



Grand ayatollah demands immediate halt to Indian violence in Kashmir 3



Israel's 2006 war on Lebanon was meant to create new Middle East 13



Nagoya Oceans beat Mes Sungun to win AFC Futsal Club Championship 15



Four cultural figures to receive Ghadir Artistic Awards 16



Culture of martyrdom has protected Iran against pressure

See page 2

Iran becoming self-reliant in producing aircraft engines: commander

TEHRAN — Iran is standing on the verge of fully self-reliant production of airplane and helicopter engines, says the country's chief of General Staff of Armed Forces. Speaking at the Defense Ministry's Aviation Industries Organization on Saturday, General Mohammad Baqeri praised the defense industries for helping other industrial sectors that are grounded by sanctions.

"Recently our dear defense minister and other commanders have stated readiness to solve problems existing in other industries, a late example of which was the sensitive field of auto parts, where the Defense Ministry took the initiative and resolved a great deal of the problem and now it is ready to enhance the production," the commander explained. →2

Iran wins 27 prizes at FIRA RoboWorld Cup 2019

TEHRAN — Iranian robotic teams won a total of 27 awards at the Federation of International Robot Sports Association (FIRA) World Cup, FIRA 2019, which was held from August 11 to 16 in Changwon, South Korea, Mehr reported on Saturday. Iranian teams ranked first in 14 competitions, second in eight competitions

and third in five others, the head of the Iranian FIRA National Committee, Soroush Sadeqnejad, said. The AUTMan and AUTMan-AMOS teams from Amir Kabir University of Technology, Hope team from Shamsipour Technical College, KERMAN-UPNOP, Microdev team from Mashhad were amongst the winners. →11

Yemen attacks Saudi oil field at Shaybah with 10 drones

TEHRAN — Yemeni forces have conducted attacks on an oil field affiliated to Saudi Aramco in the east of the kingdom in retaliation for Riyadh's war on their country, al-Masirah TV reports. Oil facilities at Shaybah, which has the largest strategic oil reserve in Saudi Arabia near the UAE border, were targeted by 10 Yemeni drones, the Yemeni

broadcaster said Saturday. The facilities attacked included a refinery and oil storage, al-Masirah said, citing Yemen's armed forces spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Sare'e. Shaybah, operated by state-oil company Saudi Aramco, is located in the east of the kingdom, close to the United Arab Emirates border. →13



ARTICLE
Ramin Hossein Abadian
Mehr News Agency
journalist

Nasrallah's strong warnings to the enemies of resistance

Sayed Hassan Nasrallah secretary general of the Lebanese Hezbollah movement gave a televised speech on Friday on the 13th anniversary of the "Grand Victory" during the Israeli 33-day July 2006 war on Lebanon.

Over the speech, Nasrallah said "if Israel intrudes into Lebanon, all their war tanks will be destroyed. In the past, Israel wanted to destroy Hezbollah movement, but today, the movement has turned into a major power in the region."

Nasrallah told Zionists, "I warn you not to come to Lebanon, if you start a war with Lebanon, everybody will eventually see your final annihilation in a live televised broadcast. The 33-day war revealed the real face of the Zionist regime. Today, the Israelis have lost their confidence that they will be able to defeat Lebanon."

"Keeping the resistance alive will stop the resurgence of terrorism in Syria and will prevent another world war in Syria. Surely, resistance and fighting will cost us far less than accepting surrender or submission," he noted. Nasrallah added that Hezbollah movement has always been after peace and stability in the region, and today "Benjamin Netanyahu, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) are the ones who want to wage war in the region." Anyway, the most important part of Nasrallah speech was about the power of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the foreign threats against it.

"Now that American officials have retreated from their previous threats about attacking Iran, we are on the verge of making a historic achievement. Any war against Iran will burn the whole region into pieces; attacking Iran, as a member of resistance, means attacking all members of resistance."

With these statements, Nasrallah gave very serious warnings to the enemies of resistance, including the United States, Saudi Arabia and UAE who are constantly trying to cause tensions and start wars in the region.

Nasrallah threatened that if the enemies pose any danger to Iran, other members of resistance, including Hezbollah will not remain silent; rather, they will support Iran and target the intruders. →13

Nigerian government transfers Zakzaky to unknown location: IMN

TEHRAN — The Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) says Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky has been transferred to an unknown location upon return from India where he sought medical treatment, only to face an "obstruction" in the procedure.

"We urge the security agency holding him hostage to declare to the public where they are keeping him in the country," IMN spokesman Ibrahim Musa said in a statement.

Zakzaky returned to Nigeria along with his wife Mallimah Zinat -- who was also seeking treatment for injuries -- after announcing an early departure from India earlier on Thursday, citing obstruction of his treatment under the influence of the Nigerian government.

According to the statement and other media reports, Nigerian security agents "whisked" the religious leader away after he landed at the Abuja International airport "without allowing the multitude of journalists that were waiting



for him for hours" to speak with him.

The IMN statement went on to detail the circumstances in which Zakzaky decided to discontinue his treatment in India, countering "the false claims" made by the Nigerian government.

It said Zakzaky and his wife had been transferred to India in a way that was greatly inappropriate for "patients suffering life threatening ailments" and not been allowed to rest between flights and upon arriving in India.

"However, despite their need for rest, they were forcibly wheeled to a hospital on arrival without their personal physician that accompanied them from Nigeria," the statement read.

"There was even a report that the security agents in India subjected him to physical assault," it added.

According to the statement, health workers took "selfies" with the sheikh and posted it on social media, in an act that violated their privacy, Press TV reported.

It said Indian authorities had rejected any supervision of doctors previously familiar with Zakzaky's case, restarting the medical evaluation and treatment process without their oversight.

Ukraine catches suspected Israeli online dope dealer after escape

TEHRAN — Ukraine said Saturday it had captured an Israeli American suspected of leading a major online-drug dealing network a day after he escaped while being extradited to the Jewish state.

Ukraine's SBU security service said it had found Amos Dov Silver in "one of the regions of our country," and said he would be extradited to Israel "in the near future."

The SBU also said it had detained three of its own employees suspected of helping Silver escape Kiev's Boryspil airport during the process of his extradition.

On Friday, Israeli police said Kyiv had informed

them that Silver had "escaped his Ukrainian escorts."

Kyiv prosecutor's office said that he was at the city's Boryspil airport bound for Israel Thursday when he escaped from his security service guards and "disappeared."

Silver was arrested in March, accused of running a network with connections in the United States, Ukraine, Israel and Germany, using the popular encrypted messaging app Telegram.

Israeli police said at the time that the ring had a turnover of "hundreds of millions" of Israeli shekels, or tens of millions of dollars or euros.

Silver founded the Israeli online drug marketplace Telegrass.

Israel has approved the export of medical cannabis, but the drug's production and sale for recreational purposes remain criminal offenses.

In 2017, the Public Security Ministry partially decriminalized recreational marijuana use, setting fines and treatment for initial offenders instead of criminal procedures.

Israeli police have said that Silver and his alleged accomplices dealt in not only marijuana but also ecstasy, LSD, cocaine and other narcotics, AFP reported.



REPORT
Roohullah Ghasemian
Journalist

The third Fox News shock to Trump

New Fox News polls showed once again that US President Donald Trump is not doing well in state and state polls. Accordingly, the likelihood of Trump's defeat in next year's presidential election has increased dramatically. Unless the trend continues, Trump will no longer be at the forefront of US political and executive equations. Trump has twice accused the Fox News network of posting false and untrue polls. However, many US analysts believe that recent Fox News polls are based on current US facts. American citizens' dissatisfaction with Trump's foreign policy, as well as some economic discontent in some states, has contributed to Trump's decline in popularity.

Although Trump has not yet responded to a Fox News poll, he is likely to accuse the US president of announcing false results in the near future! Donald Trump accuses not only Fox News but other media outlets and polls that predict his defeat in next year's presidential election. →6

condolences

"CNN sends its deepest condolences to Shirzad Bozorgmehr's family and friends in Iran and abroad.

With Shirzad's passing, we lost a superb journalist and a kind, generous, gentle and loyal colleague. He will be remembered with great love and fondness by all who worked with him.

May he rest in peace."



Hamiyar Charity Organization launches ensemble with childhood cancer survivors

Shohreh Ghiasi conducts Avaye Hamiyar Ensemble, which is composed of 23 childhood cancer survivors and their relatives, during a concert at the Hamiyar Charity Organization in Arak on August 16, 2019.

This ensemble has been established by the medical center for children with cancer to keep their spirits up during treatment.

Senior Japanese diplomat says Tokyo attaches great importance to ties with Tehran

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Japanese Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Takeo Mori said on Saturday that his country highly prioritizes ties and consultations with Iran. “Tokyo attaches great importance to ties with Tehran and continuation of consultations,” Mori said during a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Tehran, the Foreign Ministry said in a press release.



Zarif also said Tehran and Tokyo have established constructive relationship.

Zarif also pointed to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s “historic and important” visit to Iran and his meeting with Leader of the Islamic Revolution in June, and welcomed continuation of consultations on bilateral and regional issues.

Official website of Ayatollah Khamenei to launch three new languages

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The official website of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei plans to launch three new languages of Russian, French and Spanish on Monday.

The ceremony will be opened by a speech from Kamal Kharrazi, chairman of the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations.

Any war against Iran will set the entire region on fire: Hezbollah chief

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Hezbollah Secretary General Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah said late on Friday that any war against Iran will set the entire Middle East on fire, the Mehr news agency reported.

The Hezbollah chief also said, “Iran shot down a U.S. drone and seized a British oil tanker. These show Iran’s courage.”



He added that U.S. President Donald Trump is well aware of Iran’s military power and that is the reason he avoided attack on Iran after the downing of the drone.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) shot down a highly-sophisticated U.S. stealth drone in June after it violated Iran’s airspace over the Persian Gulf.

Trump reportedly gave initial approval for the U.S. military to launch strikes on Iran in retaliation, however, he cancelled the strikes.

IRGC Quds Force Commander Major General Qassem Soleimani has warned that the U.S. may begin a war against Iran, but it is Iran which will “end” it.

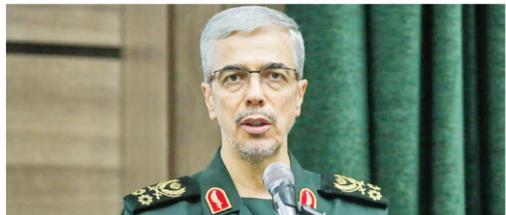
Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has also said that anyone who starts a war against Iran will not be the one who ends it.

During a joint press conference with German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas in Tehran in June, Zarif insisted on Tehran’s long-held position that Iran has not initiated and will not initiate a war with any country.

However, he said, no one can take a military action against the Iranian people without receiving a “firm response”.

Iran becoming self-reliant in producing aircraft engines: commander

➔ “It would be impossible to create deterrence and defense power in a world where they have shut all the doors to us with sanctions but through localization and reliance on our own young scientists (we can),” he noted.



“Before the revolution we were the sort of country which would import most of their industrial products in the military as well as non-military sectors,” Baqeri said, adding that despite sanctions and foreign pressure, the country is now facing a totally different horizon which promises success in meeting its own needs with self-reliance.

Britain knows Iran’s situation is different from the past: Larijani

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said on Saturday that the British are well aware that Iran’s situation is different from the past.

Speaking during an open session of the parliament, Larijani said that the British can no longer hatch plots and show muscles to Iran.

The Gibraltar government, a semi-autonomous territory ruled by London, released on Thursday the Iranian supertanker Grace 1, despite the U.S. attempt to block the release of the vessel.

“Authorities in Gibraltar have released the Iranian supertanker Grace 1, which was seized on July 4 on suspicion it was shipping 2.1 million barrels of crude oil to Syria in breach of EU sanctions,” the Gibraltar Chronicle reported on Thursday.

The tanker was seized in a British Royal Navy operation off the coast of Gibraltar.

Iran had vehemently rejected the claim that the tanker was destined for Syria. Iran has further said the sanctions on Syria do not apply to non-EU members.

In a tweet on Thursday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called detention of the tanker “100 percent unlawful.”

“Our London Embassy note to UKFCO: -Protested the illegal detention of Grace1;



-Repeated public statements about destination; & -Made it crystal clear that EU sanctions do NOT apply to Iran—a position shared by most Europeans. Nothing changes the fact: detention was 100% unlawful,” he tweeted.

UKFCO is an abbreviation for the UK

Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

In another tweet, Zarif said, “Having failed to accomplish its objectives through its economic terrorism—including depriving cancer patients of medicine—the U.S. attempted to abuse the legal system to steal our property on the high seas.”

Zarif added, “This piracy attempt is indicative of Trump admin’s contempt for the law.”

Mahmoud Vaezi, the Iranian president’s chief of staff, said on Friday that release of the supertanker Grace 1 is a “diplomatic victory” for Iran.

“Release of oil tanker Grace 1 with supports from the government and all bodies of the system and the country’s lawyers and diplomats is a diplomatic victory,” Vaezi told reporters.

Also, government spokesman Ali Rabiei said in a tweet message on Friday that the tanker was released despite the U.S. pressure and this is a “defeat” for Washington.

This victory is result of upholding the Iranian people’s rights, Rabiei added.

Iranian Ambassador to London Hamid Baeidinejad also tweeted on Thursday, saying that the U.S. was desperately trying to prevent release of the tanker and faced a humiliating defeat.

“The U.S. in a last minute attempt made a futile effort to block the release of the oil tanker and were faced with humiliating defeat. With recent attempts, all necessary preparations and technical issues to release the tanker to an open sea have been arranged and the ship will soon leave Gibraltar,” he wrote on Twitter, in Farsi.

Culture of martyrdom has protected Iran against pressure: Zarif

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Saturday that culture of altruism and martyrdom has protected the country against foreign pressure.

“Culture of altruism and martyrdom has protected the country against pressure and the people have insured the country against pressure and aggressions,” Zarif said during a ceremony held to mark the anniversary of the return of the POWs to the country in 1990.

The first group of Iranian soldiers captured by Iraq during Saddam Hussein’s war against Iran returned to the country two years after the end of the war. Iraq launched war on Iran in 1980 which ended in the summer of 1988.

The remarks by Zarif comes as U.S. Pres-

ident Donald Trump’s administration has launched the toughest ever economic sanctions against Iran in line with the White House’s “maximum pressure” against Tehran.

The chief diplomat also said, “All Iranian people are indebted to altruists, prisoners, and the martyrs.”

Zarif also said that people former the cornerstone of Iran’s power and the country has made progress as a result of resisting sanctions.

“People are the basis of our power. What

we have it is from people,” the chief diplomat said during a speech at the ceremony.

He noted that power is not limited to political, economic and military capabilities.

During a speech at a ceremony held to mark the international day of Islamic human rights on August 7, Zarif said it is the people and not foreign powers that form the basis of Iran’s power.

“Power of the Islamic Republic of Iran is the discourse that it has presented to the world. A discourse which considers people

“All Iranian people are indebted to altruists, prisoners, and the martyrs,” Zarif notes.



and not a foreign power the basis of power, legitimacy, security, progress and independence,” he said.

He said, “We never buy security and we never sell it, because we gain our security, progress and legitimacy from our people.”

Kremlin: Russia and France share common task to preserve nuclear deal

By staff and agency

Kremlin Aide Yuri Ushakov has said that Russia and France share the common tasks of preserving the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA.

“Let me note that Russia and France share the common tasks of preserving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and preventing an escalation of tensions between Iran and the U.S. in the Persian Gulf and in general,” he told reporters on Friday, according to TASS.

He noted that Russian President Vladimir Putin and French President Emmanuel Macron are scheduled to meet on August 19 at the Bregancon fort off France’s Mediterranean coast to discuss the JCPOA.

Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the UN-endorsed JCPOA in May 2018 and imposed the toughest ever sanctions against Iran in line with his administration’s “maximum pressure” policy against Tehran.

The remaining parties, particularly the European sides, have so far failed to honor their commitments since the U.S. returned sanctions and imposed new ones.

On May 8, exactly one year after the U.S. abandoned the multi-nation nuclear agreement and reimposed sanctions on Iran, Tehran said its “strategic patience” is over and announced a partial withdrawal from some aspects of the pact. 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.

President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that Tehran will start the next step of reducing nuclear obligations after

the second 60-day deadline.

The third step can include installation of more centrifuges, especially advanced ones.

“We are holding talks with the neighboring countries and other countries in the world in line with boosting relations and we will continue talks in the course of reducing nuclear commitments. However, if we will not reach any result at the end of the second 60-day deadline, we will definitely start the third step. We will give another 60 days in order to reach a right and logical solution,” he stated.

Rouhani also described Iran’s move in reducing nuclear commitments step by step as a “wise” decision

Under the JCPOA, Iran is allowed to possess 300 kilograms of uranium enriched to 3.67 percent.

Nuclear spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi announced on Tuesday that Iran’s stockpile of uranium has reached 370 kilograms.

Iran says its decision to reduce its commitments are in line with paragraph 36 of the JCPOA which has provided a mechanism to resolve disputes and allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of compliance.

Officials in Tehran have insisted if the remaining parties to the JCPOA compensate sanctions effects Iran will reverse its decision.

U.S. issues warrant to seize Iranian oil tanker Grace 1

By staff and agency

The United States has issued a warrant for the seizure of an Iranian oil tanker captured by British Royal Marines in Gibraltar last month, according to Aljazeera.

The Grace 1 vessel, which was ordered to be released by the Gibraltar Supreme Court after 43 days in detention, shifted position but remained anchored in the British Mediterranean territory late on Friday.

The tanker was seized by British Royal Marines at the western mouth of the Mediterranean on July 4.

Washington had attempted to seize the Grace 1 on the pretext that it had links to Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

According to the warrant issued on Friday, the U.S. Department of Justice also ordered the seizure of \$995,000 in an account at an unnamed U.S. bank associated with Paradise Global Trading LLC, which it called a shell company associated with businesses which act for the Revolutionary Guards.

There was no immediate word from Britain or Gibraltar over whether they would act on the warrant, as Iran said it was sending a new crew to pilot the tanker.

“This U.S. complaint alleges that Iran has violated U.S. sanctions after the U.S.

pulled out the 2015 nuclear deal last year,” said Al Jazeera’s John Hendren, reporting from Washington, DC.

“The big question is will the British government help the U.S. by seizing this ship, will Interpol be involved or will the U.S. government try to seize that ship,” he added.

On Thursday, a Gibraltar judge ordered the release of the Grace 1, six weeks after it was detained, rejecting a last-minute legal move by Washington demanding that the ship remain detained.

According to radio transmission exchanges overheard by Al Jazeera, the ship is expected to set sail on Sunday evening.

The Gibraltar Chronicle newspaper also reported that the vessel was unlikely to sail before Sunday, citing an unnamed source who added that it was waiting for six new crew members including a captain to arrive that day.

A lawyer for the Grace 1’s current captain, an Indian national, said that his client had asked to be replaced.

“He doesn’t want to stay in command of the ship, he wants to go home, because he wasn’t happy to go back and pick up the broken pieces,” his lawyer Richard Wilkinson told The Associated Press news agency. “But he’s a professional skipper and needs to wait for a new crew to do a proper handover.”



The lawyer said the tanker had been due for repairs in Gibraltar even before it was seized and its detention impeded the replacement of parts, making the tanker unfit for an immediate long voyage.

Earlier on Friday, Iranian officials said the tanker was preparing to set sail under an Iranian flag after its registration was switched from Panama and would be renamed the Adrian Darya for the voyage.

Al Jazeera’s Andrew Simmons, reporting from Gibraltar, said the Grace 1 signage had been removed as well as the Panamanian flag. “The navigation systems, all of them, indicate that it’s still Grace 1, but in terms of maritime law, this vessel really has no

visible identity,” he said.

The Grace 1 vessel and its July 4 seizure came amid surging tensions in the Persian Gulf. The U.S. has expanded its military presence in the region with a new aircraft carrier task force, missile batteries and strategic bombers

Iran called the detention of the Grace 1 an illegal interception staged by the U.S., while Washington cheered it as “excellent news”.

Tehran and Washington have been at loggerheads since U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew last year from a landmark 2015 nuclear deal between major powers and Iran, reimposing unilateral sanctions.

Iran ready to scale up nuclear work by installing advanced centrifuges: top MP

POLITICAL TEHRAN – The head of the Majlis Nuclear Committee has said Iran is ready to use advanced centrifuges in the third phase of reducing its commitments to the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"We have many options to choose from in the third phase, such as utilizing advanced centrifuges," Mehr on Saturday quoted Mohammad Ebrahim Rezaee as saying.

"In fact, we are currently using the old IR1 centrifuges, while the IR6 and IR8 centrifuges are ready to be used," he stated.

Rezaee said IR6 and IR8 centrifuges respectively have a capacity 26 to 48 times more than the IR1 ones.

Centrifuges are machines that spin uranium hexafluoride gas (UF6) at high speeds.

The legislator said Iran can further activate its production of heavy water, increase its stockpile of heavy water and increase its enrichment level.

The Westerners should know well that Iran scaled back its nuclear program because of its commitment to the JCPOA, and all the actions taken by Iran under the deal are reversible.

On May 8, exactly a year after the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, Tehran announced steps to reduce its nuclear commitments as envisioned under articles 26 and 36 of the



multilateral agreement.

As a first step, Iran increased its enriched uranium stockpile to beyond the 300 kilograms set by the JCPOA.

In the second step, Iran began enriching uranium to purity rates beyond the 3.76 percent limit.

Tehran has also warned that it may push forward with a 20% uranium enrichment

program and resume previous activities at the Arak heavy-water nuclear facility in its third step.

However, Iran has announced that its reciprocal measures will be reversed as soon as European parties to the deal find practical ways to shield the Iranian economy from unilateral U.S. sanctions which were imposed by the U.S. government after its pullout.

Meanwhile, according to Rezaee, Europe has done nothing to salvage the JCPOA because "they lack the willpower to do so and they do not want to pay the price of confronting the U.S. to save Barjam (JCPOA)."

They have voiced support for the deal but failed to provide meaningful economic incentives as required under the deal, he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the top lawmaker hinted at contradictory remarks by European officials, claimed, "Today, we are certain that Europe has been in coordination with the U.S. from the very beginning and they advanced this joint scenario against Iran."

Asked about the prospects of INSTEX, a mechanism created by Europe to do business with Iran, Rezaee voiced reservations, saying that Europe plays a complementary role in Washington's anti-Iran plots.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom set up the Instrument for Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) in January to satisfy Iran's demands for a way to bypass U.S. sanctions.

The European Union announced on June 28 that INSTEX has gone into effect.

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

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

Grand ayatollah demands immediate halt to Indian violence in Kashmir

POLITICAL TEHRAN – A senior Iranian religious scholar has condemned the inhumane treatment of Kashmiris by the Indian government, urging the central government to immediately stop its atrocities against the innocent Kashmiri people and observe their rights.

In a statement, Grand Ayatollah Lotfollah Safi Golpaygani said, "The disastrous incidents that is happening in India's Kashmir breaks the heart of every freedom-seeking person."

"What sin have the innocent and oppressed people of Kashmir committed to deserve the harshest oppression and cruelty by India's military forces?" Ayatollah Safi Golpaygani asked.

"Why have the international community, the so-called advocates of human rights, the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation have kept silent and do not condemn these atrocities against defenseless and innocent people?"

Tensions have been simmering between India and Pakistan since New Delhi stripped Indian-controlled Kashmir of its special autonomy earlier this month. Pakistan has called that move "illegal."

Kashmir is generally considered disputed territory. It has been split between India and Pakistan since their partition in 1947. The



countries have fought three wars over the territory. On Friday, Hojjatoleslam Kazem Seddiqi, the interim Friday prayer leader of Tehran, said the issue of Kashmir is one of the tragedies of the Muslim world.

"Their action is contrary to human conscience, fairness and even the domestic laws of that country," the cleric said of the Indian government's crackdown on protesters.

The UN Security Council met on Friday to discuss Kashmir for the first time in 54 years, an event the Pakistani government hailed as a major diplomatic breakthrough.

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan tweeted on Saturday welcoming the meeting, saying that "ensuring resolution of the dispute is the responsibility of this world body."

Admiral: IRGC has reinforced military in Strait of Hormuz

POLITICAL TEHRAN – Deputy Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Ali Fadavi has advised Iran's enemies to learn lessons from forty years of testing Iran, warning about the dire consequences of "even thinking of carrying out a conspiracy or an attack against Iran."

Rear Admiral Fadavi also said the IRGC's power in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz is at its height, especially in the wake of the recent incidents in the region, ISNA reported on Saturday.

