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Industry ministry approves FDI worth \$554m

TEHRAN — Some \$554.4 million of foreign direct investment (FDI) has been approved by the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-July 22).

The mentioned amount of FDI has been approved for the implementation

of 24 industry, mining and trade projects. The figure shows a 60-percent rise in comparison to the same period last year, ISNA reported on Wednesday..

In the first four months of last year, 24 industrial, mining and trade projects were approved with \$346.3 million of foreign investment. **→ 4**

IRGC: Augmenting defense power on agenda of armed forces

TEHRAN — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has said that it is on agenda of Iran's armed forces to continuously increase their defense power. In a statement published on Wednesday, the IRGC said the fact that "the arrogance system" has focused its attention on limiting Iran's military power shows that Iran has been successful in countering their malign intention.

"The totality of the country's military

and defense organizations, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps in particular, ... will not hesitate a moment in thinking about or acting to focus on improving the country's defense capacity," the statement read.

It added that Iran's achievements in various defense fields have turned the country into an "unrivaled power of the region, putting it at a level to compete with ultra-regional powers". **→ 2**

Yemen air defense forces shoot down Saudi-led drone

TEHRAN — Yemeni army forces, supported by allied fighters from the Popular Committees, have intercepted and targeted an unmanned aerial vehicle belonging to the Saudi-led military coalition while flying in the skies over Yemen's southwestern province of Dhamar.

The media bureau of Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement, citing the spokesman for Yemeni Armed Forces Brigadier General Yahya Saree, announced in a state-

ment that Yemeni air defense forces and their allies shot down the U.S.-built General Atomics MQ-9 Reaper (sometimes called Predator B) drone with a precision missile early on Wednesday.

The statement added that the aircraft was struck as it was on a surveillance mission, noting that the domestically-developed missile which brought down the drone will be showcased during a ceremony in the near future. **→ 13**



PERSPECTIVE

Hanif Ghaffari
Head of the Tehran Times
Politics Desk

Trump's defeat against the red dragon

What is certain is that US President Donald Trump has failed to take action to weaken the dollar and regulate the economic battle with Beijing. The rise of the dollar (in spite of Trump's desire) has made Washington more vulnerable to economic war with China.

China is effectively leading the economic and trade battle with the United States by manipulating its credible exchange rate and devaluing it. However, Donald Trump has failed to counter Beijing's depreciation despite his efforts and his country's Treasury Department. In such circumstances, the rise of the dollar strengthens the US failure in the economic battle with Beijing.

The reality is that since early 2017, Trump has sought to use exchange rate manipulation and lowering the value of the dollar as a deadly weapon in protectionist economic confrontation with China. At the time, Trump stated that the \$ 346 billion US trade deficit was due to trade with China. We are now in year 2019 and this trade deficit has reached \$ 419 billion! This shows well that Trump's economic policies toward Beijing have failed. This was essentially one of Trump's backing in the economic battle with Beijing. But after nearly three years, just at the height of the Beijing-Washington economic battle, Donald Trump has lost the power to manipulate the exchange rate to apply protective economic methods.

The President of the United States knows very well that his inability to intelligently control the dollar will destroy all his efforts to fight the Red Dragon! As a result, the US economy will be vulnerable in the long run. Moreover, it seems that Trump wasn't able to achieve his economic goals in the international system up to now. The existing evidence shows this very well. Accordingly, one of the most important issues is the economic relationship between China and the United States of America.

The currency(USD) has reached its highest level in recent trading despite repeated requests by the US President to depreciate the dollar. This has led to Trump's failure in the economic war with China. Did the US President imagine an economic defeat against Beijing?

'U.S., Turkey must end illegal military presence on Syria soil'

TEHRAN — Syria's UN Ambassador Bashar al-Ja'afari has called on the United States and Turkey to end their "illegal military presence" in the Arab country and crimes against civilians.

