bari):** Italy, Serbia, Australia, Cameroon.

• **Pool D (in Gdansk):** Poland, France, Slovenia, Tunisia.

• **Pool E (in Saint Petersburg):** Russia, Iran, Cuba, Mexico.

• **Pool F (in Ningbo):** Canada, Argentina, Finland, China.

Defending Olympic champions Brazil, who triumphed at home at Rio 2016 for their third Olympic gold in their history (after Barcelona 1992, Athens 2004 and Rio 2016) are on the Black Sea coast in Varna, up against hosts Bulgaria alongside Egypt and Puerto Rico. Meanwhile, reigning world champions and Montreal 1976 Olympic gold medalists Poland face some very tough opposition when they host the likes of France, alongside Slovenia



and Tunisia in Gdansk.

Rio 2016 silver medalists Italy will also need to overcome a huge hurdle when they meet Sydney 2000 Olympic gold medalists Serbia in Bari - and the rest of the opposition. Australia and Cameroon, are not to be taken lightly either. Three-time Olympic champions USA (Los Angeles 1984, Seoul 1988 and Beijing 2008) are on the road in their quest to make Tokyo 2020, travelling to Rotterdam to face hosts the Netherlands

(the Atlanta 1996 Olympic gold medalists), Belgium and Korea. The Americans were bronze medalists last time around in Rio 2016.

Four-time Olympic champions (including as USSR) Russia, however, are at home in Saint Petersburg, but face a tough challenge from Iran. The reigning European champions also meet Cuba and Mexico. This is the only qualification pool in which all four participants had played in Rio 2016. Russia finished fourth after blowing a two-set lead against USA in the bronze medal match - Cuba and Mexico failed to make it out of pool play.

And finally, Argentina and Canada will fight it out in Ningbo, where they also face hosts China and Finland for a spot at Tokyo 2020. Both the North and South Americans ranked 5th in Rio 2016, knocked out in quarterfinals - Argentina by Brazil and Canada by Russia.

(Source: fivb.org)

Iran basketball to hold three friendlies in Greece

MNA — Iran's national basketball team arrived in Greece on Tuesday and are slated to hold three friendly games as they prepare for 2019 FIBA World Cup.

This is the final foreign training camp of the Iranian team ahead of the world event. The team arrived on Crete Island on Tuesday to hold training and matches till Monday.

Iran will face off Greece on Thursday behind closed doors. Next, the team will meet Hungary on Saturday before playing another match with Greece on Sunday.

Mehran Shahintab's team will then depart Greece for Iran. In the past two weeks, Iran held two training camps in Portugal and Russia as a preparation for the world event.

The 2019 edition of FIBA World Cup will be held in China from August 31 to September 15. The Iranian team was drawn against Spain, Puerto Rico, and Tunisia in the Group C of the event.

IFMA president urges Iran to establish an independent federation for Muaythai

MNA — Secretary General of the International Federation of Muaythai Associations (IFMA) Stephan Fox has urged Iran for formation of an independent federation for Muaythai.

In a letter to Iran's National Olympic Committee (NOC), Secretary General of the International Federation of Muaythai Associations (IFMA) Fox has called on Iran to establish an independent federation for Muaythai to boost the sport in Iran.

Fox refers to newcomers to IFMA such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Palestine that have already independent federation for Muaythai, urging the newly pointed president of Iranian Muaythai Javad Nasiri to promote his body to an independent federation to further boost the sport in Iran.

Muaythai is currently under the Iran's National Olympic Committee (NOC).

Stimac announces squad for India training camp

India's national team head coach Igor Stimac has named a 34-strong squad for a training camp ahead of the Asian Qualifiers for the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar and AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

The training squad is spearheaded by India's record goal-scorer Sunil Chhetri, who is expected to wear the captain's armband when India play their opening Group E tie against Oman on September 5.

Also in the group are Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Qatar. India's training squad contains a mix of youth and experience with young players like Jobby Justin, Manvir Singh and Narender Gehlot included.

Regulars like Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, Udanta Singh, Anirudh Thapa, Raynier Fernandes and Brandon Fernandes have also been included.

The match against Oman will be followed by an away tie against reigning AFC Asian Cup champions in Doha on September 10.

India Training Squad

Goalkeepers: Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, Amrinder Singh, Kamaljit Singh, Vishal Kaith.

Defenders: Rahul Bheke, Nishu Kumar, Pritam Kotal, Anas Edathodika, Sandesh Jhingam, Anwar Ali (Jr.), Narender Gahlot, Sarthak Golui, Adil Khan, Salam Ranjan Singh, Subhasish Bose, Jerry Lalrinzuala, Mandar Rao Dessai.