"This is something the world acknowledges it," added Admiral Fadavi who was promoted to the rank of the IRGC deputy chief on May 16.

On June 20 the IRGC shot down a U.S. spy drone that had violated the Iranian territorial airspace over the Persian Gulf. The advanced drone was downed by the IRGC Aerospace Force's air defense unit near the Kooh-e-Mobarak region in the southern province of Hormozgan.

The invading drone was shot by homegrown air defense missile system "Khordad-3rd".

In comments made a few hours after the incident, IRGC Chief Major General



Hossein Salami said the shooting down of the U.S. drone had a straightforward message that any foreign intrusion into Iranian territories would draw a crushing response.

Earlier this month, Fadavi said the United States has been a complete loser in confronting the "pious, revolutionary, jihadi and enthusiastic children of the Iranian nation" serving in the IRGC Navy.

U.S. President Donald Trump imposed unilateral sanctions against Tehran after he withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear deal last year. Tehran has slammed the sanctions, which have affected the lives of thousands of Iranians, as "economic terrorism".

'Iran after forming constructive ties with neighbors'

POLITICAL TEHRAN – The Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait, Mohammad Irani, says Iran's foreign policy is based on establishing constructive relations with neighbors.

"This is not the first time that the Islamic Republic of Iran is calling for cooperation and alliance with the Persian Gulf countries," ISNA on Saturday quoted Irani as saying.

He said the Islamic Republic believes that the Persian Gulf countries can establish security in the region without any foreign interference.

"The region does not need the presence of foreign forces," the ambassador stated.

The comments by the ambassador comes as Washington is trying to form a military coalition in the Persian Gulf under the claim of providing "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.

Ambassador Irani said American rulers, especially Donald

Trump, have begun a "dangerous game".

The United States has been trying to persuade its allies into joining the coalition. However, the call has been met with cold response from European and Asian allies, in one way or another.

They are concerned such an alliance could drag them into a conflict with Iran.

In his remarks, Irani said the Americans claim they want to establish security in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz but their primary goal is to foment instability in the region, especially if Israel joins the coalition.

Israeli foreign minister Israel Katz said on August 7 that the regime would be part of the U.S.-led coalition to "protect the security of the Persian Gulf".

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has warned that the country considers possible Israeli presence in the coalition in the Persian Gulf as a clear threat to its national security, and reserves the right to counter it.

"Within the framework of the country's deterrence and



defensive policy, the Islamic Republic of Iran reserves the right to counter this threat and defend its territory," he noted.

Saudi good treatment of Iranian pilgrims may lead to thaw in ties: MP

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The chairman of the parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has hailed Saudis' good behavior toward Iranian Hajj pilgrims and expressed optimism about the possible thaw of relations between Tehran and Riyadh.

"Good behavior toward the (Iranian) pilgrims is one of Saudi Arabia's messages in line with more interaction with Iran," Mojtaba Zonnour told Tasnim.

"Up to this day, they (Saudis) have behaved hospitably and if they continue this path, there would be a thaw of relations with Saudi Arabia as we are witnessing it with the existing signs," the lawmaker added.

During a visit to Saudi Arabia in December 2018, Head of Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization Alireza Rashidian held meetings with officials from the kingdom's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah about the 2019 Hajj season.



The two sides signed an agreement at the conclusion of the meetings, aimed at making better arrangements for Iranian pilgrims and preventing the problems

they faced in previous years.

The agreement stipulated that 86,500 Iranian pilgrims would go on pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia in the 2019 Hajj season.

In 2016, more than 1.8 million pilgrims attended Hajj, but Iranians stayed home after tensions between Riyadh and Tehran boiled following a deadly crush of people during the 2015 pilgrimage.

On September 2, 2015, thousands of people lost their lives in the deadly crush after Saudi authorities blocked a road in Mina during a ritual, forcing large crowds of pilgrims to collide.

The crush was the deadliest incident in the history of the pilgrimage.

According to an Associated Press count based on official statements from the 36 countries that lost citizens in the disaster, more than 2,400 pilgrims were killed in the incident.

Saudi Arabia claims nearly 770 people were killed, but officials at Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization say about 4,700 people, including over 460 Iranian pilgrims, lost their lives.

India's ties with Iran not influenced by others: ambassador

POLITICAL TEHRAN – The Indian ambassador to Iran says that his country's ties with Tehran will not be influenced by other countries.

In an exclusive interview with the Iran Labor News Agency (ILNA) published on Saturday, Gaddam Dharmendra said, "Bilateral discussions between Indian prime minister and Iran's president have led to a diversification of trade exchanges."



Ambassador Dharmendra says sanctions are making officials in India and Iran to think of diversifying trade ties beyond the energy sector.

With regards to how U.S. sanctions can affect the volume of trade between Iran and India, he said, "We do not adjust our relations with Iran based on the behavior of other countries. Iran is our neighbor and we have extensive relations with Iran. We saw a rise of more than 25% in bilateral trade as compared to last year."

"As you know, India is not part of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal but India has backed the nuclear deal."

We also know that the International Atomic Energy Agency has confirmed that Iran has fulfilled all its obligations so far."

Dharmendra then referred to a decision by Iran to scale down its commitments to the international nuclear deal, saying it is clear that Iran has made decisions "that we are aware of, but we hope that all countries will resolve these differences peacefully by negotiation and dialogue."

He also compared the European Union's Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for trade with Iran under U.S. sanctions with India's recent measures to maintain commercial relations with Tehran, saying, "Iran and India's special financial mechanism has been active for about a year and is pleasing to both countries."

"This mechanism enables us to meet some of Iran's basic needs, including pharmaceuticals. In fact, we have set up our own SPV and we are happy about that."

The ambassador also said that sanctions are making officials on both sides to think of diversifying their trade ties beyond the energy sector.

"Tehran-New Delhi relations were mostly in the field of energy, and Iran exported oil to India and India exported items to Iran that were not in balance before."

"But now regarding to new issues, we have to see what we can do about Iranian oil. India-Iran bilateral trade stands at more than \$ 17 billion (2018-19)."

This is an increase of 25%. At present, commodities like Basmati rice, Soybean meal, black tea and cane sugar are seeing an upward trend."

According to Dharmendra, the U.S. sanctions against Iran are a new challenge which nevertheless offers an opportunity for both countries.

Members of Iran-India chambers of commerce, manufacturers and traders must explore ways to further boost trade between the two countries, he suggested.

"Both Iran and India are large, developing economies with solid fundamentals."

Both countries are benefiting from their respective demographic advantages. I see our economic partnership as being on a positive trajectory," the Indian ambassador stated.

General: 76% of opium produced in the world is discovered in Iran

POLITICAL TEHRAN – Head of the counter-narcotics center said on Saturday that the United Nations has announced that 76 percent of the opium and also 67 percent of morphine produced in the world are discovered in Iran.

Speaking at a press conference on Saturday, Brigadier General Eskandar Momeni also said those convicted of drug-related offenses account almost for 70 percent of prisoners in Iran.



He added the distributors, retailers and drug addicts all belong to a cycle that needs to be addressed altogether, ISNA reported.

Also on Saturday, the anti-narcotics police chief in Yazd said that 189kg of narcotics have been seized in the central province of Yazd.

During an operation in the city of Yazd, police seized the opium which was destined to Tehran, Colonel Ali Afkhami explained.

One smuggler was arrested and has been handed over to the judicial officials, he added.

Over 10 tons of illicit drugs have been confiscated by anti-narcotics police in Yazd province since the start of the year 1398 (March 21, 2019).

Located near Afghanistan which is one of the main sources of opium production in the world, Iran is on the frontline of the fight against drug trafficking.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	261405.8
IFX	3526.02

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,634 rials
GBP	51,031 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$58.64/b
WTI	\$54.87/b
OPEC Basket	\$58.87/b
Gold	\$1,523.60/oz
Silver	\$17.08/oz
Platinum	\$851.80/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Preferential trade agreement with D-8 to take effect in 2 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Deputy director of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) said an agreement on preferential trade with the members of D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation has been reached and it will take effect in the next two months.

Speaking in a gathering of industry ministry's deputies in Tehran on Saturday, Hamid Zadboum said TPO is planning on doubling trade with 15 neighboring countries in the near future, Shata news agency reported.

He referred to the industry ministry's programs for using the country's production capacities to improve exports, saying that "Identification of exports barriers and activation of different markets are among the programs which the industry ministry is following."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the official referred to the trade agreements that Iran has signed with various global organizations and economic bodies including Eurasia Union, Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, and said Iran's preferential trade agreement with Eurasia member countries has been prepared in 9 chapters with more than 100 articles and the agreement with D-8 organization also covers 34 articles.

He finally noted that bilateral trade agreements have also been reached with Turkey, Bangladesh, and Syria, adding that talks on same agreements were also underway with other trade partners such as Malaysia, India and Pakistan.

The D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, also known as Developing-8, is an organization for development co-operation among eight member countries namely, Bangladesh, Egypt, Nigeria, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey.

The objectives of D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation are to improve member states' position in the global economy, diversify and create new opportunities in trade relations, enhance participation in decision-making at international level, and improve standards of living.

German economy slips back into negative growth

Germany's economy shrunk by 0.1% in the three months to June, caught in the cross-fire of the trade war between U.S. and China.

According to clicklancashire.com, the nation has been hit hard by a crackdown on global trade under U.S. President Donald Trump, while its prized auto making industry has been hammered in a sales slump as customers shun diesel due to pollution fears.

As a result, if China weakens its currency and produces fewer goods in anticipation of weaker overseas demand, sales of German industrial products fall, damaging a key sector of Germany's economy.

The deceleration is spreading in Germany, which supports the ECB's signals that more monetary stimulus would be required.

A further quarterly contraction would mean the nation had entered recession. Cars for export and import stored in front of containers at the harbor in Bremerhaven, Germany. Andreas Rees, the chief economist of the bank UniCredit, added: The "fact is the German economy has only been moving forward in crawler gear for a year now".

Its export-reliant economy avoided a technical recession - two consecutive quarters of falling GDP - by a whisker past year but could fail to escape for a second time.

In a statement to the populist tabloid Bild, Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said Wednesday's data was a wake-up call, calling for a more expansionary budget.

"Trade conflicts, global uncertainty and the struggling automotive sector have finally brought it down on its knee".

The Germany economy contracted

The last time the German economy contracted on a quarterly basis was the third quarter a year ago when the automotive sector was dealing with bottlenecks getting cars certified under new emissions standards. Brzeski noted, however, that it was the uncertainty created by trade conflicts, rather than their direct effects that was principally to blame.

As a result, global trade tensions weigh on its economy. In 2005, Germany's unemployment rate hit 12.6%, with the country also facing a budget deficit at 3.5% of GDP.

Europe's largest economy - and long once of the most dynamic - has now become a drag on the eurozone. Growth was non-existent in Italy whose economy stagnated in the three months through June.

"We expect the weakness in the German economy to only broaden in the coming quarters".

That could make the country less dependent on exports. On Tuesday, Chancellor Angela Merkel poured cold water on the calls for more fiscal stimulus, and on Wednesday the government spokeswoman said this position had not changed.

European authorities will release economic growth and employment figures for the Eurozone today.

The "development of foreign trade slowed down economic growth because exports recorded a stronger quarter-on-quarter decrease than imports", the Statistisches Bundesamt said. The economic gloom was not confined to Germany, as eurozone industrial production fell 1.6pc month-on-month in June, according to Eurostat.

Russia eyes Iran's Chabahar to transit goods

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Russia is seeking to use Iran's Chabahar port in order to transit goods to other countries especially to the Indian subcontinent, Tasnim reported, quoting Sergei Milushkin, managing director of Astrakhan Special Economic Zone in Russia, as saying.

Milushkin who visited Chabahar port on Saturday, also voiced his country's readiness for investing in the port for construction of specialized terminals, including a container terminal and a liquid bulk terminal in Chabahar's Shahid Beheshti Port.

As reported, during his visit, the Russian official was accompanied by Behrouz Aghaie, the director general of Ports and Maritime Department of Sistan-Baluchistan Province, who briefed him on the potentials, capacities and capabilities of Chabahar port.

In response to Milushkin's remarks regarding Russia's interest in transiting goods through Chabahar port, Aghaie said "There are no restrictions for the investment and transfer of goods through the



Chabahar port for Russian investors and businesses."

Chabahar Port is a seaport in Chabahar located in southeastern Iran, on the Gulf of

Oman. It serves as Iran's only oceanic port, and consists of two separate ports named Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti, each of which has five berths.

After years of negotiations, Iran has awarded the development project of its strategic Chabahar port to India, and the South Asian country committed \$500 million to build two new berths in this port.

In last November, the United States announced that it would grant a sanctions waiver for the Iranian-Indian port project at Chabahar.

Chabahar Port's exemption from the new round of the U.S. sanctions on Iran is an opportunity for development of transit via this port, according to Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) Head Mohammad Rastad.

This port's exemption from the sanctions provides the opportunity for benefitting from the potentials and infrastructures of Chabahar which will definitely boost exports and imports, Rastad said, adding that it would be an achievement for the country's economy.

Bangladesh private sector seeking enhanced co-op with Iran

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Bangladesh's commercial attaché in Iran said his country's private sector is seeking to boost cooperation with the Iranian counterpart, the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) reported.

Mohammad Sabour Hossein, made the remarks in a meeting with ICCIMA Deputy Head Mohammadreza Karbasi on Saturday.

In the meeting, the two sides discussed potentials, capacities and mutual areas for development of bilateral trade between the two countries.

Expressing dissatisfaction with the current level of trade between the two countries, Karbasi noted that "unfortunately despite the good political relations and the two sides' private sectors willingness for cooperation the level of trade between Iran and Bangladesh is not at a satisfactory level."

"Reaching a \$1 billion trade volume is the least level which should be considered an acceptable trade turnover between the two countries, for which development of business relations between the two countries should be reconsidered," he added.

Karbasi further underlined Iranian private sector's

capabilities, saying Iran's private sector is ready to cooperate with Bangladeshi economic operators in all areas, especially in the export of petrochemical products as well as joint ventures.

He mentioned the lack of proper banking relations between the two countries as a major obstacle in the way of trade relations between the two countries, adding that this obstacle can be overcome by creating mechanisms such as barter trading.

"It is also necessary to implement the preferential trade agreement signed by the two countries years ago and to revise it if necessary," he added.

Sabour Hossein for his part stressed the long history of all-out relations between the two nations, saying that the two sides' private sectors could play a significant role in boosting the mutual trade.

"Considering Bangladesh's development plans, the country has a lot of needs in various areas, including petrochemicals, and Iran can also meet its needs through the Bangladesh market," he said.

According to him, joint investments between the two countries should also be seriously considered.



In the end, the two sides emphasized the need to pursue implementing the preferential trade agreement signed between the two countries and to follow up on the establishment of a joint chamber of commerce as well as cooperating in holding an Iran-Bangladesh business and investment opportunities conference in Tehran.

\$1.5b allocated for job creation in rural areas

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi said on Wednesday that the government has allocated \$1.5 billion for job creation in the country's rural areas, IRIB reported.

He added that \$750 million has so far been paid in this regard.

Vaezi made the remarks on the sidelines of the fourth national exhibition of villagers and nomads' capabilities and achievements.

According to the official, more than 2000 job opportunities have been created in rural areas across the country in

the past two years and the number is continuing to grow.

The official underlined the government's efforts for providing facilities like drinkable water, electricity, gas, telephone and internet to rural areas in order to improve the life quality in such regions.

"Currently over 90 percent of the country's villages are connected to the national electricity network, gas supply is continuing and the government is taking all necessary measures to supply drinkable water and other facilities to all villages," he said.

The fourth national exhibition for



showcasing achievements of villagers and nomads opened on Thursday, August 15, at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.

First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri and Vice President for Women's and Family Affairs Masoumeh Ebtekar attended the opening ceremony.

The event aims to introduce successful production and job creation plans in rural areas. Participant villagers and nomads have put some of their products up for sale to visitors.

The exhibition will wrap up today.

Mexico's Central Bank cuts rates for first time in five years

Mexico's Central Bank on Thursday cut its key lending rate for the first time since June 2014, citing slowing inflation and increasing slack in the economy - and fueling expectations that further monetary policy easing could be on the way.

According to aljazeera.com, in a majority decision, the five-member board of the Bank of Mexico (Banxico) voted to lower the overnight interbank rate by 25 basis points to 8.00 percent.

One board member voted to maintain the rate at 8.25 percent, the bank said in a statement.

The surprise move by Mexican policymakers follows rate cuts by central banks around the world in the last week as a trade-induced slowdown shows more signs of stymieing global growth.

Last week New Zealand's Central Bank cut rates to a record low, a move that was followed by reductions from central banks in Thailand and the Philippines.

The peso weakened as much as 0.4 percent to 19.76 per United States dollar after Banxico's decision, but quickly reversed those losses. Yields on Mexico's 10-year bonds fell by 19 basis points to 7.06 percent, Refinitiv data showed.

Eleven of 16 analysts and economists surveyed for a Reuters poll published on Monday had expected Banxico to hold the rate at 8.25 percent, the level it had maintained

since December 20. Five of those surveyed expected a rate cut of 25 basis points.

"Slack conditions in the economy have continued to loosen, even more than expected, widening the negative output gap," the bank said. "In an environment of significant uncertainty, the balance of risks for growth remains tilted to the downside."

In general terms, inflation has gone down "a little faster" than expected, central bank governor Alejandro Diaz de Leon said on Mexican radio.

"We've seen economic activity stagnating for several quarters now, and that in some way has given the bank space to consider that it will contribute to inflation its trajectory of converging toward the three percent target," said Diaz de Leon.

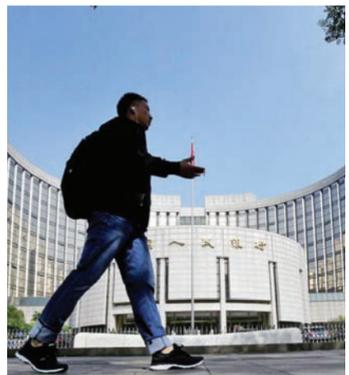
As the week progressed, however, more analysts began to say that the central bank could lower borrowing costs with the economy sputtering and inflation slowing.

Charles Seville, co-head of Latin America sovereigns at ratings agency Fitch, said the rate cut reflected lower inflation risks and greater domestic and global growth risks since the bank's last meeting.

Further rate cuts

"We still think Banxico will stay vigilant given domestic policy risks and the potential for risk aversion to affect the exchange rate," he said.

China to reform key interest rate to boost economy



China's Central Bank unveiled a key interest rate reform on Saturday to help steer borrowing costs lower for companies and support a slowing economy that has been hurt by a trade war with the United States.

According to thenational.ae, the People's Bank of China (PBOC) said it will improve the mechanism used to establish the loan prime rate (LPR) from this month, in a move to further lower real interest rates for companies as part of broader market reforms.

Analysts say the move, which came after data that showed weaker than expected growth in July and followed a cabinet announcement on Friday, underscores the government's attempts to use reforms to support a slowing economy.

"By reforming and improving the forma-

tion mechanism of LPR, we will be able to use market-based reform methods to help lower real lending rates," the PBOC said in a statement published on its website.

The central bank will "deepen market-based interest rate reform, improve the efficiency of interest rate transmission, and lower

financing costs of the real economy", it said.

Chinese banks' new LPR quotations
Chinese banks' new LPR quotations will be based on rates of open market operations, and the national interbank funding center will be authorized to publish the rate from August 20, the PBOC said. It added the rate will be published every month on the 20th, effective this month.

Banks must set rates on new loans by mainly referring to the LPR and use LPR as the benchmark for setting floating lending rates, the PBOC said, adding that banks will be barred from setting any implicit floor on lending rates in a coordinated way.

The central bank said five-year and longer tenors will be added to the existing one-year LPR, which will help banks set rates on long-term loans such as mortgages.

China will add eight small banks, including two foreign-funded banks, to the existing 10 nation-wide banks that will be allowed to submit LPR quotations, the central bank said.

The move followed pledges from China's State Council on Friday that the country will rely on market-based reform measures to help lower real interest rates for companies.

Iran, Afghanistan considering energy projects in border areas

ENERGY TEHRAN – Iran and Afghanistan are considering realization of 16,000 megawatts potential of renewable energy projects in border areas, IRNA reported.

“With good wind energy capacity in the two countries border regions, the two sides can use that capacity to produce nearly 16,000 megawatts of electricity,” Iran’s Deputy Energy Minister for Electricity Homayoun Haeri said in a meeting with Afghan Minister of Energy and Water Mohammad Gul Kholmi on Saturday.

Haeri who is visiting Afghanistan heading a high-ranking delegation from Iran’s Energy Ministry, arrived in Kabul on Saturday to hold talks with senior Afghan officials on the future of energy ties and potential areas of cooperation between the two countries.

Speaking in the meeting, Haeri mentioned the two neighbors’ great capacities for energy cooperation, saying that joining the two countries’ electricity networks could be beneficiary for both sides.

“Afghanistan’s abundant solar and water resources could make the country a major



exporter of electricity in the region, and connecting to Iran’s grid is one way to accelerate this goal,” he said.

The official further added that by joining the two countries power networks Afghanistan would be able to export electricity to

Turkey, Iraq and other countries.

He voiced Iran’s Power Generation, Distribution and Transmission Company (Tavanir)’s readiness for helping Afghanistan’s power distribution companies resolving the country’s energy issues, saying

that the two sides need to make Long-term and short-term planning in order to realize such cooperation.

Gul Kholmi for his part underlined his country’s willingness for expanding energy ties with Iran, saying that Afghanistan is seeking to become an energy hub in the region and the country has long term plans in this regard.

Mentioning the great potentials for energy cooperation with Iran, the official said “Energy is one of the areas that contributes to both regional stability and security and employment for the people.”

The Iranian Delegation is scheduled to spend two days in Afghanistan, during which they will visit the country’s energy infrastructure and hold talks with senior officials from the country’s energy sectors.

As the biggest exporter and importer of electricity in the Middle East, Iran plays a central role in power supply in the region.

It exports electricity to Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Under swap deals, Iran exports electricity to Armenia and Azerbaijan in winter and imports in summer.

IRENEX to hold 6th round of heavy oil offering on Wednesday

ENERGY TEHRAN – Unlike previous offerings, the sixth round of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC)’s heavy crude oil offering at Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) is due to be held on Wednesday, IRNA reported.

In this round, two million barrels of heavy crude will be offered at the base price of \$52.81 per barrel.

Buyers can receive their cargo up to three months after the transaction, and the delivery of the cargo in other regions is subject to NIOC approval.

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

One of the main strategies that Iran chose to execute to help its oil exports afloat has been trying new ways to diversify the mechanism of oil sales, one of which is offering oil at the country’s stock market.

NIOC offered light crude oil at IRENEX first on October 28, 2018 just few days before new U.S. sanctions on Iran’s petroleum sector took effect (November 4). In the first round, NIOC could sell some 280,000 barrels of crude oil at \$74.85 per barrel.

With the daily supply amount of one million barrels, the market wrapped up by selling eight 35,000-barrel cargos of oil on the day.

Offering gas condensate at IRENEX came after the successful offering of crude oil at this market. The first offering was done on February 13, which failed to attract customers.

And then the turn came to heavy crude. Offering heavy crude at IRENEX came after NIOC offered light crude at this stock market in eight round.

National Iranian Oil Company sold 70,000 barrels of heavy crude oil at IRENEX for the first time on April 30. In the first round one million barrels of heavy crude was offered at a base price of \$60.68.

NIOC’s representative in IRENEX has said that the company will continue offering oil at IRENEX, Mehr news agency reported.

“Offering oil and gas condensate in the international ring of IRENEX has become a legal obligation, and it will definitely be a lasting move,” Amir Hossein Tebyanian said in a press conference hosted by Mehr news agency at the place of the agency in early July.

Briefing the press about the procedures and processes of NIOC’s oil and gas condensate offerings at IRENEX, the official noted that physical sales of oil at IRENEX is just the first step and the main goal is to activate other financial instruments, and offer Iranian crude in the regional stock markets.

“We will continue offering oil at the IRENEX in order to institutionalize the necessary procedures which are a prerequisite for improving IRENEX to the level of world



class stock exchanges.” he said.

IRENEX was initially founded in an attempt to permit the Iranian private sector export crude oil since Washington aims to cut Iran’s oil sales.

However now, foreign buyers have also expressed willingness to engage in IRENEX oil offerings and welcoming the idea, NIOC is preparing necessary bases for them to be able to do so.