Speaking at a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) session on Middle East peace and security challenges in New York on Tuesday, Ja'afari urged Washington and Ankara to respect the UN Charter's principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and refrain from using force against them.

"The United States and its allies, including the Turkish occupation forces, must be obliged to end their illegal military presence on Syrian territory and to stop their aggressive practices in support of terrorism and their crimes against Syrians,

civilian installations and infrastructure," he said.

He also criticized Turkey for sending a military convoy carrying ammunition into Syria's Idlib Province in support of the militants holed up in the embattled region.

The Syrian envoy further highlighted the need for the world body to stay focused on the real root causes of the Middle East conflict, including occupation, acts of aggression and destructive interventions in countries' domestic affairs — such as those aimed at overthrowing governments by force, investing in terrorism and fabricating crises.

"Success in dealing with the challenges facing the region requires upholding the principles of international law and the provisions of the UN Charter and stopping attempts to distort and

manipulate its provisions," he said.

Ja'afari also described Israel's occupation of Arab territories as the main reason for the crisis in the region.

"The main cause of the conflicts in the Middle East and the inability to achieve peace and stability has been and continues to be the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan," he said.

According to Press TV, Ja'afari further expressed concerns about Israel's accumulation of weapons of mass destruction, saying the regime should join the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) without delay and subject its facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s safeguards regime.

What early U.S. presidential polls tell us about the 2020 race

TEHRAN— Anyone paying the slightest attention to the Democratic presidential campaign has likely seen headlines on the latest "horse race" opinion polls, highlighting one candidate's rise or another's decline.

Campaigns trumpet, or minimize, the numbers depending on how they fared. But with the first nominating contest in Iowa still five months away, what do these surveys really tell us about what will happen in the November 2020 presidential election?

The quick answer: Early polls should be taken with a grain of salt, or perhaps even a full shaker. But they can offer a snapshot of where the race stands today and at least some insight into where it might go in the months to come.

Here's a guide to reading, and understanding,

polls at this stage of the outsized, 23-candidate Democratic contest:

■ How are political polls conducted?

Professional pollsters rely on answers from a sample of people - anywhere from a few hundred respondents to 1,000 or more - intended to represent a much larger population.

In political surveys, pollsters are often interested specifically in registered voters or likely voters. Many more people say they will vote than actually do so, forcing pollsters to use other data, such as past voting behavior, to estimate the probability of casting ballots.

Some pollsters rely on phone interviews. Others, including Ipsos, which conducts surveys for Reuters, employ online questionnaires. All polls have a margin of error - a measure of confidence

that the results reflect the broader population - calculated based on the size of the sample.

■ What does history tell us about polls at this stage?

National presidential primary polls - that is, polls that measure support for one party's candidates - this early in the election cycle have been a mixed bag in predicting the eventual winner.

In August 2007, Hillary Clinton held a nearly 20-percentage point lead across a dozen national polls over Barack Obama, who would capture the Democratic nomination the following year.

The man who would win the Republican Party's nod, John McCain, hovered around 12%, with former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani leading the pack with support from nearly one-third of respondents. **→ 13**



Four cineastes receive lifetime achievement awards at Iran Cinema Celebration

TEHRAN — The organizers of the 21st Iran Cinema Celebration honored four influential figures in Iranian cinema for their lifetime achievements in a special ceremony on Tuesday night.

Stage and screen actor Akbar Zanjani, makeup artist Bijan Mohtashem, sound engineer Hassan Zahedi and director Sirus Alvand received lifetime achievement awards during the ceremony organized at the Eyvane Shams Hall. **→ 16**



REPORT

Ramin Hossein Abadian
Mehr News Agency
journalist

Syrian army gain strategic win in Idlib

On Tuesday, local news reported that terrorists withdrew from a key city, Khan Sheikhoun, in the Syrian province of Idlib and the Syrian army captured the city.

According to the latest news, after capturing the key hilltop of Tal Nimr, the Syrian army were able to enter the city of Khan Sheikhoun.