Midfielders: Nikhil Pojary, Udanta Singh, Anirudh Thapa, Raynier Fernandes, Vinit Rai, Sahal Abdul Samad, Amarjit Singh, Pronay Halder, Brandon Fernandes, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Halicharan Narzary, Ashique Kuruniyan.

Forwards: Balwant Singh, Sunil Chhetri, Jobby Justin, Farukh Choudhary, Manvir Singh.

(Source: Fox Sports)

Hanoi FC clinch ASEAN title

Vietnam's Hanoi FC were crowned 2019 AFC Cup ASEAN Zonal Champions on Wednesday after a 1-0 home win over domestic rivals Becamex Binh Duong in the second leg of their regional final.

Leading 1-0 from last week's first leg, Pape Omar Faye's second-half strike — his eighth goal of the competition — ultimately sealed a 2-0 aggregate success for Hanoi, one which earns them a spot in the Inter-Zone Semi-finals where they will now face Turkmenistan's Alyn Asyr FC.

After a cautious start to proceedings at the Hang Day Stadium, it was to be Hanoi who fashioned the game's first genuine opportunity, striker Faye failing to connect properly with an excellent delivery from Ngan Van Dai when only six yards out on 16 minutes.

Moments later, Binh Duong's Veniamin Shumeyko flicked a neat header narrowly wide of the target, before the defender came perilously close to steering Nguyen Van Quyet's cross into his own net.

In the last notable action of a compelling first period, Hanoi midfielder Do Hung Dung flashed a fierce drive just beyond the right-hand upright to leave his side within touching distance of the next round.

Binh Duong were quick out of the blocks after the break, Pedro seeing a powerful header expertly saved by Nguyen Van Cong on 47 minutes and the Brazilian forward then having an angled shot acrobatically cleared off the line by Hanoi's Nguyen Thanh Chung.

Hanoi responded well however, and they duly took the lead shortly after the hour mark courtesy of Faye's precise finish from close range after Binh Duong goalkeeper Bui Tan Truong's failure to gather a Quang Hai corner.

With Hanoi still in the ascendancy, Tan Truong reacted superbly well to parry Nguyen Quang Hai's 68th minute shot while Ngan Van Dai could only poke the rebound agonizingly wide of the target.

As full-time approached, To Van Vu's drive briefly hinted at a remarkable Binh Duong recovery but it was not to be as, with substitute Papa Kebe missing a glorious chance late on for the hosts, Hanoi held firm in the final moments to seal their progress.

(Source: the-afc)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
» Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737

Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimesdaily

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

To know integrity, the eye can never do the work of wisdom and thought, for the eye may lie and go wrong, while wisdom, when used properly, does not mislead.
Imam Ali (AS)

MSP Iranian Film Festival announces official lineup

A R T TEHRAN — Seven movies will be screened during the 2nd MSP Iranian Film Festival according to the official lineup announced by the organizers on Tuesday.

Director Peyman Maadi's drama "Bomb, a Love Story" will be the opening film of the festival, which will begin on August 15 at St. Anthony Main Theatre in Minneapolis, in the U.S. state of Minnesota.



Leila Hatami acts in a scene from director Peyman Maadi's drama "Bomb, a Love Story".

The story of the film is set in 1988 when Tehran is being bombed relentlessly at the height of the Iran-Iraq war. The days that pass by are full of foreboding, and yet, love, affection, hope and life itself manage to sweep away the fear of death from those surrounded by it.

Among the films are also director Mona Zandi-Haqiqi's drama "African Violet". The compassionate drama of strength and reunion follows Shoku, a woman who finds out that her ex-husband, Fereidun, has been placed in a nursing home by their children. She and her second husband take an unconventional step to take over care of Fereidun in their own home.

Kamal Tabrizi's political satire "Sly" will also be screened. Starring Hamed Behdad, the movie tells the story of an aspiring politician who seeks to become a member of the Iranian parliament. But, his path to success is fraught with obstacles and self-inflicted wrong turns.

The festival will also screen "Orange Days" by Arash Lahuti. It is about Aban, a strong, self-sufficient, and the only woman contractor in the competitive orange fields of northern Iran. She beats out the male competition for a big job, but the operation quickly gets off to a rocky start as her rivals stop at nothing to obstruct her at every turn.

The Minneapolis-Saint Paul (MSP) Film Society is the organizer of the festival, which will come to an end on August 18.

The society will then organize the Twin Cities Iranian Culture Week beginning on August 19.

Khayyam Intl. Exhibition of Photography goes to Gijon

A R T TEHRAN — A selection of top works displayed during the 6th Khayyam International Exhibition of Photography is on display in an exhibition in the



A poster for 6th Khayyam International Exhibition of Photography in Gijon, Spain.

Spanish city of Gijon.