Iranian heavy crude oil price rises \$1.77 per barrel in July: OPEC

ENERGY TEHRAN – Iranian heavy oil price increased \$1.77 in July, according to OPEC’s latest monthly report published on Friday.

Iran sold its heavy crude oil at \$62.65 per barrels in the mentioned month, registering a 2.9 percent raise compared to June’s \$60.88 per barrel.

According to the report, Iran produced 2.213 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil in July, a 47,000 bpd decrease from 2.260 million bpd in the preceding month.

The report put average Iranian crude output for the Q2 2019 at 2.407 million barrels per day indicating a near 318,000-bpd fall compared to the figure for Q1 2019.

The country’s average heavy crude price was also reported to be \$63.15 since beginning of 2019 up to the report’s publishing day.

Iranian oil industry has been under pressure from the U.S. efforts to isolate the country



by re-imposing sanctions. The new round of sanctions targeting Iran’s

oil sector were put in action in early November 2018, and the waivers which allowed Iranian

oil buyers to continue shipping in oil from the county were expired in early May.

However, Iran has been mobilizing all its resources to sell its oil in gray market, countering unjust and illegitimate U.S. sanctions.

Earlier this month, Reuters reported that despite the sanctions Iran is delivering its oil to China and some other destinations in Asia.

“China imported Iranian crude oil in July for the second month since a U.S. sanctions waiver ended, according to research from three data firms, with one estimate showing some oil entered tanks holding the country’s strategic reserves,” a Reuters report said.

China and other Iranian oil buyers like India have repeatedly criticized the unilateral U.S. sanctions on Iran and opposed Washington’s “long-arm” jurisdictions.

OPEC reports big drop in crude production, amid ‘somewhat bearish’ market outlook

By Herman Wang

Led by its kingpin Saudi Arabia, which said it pumped at its lowest level in more than five years, OPEC on Friday reported it slashed its crude production in July, as it continues to battle slumping oil prices.

OPEC pumped 29.61 million b/d last month, an 8.2% drop from June, it said in its closely watched monthly oil market report, which uses six independent secondary sources to track production.

Many countries are far below the quotas they had committed to under a deal aimed at bolstering oil prices.

That should set the oil market up for a tighter second half of 2019, OPEC projected, though the producer group likely will need to rein in output further to avoid another bearish build-up of inventories in 2020.

“While the outlook for market fundamentals seems somewhat bearish for the rest of the year, given softening economic growth, ongoing global trade issues and slowing oil demand growth, it remains critical to closely monitor the supply/demand balance and assist market stability in the months ahead,” OPEC said in the report.

OPEC’s analysts raised their projections of global demand for the bloc’s crude to 31.66 million b/d in the third quarter and 30.17 million b/d in the fourth quarter, indicating that if OPEC members maintain their current production levels, oil inventories should see a significant fall.

The call on OPEC crude

But the call on OPEC crude retreats to 28.85 million b/d in the first quarter of 2020 and 29.39 million b/d in the second quarter, the report estimated.

OECD oil stocks stood at 2.955 billion barrels as of June, 67 million barrels above the five-year average

that OPEC and its allies have said they are targeting with their production cuts, the report said.

The data comes ahead of a key OPEC/non-OPEC monitoring committee meeting next month in Abu Dhabi, which delegates have said will likely examine if further action is needed to reverse the recent tumble in oil prices.

Front-month ICE Brent futures were trading at \$59.25/b at 1047 GMT, up 1.75% from the previous close.

But they are down more than 21% from their peak in late April, as trade tensions between the U.S. and China have soured market sentiment.

The committee, co-chaired by Saudi Arabia and non-OPEC Russia, is tasked with monitoring market conditions and assessing compliance with production quotas.

It will meet September 12 on the sidelines of the World Energy Congress.

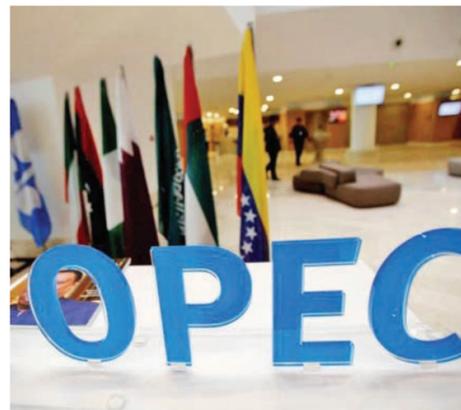
The world’s largest crude exporter

The production accord, which OPEC signed with Russia and nine other non-OPEC countries in December, commits the 24-country coalition to 1.2 million b/d in supply cuts through March 2020.

Saudi Arabia, the world’s largest crude exporter, reined in its output to 9.70 million b/d in July, a 134,000 b/d fall from June, according to secondary sources. But the kingdom, which has declared its intent to “lead by example” on the cuts, self-reported an even greater decline to 9.58 million b/d -- some 730,000 b/d below its quota.

That is the lowest Saudi Arabia has pumped since March 2014 and is a counter-cyclical drop, as Saudi production typically rises in the summer as it burns more crude for power generation to meet air conditioning demand.

Also disclosing significant output losses were Angola, which said its production fell 160,000 b/d month on month, and sanctions-hit Venezuela, which reported a



140,000 b/d contraction.

The declines were partially offset by Nigeria, which revealed a 150,000 b/d gain in July to 1.95 million b/d -- more than 260,000 b/d above its quota -- despite pledges Wednesday by Mele Kyari, the head of its state oil company, that “Nigeria is totally committed to full compliance with the agreement.” Secondary sources had estimated a 20,000 b/d decline for Nigeria in the month.

Iran, also struggling under U.S. sanctions, saw its output fall 50,000 b/d to 2.21 million b/d in July, according to secondary sources.

The country did not self-report a figure for the month, as has been its habit since the sanctions were reimposed in November.

(Source: spglobal.com)

Global energy demand rising 62 percent by 2050

Bloomberg NEF’s latest New Energy Outlook report predicts that global power demand will grow by 62 percent between now and 2050, equating to a 1.5 percent increase a year.

As stated by power-eng.com, in a news post, Climate Action reported that the study looked at how the demand for renewables is set to grow and clarifies that aggressive decarbonization will be needed beyond 2030 to keep temperature increases below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The New Energy Outlook combined the expertise of over 65 market and technology specialists in 12 countries to provide a unique view of how the market will evolve.

The report says that energy storage installations around the world will multiply exponentially, from a modest 9GW/17GWh deployed as of 2018 to 1,095GW/2,850GWh by 2040.

Coal is set to collapse everywhere in the world, except Asia and peaks globally in 2026. By 2032, there is more wind and solar electricity in the world than coal-fired electricity.

International variations are highlighted: “By 2040, renewables make up 90 percent of the electricity mix in Europe, with wind and solar accounting for 80 percent.”

China continues to be the largest market for wind and solar, which together grow from 8 percent to 48 percent of total generation by 2050.”

Yayoi Sekine, energy storage analyst for BNEF and co-author of the report, said: “Two big changes this year are that we have raised our estimate of the investment that will go into energy storage by 2040 by more than \$40 billion, and that we now think the majority of new capacity will be utility-scale, rather than behind-the-meter at homes and businesses.” The report also looks at electric vehicles, finding that EVs will add about 3,950TWh of new electricity demand globally by 2050, accounting for 9 percent of the world’s energy needs.

Chinese investments in Nigerian oil hit \$16b

Chinese investments in the oil and gas industry of Nigeria have reached \$16 billion, according to a senior NNPC official, but the industry needs even more to advance its production growth agenda.

According to oilprice.com, Vanguard quotes NNPC’s Group Managing Director Malla Mele Kyari as saying “To have investment of \$16bn in Nigeria is clearly an indication of your confidence in us. We have a target to grow production to 3m barrels per day by 2023, to do that, we need partners like you. You can count on us because we have common interest.”

The comments were addressed to the management of CNOOC, the third-largest state oil major in China and a company focused on overseas investments. These have become essential for China as domestic production declines due to natural depletion and challenges surrounding the development of new reservoirs, including shale plays.

Nigeria is a natural focus for investments despite problems with militant groups that have in the past few years caused several force majeure closures of pipelines and export terminals.

Earlier this year, Nigeria’s oil operations were disrupted several times due to fires, shutdowns, force majeure, and protests.

In April and May, a key oil pipeline and a logistics base in Nigeria’s oil-rich Niger Delta were rocked by a shutdown and protests in the latest incident that disrupted the Nigerian oil industry.

Shell declared a force majeure on Bonny Light exports, while exports of Amenam, operated by France’s Total, were also under force majeure in April. Nigeria is one of OPEC’s largest producers, with the June average at 1.855 million bpd, according to the secondary sources that OPEC uses for its monthly oil market updates.

The country was against the OPEC production cuts agreed last December because it needed to recover its production after a truce agreed with some militant groups in the Niger Delta. Eventually, however, it agreed to join the cuts.

The fastest growing energy producer in the world

Russian giant Gazprom saw the highest production growth over the last five years, followed by shale gas players in the U.S. and China, while BP dominates among the majors, according to Rystad Energy. Onshore resources – whether conventional or unconventional – are a major driver of growth.

As per oilprice.com, Rystad Energy has analyzed the production of all global E&P companies and ranked them according to their production growth from 2014 through 2018.

“Gazprom, the clear leader in production growth, is the only company with a total growth of more than 1 million barrels of oil equivalent per day (boepd) over the last five years. The growth comes primarily from conventional assets, with gas being the key contributor to the spectacular development,” says Espen Erlingsen, head of upstream research at Rystad Energy.

Production growth is a key performance indicator for E&P companies. This metric is commonly used by upstream players to demonstrate to investors that their portfolios are poised for growth as opposed to stagnated production.

Runner-up to Gazprom is PetroChina, with a total growth of around 730,000 boepd, also driven by conventional onshore gas production as well as splashes of shale gas growth. The third company to make the podium is shale-focused EQT, the largest producer of natural gas in the U.S., boasting equity production growth of close to 600,000 boepd, or 340% growth over the last five years.

The fastest-growing companies

“Behind the state behemoths in Russia and China, majors and shale companies are some of the fastest-growing companies over the last five years. Rystad Energy expects this rise in output among the majors and shale companies to continue,” Erlingsen said.

Among the majors, BP posted the largest production increase since 2014, seeing total production grow almost 500,000 boepd in the last five years.

Much of the production uptick can be credited with the company’s operations in the Middle East, with significant production additions from the Rumaila field in Iraq, and in North America, where shale and U.S. deep water are driving most of the changes.

Five of the majors – BP, Shell, Total, Chevron and Eni – have made Rystad Energy’s list of the 15 fastest-growing E&P companies. Absent from the list are ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips.

Equity production is strong not only among the majors, but also among five companies that are primarily focused on U.S. shale and tight oil: EQT, Antero, EOG, Ascent Resources and Range Resources.

Our benchmark analysis evaluates the companies’ total production growth for the five-year period, looking at both organic growth (increased field-level production in assets the company already owns) and inorganic growth (increased production due to mergers or acquisitions). All calculations have been made using each company’s equity, or working interest, across its upstream assets. National oil companies, defined as national companies with activities only in their home country, are excluded.

Americans oppose Israel lobby junkets

By Grant Smith

Antiwar—Seventy members of the U.S. Congress (16% of the total membership) are visiting Israel during recess. Most of the private funding for the junket arrives through an entity called the American Israel Education Foundation. AIEF officially formed as a "supporting organization of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee" (AIPAC) in 1988 and applied for tax exempt status in 1989.

AIEF formed to receive fully tax-deductible contributions for "educational purposes" that could then be funneled into AIPAC initiatives. AIPAC — then as now — is categorized by the IRS as a lobbying organization that can only receive non-deductible contributions.

AIEF claimed in filings to the IRS that it would educate students and young professionals about the Middle East and pursue other educational endeavors with a bona fide social welfare purpose.



There is nothing in its application for tax exempt status about junkets for politicians. Yet today AIEF funds AIPAC organized trips to Israel for members of Congress costing \$10,000 or more per individual.

AIPAC staffers organize and conduct the tours. Thanks to AIEF and a handful of similar groups, one out of every three privately funded congressional trips lands in Israel.

A recent representative poll of 2,000 voting age Americans asked about the Democratic Party delegation to Israel reveals 65.7% opposed it and think representatives should instead return to their districts.

Poll: 41 House Democrats are now visiting Israel during the Congressional recess on a trip funded by a tax-exempt pro-Israel charity linked to the US Israel lobby group AIPAC.

Following the Jack Abramoff travel scandal, a 2007 law was intended to prevent registered lobbies like AIPAC from conducting such junkets.

But like laws forbidding foreign aid to clandestine nuclear powers, regulating foreign agents, and combating espionage against the US, the lobbying law is completely ignored as applied to Israel and AIPAC. One core question is how AIEF ever gained or maintains tax exempt IRS status given the divergence between its original claimed social welfare purpose and observable activities.

One reason is the longstanding, mostly unreported, close relationship between the Israel lobby and the US Department of Treasury.

AIPAC and another related entity, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) were instrumental in creating the Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence. OTFI has been led exclusively by hard-core Zionists and functions as Israel's office of boycott, divestment and sanctions.

The IRS has also long been a captive of Israel lobby activity. Under former IRS Commissioner Douglas Shulman the IRS gutted its own oversight of "Friends of Israel" charities shuffling billions of dollars offshore into illegal settlements.

Over decades and despite lawsuits and persistent Freedom of Information Act Requests, the IRS still refuses to clarify its position on illegal settlements.

A close tie to the IRS is also the story of how the American Israel Education Foundation came into being. Although AIEF claims it "was created in 1990" it actually formed in September of 1988 and applied for tax-exempt status in April of 1989. AIEF's application presented tightly argued reasons for why it should immediately — and forever after — be affirmed by the IRS as a tax-exempt educational charity.

The IRS delivered a determination letter to AIEF in just four months.

There was little chance for a conditional five year "probationary" period which is common for new entities with no track record. That is because of AIEF's October 11, 1988 (PDF) seven-page justification for why it should receive tax exempt status.

It was signed off and most likely entirely drafted by Milton Cerny who had worked as the technical advisor in charge of tax exempt rulings at the IRS National Office in Washington until departing the IRS in September of 1988 to "begin" work on AIEF's submission.

Despite well-documented complaint filings to the IRS that AIEF is a prohibited "sham...alter ego" organization of AIPAC, there is little chance the IRS will compare AIEF's present day activities with its original tax exempt purpose. Likewise for yet another official IRS complaint about AIPAC's own failure to mention in its 1967 application for tax exempt status that it was formerly an unincorporated lobbying division of an umbrella organization ordered to register as the foreign agent of Israel by the Department of Justice in 1962.

In the 1960s IRS Commissioner Mortimer Caplin, a longtime Israel booster, delayed and finally brushed off a 1963 Senate Foreign Relations Committee demand for the review of Israel lobby entity tax exempt status.

Today in an America where key federal and even state agencies are under increasingly intense levels of capture by Israel and its US lobby, warranted accountability and compliance with regulations rigorously enforced on most other taxpayers simply does not exist.

The third Fox News shock to Trump

1 → On the other hand, the competition between Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris has intensified. If either of these candidates reach the final stage of next year's presidential race, they will have a greater chance of defeating Trump.

However, there is still much time left for the Democratic primary.

The election will be held primarily in the crucial state of Iowa. If any Democrat candidate can win in this small and important state, he can also win other Democratic intra-party election contests. Here's a look at some news and analysis on the U.S. presidential election:

Fox News poll shows Trump losing to Biden, Warren, Sanders and Harris

A Fox News poll released Thursday showed President Trump losing head-to-head matchups against four of the top Democratic presidential primary contenders. The poll found Trump with 39 percent support among registered voters in head-to-head matchups against Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.).

The poll found Sanders beating Trump with 48 percent, Warren winning over Trump with 45 percent and Harris winning with 46 percent support.

Former Vice President Joe Biden, meanwhile, beat Trump in the theoretical matchup with 50 percent support among those surveyed, compared to Trump's 38 percent. Among Democratic primary contenders, Warren saw the largest gain in support in the poll — an 8 percent jump from last month's survey.

Warren, according to the poll, took second place behind Biden with the support of 20 percent of Democratic primary voters.

Sanders dropped to third, now at 10 percent in the poll and the only other candidate aside from Warren and Biden scoring double digit support among voters. Biden dropped slightly in the poll from a previous Fox News poll in July, from 33 percent to 31 percent, but remains the clear front-runner in the race according to the survey.

The Fox News poll was taken between Aug. 11-13 and contacted 1,013 registered voters on landlines and cellphones. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percent for all registered voters, and 4.5 percent for Democratic primary voters.

2 troubling signs for Trump in this new Fox News poll

As Washington Post reported, Trump fails to crack 40 percent in any matchup with a potential 2020 opponent in a new Fox News poll. And that may not be the worst of it for him.

The new Fox poll is arguably Trump's worst of the early polls testing potential general-election matchups.

He trails Joe Biden by 12 percentage points (50 percent to 38 percent), Sen. Bernie Sanders (Vt.) by nine points (48 to 39), Sen. Elizabeth Warren (Mass.) by seven (46 to 39) and Sen. Kamala D. Harris (Calif.) by six (45 to 39).

That's tied for his biggest deficit to date against Warren, according to RealClearPolitics, and it's close to his biggest deficits against the others, too.

It's just one poll of course, and even high-quality polls have margins of error. It's possible Trump's support percentage is really in the 40s, just like in most other polls. But if you drill down, there are a couple other problematic pieces of this poll for Trump.

The first is his vote share versus his approval rating.

There has been plenty of talk about Trump's consistently low approval rating and how it sets him up for reelection.

But in this poll, he doesn't even completely lock down that vote. While he gets 38 to 39 percent in all four matchups, his approval rating is actually 43 percent.

That means roughly 4 percent of registered voters say they approve of Trump but they're not ready to vote for him. And as Josh Jordan noted, this isn't the first poll to show that.

I looked back on three other high-quality national polls and found a drop-off in all three — albeit not as big as in Fox's poll.

Reelection bids are generally viewed as referendums on the incumbent in which, in a close race, you'd expect the president to at least get the percentage of voters who approve of him.

For Trump, it appears there is a small percentage of people who like the job he's done but for whatever reason — concern about his tendency to fly off the handle, perhaps, or the fact that they also like the Democrats — aren't yet on board with his reelection. It's one thing to run for reelection with a low approval rating; it's another to not even be able to count on that level of support.

An alternative reading, of course, is that these voters are ripe for Trump to bring back into the fold and increase his vote share as the race moves forward. But even then, he's not in great shape.

The second problematic number comes from Fox News's write-up of its poll:



Voters who have a negative view of both Biden and Trump back Biden by a 43-10 percent margin in the head-to-head matchup, although many would vote for someone else (27 percent), wouldn't vote (12 percent) or are undecided (8 percent).

This is an admittedly small subsample, with a very large margin of error. Given Biden is relatively popular (50 percent favorable versus 42 percent unfavorable), the universe of voters who dislike both him and Trump is likely to be a very small share of the roughly 1,000 people surveyed. (I asked Fox about the sample size but haven't heard back yet.)

But even accounting for that, this is ominous for Trump. That's because these voters — those who disliked both him and Clinton — made the difference for him in 2016. As Philip Bump wrote last month:

Nationally, Trump had a 17-point edge with those voters, according to exit polls. In the three states that handed him the presidency — Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — he won those voters by 21, 25 and 37 points, respectively. In each state, those voters made up about a fifth of the electorate.

It was one-fifth of the electorate because only about 40 percent of voters liked both Trump and Clinton. It's a smaller universe today, because Trump's image



is slightly better and Biden's is significantly better than Clinton's. But it's also true that this universe of voters probably comes more from the right side of the electorate, given Biden's superior image rating. And yet Trump barely gets any support here.

For now, let's set aside the numbers in the head-to-head matchups. The fact is that Trump can win reelection with an approval rating in the low-to-mid 40s, which is where it's been throughout his presidency.

But he can't do it if he's not locking down basically everyone who approves of him and is getting beaten among those who dislike both him and his Democratic opponent.

If those findings are accurate, then focusing on his low approval rating might actually oversell his reelection chances.

Poll: Warren jumps over Sanders for second place behind Biden

As Politico reported, Sen. Elizabeth Warren has leapfrogged Sen.

Bernie Sanders for second place nationally in the Democratic presidential primary, according to a new poll out Thursday.

The new Fox News poll of registered

voters who say they plan to participate in the Democratic primary or caucus in their state shows that although Warren still trails former Vice President Joe Biden, pulling in 20 percentage points to his 31, she posted an 8-point gain over the previous survey conducted last month. Sanders dropped 5 points in the poll, good for third place with 10 percent support.

The poll shows remarkable growth for Warren over the last five months — she has gained 16 points since March — while Biden has remained somewhat steady over the same period. Sanders' second-place lead has diminished steadily over the same period, with Thursday's survey the first in which he dropped into third place. He has dropped 13 points since May. Sen. Kamala Harris is not far behind him in fourth place, with 8 percent.

Thursday's poll has no bearing on next month's debate in Houston, since every candidate polling above 2 percent has already reached the polling threshold for the debate stage.

The Fox poll shows that any of the top four Democratic contenders would beat President Donald Trump in a hypothetical head-to-head matchup. Biden opens up the widest lead against Trump, beating him 50-38, while Harris would

looks just fine for Biden. His position in Morning Consult's weekly tracking poll — first place with 33 percent of the vote — is unchanged.

In HarrisX's tracking poll for ScottRasmussen.com, he's at 28 percent, which is up 3 percentage points from a week ago.

He's down 1 point in YouGov's weekly poll, and he did get some middling numbers in New Hampshire this week. But Biden also got a good poll in South Carolina.

Not that you should necessarily have expected any differently.

Biden has survived more serious problems — a rough first debate, a group of allegations about inappropriately touching women — only to see his numbers rebound from any decline (if they were even affected in the first place). So it probably would have been optimistic for Biden's rivals to expect a handful of verbal gaffes to move his polls, especially given that Biden already came into the campaign with a reputation for being gaffe-prone.

Some influential Democrats are focusing on those gaffes for another reason, though: They see them as a sign of Biden's advancing age. (Biden is 76 and would be 78 upon assuming the presidency.) Whether those Democrats are genuinely concerned about Biden's age insofar as it might affect his performance against President Trump, or whether they're using it as an excuse to promote the candidacies of younger Democrats who they happen to like better anyway, undoubtedly varies from case to case.

A lot of rank-and-file voters do have concerns about Biden's age.

An NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll in February found that 62 percent of voters had reservations about voting for someone aged 75 or older. Other polls have also shown advanced age to be a concern among Democrats, Republicans and independents alike.

But there hasn't been much discussion of age from the other candidates. Eric Swalwell brought it up explicitly in the first presidential debate, when he urged voters to "pass the torch to a new generation of Americans." Rather than echo Swalwell's argument, however, Kamala Harris tried to defuse the situation by suggesting that discussions of age and generational change were tantamount to schoolyard insults. "America does not want to witness a food fight, they want to know how we are going to put food on their table," she said.

Maybe anti-Biden Democrats — and the other candidates — think they're being coy by using Biden's gaffes as a proxy for concerns about his age.

No reason to get tarred with allegations of ageism, they figure, or to risk offending older voters who turn out in big numbers in the primaries.

(Also, if the candidate they prefer to Biden is Bernie Sanders, they have the further problem that Sanders is a year older than Biden at 77.) Show rather than tell, as the maxim goes: Plant a few seeds and let voters build a narrative about Biden's age on their own, without having to give them the hard sell.

This strategy might even work! It's still fairly early, and Biden's age is perhaps his biggest risk factor — bigger, in my view, than his policy positions, which are often more in line with the views of the average Democrat than those of the more liberal candidates.

But especially in the era of Trump — who, of course, has already begun to question Biden's mental fitness — there might also be something to be said for saying the quiet part out loud.

In a poll conducted shortly after the first debate, some Democratic voters explicitly used Swalwell's "pass the torch" language when asked an open-ended question about why they didn't want to vote for Biden.

And they were much more likely to explicitly mention Biden's age than to use vaguer responses, such as that he was "out of touch."

There's also risk to anti-Biden Democrats in drawing voters' attention to gaffes or other incidents that voters view as relatively minor.

Biden remains an extremely well-liked figure among Democratic voters; 75 percent of them have a favorable view of him, according to Morning Consult's latest polling.

So three-quarters of the electorate is going to start with a predilection against sympathizing with critiques of Biden. If those critiques aren't really bringing the goods and instead seem like petty grievances, those Democrats may conclude that the case against Biden is a lot of hot air.