After the Syrian army entered Khan Sheikhoun, all the terrorists fled out of the city.

But why this city is so important and why capturing it was an important victory for the Syrian army?

Khan Sheikhoun has a high strategic importance; it overlooks the key roads in Syria and is the intersection of Idlib's western, eastern and northern parts. Capturing Khan Sheikhoun is the first step toward reopening the road that connects Syria's economy capital Aleppo to Damascus which is the political capital of the country.

Capturing Khan Sheikhoun is also critical from a military point of view because it will make it easier for the army to go further north toward cities of Kafar Sijnah and Maarat al-Numan.

Capturing Khan Sheikhoun paves the way for more victories for the Syrian Army because it means that now the Syrian Army gains control over a big area in northern Hama, an area which is called the triangle of death.

Another important part of the victory is that it will pave the way for the Syrian army to wipe out all Takfiri terrorists in the province of Idlib.

If the Syrian army free Idlib in a quick, surprising strike, how it would influence the Americans and their military forces in Syria?

The answer is that the United States is worried that the Syrian army seize the control of all critical military areas out of the hands of Americans and their allies as they use these areas to put pressure on Damascus. In fact, operation in Idlib will be the last stage of the war for completely freeing Syria from the curse of terrorism.

With freeing Idlib, the militia forces and their supporters will lose their winning edge and pressure leverage against the Syrian army. **→ 7**

Swedish FM describes talks with Zarif as ‘Frank and constructive’

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom has said that her talks with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif were “frank” and “constructive”. “Frank and constructive discussions with FM Zarif, today visiting Stockholm. Focus on human rights situation in Iran, regional issues, such as Yemen and the Persian Gulf, and the JCPOA. Dialogue essential in times of uncertainty,” she tweeted on Tuesday.



Carl Bildt, a former Swedish prime minister, also in a meeting with Zarif on Tuesday expressed support for the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA, and insisted on the need to honor international law in respect to free navigation.

“Had meeting with Iran FM @JZarif. Emphasis was on possible ways back to full respect for the Iran nuclear agreement by everyone as well as on the importance of respect for international law in terms of maritime security,” Bildt tweeted.

Zarif started Scandinavian tour on Monday and held talks with Finland’s top officials including President Sauli Niinisto at the first leg of the three-nation Scandinavian tour.

Finland currently hold the European Union presidency. “Fruitful meetings with current EU presidency, Finnish President, foreign minister and trade minister,” Zarif tweeted.

Norway was scheduled to be the last leg of Zarif’s tour of Scandinavian nations.

Zarif’s tour of Scandinavian nations took place after he visited the two Persian Gulf states of Qatar and Kuwait on August 12 and 18 respectively to renew Iran’s proposal for maritime security and non-aggression pact.

Zarif, who will be visiting France and China in coming days as well, is trying to remind the world about a possible collapse of the JCPOA and also warn about the U.S. dangerous move in forming a military coalition in the Persian Gulf.

On July 4, Britain captured and Iranian oil tanker off Gibraltar, claiming it was carrying oil to Syria. Iran responded in kind by seizing a British tanker in the Strait of Hormuz on July 19.

Russia says building coalitions in Persian Gulf may lead to sad consequences

By staff and agency

Russia’s acting envoy to the United Nations Dmitry Polyansky warned on Tuesday that building coalitions in the Persian Gulf may lead to sad consequences, inviting UN Security Council member states to discuss its Concept for collective security in the region.

“A scenario of building coalitions of interest leads to sad consequences,” TASS quoted him as saying in open debates on the Middle East at UN Security Council.



He said, “With an understanding of the relevance of developing a sustainable mechanism for collective security in the region on the basis of equal dialogue, Russia has proposed and presented, including at the UN platform, a Concept for collective security in the Persian Gulf.”