The exhibit has been set up at the FIDMA, an international trade fair in Gijon, the director of the exhibition, Ali Samei, said in a press release on Wednesday.

Iran's Focus Photo Club, in collaboration with the Asemeyando Photographic Association in La Felguera in northern Spain, has organized the exhibit, which opened on August 5 and will be running until August 12.

The 6th Khayyam International Exhibition of Photography was first opened at the Iranian Academy of Arts in Tehran in January. It toured several Iranian cities and later was taken to Konya in Turkey and Bilbao in Spain.

Iran's Focus Photo Club organizes the exhibition annually with the help of the Photographic Society of America (PSA) and FIAP. The Khayyam exhibit aims to elevate the art of photography and provide facilities for increased interaction between Iranian and world photographers.

French musician Nicolas Krauze calls Tehran concert difficult task

By Manijeh Rezapoor

TEHRAN — French musician Nicolas Krauze who will accompany the Tehran Symphony Orchestra as a guest conductor during its upcoming two concerts has called the program a difficult task.

"My plan is first to work as well as possible with the orchestra in order to produce the best possible result for the audience; the program is not easy," Krauze told the Tehran Times in a recent email interview.

He is scheduled to conduct the Tehran Symphony Orchestra at Vahdat Hall during performances on August 21 and 22.

"I have no idea how it will be, and I prefer to discover it as a surprise! The only thing I looked at on the Internet are pictures of the concert hall, and it looks very beautiful," he added.

Krauze said that he doesn't know any Iranian musician personally and he has never been in Iran and added, "That will be a big first! I'm very curious and looking forward to it."

He also noted that he has not performed any compositions by Iranian musicians in his performances with international orchestras and added, "My training and musical life has been very centered in Western and Eastern Europe."

"Over the past years, my carrier has been growing, and I've also had the chance to perform with many orchestras in other parts of the world, such as Brazil, Argentina, China, South Korea and Kazakhstan, but in the Near-East it will be a first," he explained.

The musician said that he will be staying in Iran a bit more than a week.



French conductor Nicolas Krauze in an undated photo.

"Of course, if there is some time left, I'll be very happy to visit the historical and interesting contemporary things, meet local people, go to original places, and taste Iranian food specialties," he added.

"Although I'm French and born in France, I had the opportunity to travel quite a lot when I was young, and the intense years of

music study for me were in Moscow, Russia and Poland.

"Today, I conduct about 50 concerts a year, about half with my orchestra in France, and half as a freelance conductor here and there in the world," he asserted.

"I also love opera very much and from time to time I conduct operas, too," he added.

The Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi's opera "La Forza Del Destino", French composer Paul Dukas' symphonic poem "The Sorcerer's Apprentice", French composer Maurice Ravel's one-movement orchestral piece "Bolero" and Beethoven's Symphony No. 4 are among the compositions to be performed during the Tehran concert.

"The Feast of the Goat" receives nomination at Parisian festival



A scene from the Iranian short film "The Feast of the Goat" written and directed by Saeid Zamanian.

A R T TEHRAN — The Iranian short film "The Feast of the Goat", written and directed by Saeid Zamanian, has been nominated for the best short script award at the 9th Paris Art and Movie Awards (PAMA), an international film festival and screenwriting contest in France.

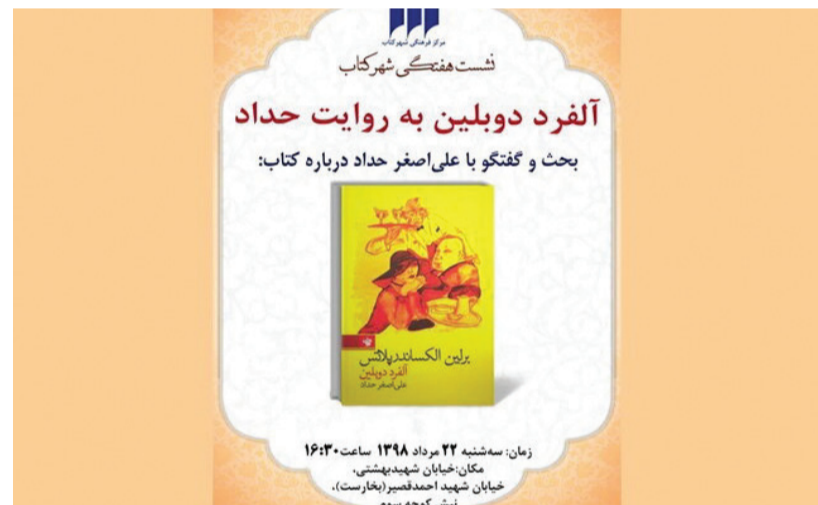
Produced in 2018, the film tells the story of Saeid, a 9-year-old boy who tries to stop his father from sacrificing his goat

on the day of Eid al-Adha (the Feast of Sacrifice).