Meanwhile, if the false alarms continue — as in, Democrats on Twitter or on podcasts predict Biden's demise and the polls are unmoved — the media may come to view Biden as a Trump-like "Teflon" candidate who isn't greatly affected by gaffes and scandals.

That could reduce their appetite for covering them in the future — even if more serious ones occur than what's taken place.

Granted, there hasn't been a ton of polling this week. But what data we have

The U.S. government doesn't care about Afghan women

By Maj. Danny Sjursen

TEHRAN — Antiwar-In once, and to some extent still, relatively cosmopolitan Baghdad, Iraq, I once saw three young female college students from Mustansiriyah University walking home from class. They couldn't have been more differently clothed. One wore a full burqa that exposed only her eyes; another a hijab, a more modest head scarf without a facial veil, and a pair of jeans; the third sported a pink miniskirt and a revealing tank top with her long hair fully exposed. Still, they chatted like old friends.

By early 2007, this range of women's clothing was already highly rare in all but the safest Baghdad neighborhoods, yet it did still happen. I remember woefully realizing that I, a 23-year-old American lieutenant, had been treated to a rare glimpse of Saddam's largely secular (if brutal) regime that had preceded the U.S. military's ill-fated invasion. Before Uncle Sam fractured Iraq and empowered Islamist zealots, I was often told by locals that men and women could go on dates and drink alcohol publicly in cafes along the Tigris River. But those days were gone.

Four years later, and even further east in the proverbial Greater Mideast, while patrolling rural Kandahar, Afghanistan—birthplace of the Taliban movement—I hardly even saw a solitary grown woman. There, in the backwater of a country full of backwaters, adult women were rarely seen outdoors and never without a male family member as an escort.

It was all rather archaic and made Baghdad seem as liberal as Boston. I remember one young girl with shocking blue eyes, maybe twelve, playing close to my patrol base in the nearby village of Pashmul. Watching her skip a strange, improvised jump rope gave me rare moments of innocent joy in an altogether dangerous place I shouldn't have been in in the first place.

Then one day, she disappeared, this (to me) nameless, joyful girl, never to be seen again. Eventually I asked a village elder, who probably played both sides—Taliban and America—against the other, what had happened to the blue-eyed Afghan girl. His answer was simple: puberty. She had had her first period, was immediately deemed a "woman," and cloistered away behind the mud walls of her family home until her father decided to marry her off—likely to a much, much older man. Such was life in rural southern Afghanistan. It seemed most of the



ethnic Pashtun villagers wanted it that way.

I think about that striking young girl occasionally as I repeatedly argue for the full and rapid withdrawal of the US military from Afghanistan—which is, after all, the gold standard of hopeless wars. As I've predicted, it seems likely the Taliban will either conquer much of the country outright in the near future or at least maintain de facto control of Afghanistan's Pashtun-dominated south and east indefinitely. That means Afghan women in those regions, and potentially many others, will suffer. Yet, here's the nasty truth: When I (and some 100,000 other US troops) occupied much of Afghanistan, rural women still suffered. We could scarcely alter the longstanding cultural traditions of these regions. If, at the height of Obama's Afghan surge, the status of most (largely pastoral) women didn't change, what hope do the remaining 14,500 or so American soldiers still there have to protect these women? And after 18 years of stalemate, if—as now seems obvious—the US can't meaningfully win this war, what point is there in pinning over the fate of human rights in this landlocked Central Asian time warp?

Sure, it's disturbing, but it's also a solid fact of life. What's more, militarist, interventionist mainstream foreign policy wonks' sudden feigned concern for the fate of Afghan women is cynical bunk meant only to prolong America's longest ever war. It was never about women's rights or humanitar-

ianism in general. The US military and CIA invaded Afghanistan out of vengeance for the 9/11 attacks, out of a degree of uncertainty about what else to do. Someone had to pay, someone had to be bombed, and bin Laden was, well, in Afghanistan.

Treating the terror attacks as an act of war rather than an international crime was then the original sin of these forever wars. The rapid decision to shift strategy in Afghanistan from limited counter-terror operations to nation-building, counterinsurgency and prolonged military occupation ought to be considered the second sin.

Make no mistake: The well-being of Afghan women hardly motivated the architects of the American invasion and occupation. Need proof? Here's an ever-so-brief history lesson. During the Soviet war in Afghanistan (1979-89), the CIA not-so-secretly backed some of the worst Islamist theocrat "freedom fighters" against the Soviet-backed secular communist government then in power.

Whatever else Soviet socialist-style reforms brought to Afghanistan, they undoubtedly greatly improved the lot of local women, who gained full civil and social rights, access to education and prospects for professional careers. Uncle Sam hardly cared about Afghan women back then. It was not so long ago when Washington knowingly backed the most chauvinist theocrats in the Afghan mujahideen and, let's not forget, the Islamists' Arab volunteers—including one Osama bin Laden.

What's more, if the many D.C.-based backers of continued, perpetual US military involvement in Afghanistan were truly concerned with women's rights, perhaps they'd raise the alarm about the millions of women oppressed by Washington's ally, the Saudi absolute monarchy. After all, women in the kingdom live under the thumb of venal theocracy, as morality police roam the Saudi streets. This is a kingdom that still beheads women for "sorcery" and "witchcraft." On this topic, you'll hear hardly a peep from the dominant class of Washington interventionists.

One final note on mainstream militarist hypocrisy. A majority of these folks are older, white, socially conservative American men. Hardly feminists by any stretch of the imagination, on domestic policy they widely refuse to address the pervasive gender pay gap, have no stomach for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and support the escalating state-based war on constitutionally protected abortion rights. See, the militarists' hypocrisy knows no bounds.

The whole phony concern for Afghan women's rights in the wake of a potential US military withdrawal is a canard. These hypocrites' calls for perpetual war on behalf of Afghan women's souls serve only as an excuse for imperial expansion, future domination of Afghan mineral wealth, a regional check on the growing Chinese dragon and mastery of potential oil pipelines to bypass Russia. It's all old-fashioned geopolitics, folks, mixed with some absurd attachment by the military to dominance of the region. The Afghan people, especially women, rank as little more than pawns in a new Great Game in this long-contested region.

This author, as a former "guest" in the country, and as a (mostly) empathetic human, is sad for the women who do and will live under medieval Taliban rule. Still, the realist in me recognizes the limits of American military power, that the war shouldn't have ever been fought and can't be won. And as a born-again skeptic and a student of Afghan history, I know this much, too: Washington helped create what became the Taliban, sold out Afghan women to theocracy once before in the interest of embarrassing a Cold War rival, and never, ever, cared much about the plight of the blue-eyed girl who once made me smile.

I only wish the militarists in the foreign policy elite would admit as much, and leave the abandoned Afghan women out of it.

UAE hatching evil plots against neighbouring countries, Arab World

United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the name of a country that didn't exist before 1971 when the area was called Emirates of Motesalehe or the Emirates of the Coast of Oman.



This country which appeared on the map of the world on December second 1971, now has taken up a destabilizing role in Middle East and is trying to interfere in the affairs of other Arab countries in the region, both openly and in secret.

UAE's destructive role, especially in suppressing public protests became more evident after the events of September 2011; as UAE and its allies did their best to stop the progress of Arab countries and prevent the public uprisings that were rooted in Islamic reawakening.

On the other hand, Al Nahyan, one of the six ruling families of the UAE, did its best to destroy all resistant groups that were against Zionists such as Hamas and Hezbollah to prepare the ground for normalizing relations between Israel and Arab nations; something that led to creation of the Deal of the Century.

To give an example, Mahmoud al-Mabhouh, who was among top Hamas leaders and was the chief of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades was assassinated in Dubai. Later, Yedioth Ahronoth, Israeli daily newspaper said the assassination was planned by Mossad and was carried out in cooperation with UAE's intelligence service.

There are many similar examples, in another one, we see that UAE's secret service agent enters the Gaza Strip through Egypt, under the cover of a Red Crescent volunteer to spy on Hamas and Palestinian resistant groups in order to give information to the Zionist regime.

Apart from activities against Palestinians, UAE has also tried to sabotage Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan Al-Muslimin) in Egypt through its media channels such as Al-Hayat, Al Youm Al Sabee, and Al-Masry Al-Youm. Furthermore, UAE gave full financial support and security help to certain groups in order to topple Muslim Brotherhood.

UAE is a big supporter of Egypt's current government. The country keep spending billions of dollars to carry out Zionists' plans in Middle East and suppress any democratic movement in the region that is based on public votes and people's determination.

An example of UAE's interference in Libya is the story of Yusef Mobarak. He was arrested in Al-Aqiq Airport in Tripoli after the intelligence service of Libya's Government of National Accord accused him of taking pictures from high-security centers and foreign embassies in Tripoli. After investigations, it was revealed that Yusef was a main link to Khalifa Haftar, the renegade military commander of Libya, and was particularly supported by UAE and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Egypt's president.

Everyone knows that UAE's army has given modern weapons and high-tech tanks to Khalifa Haftar and has supported the renegade commander against Tripoli. UAE's interference in Libya is aimed at keeping the country entangled in wars and chaos, so that Libya can become a heaven for the intelligence services of the United States, Israel and UAE.

UAE has also been seriously interfering in Tunisia. The country is putting enormous political and economic pressure on Tunisia to expand its control over it and crush all the public movements. They have forced Tunisia to choose between surrendering to UAE and suffering under a security crisis.

Yemen is another country that is crushed by UAE's interference. UAE has done a dirty job in Yemen by destroying Yemen's infrastructures and killing thousands of innocent Yemeni citizens.

The octopus of UAE has extended its claws to Oman as well. Oman intelligence service discovered an Emirati spy network that was supposed to predict and influence what happens in Oman after Sultan Qaboos. The network was trying to make strong bonds with anti-government tribes such as Al Shuluh tribe which has close relationships with UAE, especially with Ras al Khaimah emirate.

Another UAE spy network was discovered in Turkey and brought shame to Emirati leaders. According to Turkish media, UAE was trying to support some of the government dissidents and army commanders including Fethullah Gülen. Turkish intelligence service also discovered that Mohammed Dahlan entered Turkey under a fake identity and by using an Emirati passport. In this secret trip, he had meetings with the opponents of Turkish government.

UAE is also trying to expand its reach to the Islamic Republic of Iran as well. The country has already given financial support and intelligence to some terrorist cells that worked against Iran. Once again, UAE's efforts to interfere in Iran was proved when it was revealed that Global Hawk drone was sent to Iran from an Emirati base. Apart from having a destructive role in Middle Eastern countries, UAE is quickly expanding its relationship with the Zionist regime. Now, Zionists have representative offices in Abu Dhabi and can freely travel to UAE.

All these facts show that Al Nahyan family and specially Mohammed bin Zayed, the Crown Prince of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, are the main causes of war in Arab World and division among Muslims. They are completely abiding by the goals of the Zionist regime; therefore, the Muslim community and Arab world should free itself from the influence of this evil element.

Trump's tariffs mean a less merry Christmas in US

By Hu Weijia

GLOBALTIMES — If China plays the card of the holiday economy to hit back on the US in the trade war, Americans may have an unforgettable Christmas this year with price hikes for Christmas trees, plastic reindeer, glittery wreaths and even Bibles.

US President Donald Trump said earlier this week that he is delaying some tariffs on Chinese imports because of the Christmas season, "just in case some of the tariffs would have an impact on US customers." Trump previously claimed that China is paying the full price of his tariffs, but now he has changed his mantra that the tariffs may have an impact on US consumers.

Some statistics show that two-thirds of the world's Christmas decorations are produced in Yiwu, East China's Zhejiang Province. In the US, some 90 percent of imported Christmas ornaments and lights come from China, the US media outlet marketplace.org reported, citing data from the US Census Bureau.

Not only Christmas ornaments but also a wide range of made-in-China products hold a large market share in the US, so US consumers may have to endure higher prices

thanks to Trump's tariffs, because countries outside China can hardly develop a production capacity that is large enough to meet the demand from the US market in the short run. That's why Trump pulled back from some pending tariffs ahead of the Christmas season.

The US is delaying tariffs on made-in-China items such as cellphones, laptop computers, video game consoles, and certain toys, footwear and clothing. This means the US market has rigid demand for those items and can tolerate price hikes.

This can be a bargaining chip in China's trade negotiations with the US: Trump can delay tariffs on imports from China to curb inflation, so China can encourage its companies to raise the prices of certain products to push up inflation.

Even if Chinese exporters raise their prices, US consumers cannot find alternative products in the short run. This may give an advantage to China during the upcoming holiday shopping season.

China won't be content to only play defense in the trade war. Trump's decision to delay tariffs reminds China that it can choose certain products on which to raise prices in the US market.

Most US publishers print the Bible and some other reli-



gious texts in China. If the US-launched trade war results in a price hike or even a shortage of Bibles during the Christmas holiday, Americans will be deeply impressed by the interconnection between China and the US economy.

Wise companies in Hong Kong ought to draw a clear line against violent protests

By Hu Weijia

GLOBALTIMES — A group of violent protesters in Hong Kong organized a series of illegal rallies and violent protests that have had devastating effects on the local economy and people's well-being. Radical protesters tarnished the national emblem mounted on an official building, desecrated the national flag, defying national sovereignty and seriously challenging the "one country, two systems" principle. Such violent actions have triggered public anger across China.

Illegal protests and violence are supposed to be condemned by all of society, but it is unfortunate that certain influential multinational companies doing business in Hong Kong are not acting wisely. Some are catering to the radical protesters, others try to hype themselves up, and some even play an insidious role in supporting the violent protests.

Whether it is out of ignorance or purposely done, these companies are doing the wrong thing. The reason is simple: Any company with a sense of social responsibility should not be associated with violence. Only a stable social environment can help businesses flourish. Commercial entities which are eager to promote hype

are very short-sighted. They may have pandered to some groups but it will end up costing them business. Compared to the rioters, the majority of the population seeks peace. Compared to a small fraction of Hong Kong secessionist forces, China's 1.4 billion strong population means a huge market. Some companies fail to see the bigger picture.

Although the majority of companies understand the situation very well, a select number are still willing to take chances by acting in contradictory ways on the Hong Kong question. However, in the internet age, this duplicity can hardly hide itself. Behavior that hurts Chinese people's feelings are always eventually uncovered by netizens, and the companies guilty of such behavior are criticized or boycotted. Companies are supposed to be rational entities. Their decisions should take both company and society interests into account.

A responsible company needs to build a coherent image worldwide and protect that image through practical actions. Localization of services should never be used as an excuse to go out of the way to cater to certain radical groups.

A responsible company ought to re-



spect and abide by the local rule of law and international consensus, instead of intentionally turning a blind eye to it or feigning ignorance.

In the case of Hong Kong, all enterprises should respect Hong Kong's legal system and value the "one country, two systems" principle, rather than practice irrationality. They should understand that stability underpins business success. Stability is based on abiding by the law. If any illegal incident or violence occurs, it is not only a public security issue.

The economic or commercial boom will also be dealt a blow, thus companies' long-term interests will be undermined.

The recent violence in Hong Kong has had a severe impact on the local economy. The tourism, retail and restaurant sectors of Hong Kong have all seen an apparent decline in business. The Hong Kong stock market has also taken a plunge.

Companies should not become accomplices of the rioters. Moreover, they need to see themselves as an important symbol of maintaining a stable and prosperous society.

They should stand up and draw a clear boundary against violent actions. Some multinational corporations have taken responsible actions, expressing their stances against violence, and their support of safeguarding the rule of law. It does not mean that all corporations will be forced to take a position or speak out.

However, it is necessary for all to draw a line against violence with their actions, not to be hijacked or deceived by violence, and not root for it.

This should be their bottom line. Silence or even encouragement of violence will harm and wound the pacifists the most. In this sense, the vast number of consumers on the mainland always have sharp eyes.

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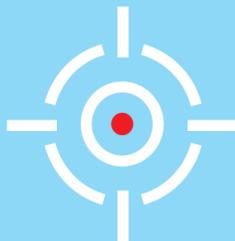
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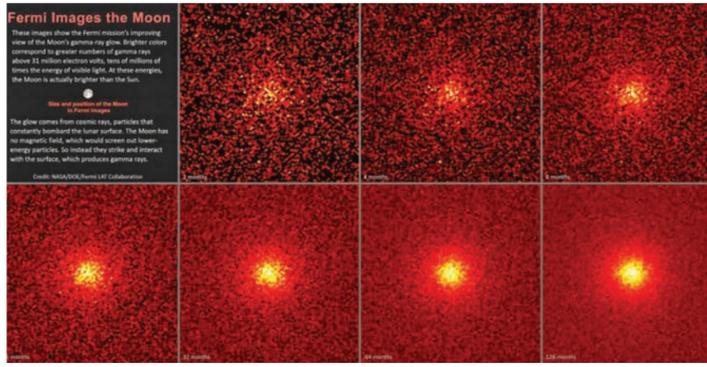
Moon glows brighter than sun in images from NASA's Fermi

These images show the steadily improving view of the Moon's gamma-ray glow from NASA's Fermi Gamma-ray Space Telescope. Each 5-by-5-degree image is centered on the Moon and shows gamma rays with energies above 31 million electron volts, or tens of millions of times that of visible light. At these energies, the Moon is actually brighter than the Sun. Brighter colors indicate greater numbers of gamma rays. This image sequence shows how longer exposure, ranging from two to 128 months (10.7 years), improved the view.

If our eyes could see high-energy radiation called gamma rays, the Moon would appear brighter than the Sun! That's how NASA's Fermi Gamma-ray Space Telescope has seen our neighbor in space for the past decade.

Gamma-ray observations are not sensitive enough to clearly see the shape of the Moon's disk or any surface features. Instead, Fermi's Large Area Telescope (LAT) detects a prominent glow centered on the Moon's position in the sky.

Mario Nicola Mazziotta and Francesco Loparco, both at Italy's National Institute of Nuclear Physics in Bari, have been analyzing the Moon's gamma-ray glow as a way of better understanding another type of radiation from space: fast-moving particles called cosmic rays. "Cosmic rays are mostly protons accelerated by some of the most energetic



phenomena in the universe, like the blast waves of exploding stars and jets produced when matter falls into black holes," explained Mazziotta.

Because the particles are electrically charged, they're strongly affected by magnetic fields, which the Moon lacks. As a result, even low-energy cosmic rays can reach the surface, turning the Moon into a handy space-based particle detector. When cosmic rays strike, they interact with the powdery surface of the Moon, called the regolith, to produce gamma-ray emission.

The Moon absorbs most of these gamma rays, but some of them escape.

Mazziotta and Loparco analyzed Fermi LAT lunar observations to show how the view has improved during the mission. They rounded up data for gamma rays with energies above 31 million electron volts -- more than 10 million times greater than the energy of visible light -- and organized them over time, showing how longer exposures improve the view.

"Seen at these energies, the Moon would never go through its monthly cycle of phases

and would always look full," said Loparco.

As NASA sets its sights on sending humans to the Moon by 2024 through the Artemis program, with the eventual goal of sending astronauts to Mars, understanding various aspects of the lunar environment take on new importance. These gamma-ray observations are a reminder that astronauts on the Moon will require protection from the same cosmic rays that produce this high-energy gamma radiation.

While the Moon's gamma-ray glow is surprising and impressive, the Sun does shine brighter in gamma rays with energies higher than 1 billion electron volts. Cosmic rays with lower energies do not reach the Sun because its powerful magnetic field screens them out. But much more energetic cosmic rays can penetrate this magnetic shield and strike the Sun's denser atmosphere, producing gamma rays that can reach Fermi.

Although the gamma-ray Moon doesn't show a monthly cycle of phases, its brightness does change over time. Fermi LAT data show that the Moon's brightness varies by about 20% over the Sun's 11-year activity cycle. Variations in the intensity of the Sun's magnetic field during the cycle change the rate of cosmic rays reaching the Moon, altering the production of gamma rays.

(Source: Science Daily)

Elon Musk wants to drop nuclear bombs on Mars

Elon Musk, CEO of SpaceX and Tesla, still wants to drop nuclear bombs on Mars to transform it into a livable planet for humans -- as evidenced by his latest tweet on Friday morning.

Musk believes that by hitting Mars with nuclear weapons, the planet's polar ice caps could melt and release vast amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which would essentially create a greenhouse effect that raises the temperature and air pressure of the planet -- like a really quick version of climate change.

Musk has shared this opinion for years, dating back to interviews with the billionaire from 2015. He even went on Stephen Colbert's late-night talk show to discuss his idea to bomb Mars.

In 2017, Musk published an article in the journal *New Space* detailing how humans could build a 1-million-person colony on Mars in less than a century.

Perhaps in an effort to get more people on board with his idea, Musk floated the idea of selling "Nuke Mars!" merchandise to the Twitter crowd.



It's unclear if Musk is actually serious about the "Nuke Mars!" shirts, but he does seem very serious about making humans an "interplanetary species".

His company SpaceX is currently testing a prototype version of its rocket to Mars called Starship, which Musk hopes will eventually send humans to Mars.

The prototype for this ship, called Starhopper, just had its first successful test after a previous launch went wrong. NASA is hoping to use rockets from SpaceX for future visits to the moon and Mars.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Scientists find natural pigment in 54-million-year-old insect eyes

Scientists were surprised to find a natural pigment called eumelanin in the 54-million-year-old eyes of an ancient crane fly. The fossilized fly was recovered from Denmark's Fur Formation.

"We were surprised by what we found because we were not looking for, or expecting it," Johan Lindgren, an associate professor in the geology department at Lund University in Sweden, said in a news release.

Eumelanin, a type of melanin, is found in human eyes. After finding the pigment in the eyes of a prehistoric crane fly, scientists went looking for it in the eyes of living crane flies. Sure enough, it was there.

By comparing the ancient and modern crane fly eyes, scientists were able to gain a better understanding of how the fossilization process affects the composition and structure of an insect eye.

In addition to eumelanin, researchers also identified calcified ommatidial lenses. Researchers suggest that over time, the original chitinous material was replaced by calcium salts.

Scientists have previously hypothesized that trilobites, a diverse and widespread



group of extinct marine arthropods from the Cambrian period, used mineralized lenses to see. The latest research -- published this week in the journal *Nature* -- suggests the hypothesis is flawed.

"The general view has been that trilobites had lenses made from single calcium carbonate crystals," study author Lindgren said. "However, they were probably much more similar to modern arthropods in that their eyes were primarily organic."

The compound eyes of arthropods, including insects and crustaceans, are made up of dozens of tiny light-sensitive ommatidia.

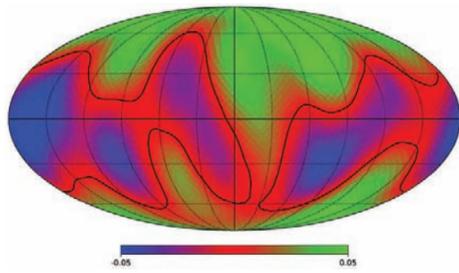
(Source: UPI)

Here's what Earth might look like to aliens

When Earthly astronomers train their telescopes on exoplanets beyond our solar system, they're lucky to see even a single dot of light. How can they figure out whether it might have suitable conditions for life? To find out how they might know more, a team of scientists turned the problem on its head: They took images of a habitable planet--Earth--and transformed them into something alien astronomers light-years away would see.

The team started with about 10,000 images of our planet taken by NASA's Deep Space Climate Observatory (DSCOVR) satellite, which sits at a gravitational balance point between Earth and the Sun, allowing it to see only the daytime side of the planet. The images were taken at 10 specific wavelengths every 1 to 2 hours during 2016 and 2017.

To simulate an alien point of view, the researchers reduced the images into a single brightness reading for each



wavelength--10 "dots" that, when plotted over time, produce 10 light curves that represent what a distant observer might see if they steadily watched exoplanet Earth over 2 years.

When researchers analyzed the curves and compared them with the original images, they figured out which parameters of the curves corresponded to land and cloud cover in the images. Once they knew those relationships, they picked out the parameter most closely related to land area, adjusted it for the 24-hour rotation of the Earth, and constructed the above contour map, soon to be published in *The Astrophysical Journal Letters*.

The black lines, which mark the median values for the land parameter, serves as an approximate coastline. Rough outlines of Africa (center), Asia (upper right), and the Americas (left) are clearly visible. While this is obviously no substitute for an actual image of an alien world, it may allow future astronomers to assess whether an exoplanet has oceans, clouds, and icecaps--key requirements for a habitable world.

(Source: sciencemag.org)

LIGO and Virgo probably spotted the first black hole swallowing up a neutron star

Shudders in the cosmos have revealed what's likely the sad end of a neutron star -- getting swallowed by a black hole.