He noted that the proposal is “aimed at unblocking conflict situations and at developing measures of trust and control.” “When it comes to Russian proposals, they can and should be adjusted and specified. In a sense, they represent an invitation for a constructive dialogue on ways to achieve long-term stabilization in the Persian Gulf,” Polyansky said.

A roundtable on starting expert dialogue on this topic will be held in Moscow on September 18-19, he said.

On July 23, the Russian Foreign Ministry presented a Concept for collective security in the Persian Gulf. The proposal envisages forming an initiative group for organizing an international conference on security and cooperation in the Persian Gulf, which would later lead to establishing an organization for security and cooperation in the region. Moreover, Moscow put forward a proposal to create demilitarized zones in the region and suggested to give up permanent stationing of groups from non-regional countries, as well as to set up coordination between militaries.

The United States has called on its European and Asian allies to form a maritime force to supposedly monitor safe shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and Persian Gulf.

President Hassan Rouhani has said such a move will not help regional security.

So far, only Britain, Israel, Australia and Bahrain have agreed to join the coalition.

UN backs nuclear deal, says genuine dialogue needed to avoid confrontation in region

By staff and agency

UN Secretary-General’s Chef de Cabinet Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti said on Tuesday that “restraint and genuine dialogue are urgently needed” to avoid a major confrontation, which would have disastrous consequences, even well beyond the Middle East region.

Briefing the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, she described the situation in the Middle East as “troubling and complex”.

Tensions in the Strait of Hormuz have been raised to dangerous levels, she said.

She added that the rights and duties related to navigation must be respected in accordance with international law.

Elsewhere, she expressed the UN support for the 2015 nuclear deal.

In an exclusive interview with Al Jazeera on August 12, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif warned against an arms race in the Middle East.

“The U.S. [sold] \$50bn worth of weapons to the region last year. Some of the countries in the region with less than



a third of our population spend \$87bn on military procurement. Let’s make a comparison, Iran spent last year \$16bn on all its military with almost one million people in the army.

“The UAE with a total population of one million spent \$22bn, Saudi Arabia spent \$87bn. If you are talking about threats coming

from the region, the threats are coming from the U.S. and its allies who are pouring weapons in the region, making it a tinderbox ready to blow up,” Zarif told Al Jazeera.

Zarif’s comments came after the United States announced it is working to form a military coalition to supposedly protect commercial shipping in the Persian Gulf

following attacks on oil tankers near the Strait of Hormuz.

On August 14, President Hassan Rouhani insisted on Iran’s position that there is no need to foreign forces to maintain security in the Persian Gulf region.

“Major powers, especially America, seek nothing except causing division and emptying treasury of the Islamic countries. The Persian Gulf littoral states can maintain security and stability in the region,” Rouhani said during a cabinet meeting.

Zarif said on August 9 that the Persian Gulf is a “national security priority for Iran” and that Tehran will not “hesitate to safeguard its security” in this strategic waterway, which he described as a “vital lifeline” for the Islamic Republic.

The chief diplomat warned that military presence of extra-regional forces is absolutely a “source of insecurity”.

“Mindful of this reality, any extra-regional presence is by definition source of insecurity - despite propaganda,” Zarif wrote on his Twitter account.

Leader: The Kashmir wound is British legacy

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday that the current tension in Kashmir is a “wound” left by “malicious acts” of Britain when it was forced to leave the Indian subcontinent in 1947.

“For a continuation of conflict in Kashmir, the British intentionally left this wound open in the region,” Ayatollah Khamenei noted.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since their partition and independence from Britain in 1947. The disputed region is claimed in full by both sides, which have fought three wars over it.

According to Press TV, Kashmir has been the scene of fresh protests and placed under a lockdown ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government revoked the

Indian-administered region’s special status.

India has claimed the decision to strip the Muslim-majority region of its semi-autonomy was necessary for economic development in Kashmir and to stop “terrorism.”

Ayatollah Khamenei urged India to follow a “fair policy” toward the Kashmiri people.