"The Feast of the Goat" will compete with "From the Face of an Angel" written by Frank Vespe from the U.S., "Generations: Letter from an Old Father to His Son" by Kevin Starnino from Canada and "Kitchen" by Conor Waldron from Ireland.

The event, which is a leading film festival for independent filmmakers, will be held from September 19 to 23.

Book City Institute to review works by Alfred Doblin



A poster for a meeting to be held at the Book City Institute in Tehran on August 13 to review the oeuvre of German novelist Alfred Doblin.

A R T TEHRAN — Groups of Iranian literati will come together in a session at Tehran's Book City Institute on August 13 to review works by German novelist Alfred Doblin.

The session will focus on Doblin's famous novel "Berlin Alexanderplatz", which has recently been published in Persian by Lahita Publications in Tehran.

Written in 1929, the book is about a murderer, Franz Biberkopf, who has just

been released from prison. Franz, who killed his mistress accidentally four years earlier, tries to turn himself around and lead a respectable life.

The novel is considered one of the most important and innovative works of its time. In a 2002 poll of 100 noted writers, the book was named among the top 100 books of all time.

The Iranian translator of the book, Ali-Asghar Haddad, is scheduled to deliver a speech during the meeting.

Nobel laureate Toni Morrison dead at 88



In this Nov. 25, 2005 file photo, author Toni Morrison listens to Mexico's Carlos Monsivais during the Julio Cortazar professorship conference at the Guadalajara's University in Guadalajara City, Mexico. (AP Photo/Guillermo Arias, File)

NEW YORK (AP) — Nobel laureate Toni Morrison, a pioneer and reigning giant of modern literature whose imaginative power in "Beloved," "Sula" and other works transformed American letters by dramatizing the pursuit of freedom within the boundaries of race, has died at age 88.

Publisher Alfred A. Knopf announced that Morrison died Monday night at Montefiore Medical Center in New York after a brief illness.

"Toni Morrison passed away peacefully last night surrounded by family and friends," Morrison's family said in a statement through the publisher. "She was an extremely devoted mother, grandmother, and aunt who reveled in being with her family and friends. The consummate writer who treasured the written word, whether her own, her students or others, she read voraciously and was most at home when writing."

Few authors rose in such rapid, spectacular style. She was nearly 40 when her first novel, "The Bluest Eye," was published. By her early 60s, after just six novels, she had become the first black woman to receive the Nobel literature prize, praised in 1993 by the Swedish academy for her "visionary force" and for delving into "language itself, a language she wants to liberate" from categories of black and white.

Morrison helped educate her country and the world about the private lives of the unknown and unwanted. In her novels, history — black history — was a hidden trove of poetry, tragedy and good old gossip, whether in small-town Ohio in "Sula" or big-city Harlem in "Jazz." She regarded race as a social construct, and through language founded the better world her characters suffered to attain, weaving in everything from African literature and slave folklore to the Bible and Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

"Narrative has never been merely entertainment for me," she said in her Nobel lecture. "It is, I believe, one of the principal ways in which we absorb knowledge."

Winner of the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for "Beloved," she

fabulous," Morrison added. "Nobody was going to take that and make it into something else. I felt representational. I felt American. I felt Ohioan. I felt blacker than ever. I felt more woman than ever. I felt all of that, and put all of that together and went out and had a good time."

Morrison was born Chloe Anthony Wofford in Lorain, Ohio, a steel town outside of Cleveland. She attended Howard University, where she spent much of her free time in the theater, and met and married a Jamaican architect, Harold Morrison, whom she divorced in 1964. They had two children, Harold and Slade.

Even when she was growing up, she believed she was smarter than the white kids and took it for granted she was wiser. She was an honors student and attended Howard because she dreamed of life spent among black intellectuals.

But although she went on to teach there, Howard disappointed her. Campus life seemed closer to a finishing school than to an institution of learning.

Protesters, among them her former student Stokely Carmichael, were demanding equality. Morrison wanted that, too, but wondered what kind.

"I thought they wanted to integrate for nefarious purposes," she said. "I thought they should demand money in those black schools. That was the problem — the resources, the better equipment, the better teachers, the buildings that were falling apart — not being in some high school next to some white kids."

In 1964, she became an editor at Random House and one of the few black women in publishing. Over the next 20 years, she would work with emerging fiction authors such as Gail Jones and Toni Cade Bambara, on a memoir by Muhammad Ali and books by such activists as Angela Davis and Black Panther Huey Newton. A special project was editing "The Black Book," a collection of everything from newspaper advertisements to song lyrics that anticipated her immersion in the everyday lives of the past.

"I decided that ... winning the (Nobel) prize was