If confirmed, it would be the first solid detection of this source of gravitational waves, revealing a type of cataclysm never before spotted. Researchers from the LIGO and Virgo gravitational wave observatories reported the candidate event, which was detected August 14, in a public database used by astronomers.

Scientists are still analyzing the data to verify what created the gravitational waves, which are tiny vibrations in spacetime caused by massive, accelerating objects. But one thing seems fairly certain: "Something has occurred out there in the sky," says physicist Daniel Holz of the University of Chicago, a member of LIGO. "So far, it doesn't obviously look like anything we've detected with high confidence before."

LIGO and Virgo previously have picked up gravitational waves from pairs of merging black holes and from colliding neutron stars, which are extremely dense collapsed stars. In April, scientists saw

tentative hints of a rendezvous between a black hole and neutron star, but the signal was weak and could have been a false alarm.

This new discovery offers much more solid evidence: The detection was so clear that it's considered very unlikely to be a false alarm. The researchers estimate that the run-in between the two objects occurred around 900 million light-years away, and within an area about 23 square degrees across the sky. (For comparison, the moon is about half a degree across.) Astronomers have since been peering at that region with their telescopes, looking for any light that may have been emitted in the merger. Such light could have been released if the neutron star were torn apart by the black hole before being gulped within its depths.

Further study of the encounter could help reveal new secrets about some of the universe's most mysterious objects. But the potential detection is exciting on its own, Holz says. "The first of anything is always really fascinating."

(Source: sciencenews.org)

Prehistoric humans drove cave bears to extinction, DNA study suggests

Europe's vegetarian cave bears were driven to extinction by humans around 24,000 years ago, according to a new DNA study.

There was a drastic decline in their population starting around 40,000 years ago, the findings, published in *Scientific Reports*, suggest. This coincided with the spread of anatomically modern humans in Europe and pre-dated climate cooling.

"Our study supports a potential significant human role in the general extinction and local extirpation of the European cave bear and illuminates the fate of this megafauna species," the authors wrote.

Researchers led by Verena Schuenemann from the University of Zurich and Herve Bocherens, from the University of Tübingen, reconstructed 59 cave bear mitochondrial genomes from bone.

The samples were collected across 14 sites in Switzerland, Poland, France, Spain, Germany, Italy and Serbia.

The team then compared these genomes to 64 previously published mitochondrial genomes to show where different populations of cave bears lived and how they migrated during the Late Pleistocene.

They identified five major mitochondrial DNA lineages that originated from a common ancestor around 451,000 years ago and spread across Europe -- indicating cave bear distribution was more complex than previously thought.

Cave bear populations remained relatively stable until around 40,000 years ago, including during two cold periods and multiple cooling events, scientists estimate.

They say that as the cooling climate of the last ice age started much later -- around 30,000 years ago -- the findings suggest other factors, such as hunting by humans, may have had a major impact.

The study also sets out that the cooling climate and subsequent reduced availability of food from plants may have split the overall bear population into various sub-populations.

They would have inhabited more moderate climates with a rich supply of different plants. By interrupting the connectivity between these sub-populations, humans may have played a decisive role in the species' extinction, according to the study.

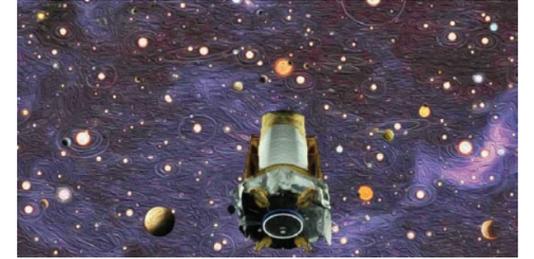
(Source: The Independent)

Study predicts universe's population of Earth-like planets orbiting sun-like stars

How many other Earths are there? Scientists still aren't sure, but researchers have narrowed the range of possibilities.

In a new study, astronomers offered the most accurate formula yet for calculating the rate of Earth-like planets orbiting sun-like stars.

For the research, scientists surveyed the exoplanet discoveries made by NASA's Kepler space telescope, which identifies alien worlds by observing the dimming of stellar light as exoplanets transit across the face of their host stars. Scientists can use the transit data collected by Kepler to estimate the size of the planet and its distance from its host star.



"Kepler discovered planets with a wide variety of sizes, compositions and orbits," study author Eric B. Ford, professor of astronomy and astrophysics at Pennsylvania State University, said in a news release. "We want to use those discoveries to improve our understanding of planet formation and to plan future missions to search for planets that might be habitable. However, simply counting exoplanets of a given size or orbital distance is misleading, since it's much harder to find small planets far from their star than to find large planets close to their star."

To overcome this bias, Ford and his colleagues developed a model to analyze how many planets -- and at what range of sizes and orbital distances -- Kepler would find in a simulated universe.

"We used the final catalog of planets identified by Kepler and improved star properties from the European Space Agency's Gaia spacecraft to build our simulations," said co-author Danley Hsu, a grad student at Penn State. "By comparing the results to the planets cataloged by Kepler, we characterized the rate of planets per star and how that depends on planet size and orbital distance. Our novel approach allowed the team to account for several effects that have not been included in previous studies."

The simulations suggest approximately one in four sun-like stars host an Earth-like exoplanet, a planet three-quarters to one-and-a-half times the size of earth and with an orbital period between 237 and 500 days.

The research, published this week in the *Astronomical Journal*, could prove useful to scientists looking for signs of alien life on Earth-like planets. Understanding the relative abundance or scarcity of Earth-like exoplanets can help researchers properly scale their search efforts.

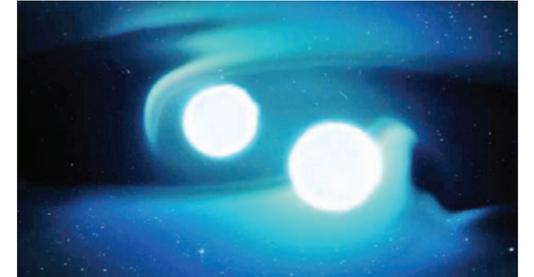
"Knowing how often we should expect to find planets of a given size and orbital period is extremely helpful for optimize surveys for exoplanets and the design of upcoming space missions to maximize their chance of success," Ford said.

(Source: UPI)

Scientists to use near-Earth object telescope to observe cosmic mergers

Scientists have reprogrammed the Catalina Sky Survey's near-Earth object telescopes to look for both asteroids and cosmic mergers.

"Catalina Sky Survey has all of this infrastructure for their asteroid survey," Michael Lundquist, postdoctoral research associate at the University of Arizona, said in a news release. "So we have deployed additional software to take gravitational wave alerts from LIGO, the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory, and the Virgo interferometer then notify the survey to search an area of sky most likely to contain the optical counterpart."



The Catalina Sky Survey telescopes will continue to look for asteroids, but it will scan parts of the sky that LIGO and Virgo observations suggest is likely to feature the optical signals of mergers, the cosmic events thought to be responsible for producing gravitational waves.

The Catalina Sky Survey began its new approach to sky-gazing in April. In the first month, the telescopes were alerted to look for three potential massive collisions.

Tracing gravitational waves to the origins and finding the event's optical counterpart is difficult. Scientists have mostly taken a precise approach, using small telescopes with narrow fields of view. The Catalina Sky Survey uses a 60-inch telescope with a wide field of view to image large swaths of sky in just half-an-hour.

Researchers built a sophisticated algorithm to analyze LIGO and Virgo data and help the Catalina Sky Survey determine what to look for. The team of astronomers described their new survey software this week in the *Astrophysical Journal Letters*.

Initially, the April alerts triggered the search for 20,000 objects, but the machine-learning algorithm narrowed down the search to five potential objects.

The first of the three events was a merger of two black holes. "There are some people who think you can get an optical counterpart to those, but it's definitely inconclusive," Lundquist said.

The second event was a merger of two neutron stars -- the giant, dense cores of collapsed stars.

While the survey failed to find any corresponding optical signals for the potential merger of objects, astronomers did identify a supernova.

"We also found a near-Earth object in the search field on April 25," Christensen said. "That proves right there we can do both things at the same time."

Scientists hope that as the survey continues to run, and as LIGO and Virgo identify new targets, the Catalina Sky Survey will observe the optical signal of a merger event responsible for a gravitational wave.

(Source: UPI)

Turkish tourism booms with Eid al-Adha

Turkey's resort towns saw a 100 percent occupancy rate with the Eid al-Adha holiday, including the southern province of Antalya and Aegean province of Mugla, the top two favorite destinations of both domestic and foreign tourists.

"We had a great Eid al-Adha holiday as a country. We projected 5.5 million citizens to travel to their hometowns and 4.5 million citizens to flock to resort towns," Ulkay Atmaca, the president of Professional Hoteliers Association, told Anadolu Agency.

"About 10 million people travelled during the holiday season. There was especially intensity in the Mediterranean and Aegean [provinces]," Atmaca added.



On a daily basis, about 100,000 people travelled to Mugla's Ula district, which has a population of 4,000.

"We have hosted guests 25 times more than our population. It was a fruitful Eid al-Adha," said Ismail Akkaya, the mayor of Ula.

Daily excursion boats also saw a 100 percent occupancy rate in Ula.

While many domestic tourists preferred to have their vacations at Mugla, Marmaris and Fethiye, the resort towns of Bodrum, others were drawn to Antalya with its golden beaches and turquoise-hued waters.

In Marmaris, too, daily excursion boats were full. "About 20,000 vacationers enjoyed a blue voyage, on a daily basis, in each day of the [Eid al-Adha] holiday," said Halil Bagli, the chairperson of the Marmaris branch of Chamber of Shipping.

About 5,000 vacationers each day travelled to the coves of Marmaris on gulets, Bagli added.

In Antalya, especially the Kaputaj Beach in Kas, Phaselis Cove in Kemer and the King's Cove in Gazipasa attracted the attention of visitors.

The Cleopatra Beach in Alanya was also a frequent destination of tourists. Cleopatra Beach is among the 10 most beautiful beaches of Turkey. Throughout centuries it was said that the fine and non-sticking sand of the beach was brought from the North African coast upon Cleopatra's command.

In the five-day-long holiday, roughly 600,000 foreign and 100,000 domestic tourists came to Antalya, said Erkan Yagci, the head of Mediterranean Touristic Hoteliers and Investors Association. He also added that 100 percent occupancy rate was seen in Antalya's hotels.

"There was a tourism volume of 700,000 [people]," he said. The sector's expectations have been met with the number of tourists arriving in resort towns for vacation, said Osman Ayik, the chairman of Turkey's Hoteliers Federation, adding that the sector's expectations have been met with the number of tourists.

"There was intensity in all regions of Turkey. Many people travelled during Eid al-Adha. It was also a period in which the volume of foreign tourists was dense in coastal regions," Ayik said.

This holiday season was profitable, according to Bilal Korkmaz, chairperson of the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TURSAB).

(Source: Hurriyet Daily News)



ROUND THE GLOBE

National History Park – Citadel, Sans Souci, Ramiers

In the northern part of Haiti, the National History Park – Citadel, Sans-Souci, Ramiers (NHP-CSSR) is located in the central zone of the northern massif that extends to the Dominican Republic.

The NHP-CSSR is located between the coastal plains and the mountainous interior of the region. The choice to build the Citadel on the summits responded to a strategy for interior protection, differing from the coastal defense strategy inherited from French colonization.



Created by presidential decree in 1978, to preserve the splendid natural scenery of the mountainous peaks covered with luxuriant vegetation, the NHP-CSSR covers an area of 25 km². It includes the monumental ensemble of the Palace of Sans-Souci and its annex buildings, the Citadelle Henry and the Ramiers site, universal symbols of liberty, being the first monuments to be constructed by black slaves who had gained their freedom. For Haitians, they represent the first monuments of their independence.

On 1 January 1804, after fourteen years of struggle by the island's black slaves against the colonists, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, the principal leader of the revolution, proclaimed the independent Republic of Haiti. The "Emperor" Dessalines immediately entrusted to one of his generals, Henri Christophe, the task of constructing an immense fortress on the Pic Laferriere, to protect the young republic.

Both military installation and political manifesto, the Citadelle Henry, constructed to a height of 970 m, is one of the best examples of the art of military engineering of the early 19th century.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran among countries with Neanderthal discoveries

TOURISM TEHRAN — Iran is on the list of countries that have yielded Neanderthal remains during archaeological excavations, Mehr reported on Saturday.

The Journal of Human Evolution has recently included Iran in the list of countries in which Neanderthal human remains have been found, the report said.

Existence of Neanderthals in the country was confirmed by a new study jointly carried out by experts from the University of Tehran, the University of Poitiers, the University of Bordeaux, National Museum of Iran, and Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism.

Established in 1972, the Journal of Human Evolution is a monthly peer-reviewed scientific journal covering all aspects of human and primate evolution.

Last year, a team of archeologists discovered a fossilized tooth, believed to be from a Neanderthal kid, in the central western Zagros mountainous area.

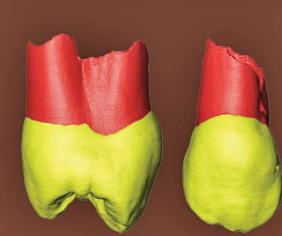
According to Saman Heydari-Guran, a senior Iranian archaeologist, the team detected a milk tooth, belonging to a six-year old Neanderthal kid, which was found along with several stone tools belonging to the Middle Paleolithic period, an era between 125,000 to 40,000 years ago.

He said the tooth is the first of its kind being excavated in the country with a 100-percent certainty of fitting to the Neanderthals.

"Using radiocarbon-14 dating technique, the tooth is estimated to date from 42,000 to 45,000 years ago... So, the kid belonged to the Neanderthal species with features close to modern humans."

"The recovered tooth is among rare Neanderthal milk teeth that have been found yet across the world," the archeologist said. Similar fossils have previously been found

Wezmeh Cave: The first actual remain of a Neanderthal from Iran



A Neanderthal premolar tooth from Wezmeh Cave



Entrance of Wezmeh Cave, view from inside

in Spain, France and Germany, he added. The discovery was made in Wezmeh Cave, in the Kermanshah region of Central Western Zagros.

Several fragmented human bones and teeth were discovered in the site. Among these human remains one tooth studied in detail by Paleoanthropologists such as Erik Trinkaus. Wezmeh 1, also known as Wezmeh Child, represented by an isolated unerupted human maxillary right premolar tooth (P3 or possibly P4) of an individual between 6-10 years old. It is relatively large compared with both Holocene and Late Pleistocene P3 and P4. Later Researchers analyzed it by non-destructive gamma spectrometry that resulted in a date of around 25,000 years BP (Upper Paleolithic).

"Uranium-series analyses of the fauna by alpha spectrometry provided age estimates between 70 and 11 ka. Crown dimensions place the tooth specimen at the upper limits of Late Pleistocene human ranges of variation... We used microfocus X-ray tomography to reassess the metameric position and taxonomic attribution of this specimen. We investigated its endostructural features and quantified crown tissue proportions," the Journal of Human Evolution wrote.

"We compared Wezmeh 1 with unworn/slightly-moderately worn P3 and P4 of European Neanderthals, Middle Paleolithic modern humans from Qafzeh, an Upper Paleolithic premolar, and Holocene humans. The results confirm that Wezmeh 1 represents a P3... Wezmeh 1 is thus the first direct evidence of Neanderthal presence on the western margin of the Iranian Plateau."

The Wezmeh Cave is an archaeological site near Islamabad Gharb, around 470 km (290 mi) southwest of the capital Tehran. The site was discovered in 1999 and excavated since 2001 by a team of Iranian archaeologists.

WCC-applauded Marivan to host major handicrafts exhibit

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Tens of thousands of artisans who are natives of western Iranian provinces will show their skills at a vast sales exhibit, which will be held in the city of Marivan from August 22 to 26.

Some 60 stalls will be set up for the event, in which street theater troupes are scheduled to turn the spotlight on touristic capacities of the region, CHTN reported.

Located in Kordestan province, Marivan was officially named a world crafts city of Kalash by the World Crafts Council-Asia Pacific Region. The city won the WCC-APR status in September 2017 after a delegation of international experts probed the in-house expertise which has been passed down generations to generations.

Kalash, also called Giveh, is a traditional footwear used to be very popular all over Iran in the past. The lightweight and breathable footwear was originally



intended to wear by men, however, in some regions they are welcomed by women too in the hot summertime.

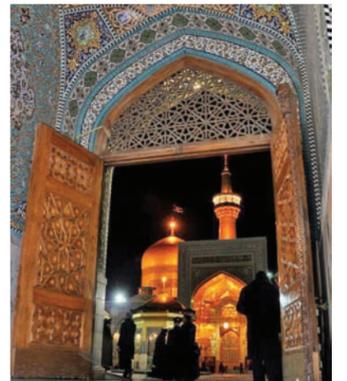
Foreign visitors hold 40% share of hotel occupancy in Khorasan Razavi

TOURISM TEHRAN — Foreign travelers and pilgrims account for some 40 percent share of hotel occupancy in Khorasan Razavi province, a local tourism official has said.

The province embraces over 900 hotels, apartment hotels and guest houses, according to provincial tourism department. Each day, Mashhad, the provincial capital, welcomes thousands of travelers, who come from various Iranian cities, neighboring countries and even every corner of the globe to visit the holy shrine complex of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Imam of the Shia Muslims.

Gholamabbas Arbab-Khales, the head of Foreign Ministry's Mission in East and North Iran, said earlier in June that the number of foreign travelers to Mashhad has been rising over the past couple of years.

"The arrival of foreign tourists to Mashhad is increasing by 15-20 percent annu-



ally, according to [the number of] visas on arrival that are issued by this mission," the official said.

Iranian hajj pilgrims returning home

TOURISM TEHRAN — The first group of Iranian hajj pilgrims flew home on Friday, departing from Medina in Saudi Arabia to Sari, the capital of Mazandaran province, Tasnim reported.

Another group of Iranian hajj pilgrims returned home on Saturday, leaving Medina for Salam Terminal at Tehran Imam Khomeini Airport City (IKAC).

Iranian flag carrier Iran Air sent a special Airbus aircraft from Jeddah to Tehran to transfer the pilgrims, said the general manager of Salam terminal, Mohammad Reza Fardi, according to IKAC news service.

A total of 12 flights were operated by Iran Air on Friday to return Iranian pilgrims to the provinces of Mazandaran, Yazd and Zanjan.

Return flights will be carried out until September 8,



taking some 88,000 pilgrims from the Saudi cities of Jeddah and Medina to 19 provinces in Iran over a period of 23 days.

A total of 361 return flights are scheduled to be operated, of which 176 are from Jeddah and the remaining 185 from Medina, Fars reported on Saturday.

Over 88,500 hajj pilgrims were transported from various Iranian airports to Saudi Arabia via 360 flights over the course of 30 days (July 8 – Aug. 6), the report said.

Performing hajj is compulsory on every Muslim at least once in their life. It is one of the largest annual gatherings of human beings on earth, with approximately three million people gathering each year for three to five days between the eighth and 12th of Dhul-Hijjah, the last month of the Muslim calendar.

Stash of ancient diamonds is discovered near the Earth's core

An ancient reservoir of diamonds that is older than the moon has been discovered near the Earth's core, more than 410km below the surface.

The diamonds had lain undisturbed for more than 4.5 billion years before being brought to the surface by a violent volcanic eruption in Brazil.

An international group of scientists measured helium isotopes – different atomic forms of helium – in the diamonds to find the ancient reservoir, according to a study published in Science.

Researchers say they acted as "perfect time capsules" that gave them an insight into the tumultuous period shortly after the planet formed. During this period there was so much violent geological activity that almost nothing of the young planet's original structure remained.

However, amid all this change, it had long been suspected there was an area of the mantle somewhere between the crust and core which had been relatively undisturbed. Until now, there was no proof it existed.

The first clues came in the 1980s when

scientists noticed some basalt lavas from particular locations had a ratio of helium-3 to helium-4 isotopes that was higher than usual. What was particularly interesting was that this ratio mirrored the isotope ratio found on early meteorites that had crashed into Earth.

This suggested the lava had come from some deep reservoir in Earth which hasn't changed for billions of years.

"This pattern has been observed in 'ocean island basalts', which are lavas coming to the surface from deep in the Earth, and from islands such as Hawaii and Iceland," said Dr Suzette Timmerman, from the Australian National University, who led the research.

"The problem is that although these basalts are brought to the surface, we only see a glimpse of their history. We don't know much about the mantle where their melts came from," said Dr Timmerman.

To find out more, researchers studied helium isotope ratios in super-deep diamonds that formed between 150 and 230km below the Earth's crust. "Diamonds are the hardest, most indestructible natural sub-

stance known, so they form a perfect time capsule that provides us a window into the deep Earth," she said.

"We were able to extract helium gas from 23 super-deep diamonds from the Juina area of Brazil.

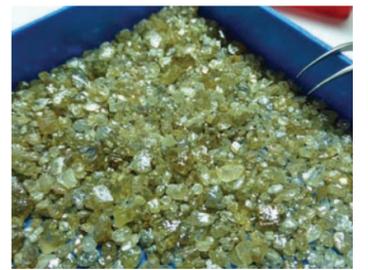
"These showed the characteristic isotopic composition that we would expect from a very ancient reservoir, confirming that the gases are remnants of a time at or even before the moon and Earth collided."

By studying the diamonds, scientists could tell they came from an area called the 'transition zone' which is between 410 and 660km below the surface of the Earth.

"This means that this unseen reservoir, left over from the Earth's beginnings, must be in this area or below it," said Dr Timmerman.

No one knows the size of the reservoir and they believe there could be more than one of them.

Professor Matthew Jackson from the University of California, Santa Barbara, who was not involved in the research, said the result was "interesting" and would help



The diamonds were 'perfect time capsules' that gave scientists an insight into a violent period shortly after the Earth formed (Graham Pearson)

scientists map out where these ancient domains are in the Earth's deep interior.

"This work is an important step towards understanding these reservoirs, and points the way to further research," he said.

Scientists will present their work at the Goldschmidt conference in Barcelona later this month.

(Source: Independent)

Iran wins 27 prizes at FIRA Robo World Cup 2019

The student teams came from Amir Kabir University of Technology, Sharif University of Technology, Yazd University, University of Isfahan and Technical and Vocational University and the junior teams came from Salam, Danesh, Allameh Tabatabaee, Khatam, Allameh Helli and some other schools and academies.

According to FIRA website, the FIRA RoboWorld Cup 2019 included competitions in FIRA AIR, that included 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 settings and FIRA Youth, competitions for our younger participants such as the mission impossible events.

FIRA also introduced 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 explores developing software to solve problems in AI, ML, and robotics.

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

ITO seeks UNIDO's help to introduce Iranian startups to global market

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The Information Technology Organization (ITO) of Iran has asked the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) for introducing Iranian startups to the global market, Mehr reported on Thursday.

ITO Director Amir Nazemi and Deputy ICT Minister Mehdi Ahuyee met with the managing director of program development and technical cooperation at UNIDO, Philippe Scholtès, in Tehran on Wednesday.

Representatives of six Iranian startups also attended the meeting, in which, Nazemi presented a report on the internet penetration rate among Iranian startups. During the meeting, Scholtès called Iran one of

the exemplary countries in the field of IT and praised advancement of startups in the country.

He said that UNIDO paves the way for development of countries in the global market and cooperates with Iran in international levels.

UNIDO is ready to boost cooperation in order to support Iranian startups in the international market, he added.

In May, the Strategic Technologies Center announced that over 6,500 startups are now active in Iran. The Iranian startup ecosystem is one of the biggest ones in the southwestern Asia and will turn into the most powerful economies in the near future.



ITO Director Amir Nazemi (2nd from right) and UNIDO official Philippe Scholtès pose for a photo during the meeting on Wednesday

Some startup culture mistakes

Remember, the startup culture is critical to the success of a startup. You need to create a culture if you want to be in the market forever. But there are some mistakes in building culture.

Therefore try to prevent when you want to build a startup culture as a startup.

Founders think startup culture just "happens." Maybe you think startup culture can be fixed later. Once you want to build a startup everything takes a backseat to get MVP.

You need to know that "culture" is another way of saying "how we work".

When you get to your MVP, startup culture will be deeply entrenched.

Some founders never took the time to define the startup culture and they felt it is too "cheesy". But when their company grows, the culture of their company will get diluted.

You can shape your startup culture while you build your MVP rather than waiting to define it. You don't need to write a complex culture, just simply write five words that describe your startup culture and once a month discussing whether those words are still appropriate.