“We maintain good relations with the Indian government, but the Indian government is expected to adopt a fair policy toward the decent people of Kashmir so that the Muslim people of the region are not put under pressure,” the Leader remarked.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Ayatollah

Khamenei told President Hassan Rouhani and his cabinet team that “domestic production” is the “main key to resolving existing problems” facing the poor and middle classes of society.

The meeting took place on “government week”.

The Leader suggested that giving space to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the main tools in resistance economy.

Ayatollah Khamenei said all officials are unanimous in their view on the importance of SMEs and have promised to work on such projects.

“Small and medium-sized enterprises are main tools in promoting resistance economy.”

■ **“The need to cut dependence on oil export”**

The Leader urged officials to turn sanctions into opportunities by cutting dependence on oil exports and relying more on domestic capabilities.

The easily gained revenues from oil export has been a “great calamity” for the country, the Leader remarked, adding, “This old problem has been really detrimental to the progress of the country.”

He said there are countries that have succeeded to achieve great economic prosperity without producing a “drop of oil”.

He added the best possible way to counter sanctions is shoring up production in different sectors, particularly in knowledge-based projects, agriculture, auto industry, housing construction, etc.

Zarif: ‘Trump cannot expect to be unpredictable and expect Iran to be predictable’

By staff and agency

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday Tehran may act “unpredictably” in response to the United States’ “unpredictable” policies under U.S. President Donald Trump, Reuters reported.

Tensions between Tehran and Washington have risen since President Trump’s administration last year quit an international deal to curb Iran’s nuclear ambitions and began to ratchet up sanctions. Iranian officials denounced the new penalties as “economic warfare”.

“Mutual unpredictability will lead to chaos. President Trump cannot expect to be unpredictable and expect others to be predictable. Unpredictability will lead to mutual unpredictability and unpredictability is chaotic,” Zarif said in a speech at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

Zarif also said, “You cannot have an island of security by your fleet in the Persian Gulf when the United States is

waging an economic war against Iran.”

■ **‘If Europe observes commitments Iran will fully implement JCPOA’**

The chief diplomat also said if the Europeans fully honor their commitments to the 2015 nuclear deal, Iran will immediately reverse its decision in scaling down its obligations.

“Even if the United States does not return to the nuclear deal, Iran will return to the first stage in several hours... on the condition that the European side fully implements its obligations,” Zarif asserted.

U.S. President Donald Trump abandoned the nuclear deal in May 2018 and returned the previous sanctions and imposed new ones.

So far, Iran has taken two steps in reducing its nuclear commitments: increasing its stockpile of enriched uranium beyond the 300 kilograms allowed under the JCPOA – the official name for the nuclear deal – and enriching nuclear



fuel to the purity level of 4.5 percent.

Under the agreement, Iran was allowed to enrich uranium to 3.67 percent.

IRGC: Augmenting defense power on agenda of Iran’s armed forces

➔ It added that Iran’s achievements in various defense fields have turned the country into an “unrivaled power of the region, putting it at a level to compete with ultra-regional powers”.

The statement was released on the same day as United States Secretary of State Mike

Pompeo warned against ending an arms embargo on Iran, which will expire on October 2020.

“Time is drawing short to continue this activity of restricting Iran’s capacity.... The international community will have plenty of time to see how long it has until Iran

is unshackled to create new turmoil, and figure out what it must do to prevent this from happening,” Pompeo said Tuesday, during an address at the United Nations.

The arms embargo covers all weapons sales and “related material” to Iran. It was put in place by the UN and is set to be lifted five

years after the adoption of the nuclear deal.

The push to extend the ban on weapons sales to Tehran comes amid increasing efforts by Washington to restrict Iran’s oil exports in line with U.S. President Donald Trump’s “maximum pressure” policy toward Iran.

FM Zarif due in France on Friday, to visit China next week

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif will pay a visit to France later this week for talks with the French president and foreign minister and will fly to China next week.