Founders only hire their friends

High level of trust is a critical point when you want to hire for a startup. As a founder, you need your team to believe in you and your vision, work hard and make the right decisions. Therefore, you can look for people from your existing network.

As you know the teams are homogenous communicate better. But it can quickly lead to trouble.

For example, a startup was launched, but this startup was hit with a lawsuit due because the general counsel of this startup was the brother of the co-founder.

You can establish the rules of engagement early on that contains what happens in a worst-case scenario to avoid these type of problems. You need to plan into the existing culture about how you're going to integrate people.

Founders think hiring lots of people means success

Success at a startup can be so rare in the first months so celebrating is so important. The size of your team is easy to understand.

The founder of a famous startup noted he impressed people when he told them how big the company was and he was proud to share it. But the startup brought on lots of people, too fast and they were forced to lay off about 11% of the company.

Track more accurate measures of success and protect the morale of your team and find some ways to celebrate small success regularly.

Compete with other startups by spending too much money on perks

Maybe as you know a common Silicon Valley practice is



bribing employees. They attempt to get more work out of employees by meditation classes, and laundry service. But these bribes don't come cheap. For example, when funds of VC decreased, they forced to cancel its free shuttle and limit free meals

Try to give your team meaningful work if you want your team to do their best work, regardless of your compensation budget. Once they find out how their work is impacting the startup and how the startup is making a difference in the world, they will work better. You need just give them purpose. The purpose doesn't have to be a service or product that saves the world, have a mission and compelling vision is sufficient.

Work hard and spend long hours at the office as a startup cultural

When you begin to build a startup, outrageous goals and long hours are part of the agreement. But this doesn't mean push too hard because it can be caused to trouble.

For instance, at a startup obsession with performance metrics, long hours and "aggressive" deadlines led to a talent drain, and even hampered its ability to acquire companies. If you want to help your team manage workload and stress levels hold regular check-ins with them and also try to check-in with the founder.

According to reports, about 30% of founders report being depressed.

Finally, spend some weekends and long nights at this office is not a bad decision but never try to make it a cultural norm.

Hire talent people without any focus on their behavior

As you know, hiring smart people is highly competitive. Assume you accept their productivity and their superior skill set, but their personality will destroy your team culture. For instance, I worked with an executive whose attitude turned the rest of the team against him. He protects his own job by

guarding his information more closely and when making crucial decisions, leaving the startup completely in the dark.

The best method to prevent this problem is to carefully screen for jerks while the interview process, listening for trash talking past employers and self-centered answers.

You believe violate the rules as a startup culture.

A great way to get new customers and attract attention is pushing the limits. A startup was known as a major disruptor in the insurance industry. Investors of that pushed it to improve its sales goals. The Startup ignored state regulations to meet those goals which finally threatened to destroy the organization and forced the CEO out.

Before you think about lawyering up, you need to meet your founders and determine your startup values and understand what's important to your team? When do you need to discuss an action before moving forward? Track every quarter so that when money's on the line and deadlines approaching, you know what you stand for.

From Lean to the design team

Maybe you've already implemented practices of lean into your startup: create prototypes, test prototypes with consumers and modify the next version.

If you really want to build the best startup culture, it's as simple as applying those same principles to your team. This process is called Team Design and helps your team reach higher levels of engagement and performance:

Identify belief or practice that could be better

Fuzzy values? and ineffective meetings, approach it from your team' point of view. What will help your team better perform their jobs? What's avoiding your team from achieving their goals?

Build a few prototypes

This process is very simple, just declare one day a week as "No Meeting Day" so your team has enough time to do more deep thinking, or declare your status meeting with a one-sentence review of your strategy to see if tasks of everyone are on track.

Hold a retrospective

If you want to know what worked and what didn't, just like you would for a product, tweak the pilot and track if it's worth keeping, or if you should take a different approach.

These steps aren't as glamorous as holding a luxurious offsite retreat, but it is a reliable method to create a startup culture that you and your team are proud of and enjoy working in. From my own experience, I've seen teams' ability to plan, as well as teams' interpersonal trust, improve by a third. And when you do make some mistakes, they will be small and corrected fast, and less likely to end up as a headline on a front page.

(Source: startupik.com)

Iranian technology delegation to visit China in November

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — A delegation of 50 Iranian knowledge-based firms will travel to China in November in order to boost technological cooperation between the two countries.

Heading by the vice president for science and technology, Sourena Sattari, the delegation is scheduled to hold meetings from November 10 to 14, Mehr reported on Saturday.

The meetings aim to pave the way to change trade cooperation between the two countries from oil-based into knowledge-based.



The event will be held concurrent with the China Hi-Tech Fair (CHTF), which will be held from November 13 to 17 at the Shenzhen Convention & Exhibition Center.

Iran national pavilion at the CHTF will present new achievements of Iranian knowledge-based firms and startups.

The Iranian delegation will also pay a visit to Suzhou Science and Technology Park.

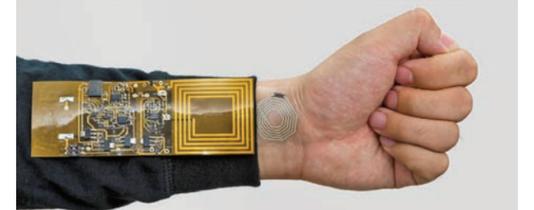
Flexible stick-on sensors could wirelessly monitor your sweat and pulse

As people strive ever harder to minutely quantify every action they do, the sensors that monitor those actions are growing lighter and less invasive. Two prototype sensors from cross-town rivals Stanford and Berkeley stick right to the skin and provide a wealth of physiological data.

Stanford's stretchy wireless "BodyNet" isn't just flexible in order to survive being worn on the shifting surface of the body; that flexing is where its data comes from.

The sensor is made of metallic ink laid on top of a flexible material like that in an adhesive bandage. But unlike phones and smartwatches, which use tiny accelerometers or optical tricks to track the body, this system relies on how it is itself stretched and compressed. These movements cause tiny changes in how electricity passes through the ink, changes that are relayed to a processor nearby.

Naturally if one is placed on a joint, as some of these electronic stickers were, it can report back whether and how much that joint has been flexed. But the system is sensitive enough that it can also detect the slight changes the skin experiences during each heartbeat, or the broader changes that accompany breathing.



The problem comes when you have to get that signal off the skin. Using a wire is annoying and definitely very '90s. But antennas don't work well when they're flexed in weird directions — efficiency drops off a cliff, and there's very little power to begin with — the skin sensor is powered by harvesting RFID signals, a technique that renders very little in the way of voltage.

The second part of their work, then, and the part that is clearly most in need of further improvement and miniaturization, is the receiver, which collects and re-transmits the sensor's signal to a phone or other device. Although they managed to create a unit that's light enough to be clipped to clothes, it's still not the kind of thing you'd want to wear to the gym.

The good news is that's an engineering and design limitation, not a theoretical one — so a couple years of work and progress on the electronics front and they could have a much more attractive system.

"We think one day it will be possible to create a full-body skin-sensor array to collect physiological data without interfering with a person's normal behavior," Stanford professor Zhenan Bao said in a news release.

Over at Cal is a project in a similar domain that's working to get from prototype to production. Researchers there have been working on a sweat monitor for a few years that could detect a number of physiological factors.

Normally you'd just collect sweat every 15 minutes or so and analyze each batch separately. But that doesn't really give you very good temporal resolution — what if you want to know how the sweat changes minute by minute or less? By putting the sweat collection and analysis systems together right on the skin, you can do just that.

While the sensor has been in the works for a while, it's only recently that the team has started moving toward user testing at scale to see what exactly sweat measurements have to offer.

RollToRoll BN 768x960 "The goal of the project is not just to make the sensors but start to do many subject studies and see what sweat tells us — I always say 'decoding' sweat composition. For that we need sensors that are reliable, reproducible, and that we can fabricate to scale so that we can put multiple sensors in different spots of the body and put them on many subjects," explained Ali Javey, Berkeley professor and head of the project.

As anyone who's working in hardware will tell you, going from a hand-built prototype to a mass-produced model is a huge challenge. So the Berkeley team tapped their Finnish friends at VTT Technical Research Center, who make a specialty of roll-to-roll printing.

For flat, relatively simple electronics, roll-to-roll is a great technique, essentially printing the sensors right onto a flexible plastic substrate that can then simply be cut to size. This way they can make hundreds or thousands of the sensors quickly and cheaply, making them much simpler to deploy at arbitrary scales.

These are far from the only flexible or skin-mounted electronics projects out there, but it's clear that we're approaching the point when they begin to leave the lab and head out to hospitals, gyms and homes.

(Source: techcrunch.com)

Technology brought us all together; that's part of what's holding us back

Our connected world has allowed researchers to become so tightly networked that they're falling into the trap of groupthink. That might explain why some researchers seeking cures for Alzheimer's disease, for example, have conceded that they've been throwing years of work and billions of dollars toward a single theory that has failed to lead to any treatment — while ignoring promising alternatives.

Sociologist James Evans of the University of Chicago has concluded that what's being lost, at least in biomedical research, is scientific independence. Being able to work independently of other labs allows researchers to come up with fresher insights.

In a new study, Evans and colleagues found that weak studies are more likely to come from labs that share lots of researchers and methods with others, and strong studies come from labs that do things their own way.

Weak studies are not just those that come to the wrong conclusions but those whose conclusions are fragile. If a competitor tries to replicate them, the result will be different, unless conditions and methods are exactly

the same. The conclusions of such studies are unlikely to represent broad biological facts, and probably won't be of much use in medicine.

To sort the weak from the strong, Evans and colleagues were able to use a special case where thousands of studies on the interaction between drugs and genes can be re-tested quickly. A machine can now do what's called a high throughput assay to rerun a whole slew of previous studies. And so Evans was able to evaluate more than 3,000 published claims against the results of this mechanical backup, which can not only replay the exact experiments but also test the robustness of the claims by varying the parameters a bit.

There was a huge correlation between centralized, networked groups and weak studies. The most networked groups were more likely to replicate themselves and each other, but less likely to reach conclusions that checked out with the mechanical system.

Groupthink is well known in politics and media. Where once competing reporters would



look into the same events independently and not know the others' results until the next day's papers, now there's an unconscious temptation among journalists to believe the interpretation of the most prominent news outlets, or whoever posts online first.

Scientists are subject to the same human foibles, but groupthink shouldn't be conflated with scientific consensus, which is often based on ideas that are backed up by multiple lines of inquiry. That would include things like the structure of DNA, Einstein's theory of relativity, and the basic physics behind the

greenhouse effect. Those are widely accepted now, in part because they were supported by independent, even isolated researchers.

What's rewarded these days is the absolute opposite of those historic claims. While science works best when researchers prove one idea multiple ways, funding agents and journal editors today reward those with only a single line of evidence to support multiple claims. They want bigger claims and are content with lesser evidence.

The technology that's allowed so much connection has of course also been positive, enabling people to collaborate and learn more efficiently. Researchers can sometimes even counteract extraneous noise by harnessing a wisdom-of-the-crowd phenomenon, where many individuals converge on a right answer. But like many technological changes, it's come with unintended consequences. The fact that U.S. researchers are producing 1,000 papers a day shows there's a lot of energy out there to be used more productively — if funding encouraged bold exploration.

(Source: bloomberg.com)

IRCS rescues some 29,000 from death in summer

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) has rescued 28,947 individuals from death since the beginning of summer (June 22), within the framework of the national rescue and relief scheme, IRCS director Morteza Salimi has said.

The national rescue and relief scheme aims at performing relief and rescue operations over a period of 94 days to help victims and the injured in natural disasters and accidents nationwide during summer vacations.



Meanwhile, 8,865 operations have been made to rescue people whether in natural disasters or accidents happened due to human errors, he added.

Various relief services have been offered to 28,947 people nationwide, 9,041 of them have been provided with outpatient care, while 4,874 individuals were hospitalized, he noted, Mehr reported on Saturday.

He went on to explain that 49 percent of the operations were conducted for traffic-related accidents, 5 percent for drowning incidents and 5.5 percent for mountain climbing ones.

He added that 718 operations were also made to rescue 978 people from car rollovers, car fires and traffic-related accidents.

Thailand's beloved baby dugong dies of shock and ingesting plastic

A baby dugong which became a national sweetheart after she was rescued near a beach in southern Thailand, has died after ingesting plastic waste.

Biologists say a combination of shock and plastic consumption caused the death of the orphaned dugong named Marium, who captured the nation's hearts when she was found lost and alone.

The eight-month-old dugong, a large ocean mammal, went viral after photos of her being hugged and fed sea grass and milk by veterinarians spread across social media.

Thailand's Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) dubbed her "the nation's sweetheart". Veterinarians and volunteers fed her up to 15 times a day and gave her health checks.

But last week, she was brought in for treatment in the artificial sea on Libong Island in Krabi province after she was found bruised.

Experts believe she may have been attacked by a male dugong during the mating season. The dugong is a species of marine mammal similar to the American manatee and can grow to about 3.4 meters in length. Its conservation status is currently listed as vulnerable.

Jatuporn Burusapat, the director-general of the DMCR, said: "We assume she wandered off too far from her natural habitat and was chased, and eventually attacked by another male dugong, or dugongs, as they feel attracted to her."

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS Macedonia - talks begin

(July 9, 2001)

Talks between Albanian and Macedonian politicians are due to begin in Skopje today. Paul Anderson reports on the difficulties the participants face in reaching an agreement.

Senior Albanian politicians haven't **rejected outright** the new set of proposals they and their Macedonian counterparts will be discussing today. But they've raised serious objections, removing any hope of a speedy **breakthrough**. One leader said the **framework document** would not stop the war.

Another said the proposals it contains were unacceptable and the Albanians couldn't be held **accountable** for the **repercussions**. He said the document failed to meet Albanian demands for greater official use of their language, better state higher education for their community and more **legislative** power.

The document hasn't been **made public** yet, and there's been no official response to it or the Albanian statements from the Macedonian side. The Macedonians however have reported several **albeit** minor **infringements** of the ceasefire which **came into force** last Thursday.

That and progress at the political talks are the key conditions for the **deployment** of a force of around three thousand soldiers drawn from NATO, which would **oversee** the **disarming** of the rebels.

Words

rejected: if you reject a proposal you refuse to agree to it
outright: completely and totally
counterparts: Macedonian politicians carrying out similar jobs
breakthrough: an important development or achievement
framework document: an outline - the main points - of what has been agreed

accountable: responsible
repercussions: the effects of an event - which happen sometime afterwards

legislative: related to the process of making and passing laws
made public: if something is made public it is made known to everyone and so is no longer secret

albeit: although, even though

infringements: the breaking of an agreement or law
ceasefire: an agreement between countries or groups who are at war to stop fighting for a time

came into force: started to be obeyed

deployment: the organization and preparation of troops so they are ready for immediate action

oversee: to make sure it is done properly

disarming: taking away weapons

(Source: BBC)

Iranian universities among world's top 1,000

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Thirteen Iranian universities have been ranked among the top 1,000 universities in the world, according to the latest report published by the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU).

Thirteen universities of Iran have been placed in the list, while university of Tehran managed to stay among the top 400, similar to the previous year's result.

Sharif University of Technology and Tehran University of Medical Sciences with a promotion compared to that of last year, ranked among the top 500 universities of the list, while placed 2nd and 3rd among the Iranian universities of the list.

University of Tehran, Amirkabir University of Technology, Sharif University of Technology, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Iran University of Science and Technology, Tarbiat Modares University, Babol Noshirvani University of Technology, Isfahan University of Technology, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Shiraz University, University of Tabriz, and Iran University of Medical Sciences were among the best Iranian universities.



Thirteen universities of Iran have been placed in the list, while university of Tehran managed to stay among the top 400, similar to the previous year's result.

Harvard University, Stanford University and University of Cambridge have been listed as the three leading universities, respectively.

Among the top 20 universities, 16 have been from the United States and four from Europe.

Last year, 13 Iranian universities also were analyzed in this ranking, and placed among the top 1,000 universities.

The ARWU was first published in June 2003 by the Center for World-Class Universities (CWCU), Graduate School of Education (formerly the Institute of Higher Education) of Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China, and updated on an annual basis.

ARWU uses six objective indicators to rank world universities, including the number of alumni and staff winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals, number of highly cited researchers selected by Clarivate Analytics, number of articles published in journals of Nature and Science, number of articles indexed in Science Citation Index - Expanded and Social Sciences Citation Index, and per capita performance of a university. More than 1800 universities are actually ranked by ARWU every year and the best 1,000 are published.

Tehran bus fleet delivers 165 million rides within 4 months

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — The bus transport system in the metropolis of Tehran has delivered over 165 million rides during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21), Tehran bus operating company's managing director Peyman Sanandaji has said.

On average, more than two million passengers are transported daily by the buses in both public and private sectors in the capital, he stated, Mehr reported on Friday.

Since the beginning of this year until July 22, some 165 million passengers were delivered to their destinations by the Tehran bus fleet, he said, adding that the figure is roughly equivalent to that of the same period last year.

Referring to equipping the buses with diesel particulate filters, he noted that some 41 buses have been equipped with the filters so far.

A diesel particulate filter is a device designed to remove diesel particulate matter or soot from the exhaust gas of a diesel engine by 85 percent, and under certain conditions can attain soot removal efficiencies approaching 100 percent.

"Public transport fleet, operating by Tehran municipality, also is supposed to buy diesel particulate filters, but some of buses are over 10 years old, so cannot be equipped with the filters," he said.

He went on to add that the rest of the buses amounting



to 700 will install the filters by the Iranian calendar year 1401 (March 2022 - March 2023).

Sanandaji also highlighted that 100 new articulated buses are planned to be purchased and some of which will be added to Tehran public transport fleet by the next month.

"Currently, 5,926 buses are operating in Tehran's bus transport fleet, 1,342 of which are at service in the public sector and 4,584 in the private sector," he added.

"Of all the buses, 3,382 are running on diesel, 2,480 running on gas while some 64 are electric," he stated, noting that the average lifespan of the fleet is 11.5 years which shows that 3,232 buses accounting for 54 percent are extremely old.

In line with the 5-year development plan of Tehran, some 500 buses are planned to be renovated in addition to 500 new buses to be replaced with old ones this year, Sanandaji concluded.

Moreover, on February 7, Mohammad Javad Heshmati, deputy prosecutor general, said that more than 80 percent of the air pollution in metropolises is caused by low quality fuel.

So it is not so farfetched to conclude that air pollution in Tehran and other metropolises of Iran are derived from low quality fuel and the old transportation system.

Globally transportation accounts for about 21 percent of greenhouse emissions. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has predicted that transport sector emissions of carbon dioxide will increase by 92 percent between 1990 and 2020. Most importantly the age of the transport fleet, the technology used within it and the extent to which such vehicles are maintained as well as the availability of appropriate fuel can decide the amount of emission attributed to the transport sector.

Taxi drivers to be trained on emergency medical services

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Head of Tehran Emergency Center, Peyman Saberian, announced that cab drivers in the city will be trained on pre-hospital care in order to enhance their skills and capabilities during incidents or accidents.

Considering the sheer volume of cars on the roads, traffic accidents are in fact quite common; therefore, pre-hospital emergency care plays a key role in traffic-related acci-

dents, he said, ISNA reported on Saturday.

"If we expand public education and familiarize the majority of people with how to respond before the emergency forces arrive, a better outcome will be achieved in reducing accidents and mortalities," he explained.

"We are planning to offer cab drivers such training courses," he said, adding, given their occupation that are constantly traveling on urban areas, they can play a very important role in this regard.

"Providing emergency care to the public is one of the priorities of Tehran Emergency Center. So far, employees of the Ministry of Health, the Judiciary, and the Traffic Police have taken courses in this field," he highlighted.

"Unfortunately, there is lack of trainers, and the courses are time consuming, so it makes the process slower, however, we provide training for 20 to 60 individuals daily," he concluded.



ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Miankaleh peninsula faces serious risk of disappearing

Hossein Ali Ebrahimi, head of Mazandaran province department of department, has said that almost 20 percent of the peninsula's wetlands have dried up.

Drought spell and climate change are two of the key factors contributing to the Miankaleh peninsula dryness, YJC quoted Ebrahimi as saying on Wednesday.

Unfortunately, the province of Mazandaran has also been negatively affected by climate change and less precipitation has increased the peninsula water deficits, Ebrahimi said, stating that additionally mismanagement, unsustainable agricultural practices, and severe depletion of the wells and groundwater resources have exacerbated Miankaleh peninsula's condition.

تالاب میانکاله در معرض خشکی کامل

حسین علی ابراهیمی مدیر کل محیط زیست استان مازندران ۲۰ درصد از تالاب میانکاله کاملاً خشک شده است.

به گزارش روز چهارشنبه باشگاه خبرنگاران جوان ابراهیمی ادامه داد: تغییرات اقلیم شده و خشکسالی نیز بر این تالاب تأثیر گذار

گفت: متأسفانه استان مازندران نیز مانند سایر استان‌های کشور درگیر تغییرات اقلیم شده و خشکسالی نیز بر این استان تأثیر گذار بوده است به همین دلیل قسمتی تالاب میانکاله کاملاً خشک شده است. وی در ادامه افزود: علاوه بر تغییرات اقلیمی و کمبود نزولات آسمانی، نبود مدیریت صحیح منابع آبی برداشت غیرمجاز از چاه‌ها و و منابع آب زیرزمینی و کشاورزی ناپایدار در منطقه، وضعیت این تالاب بحرانی است.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ization, -isation”

■ **Meaning:** a word ending that indicates process or result

■ **For example:** The **characterization** is believable, but it's still not a very good book.

PHRASAL VERB

Gnaw (away) at somebody/something

■ **Meaning:** to make someone feel worried or frightened, over a period of time

■ **For example:** Something was gnawing at the back of his mind.

IDIOM

A breeze

■ **Meaning:** say that something was a breeze means that it was very easy or that everything went smoothly

■ **For example:** The interview was a breeze - barely 10 minutes and I got the job!

Israel's 2006 war on Lebanon was meant to create new Middle East: Nasrallah

TEHRAN— The secretary general of the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah says the Israeli military's 33-day war on Lebanon in the summer of 2006 was aimed at creation of a new Middle East region, where the Tel Aviv regime would have performed the leading role.

"The Israeli military was simply a tool in the 2006 war against Lebanon, as the military campaign had been orchestrated by the United States. Among the objectives of the war were putting an end to the presence of (Hezbollah) resistance (movement) in Lebanon, toppling the Syrian government, and defeating Iran in the region," Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah stated in a televised speech broadcast live from the southern Lebanese town of Bint Jbeil on Friday evening.

He added that American officials, by launching the 33-day war on Lebanon, had wished to form a new Middle East, where the Israeli regime would have been in the saddle, controlling everything.

"In that war, John Bolton, then the U.S. ambassador to the UN Security Council, told an Arab official: 'The war will stop only if Hezbollah is crushed or it surrenders.'"

"But Bolton later told the same Arab official: 'We have to stop the war now.'"

"The Arab official asked him: Did you crush Hezbollah? He said no. The Arab official asked: Did Hezbollah surrender? He said no. The Arab official said: So why did you stop the war? Bolton said: Israel would face a catastrophe if the war continues," the Hezbollah chief said.

"American and Israeli officials failed to attain any of their goals (in the 33-day war),"



Nasrallah said, describing Hezbollah as a deterrent force against U.S. and Israeli acts of aggression in the region.

The Hezbollah chief noted that Lebanon could emerge victorious in the war because it held on to the golden equation of people, army and the anti-Israel resistance front.

Nasrallah then warned Israeli officials against launching a new military aggression against his country, stressing that all Israeli battalions will be destroyed under the eyes of mainstream media.

"Israeli military experts acknowledge that the Israeli army is incapable of waging a fresh war on Lebanon," he said.

The Hezbollah secretary general went on to say that the resistance front is gaining

momentum across the Middle East, and now covers a vast expanse of land from Lebanon to Syria, Palestine, Yemen, Iraq and Iran.

"Reliance on the resistance front will prevent war, acts of aggression as well as terrorism. Being part of such an axis will prevent (U.S. President Donald) Trump's exploitation as he is now milking (Persian) Gulf countries," Nasrallah stated.

He also lauded Palestinians' outright rejection of Trump's controversial proposal for peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, dubbed "the deal of the century."

"Look at daily operations being carried out by Palestinians against Israel in the occupied territories. They are done by young people who are not older than 15. This is the

new Palestinian generation," Nasrallah said.

■ **'A war on Iran would mean the whole region will be set ablaze'**

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Hezbollah chief described Iran as a "major regional superpower," stating that the rhetoric and threats of a war against the Islamic Republic have ebbed because Trump came to realize that Iran is not an easy target.

"War against Iran means the entire region will be set on fire," Nasrallah underlined.

According to Press TV, he stated that Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps lawfully captured British oil tanker Stena Impero for breaching international maritime law while crossing the Strait of Hormuz on July 19, and shot down an intruding U.S.-made Global Hawk surveillance drone in the skies over the country's southern coastal province of Hormozgan on June 20.

"Iran has proved its strength and showed that it does not accept to be threatened... I assure that a war on Iran is a war on the resistance front in the entire region."

"All enemies' efforts to topple the resistance front in Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Iran have failed. As Imam Khomeini [the late founder of the Islamic Republic] said the price of the resistance is much lower than the price of submission. Hezbollah, which they wanted to destroy, is now a regional power," Nasrallah said.

Nasrallah also highlighted that Hezbollah does not intend to remove any one from the political arena in Lebanon, calling on politicians and people from all walks of the Lebanese society to join forces and address lingering corruption in the country.

France joins pressure campaign to prevent Syria's Idlib liberation

TEHRAN — France has joined a pressure campaign on Syria to prevent the liberation of northwestern Idlib Province, the last terrorist stronghold in the Arab country, as the army edges closer to final victory over the Takfiri terrorist groups.

On Friday, the French Foreign Ministry called for an immediate end to the anti-terror fight in Idlib.

The request followed fresh Israeli airstrikes on Syria, which are usually viewed as attempts to prop up terrorists suffering defeats at the hands of Syrian government forces.

Also recently, an official in the so-called National Syrian Army announced that the Turkey-backed terrorist group would send reinforcements to the frontlines of the town Khan Shaykhun in Idlib Province.

Idlib remains the only large area in the hands of anti-Damascus terrorists after the Syrian army -- backed by Iran and Russia -- managed to undo militant gains across the country and wrest back control of almost all of Syrian soil.

In January, the UN estimated that there were 20,000 terrorists in Idlib associated with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which is a coalition of different factions of terror outfits largely composed of the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham Takfiri terrorist group, formerly known as al-Nusra Front.

Over the past week, Syrian forces have managed

to advance on Idlib's southern edges with the aim of retaking Khan Shaykhun, which lies on a key highway connecting the capital Damascus with the city of Aleppo.

■ **Foreign-backed terrorists resort to beheading tactic**

Latest reports said terrorists have now resorted to their old tactics of beheading Syrian soldiers.

In the last few days alone, the Takfiri elements released at least five videos of beheading Syrian troops in Idlib's southern countryside.

On Friday, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary General of the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah, stressed that Syria has withstood "a universal war" and is now "moving steadily towards the final victory."

Earlier this month, American and Turkish officials agreed to quickly set up a Turkey-based operations center "to coordinate and manage the implementation of the safe zone" in northeastern Syria.

The area is currently under the control of the U.S.-backed Kurdish militants, who are considered terrorists by Ankara.

Speaking on Thursday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova reiterated Moscow's support for Syria's sovereignty.

"Attempts to isolate Syria's northeast are a source



of growing concern," she said. "Russia's approach to this issue has remained unchanged. As before, we support efforts to reach long-term stability and security in the northeast by restoring Syria's sovereignty and a productive dialogue between Damascus and the Kurds."

According to Press TV, Syria had already rejected the U.S.-Turkey agreement as "blatant aggression" against the country's territorial integrity and a "flagrant violation" of the international law and the UN Charter.

UN says 2nd attempt to return Rohingya to Myanmar planned

TEHRAN — The UN refugee agency says Myanmar and Bangladesh are making a second attempt to start repatriating Rohingya Muslims after more than 700,000 of them fled a security crackdown in Myanmar almost two years ago.

Agency spokeswoman Caroline Gluck said Friday that the Bangladesh government has asked for its help in verifying the 3,450 people on a new list of returnees are going back to Myanmar voluntarily. She said the list was whittled from 22,000 names

that Bangladesh had sent to Myanmar for verification.

Myanmar's military in August 2017 launched a counterinsurgency campaign in response to an attack by a Rohingya insurgent group. The army operation led to the

Rohingya exodus to Bangladesh and accusations that security forces committed mass rapes and killings and burned thousands of homes, AP reported.

India says committed to 'no first use' of nuclear weapons for now

TEHRAN — India has stuck to its commitment of 'no first use' of nuclear weapons but future policy will depend on the situation, the defense minister said Friday, which analysts said introduced a level of ambiguity in a core national security doctrine.

India declared itself a nuclear weapons power after conducting underground tests in 1998 and long-time rival Pakistan responded with its own tests shortly afterwards. Since then, nuclear experts say the rivals have been developing nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them.

In a visit to Pokhran in western India, the site of the nuclear tests, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh paid tribute to late former prime minister and revered leader of the ruling Hindu nationalists, Atal Behari Vajpayee, for making India into a nuclear power, Reuters reported.

"Pokhran is the area which witnessed Atal Ji's firm resolve to make India a nuclear power and yet remain firmly committed



to the doctrine of "No First Use." "India has strictly adhered to this doctrine. What happens in future depends on the circumstances."

At the time of the tests, India said it needed a deterrent against nuclear-armed

China but it has also long been concerned about Pakistan's nuclear capabilities.

Shekhar Gupta, a political commentator and defense expert, said the government appeared to have an open mind on the issue of 'no first use' of nuclear arms and

the comments could be aimed at Pakistan, which has said previously it needed to develop small nuclear weapons to deter a sudden attack by India.

"Rajnath Singh is measured and not given to loose talk or bluster. He isn't signaling a shift, but an open mind on the NFU (No First Use) inherited from Vajpayee's Nuclear Doctrine," he said on Twitter.

Tensions between the two countries have increased following India's move to revoke autonomy in the disputed region of Kashmir, the cause of two of their three wars. In February, Indian and Pakistani fighter jets clashed over the territory.

Vipin Narang, a nuclear affairs expert at MIT in the United States, said that Singh's comments were a sign the policy on 'no first use' could change in the future.

"Make no mistake: this is by far the highest official statement from the Raksha Mantri's (Defense Minister) mouth directly that India may not be forever bound by No First Use," Narang said on Twitter.

Yemen attacks Saudi oil field at Shaybah with 10 drones

► **Sare'e** said the operation was launched as part of "a legitimate deterrence for the aggression crimes and siege" against the Yemeni nation.

He renewed call on companies and civilians to stay away from all vital sites in Saudi Arabia, adding that Yemen's bank of targets inside the kingdom "expands daily" and that the future attacks would be more painful to the enemy.

"Forces of aggression have no choice but to stop the war and lift the siege on the Yemeni people," Sare'e said.

Yemeni fighters regularly target positions inside Saudi Arabia in retaliation for the Saudi war, which began in March 2015 in an attempt to reinstall the country's Riyadh-allied former regime and crush the popular Houthi Ansarullah movement.

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

► **Saudi-led coalition attacks Aden**

Early on Saturday, Saudi-led coalition warplanes fired flares over Yemen's southern port city of Aden near camps occupied by the Emirati-backed separatists.

The coalition also urged the southern separatists to withdraw from all sites they have recently captured in Aden.

However, Aden local officials said that although the UAE-sponsored elements had moved away from the nearly empty presidential palace and central bank, they were not quitting the city's military camps.

"We will not retreat, we will not budge and planes will not scare us," a statement from one of the brigades fighting as part of the Emirati-backed militants.

In recent days, Aden has witnessed deadly clashes between UAE-backed southern separatists and Saudi-led militants loyal to ex-Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi in Aden, a gateway for commercial and aid supplies.

According to Press TV, Both camps serve the Riyadh-led coalition, and have been engaged, since 2015, in a bloody military campaign against Yemen aimed at reinstating Hadi, who resigned in 2014 and later fled to the Saudi capital.

The clashes erupted weeks after the UAE announced a surprise plan to withdraw part of its troops from Yemen in a major blow to its coalition allies.

Kim oversaw the test-firing of new weapon again

TEHRAN — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un oversaw the test-firing of a new weapon again on Friday morning, state media KCNA said on Saturday.

North Korea launched at least two short-range ballistic missiles on Friday, South Korea's military said, its sixth round of weapons launches since late July, complicating efforts to restart talks between the United States and North Korea over Pyongyang's weapons programs.

Stephen Biegun, the U.S. special envoy for North Korea will travel to Japan and South Korea next week to coordinate efforts to secure the denuclearization of North Korea, the State Department said on Friday.

News of Biegun's trip came after U.S. President Donald Trump said last Saturday that Kim had told him he was ready to resume stalled denuclearization talks with the United States and would stop recent missile testing as soon as U.S.-South Korea military exercises that have been held this month end.

The North has protested against joint U.S.-South Korea military drills, which kicked off last week, calling them a rehearsal for war.

An official at Seoul's defense ministry said on Friday that there was a possibility that the North fired the same type of missiles it used on Aug. 10, which Pyongyang also called "a new weapon" at that time.

Last week, Trump played down the North's recent missile tests, saying they do not violate Kim's pledge to forego nuclear and long-range tests. Trump also said that he had just received a "very beautiful letter" from Kim and added that he could have another meeting with him.

The denuclearization talks have been in a stalemate since a June 30 meeting between the two leaders, Reuters reported.

Nasrallah's strong warnings to the enemies of resistance

► **Hezbollah's** warnings are coming at a critical time; over the past few weeks Americans had repeatedly announced that military operation against Iran is on the table; however, they reduced these threats after they realized the power of Iran; over this time Iran downed an intruding American drone in the sky of Persian Gulf and seized a British oil tanker who had violated international maritime laws.

Nasrallah reminded enemies of "the unity of resistance" and made it clear that attacking any members of resistance is the same as attacking the whole unity.

Nasrallah's threat was very clear, so the warmongers in the region such as Bin Salman, Bin Zayed and Netanyahu will surely receive the intended message.

On the other hand, what Nasrallah said about the defensive and military power of Iran against U.S. and its allies drew the attention of media all around the world toward Iran.

Nasrallah clearly stated that "Donald Trump, the U.S. president realized Iran's high military power and brevity, so he refrained from attacking the country."

Nasrallah meant to clarify that U.S. decision to avoid war with Iran was not a strategic and diplomatic decision; rather, it was made out of fearing Iran's power.

Clearly, Nasrallah's speech was supposed to have a "preventive effect"; the purpose was that the warmongers in the region and the world will get a grasp of the unity of resistance forces, so they will take it into account, before seeking any adventures in the region and reconsider all their moves and decisions.

Another purpose of the speech was to notify enemies, including Saudi and the U.S., about the rising power of Hezbollah and Iran as this power will change all their previous calculations and even some western media are now admitting that U.S. power against Iran is rapidly declining.

We will not rule out any option to stop Brexit - Scottish leader Sturgeon

TEHRAN— The leader of the Scottish National Party, Nicola Sturgeon, said Thursday her party and its 35 lawmakers would explore any option to stop Brexit in parliament and did not rule

out backing opposition Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn.

"We will work with anyone and we'll explore any option to stop Brexit," Sturgeon told the BBC. She added that

Corbyn, who earlier urged rivals to back him in a bid to topple Prime Minister Boris Johnson, had to set out a clear position on Brexit, Reuters reported.

Nike changes policy for pregnant athletes

Six-time Olympic gold medalist Allyson Felix says female athletes will "no longer be financially penalized for having a child" after Nike changed its contracts for pregnant athletes.

In a letter shared by Felix on social media, Nike says it will "not apply any performance-related reduction" for 18 months if an athlete becomes pregnant.

Felix's daughter Camryn was born prematurely in November. In May, she said Nike wanted to pay her 70% less after she became a mother.

Writing in the New York Times at the time, Felix, 33, said: "I asked Nike to contractually guarantee that I wouldn't be punished if I didn't perform at my best in the months surrounding childbirth."

"I wanted to set a new standard. If I, one of Nike's most widely marketed athletes, couldn't secure these protections, who could? Nike declined."

Felix returned to racing for the first time in 13 months in July at the US National Championships. After the meet, she decided to not renew her Nike contract and joined women's athletic wear company Athleta.

On social media on Friday, Felix posted a picture of the letter from Nike executive vice president of global sports marketing John Slusher. She wrote: "Our voices have power."

"Nike has joined in officially and contractually providing maternal protection to the female athletes they sponsor. This means that female athletes will no longer be financially penalized for having a child."

In a statement to Sports Illustrated, Nike said: "Female athletes and their representatives will begin receiving written confirmation reaffirming Nike's official pregnancy policy for elite athletes."

"In addition to our 2018 policy standardizing our approach across all sports to ensure no female athlete is adversely impacted financially for pregnancy, the policy has now been expanded to cover 18 months."

(Source: BBC)

Neymar left out of PSG team again

Neymar has been left out of the Paris St Germain team for the second week running, coach Thomas Tuchel said on Saturday, as speculation continues over whether or not the Brazilian will remain at the French champions.

"He won't be with us," Tuchel told reporters ahead of Sunday's league match away at Rennes, adding that the forward was still not fully fit having missed last week's season opening win over Nimes.

Tuchel said Neymar's future at PSG remained undecided, but that he remained one of the club's most important players. "If I think of a strong PSG team, I think of a team with 'Ney' in it," the German coach said.

Neymar joined Qatari-owned PSG from Barcelona in 2017 in a deal valued at a record 222 million euros (\$246 million).

However, injuries have kept him out of key Champions League matches and media reports have linked him with a transfer to Barcelona or Real Madrid.

(Source: Mirror)

Dzeko commits to Roma with three-year contract extension

Bosnian international striker Edin Dzeko has ended speculation about his future by signing a new three-year contract with Roma, the Serie A club announced.

The 33-year-old had been touted for a possible move to Inter Milan but has opted instead for a new deal until June 30, 2022 with the capital side.

"I realized just how much they wanted me to stay," Dzeko, who joined the club in August 2015 from Manchester City, told the club's website.

"Here there is everything we need to win something and I am delighted to be able to stay here even longer."

Dzeko has played 179 times for Roma and scored 87 goals. He was the Serie A top goal scorer during the 2016-17 season.

Roma also confirmed they have signed Turkish defender Yildirim Mert Cetin on a five-year deal from Genclerbirligi for three million euros (\$3.3 million).

Roma finished sixth in Serie A last season and under new coach Paulo Fonseca open their campaign at home against Genoa next weekend.

(Source: France 24)

Barca beaten in Bilbao by thunderous strike from Aduriz

La Liga champions Barcelona fell to their first opening day defeat of the season in 11 years when they were beaten 1-0 at Athletic Bilbao thanks to a sensational late overhead kick from veteran striker Ariz Aduriz.

The 38-year-old came off the bench late in the game and soon made Barca pay for squandering several chances by acrobatically lashing an unstoppable shot into the net in the 89th minute.

The Catalans were without injured captain Lionel Messi but lined up with 200 million euros of new talent in France forward Antoine Griezmann and Dutch midfielder Frenkie de Jong.

However, they lacked sparkle against an energetic Bilbao side who had the better run of play for the first half even though Barca came closest to scoring before the interval.

Luis Suarez struck the near post in the first half when presented with a terrible back pass from Athletic's Unai Lopez and was soon forced off with a calf injury, while substitute Rafinha rattled the crossbar after coming on.

Barca improved after the break as coach Ernesto Valverde replaced young midfielder Carles Alena with the more experienced Ivan Rakitic and spent most of the second period in the home side's area.

Rakitic and Rafinha each came close to scoring for the visitors but they were outdone by one of Spanish football's best loved players in Aduriz, who has announced that he will retire at the end of the season.

"Sometimes football is so beautiful and when you least expect it a ball like that comes to your feet and goes into the net," Aduriz told reporters.

(Source: Reuters)

Race to remember Berlin Wall victims, 30 years on

Where guard towers and barbed wire once stood, runners pounded the 100-mile (160 kilometer) path along the former Berlin Wall this weekend in a race with victims of the Cold War relic at its heart.

On Saturday at 6:00 am (0400 GMT), around 500 runners, started the 8th edition of the Berlin Wall Race, ahead of the 30th anniversary of the Wall's demise this November.

With weary legs, most runners will jog through Saturday night, aiming to reach the city center stadium which doubles as both start and finish, in the early hours of Sunday.

The race is part ultra-marathon, part tribute to those who died trying to cross the Wall, which the East German communist regime hastily erected in 1961 and stood for 28 years.

Precious little of the original concrete structure remains, most of it hurriedly torn down when East Germany collapsed in late 1989.

The longest single section is the kilometre-long East Side Gallery, where the former symbol of oppression is now covered in art, a popular backdrop for tourists posing for selfies.

What was once a heavily-fortified border strip that encircled West Berlin and patrolled by guards under shoot-to-kill orders, was in 2006 turned into the 'Mauerweg' or Berlin Wall path.

It passes iconic landmarks such as the



Brandenburg Gate and Checkpoint Charlie as well as leafy suburbs, farmland and forests.

Along the route, memorials tell the personal stories of many of the around 130 people killed along the Wall.

"When you move around Berlin now, you hardly see any of the Wall left, but when you run the path and see its scale, you have a better understanding of the divide it caused," said race organizer Olaf Ilk, who was born in East Germany and was 24 when the Wall fell.

Mental challenge

The mammoth race is not for the faint-hearted: it is effectively four marathons back-to-back.

"You know you are going to feel pain, you have to accept it and think 'I can do one step more,'" said Patrik Gullerstrom, from Stockholm, who hopes to finish in under 17 hours and has run the race four times previously.

The course record, set by Briton Mark

Perkins in 2014, stands at a mind-blowing 13 hours, 6 minutes for the 100 miles.

Russian-born Israeli Tom Shenbrun, 50, whose grandfather was part of the Red Army which invaded Berlin in 1945, was inspired to run the race by the Wall's history.

"As a Jew, it's something very special. You feel the history all along the course, you see the guard towers and you can understand how it divided a nation, families, friends," he said.

The East German authorities "were prepared to shoot people on the basis of ideology. History is something we must learn from and must not be repeated," he added.

The Wall's history is entwined in the race's DNA.

Registration for the following year's race always opens at 18:57 (1657 GMT) on November 9 -- marking the exact moment in 1989 when East Germany lifted its travel ban, triggering the Wall's demise.

Each year, one Wall victim features on start numbers and finisher medals, while a ceremony is held at the spot where they died.

For the first race in 2011, Chris Gueffroy, the last person shot dead on the Berlin Wall, was honored.

He was killed in February 1989, nine months before the Wall fell, and on Sunday, Gueffroy's mother Karin will present medals at the finishers' ceremony.

(Source: AFP)

Lacazette and Aubameyang fire Arsenal to win over Burnley



Arsenal's dominant run against Burnley continued on Saturday with a 2-1 victory at the Emirates, courtesy of goals from Alexandre Lacazette and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang.

Since their last promotion to the Premier League in 2016, Burnley have failed to take a single point from the Gunners, losing all six league fixtures against Arsenal before Saturday. Despite that poor record, Sean Dyche's men were far from intimidated at the Emirates, pressuring their opponents throughout the first half.

But their determination was not enough to avoid a first defeat of the season, with Arsenal taking the lead 13 minutes in as Lacazette scored the opener.

Seconds earlier, Burnley goalkeeper Nick Pope denied the France striker a headed goal with a reflex save from close range, but Lacazette found the net from Dani Ceballos' resulting corner, controlling the ball well in a crowded box before spinning Erik Pieters and blasting a shot in at the near post.

Ceballos' assist was one of a number of promising moments as the Real Madrid loanee proved the man of the match in his first start for Arsenal, with the Spaniard showing off some flashy footwork and tidy passing throughout the game. Meanwhile, there were debuts for David Luiz, who joined Arsenal from Chelsea this summer

for £8 million, and the Gunners' record signing, Nicolas Pepe, who came off the bench.

The winger only arrived after a dramatic end to the first half, though, as the visitors leveled on 43 minutes and Arsenal were denied a second goal by VAR; Reiss Nelson's strike in added time was ruled out due to Nacho Monreal crossing from an offside position, just minutes after Ashley Barnes poked in the equalizer from close range.

It was Barnes' third goal in his side's opening two games this season, following the 29-year-old's brace in a 3-0 victory against Southampton at Turf Moor last week.

Burnley endured a tougher second half, forced to defend throughout as Arsenal enjoyed the majority of possession. The home team's mounting pressure paid off shortly after the hour mark, with Ceballos winning the ball deep in the Claret's half and Aubameyang pouncing before guiding a finish past Pope from the edge of the box.

Unai Emery's side were largely untroubled through the rest of the half and were able to make it back to back wins at the start of a league campaign for the first time in 10 years.

Arsenal next face Liverpool at Anfield in the Premier League on Saturday Aug. 24, while Burnley play Wolves away on Sunday Aug. 25.

(Source: Goal)

Water bacteria cancels Tokyo 2020 paratriathlon test swim



The swimming section of a paratriathlon test event for Tokyo 2020 was cancelled Saturday due to high levels of bacteria in the water, the latest in a series of difficulties over water quality and temperature.

Olympic organizers have won widespread praise for their preparations but extreme summer heat and poor water quality have brought headaches at practice events, with less than a year to go until the opening ceremony.

The International Triathlon Union (ITU) shelved the swimming leg after tests showed levels of e-coli more than double the acceptable standard.

The 70 paratriathletes instead competed in a duathlon format with two runs and a bike race.

"I'm so sorry for athletes that we could not prepare the competition conditions effectively," Shinichiro Otsuka, managing director of Japan's Triathlon Union, told reporters.

"It was regrettable," he said, vowing to step up preparations for Sunday's Mixed Relay.

Former British paralympic triathlete Clare Cunningham tweeted that Saturday's decision to abridge the race was "disappointing for all".

It was the latest setback at a test event for Olympic organizers after extreme temperatures women's triathlon run was cut short due to extreme heat in the Japanese capital on Thursday, with French triathlete Cassandre Beaugrand was taken to hospital for suspected heatstroke.

Around a dozen competitors and spectators also fell ill at a rowing test event, also due to

high temperatures, as Tokyo swelters through a deadly heatwave.

Competitors at a marathon swimming test event on Sunday complained of smelly water and high water temperature at Odaiba Bay, the location for long-distance swimming and triathlon.

Organizers are desperate to avoid the embarrassment of the 2016 Olympics in Rio, when the pool used for diving events turned an unsettling shade of green overnight.

Brazilian officials also had to scramble to clean up the bay used for sailing and windsurfing that was plagued by sewer bacteria and filthy with rubbish.

In October 2017, Tokyo 2020 organizers were left red-faced after tests revealed levels of e-coli bacteria more than 20 times higher than international standards, sparking doubts about the venue's safety.

At the time, the organizing committee blamed prolonged summer rain that had brought pollutants from offshore for the high readings between late July and early September.

A year later, organizers said that tests using underwater "screens" to filter the water had successfully reduced bacteria levels at the venue.

"We will keep doing our best to secure a safe and sound environment for athletes towards the Games next year," Tokyo 2020 spokesman Masa Takaya said Saturday.

(Source: Eurosport)

Bayern Munich haunted by Guardiola's ghost in Bundesliga opener

If there was one way Niko Kovac did not want to start his second season at Bayern Munich, this was it. This was a performance from Bayern that sent an untimely but a familiar reminder that the ruthlessness of the Pep Guardiola days is still very much noticeable in its absence. Such a start by Bayern is more liable to prolong some supporters' summer of discontent than to banish it.

It was not what Bayern Munich fans had spent the off-season waiting for. As the sun set on Friday evening, a packed U6 underground line was full of smiles. Bayern jerseys, new and old, lined the road from Munich's Karlsplatz down to Marienplatz. Fans were loud, happy to be back in their seats, shouting the surnames of their favorite players. The wait was finally over. Football was back. Ninety minutes later, Bayern's fans must have felt as if they were still waiting.

Serge Gnabry was perhaps the only bright spark for Bayern. The 24-year-old picked up where he left off last season, leaving defenders in his dust. He fittingly set up Robert Lewandowski to score Bayern's and the Bundesliga's first goal of the new season, sliding in at the back post like he has done many, many times before.

Lewandowski's second-half penalty made sure Bayern



came away with at least a point, but the damage was already done. Dodi Lukebakio's deflected strike and Mark Grujic's composed finish left Bayern embarrassed at the break. It was Lukebakio who exposed Bayern's defensive line last season, scoring three for Fortuna Dusseldorf. After that game, Kovac described his mood as "worse than mere discontent," while Uli Hoeneß labeled Bayern's defensive efforts a "slapstick" showing.