“I will travel to Paris on Friday to meet French President Emmanuel Macron and Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian,” Zarif said late on Monday while in the Swedish capital of Stockholm.

During his Monday statements, Zarif said that he would also visit China “next week”.

Zarif’s Friday host France is a partner to a 2015 deal on Iran’s nuclear program — officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — and has led European efforts to salvage the landmark accord since U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew his country from it last year and re-imposed previous sanctions on Iran and introduced new harsh ones.

Zarif’s visit to Paris will follow two phone conversations between Macron and President Hassan Rouhani of Iran regarding the JCPOA on July 18 and August 6.

Iran has said if the remaining signatories to the JCPOA — France, Britain, Germany, Russia and China — fail to protect Iran from sanctions it will see no reason to remain the only party loyal to the agreement. Since the U.S. abandoned the accord, the European sides have failed to abide by their commitments.

In his whirlwind tour of the region and Scandinavian nations, Zarif has already visited Qatar and

Bahrain on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf. The visits also took place after Britain seized and later released an Iran-operated oil tanker off Gibraltar. Iran called the move “maritime piracy”.

While visiting Qatar and Kuwait, Zarif renewed Iran’s proposal for non-aggression pact with the Persian Gulf littoral states.

Iran has proposed non-aggression pact while the U.S. and Israel have been trying to demonize Iran. The Trump administration has claimed Iran wants to colonize Arab nations and Israel has said Iran wants to revive the Persian Empire.

■ **“Fruitful talks”**

Zarif concluded his visit to Helsinki late on Monday, where he held talks with Finland’s top officials including President Sauli Niinisto.

Finland currently holds the rotating presidency of the European Union.

“Fruitful meetings with current EU presidency, Finnish President, foreign minister and trade minister,” Zarif tweeted.

After Finland, Zarif visited Stockholm, Sweden, on Monday evening. On Tuesday, he held talks with Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom.

Wallstrom said her talks with Zarif were “frank” and “constructive”.

Zarif also held a meeting with a number of Swedish businessmen. Norway will be the last leg of Zarif’s tour of Scandinavian nations.

Zarif’s meetings with foreign officials are primarily

intended to develop bilateral relations, deescalate tension in the Persian Gulf region, and also prevent the collapse of the nuclear deal.

In response to Washington’s exit and Europe’s failure to compensate for the U.S. absence, Iran has, since May 8, twice suspended some of its commitments under the nuclear deal in a retaliatory step based on articles 26 and 36 of the JCPOA.

Europe has already missed a July 7 deadline set by Tehran for it to meet its end of the bargain. Tehran has said it will go ahead with the third stage of scaling down its nuclear commitments on September 7 if the European side keeps failing.

Zarif further played down the sanctions recently imposed by the U.S. on him. He said, “America’s sanctions are not pressuring me. They [the Americans] are after sanctioning the [Iranian] people; therefore, we will not use the word ‘sanctions’ anymore, but we will, instead, use the term ‘economic terrorism’” to refer to Washington’s pressure campaign, Zarif said.

In a joint press conference with Finland’s Foreign Affairs Minister Pekka Haavisto in Helsinki on Monday, the top Iranian diplomat said that the Islamic Republic has no interest in engaging in a fresh round of nuclear talks with the United States.

“Iran is not interested in negotiations with the United States to clinch a new nuclear accord,” Zarif said, adding, “We had detailed negotiations with the United States and it was not us who left the negotiating table.”

Takht-Ravanchi warns of Washington's 'divide and rule' strategy

Ambassador Takht-Ravanchi says foreign forces are sowing insecurity in Strait of Hormuz

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Majid d e s k Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, warned on Tuesday that the U.S. is seeking to sow discord among regional states through its "divide and rule" strategy.

"The sole beneficiary of weapons stockpiling in the region is the defense industry of the exporting countries. We should not ignore the U.S. 'divide and rule' mechanism, which seeks to sow seeds of permanent discord among regional states," Takht-Ravanchi told the UN Security Council meeting on Middle East peace and security challenges, Press TV reported.