This wasn't quite as bad, but it wasn't much better. If

Bayern were disjointed in attack, they looked, whisper it quietly, vulnerable in defense. Manuel Neuer no longer possess the same aura of invincibility, and the defensive line in front of him is changing often enough to cause disruption. They looked hurried, anxious and lacking the composure of old. Quick, transitional football — often in the form of one direct pass — was their undoing. Hertha's head coach Ante Covic made sure that plan was delivered in his first Bundesliga game in charge.

"Bayern obviously take a lot of risks. They have a lot of possession and put a lot of numbers forward," Hertha's Mathew Leckie told DW after the game. "They have the quality to keep the ball and take those risks. But obviously, one, two, three times in a game, everyone can make a mistake — they're human as well. We took those chances. We know they stood really high and also they often play man-against-man at the back, so we tried to use that to our advantage and, for the second goal, it worked really well."

Though Leckie conceded the spoils were hard-earned: "I think we ran more today than we did all season last year in one game. It was a real good team effort."

(Source: Deutsche Welle)

Nagoya Oceans beat Mes Sungun to win AFC Futsal Club Championship

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Nagoya Oceans from Japan won AFC Futsal Club Championship for the fourth time on Saturday.

Nagoya Oceans defeated Mes Sungun Varseqan 2-0 at the Bangkok Arena.

Neto Antonio Hirata and Ryohei Ando were the Oceans' scorers as the Japanese outfit dashed Mes Sungun's bid to win back-to-back titles, the-afc.com reported.

The early stages were an evenly matched contest with both sides playing with extreme caution with neither side finding much room to create chances.

It was only in the sixth minute that Oceans had their first opportunity at goal but Ryohei Ando's effort from above the arc lacked sting and was easily collected by Mes Sungun goalkeeper Alireza Samimi.

Mes Sungun responded immediately but captain Farhad Fakhim could not find the target after dribbling into the box.

Oceans began to see more of the ball and took the lead in the seventh minute through Hirata's fine strike from inside the box with Soma Mizutani providing the assist.

A stunned Mes Sungun almost conceded another goal two minutes later when Mohammad Shajari lost possession in his own half which forced Samimi into making a save from Oceans' Ryuta Hoshi and later the follow-up from Masaya Hashimoto.

Mes Sungun had a half chance in 11th minute but an unmarked Mahdi Javid failed to connect to Fakhim's pass.

The Iranian club wasted several chances after that with Alireza Askari Kohan sending his shot over the bar in the 15th minute and Fakhim firing his effort high in the 19th minute as Oceans took a 1-0 lead into the break.

Mes Sungun came back fighting in the second half and Javid had the goalmouth in sight in the 22nd minute but the Oceans players were quick to snuff out the chance.

Oceans, however, slowly begin to dominate with their fast-attacking transitions, which almost bore fruit in the



23rd minute but Samimi was equal to the challenge when he saved efforts from Pepita and then Ryohei Ando.

Oceans came close to finding the net at the half-hour mark but with only the goalkeeper to beat Tomoki Yoshikawa fired his effort wide.

The Japanese club's persistence paid off in the 34th minute when Ando scored a volley following Yoshikawa's

corner to increase their advantage.

The 2019 AFC Futsal Club Championship was the 10th edition of the AFC Futsal Club Championship, an annual international futsal club tournament in Asia organized by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

The competition was held in Bangkok, Thailand on August 7-17.



Iran's road to 2022 World Cup starts on Sept. 1

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran national football team will start their journey to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar on Sept. 1.

Team Melli will hold the camp in Tehran on Sept. 1 and leave the country for Hong Kong after three days.

Marc Wilmots's side will face the East Asian country in Group C of the Asian Qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup and the 2023 AFC Asian Cup on Sept. 10.

The eight group winners and four best runners-up will advance to the AFC Asian Cup China 2023 Finals and the final round of qualifying for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

The next best 24 teams from the second round of the joint qualifiers will compete in a separate competition for the remaining 12 slots in the 24-team AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

Iran fixtures in the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers

September 10, 2019: Hong Kong vs Iran

October 10, 2019: Iran vs Cambodia

October 15, 2019: Bahrain vs Iran

November 14, 2019: Iraq vs Iran

March 26, 2020: Iran vs Hong Kong

March 31, 2020: Cambodia vs Iran

June 4, 2020: Iran vs Bahrain

June 9, 2020: Iran vs Iraq

Andrés Iniesta tackles football 5-a-side



Ahead of the launch of Paralympic Games ticket sales on 22 August, the Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee has launched a video entitled «Experience the Unbelievable» featuring members of Japan's football 5-a-side team and Spain's FIFA World Cup winner Andrés Iniesta playing blind football.

«Experience the Unbelievable» displays the amazing skills and athletic abilities of football 5-a-side players. Led by Japan national team captain Ryo Kawamura, the film shows Iniesta trying out the sport blindfolded like all Paralympic football 5-a-side players.

«It was an amazing experience for me because I could spend time with these guys and see the great work they're doing. It was really complicated to do. It's very difficult,» said the 35-year-old who won 131 caps for Spain during a glittering international career.

Having won pretty much every competition there is in international and club football, including the UEFA Champions League four times with FC Barcelona, Iniesta is widely regarded as one of the world's best players of his generation. He currently plays in Japan's J. League with Vissel Kobe.

Iniesta is not the first star footballer to be blindfolded and give football 5-a-side a try.

Ahead of the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games, his former FC Barcelona teammates including five-time Ballon d'Or winner Lionel Messi, took part in a penalty shoot-out against the Spain's football 5-a-side team as part of a joint campaign for the

Agitos Foundation and UNICEF.

Find out who was victorious as Messi and Ivo Rakatic went head-to-head with Spain's best blind footballers.

Not to be outdone, former England captain David Beckham trained with the Great Britain team prior to the London 2012 Paralympic Games. Putting the former Real Madrid and Manchester United midfielder through his paces was David Clarke, a scorer of a record 128 goals in 144 international appearances for Great Britain and England's football 5-a-side team.

See how many attempts Beckham needed to score a penalty blindfolded.

Iniesta, Messi and Beckham have nothing on these players though – at the last Paralympics in Rio there were some stunning goals.

The first ticket lottery offering Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games tickets for Japanese residents will take place from 22 August to 9 September.

Tickets for all sports are being offered at affordable prices which aim to encourage people to attend with their family and friends. Seats at competitive events will be priced from just JPY 900 and will cost no more than JPY 7,000.

This is part of the Organizing Committee's commitment to enhance the family atmosphere at the Paralympic Games and attract as many young spectators as possible. Tickets for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies will cost from JPY 8,000 up to JPY 150,000.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Thai Son Nam end campaign in style



Thai Son Nam FC came from behind to defeat AGMK FC 6-4 to clinch third place in the AFC Futsal Club Championship Thailand 2019 on Saturday.

In a thrilling contest which saw the Vietnam outfit trailing 2-0 and then 3-1 before leading 4-3, Thai Son Nam's Kazuya Shimizu struck twice in the final three minutes to settle the tie at the Bangkok Arena.

Thai Son Nam, who had to come from behind to defeat AGMK 4-1 in the group stage, found themselves again trailing when the Uzbekistan club's Davron Choriev beat Tran Thai Huy inside the box before setting up Akbar Usmonov to score into an empty net in the first minute.

AGMK continued to apply pressure and doubled their advantage a minute later after Davron Valijonov forced a save from Thai Son Nam goalkeeper Ho Van Y with the rebound falling invitingly for Mashrab Adilov, who scored from close range.

Thai Son Nam fought back with Shimizu fending off Adilov's challenge before firing a low drive past AGMK goalkeeper Rustam Umarov in the fifth minute.

Shimizu then forced Umarov into a save but it was AGMK, who had progressed to the knockout stage of the Championship for the first time, who increased their advantage in the sixth minute through Ikhtiyor Ropiev's fine finish from above the arc off Anashkon Rakhmatov's assist.

The third goal stunned 2018 runners-up Thai Son Nam as the Vietnam club failed to trouble AGMK who took what looked

like a comfortable 3-1 lead into the break.

It was, however, a different Thai Son Nam in the second half as they increased the intensity of their game and their persistence paid off in the 24th minute when Ropiev deflected the ball into his own net in trying to clear Ho's goal kick.

The goal spurred Thai Son Nam to push forward even harder and they equalized three minutes later through Ton That Phi, who finished Nguyen Minh Tri's long pass by chipping the ball over Umarov.

he equaliser left AGMK reeling and Pham Minh Giang's side took the lead for the first time in the match in the 28th minute through Tran Thai Huy's strike from the above the arc.

A stung AGMK pushed forward and forced their way back into the game as Choriev scored in the 34th minute from inside the box off Adilov's kick-in.

It was not to be for AGMK though as Shimizu scored from above the arc off Alireza Rafiei Pour's assist in the 37th minute and with just seconds to go, completed his hat-trick - taking his tournament tally to 10 - as Thai Son Nam sealed third place with a remarkable performance.

Pham Minh Giang: Thai Son Nam head coach

«AGMK approached the match better than us and they led 3-1 at half-time. But in the second half, we changed our tactics, played well and scored the goals. If given the chance to coach Thai Son Nam again next year, our target is to reach the final.

(Source: the-afc)

Iran U19 national volleyball team defeats Cuba in friendly game

IRNA — Iran's U19 national volleyball team, which is camping in Tunisia, beat Cuba in a friendly game 3-2.

During the Friday game, Iran defeated its mighty rival in the first set 25-18. However, it was Cuba that won the second and third sets.

But the Iranian team defeated Cuba in the fourth and fifth sets to beat its rival 3-2.

Iran had another friendly game in Tunisia on Thursday when it easily passed Egypt in consecutive sets.

The Iranian volleyball players are also scheduled to face Brazil in a third friendly game on Saturday.

Iran's U19 national volleyball team left Tehran for Tunisia on Tuesday morning to attend World Championship.

Iran will compete with Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Colombia and Italy in Pool B of FIVB Volleyball Men's U21 World Championship. It will face Bulgaria in its first game of the tournament on August 22.

Iran become champs in Eurasia budo

IRNA — Iran's team of bodu received 30 gold medals to become the champion of the first Eurasian contests.

Athletes from Sweden Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan Republic, Georgia, Iraq, Russian and Iran participated in the event, Saeed Salmanpour, the head of Iran's Bodu association, told IRNA.

He said that Afghanistan received one gold, four silver, and two bronze medals to become second; and Azerbaijan came third with one gold, one silver and two bronze medals.

He also said that 150 athletes attended the competitions.

The head of the world federation of bodu, Faeg Rafi-Of, and the heads of the federations of Afghanistan and Pakistan were the special guests of the event that took place in Orumiyyeh, northwestern Iran.

Budo is a Japanese term describing modern Japanese martial arts, such as karate, judo, jujutsu, aikido, shorinji kempo, and sumo.

Iranian paddlers to participate in World Dragon Boat C'ships

MNA — A team of Iranian men's paddlers have departed Tehran for Thailand to take part in the 14th edition of IDBF World Dragon Boat Racing Championships.

Organized by the International Dragon Boat Federation, 14th World Dragon Boat Racing Championships will be held from August 20 to 25 in Pattaya-Rayong, Thailand.

Iran will take part in the event in both men's and women's categories.

The men's team comprises 15 athletes and two coaches. The Iranian women dragon boat team will also depart for Thailand on Sunday.

Dragon boat racing is a watersport wherein a number of watercrafts called dragon boats race over a clearly defined unobstructed course in the shortest time possible. Paddlers sit in two side-by-side and use a single-bladed paddle. There are two categories that compete in this discipline, 10-seater (small boat) and 20-seater (standard) referring to the number of paddlers in the boat. A team also has a drummer and a steerer, with everybody in the boat paddling to the rhythm of the drum.

Nagoya Oceans' Yoshikawa wins MVP award

Tomoki Yoshikawa of Nagoya Oceans was named the Most Valuable Player of the AFC Futsal Club Championship Bangkok 2019 on Saturday.

Yoshikawa played a key role in Oceans' campaign, which climaxed with the Japanese club winning a record-extending fourth AFC Futsal Club Championship title.



Yoshikawa, 30, was at the centre of Oceans triumph, which saw them lifting the title with a 100 percent record - including two wins over 2018 champions Mes Sungun Varseqan of Islamic Republic of Iran.

He scored the second goal in Oceans' 2-0 win over Mes Sungun in the final.

Meanwhile, Thai Son Nam's Kazuya Shimizu won the Top Scorer award after hitting a whopping 10 goals.

Shimizu's goals powered the Vietnamese side's campaign, which included a hat-trick in the third-place playoff which Thai Son Nam won 4-3 against AGMK FC of Uzbekistan.

Mes Sungun won the Fair Play Award.

ROLL OF HONOUR

Champions: Nagoya Oceans (JPN)

Runners-up: Mes Sungun Varseqan (IRN)

Third: Thai Son Nam (VIE)

Most Valuable Player: Tomoki Yoshikawa (Nagoya Oceans)

Top Scorer: Kazuya Shimizu (10 goals, Thai Son Nam)

Fairplay: Mes Sungun Varseqan

(Source: the-afc)

Doping: Seven more Russian weightlifters banned

MOSCOW (Reuters) — Another seven Russian weightlifters have been provisionally suspended for doping violations, joining five compatriots already banned from the sport earlier this week.

The International Weightlifting Federation said on Friday the seven had been charged based on data from the Moscow anti-doping laboratory.

The announcement came days after the IWF said five other Russian weightlifters had been provisionally suspended.

The latest batch include Dmitry Lapikov and Nadezhda Evstyukhina, who had Olympic medals from the 2008 Beijing Games stripped for doping.

«There is no certainty that there won't be more suspen-

sions,» the president of Russia's weightlifting federation, Maxim Agapitov, told RIA news agency.

The World Anti-Doping Agency is in the process of analyzing data retrieved earlier this year from the Moscow laboratory and submitting the results to international sports federations.

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

He who adopts patience like free spirits against hardships will benefit greatly, but if he is impatient like ignorant people, he will gradually fall into forgetfulness. Imam Ali (AS)

Four cultural figures to receive Ghadir Artistic Awards

TEHRAN — Four cultural figures will be honored during the Sixth Ghadir Artistic Awards, which will be presented during a special ceremony at the Imam Ali (AS) Religious Arts Museum in Tehran today.

The awards are annually granted to those artists who have created works on Imam Ali (AS), the first Imam of the Shia, and the awards ceremony is organized every year on the anniversary of Eid al-Ghadir, the day on which Imam Ali (AS) was appointed as successor to the Prophet Muhammad (S).

This year's honorees are calligrapher Ahmad Abdorrezaei, painter Habibollah Sadeqi, mirror mosaic artist Ebrahim Zaif-Sanayei and poet Ahmad Alavi.

Calligrapher Nasrollah Afjei, director of the Nahjul-Balaghah Foundation Seyyed Jama'eddin Dinparvar, actor Asghar Hemmat, writer Ebrahim Hassanbeigi and singer Hesameddin Seraj were honored at the fifth edition of the awards in 2018.

Scholars Seyyed Jafar Shahidi and Morteza Asgari, poet Seyyed Ali Musavi Garmarudi, filmmaker Davud Mirbaqeri, calligrapher Hamid Ajami and actor Dariush Arjmand received the award in 2017.

The museum will also be hosting an exhibition of works by various artists on Imam Ali (AS).

"The Fishermen" comes to Iranian bookstores

TEHRAN — Prominent young Nigerian writer Chigozie Obioma's debut novel "The Fishermen" has recently been published in Persian by Chatrang Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Misaq Khalaj, the 2015 book follows the lives and childhood of four brothers Ikenna, Boja, Obemba and Benjamin in a small Nigerian town in the late 20th century.

When their strict and overbearing father leaves town temporarily for a business opportunity, the brothers make use of the opportunity to live dangerously, skipping school and engaging in fun recreational activities instead, including fishing in the river near their home, despite being forbidden from doing so by their parents.

On one of their fishing trips, they encounter a local madman, Abulu, who follows them shouting the name of Ikenna, the oldest brother. The other children flee, but the four brothers stop to listen, as Abulu shouts a series of prophecies that Ikenna will become blind, mute and crippled. He finishes by prophesying that Ikenna is destined to be killed by a fisherman.

Ikenna thinks this means one of his brothers will kill him, and he gradually turns against them. The prophecy undoes the family and the expectations the brothers' parents have for them.

The book received several awards, including NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work for Debut Author, Los Angeles Times Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction and Nebraska Book Award for Fiction.

It was also shortlisted for the 2015 Man Booker Prize and received positive reviews from critics.

"How the Zebra Got Its Stripes" published in Persian

TEHRAN — "How the Zebra Got Its Stripes: Darwinian Stories Told Through Evolutionary Biology", a book by French writer and blogger Léo Grasset, has been published in Persian in Tehran.

Kaveh Feizollahi is the translator of the book, which has been released by Now Publications.

Published in 2017, the book tries to answer some funny yet serious questions about topics in biology and evolution such as: why do giraffes have such long necks? And why are zebras striped?

Deploying the latest scientific research and his own extensive observations in Africa, Grasset offers answers to these questions and many more in the book.

Complex natural phenomena are explained in simple and at times comic terms, as Grasset turns evolutionary biology to the burning questions of the animal kingdom, from why elephants prefer dictators and buffalos' democracies, to whether the lion really is king.

Photo: Front cover of the Persian version of "How the Zebra Got Its Stripes: Darwinian Stories Told Through Evolutionary Biology" by French writer Léo Grasset.

Navaye Rahmat Intl. Daf Festival wraps up

TEHRAN — The 9th edition of the Navaye Rahmat International Daf Festival came to an end on Friday during a ceremony at Bahman Cineplex in Sanandaj, the capital of the western Iranian province of Kordestan.

The winners of the various sections were announced during the ceremony, which was attended by a number of cultural officials and musicians.

In the group performance section, Nuance Ensemble led by Puria Rahmani received first prize as it was followed by Aras Ensemble led by Nilufar Karimi and Avin Ensemble led by Maryam Golsorkhi.

Suzidel Ensemble led by Mehran Hosseini took first place in the section of Moludi Khani, a poem reciting ritual that is performed to celebrate the birthdays of the Prophet Muhammad (S), his household and Imams.

In this section, Bidel Ensemble led by Ali Puratai and Mohammad Rasulullah Ensemble led by Farid Mansuri received second and third prizes respectively.

Erfan Moradi won first prize in the men's solo performance category, while Siran Adibfar received first prize in the women's solo performance section.

Taimaz Mohseni was named best player in the boys' solo performance category and Mahtab Keramati was picked as best player in the girls' solo performance section.

The Navaye Rahmat International Daf Festival is held every year in Sanandaj, which is considered as the birthplace of the daf instrument.

Music ensembles from Iran as well as groups from India, Afghanistan and Pakistan performed in various categories of this year's edition of the festival with the motto of "Art, Unity and Kindness".



Aras Ensemble poses after accepting second prize of the group performance section at Bahman Cineplex during the 9th Navaye Rahmat International Daf Festival in Sanandaj on August 16, 2019.

Omid Salehi named Iran's film photographer of the year



Omid Salehi (C) accepts the award for the film photographer of the year at the 5th Iranian Society of Still Photographers Celebration at the Rayzan International Conference Center in Tehran on August 15, 2019. (Mehr/Behnam Tofigi)

TEHRAN — Omid Salehi has been selected as Iran's film photographer of the year for his collection of the highly acclaimed movie "When the Moon Was Full".

He was awarded at the closing ceremony of the 5th Iranian Society of Still Photographers Celebration, which was held at the Rayzan International Conference Center in Tehran on Thursday.

Directed by Narges Abyar, "When the Moon Was Full" won Crystal Simorghs in six categories, including best film and best director, at the 37th Fajr Film Festival in February.

The film is about Abdul-Hamid Rigi, the younger brother of Abdul-Malik Rigi, the founder and leader of the Jundallah terrorist group in southeastern Iran, who marries Faezeh Mansuri, a woman from Tehran. He

forces Faezeh to leave her homeland along with her brother to live in Pakistan where they find themselves involved in Jundallah terrorist activities.

The ceremony went on with honoring filmmaker Sirus Alvand with a lifetime achievement award for his special outlook towards film photography.

"We are here to be the voice of people and society and this instills in us great pride," Alvand said in his acceptance speech.

Veteran photographer Hossein Maleki also received a lifetime achievement award for his lifelong collaboration in numerous film projects.

Accepting his award, the 78-year-old photographer said that he had been active in cinema when he was only 14. "I must express thanks to the Iranian Society of Still Photographers that dedicated this award to me," he added.

Love is Folly festival to screen movies from Iran



A scene from Iranian director Behruz Nuranipur's drama "Dayan".

TEHRAN — "Yeva" and "Dayan" will be competing in the 27th Love is Folly International Film Festival, which will take place in Varna, Bulgaria from August 23 to September 1.

"Yeva" directed by Anahid Abad is about Yeva, a young woman who escapes her influential in-laws with her daughter Nareh, after her husband's tragic death, and takes refuge in one of the villages of Karabakh, Azerbaijan. Yeva is a complete stranger in this village and is obliged to live her daily life in disguise.

The film, which is a co-production between Armenia and Iran, has been acclaimed at several international events, including the Arpa International Film Festival in Los Angeles that selected it as best film in November 2018.

Directed by Behruz Nuranipur, "Dayan" tells the story of a group of people in a small village that try to have a better future

after the Syrian war, which displaced over 4 million families, and 450,000 women and girls never came back to their loved ones as a result.

Iranian filmmakers have been frequent visitors to the Love is Folly International Film Festival. "Melancholy" by director Morteza Atashzamaz won the Award of the Union of Bulgarian Film Makers at the 25th edition of the festival in 2017.

Victor Chouchkov Jr., the Bulgarian actor and director, will preside over the international jury, which is composed of British actor Alexander Perkins, Turkish actress and director Cigdem Sezgin, Romanian critic Ileana Pernes Danalache and Kazakh actress Irina Lindt.

Twelve movies, including Hungarian director Laszlo Csuj's "The Valley of the Flowers" and Canadian filmmaker Warren Sulatycky's "April in Autumn", will be screened in the official competition of the festival.

Youth Film Making Olympiad of Iran opens in Isfahan

TEHRAN — The third edition of the Youth Film Making Olympiad of Iran opened at the Isfahan branch of the Art Bureau on Saturday, the organizers announced.

The Olympiad is part of a program arranged every year on the sidelines of the 32nd International Film Festival for Children and Youth (IFFCY) in Isfahan.

The Olympiad, which will be running until August 21, has been launched as a special section for children aged between 9 and 16 to compete with their three-minute films.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the director of the festival, Alireza Tabesh, said that the organizers aim to discover young talents in filmmaking through this program.

Addressing the participants, he said, "The participation of famous filmmakers and cineastes will give you the chance to learn more from them and help you plan for your future wishes and dreams."



Filmmakers Puran Derakhshandeh (3rd R) and Marzieh Borumand (4th R) and participating youth cut the cake for the third edition of the Youth Film Making Olympiad of Iran at the Isfahan branch of the Art Bureau on August 17, 2019. (IFFCY)

Sheeran design Heinz Ketchup bottle sells for 1,500 pounds

LONDON (Reuters) — Three limited-edition bottles of Heinz Tomato Ketchup based on the tattoos of British songwriter Ed Sheeran, a dedicated fan of the condiment, sold at auction in London on Thursday, with one going under the hammer for 1,500 pounds (\$1,816).

Only 150 of the "Ed Sheeran X Heinz Tomato Ketchup, the Tattoo Edition" bottles,

featuring a copy of Sheeran's own Heinz inking, will be available across the world.

The first three were sold for 1,050 pounds, 1,100 pounds and 1,500 pounds on Thursday. Nigel Dickie, Kraft Heinz director of corporate affairs, said 150 of the bottles were made to mark Heinz 150th birthday.

"What's special about them is that they have his tattoos on the label," he

said. "They're part of the label, so it's his sleeve on our sleeve."

He said he suspected not many people would open the bottles, but they had "perfectly enjoyable ketchup" inside.

Some 104 bottles will be the prizes in a free global draw, according to a statement linked on Sheeran's Instagram account, and the remainder would go to Sheeran and Heinz

superfans and museums.

All money raised from the bottles will be donated to East Anglia's Children's Hospices, a charity nominated by Sheeran, and Rise Against Hunger, which is supported by Heinz.

The 28-year-old star, who has sold more than 150 million records worldwide, is a long-time fan of the sauce and has the "Heinz Tomato Ketchup" label tattooed on his arm.