The Iranophobic remarks by American officials are meant to accomplish such an objective, Takht-Ravanchi said, adding, "They have leveled unfounded accusations against Iran in order to justify their regional policies, and prevent the country from performing its role in the region."

"While we are not seeking confrontation, we cannot and will not remain indifferent to the violation of our sovereignty. Therefore, in order to secure our borders and interests, we will vigorously exercise our inherent right to self-defense," Takht-Ravanchi told the Security Council.

He also pointed to the U.S. attempt to



lead a coalition in the Persian Gulf, saying foreign forces are causing insecurity and instability in the Strait of Hormuz with their military presence in the strategic sea passage.

He emphasized that the responsibility of ensuring the water body's security rests only with Persian Gulf littoral states.

Takht-Ravanchi further described the deployment of more than 70,000 U.S. ser-

vicemen as one of the main reasons behind the instability in the Middle East, stressing that the Pentagon has active military presence in all Persian Gulf states except for Iran.

He said the number of foreign military installations in the Middle East has jumped from four in 1991 to 41 in 2018, with nearly all of them belong to the U.S.

This marks "the highest concentration of military sites in the world," he remarked. Takht-e Ravanchi then highlighted that Tehran will continue to ensure the security of maritime navigation in the Middle East, particularly in the Strait of Hormuz, adding that the United States' attempts to set up a military coalition in the Persian Gulf to counter what it calls the "Iran threat" will fail.

U.S. Marine General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on July 9 that the U.S. was proceeding with plans to assemble the coalition purportedly aimed at ensuring freedom of navigation in waters off Iran and Yemen.

Meanwhile, Washington's call to form the coalition has been faced with reluctance even on the part of its close allies. So far, only a few countries, including Bahrain, Britain and Australia have agreed to join the coalition.

Unlike Trump, Obama was a wise enemy: Larijani

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Parliament Speaker Ali d e s k Larijani has ruled out the possibility of negotiations with the U.S. under the administration of Donald Trump, saying Iran accepted Obama's offer to enter talks because he was a "wise enemy".

"During the previous administration, the U.S. offered talks to Iran and Iran accepted... because our initial impression was that Mr. Obama was following some principles in his policies," Larijani said in an interview with the NBC's Lester Holt in Tehran.

"He was our enemy, but he was the wise enemy. It's easier to interact with a wise enemy," he said.

"I think the United States needs to correct its behavior. I think Mr. Trump ruined one important opportunity," the speaker remarked.

He also said Washington's behavior has "increased solidarity" of the Iranian public.

Asked whether he could confirm any backchannel communication between the two countries, Larijani said, "I don't confirm this. There is no backchannel communication."

He stressed that if the U.S. wants to talk with Iran, it needs to first come back to the Iran nuclear deal, also known as the

JCPOA, which Iran struck with six world powers in 2015.

Lester Holt is visiting Iran and he has already held several interviews with senior Iranian officials including Foreign Minister Zarif, Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, CBI Governor Hemmati, and Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani.

In his interview with the SNSC secretary, published on Tuesday, Shamkhani said the U.S. sanctions pressure against Iran are not for negotiation but intended to make Tehran surrender.

"As long as this approach is taken by the United States, Iran will never ever seek negotiations," Shamkhani said.

"We had a case of successful negotiations with the JCPOA [the 2015 nuclear deal]. How come the United States departed from it?" he said.

He also said that Iran should never have signed the JCPOA. He said that there were people in Iran who felt that signing the JCPOA was a mistake.

Asked if he was one of those people, Shamkhani said, "Yes. ... I'm just following the viewpoints of my nation, the people of Iran."

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.

At the same time, Trump has pushed for talks with Iran but to no avail.

Iran's power has driven enemy into despair, says military chief

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran's power d e s k has reached a level that it has driven the enemy into despair, says Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, the Armed Forces Chief of Staff.

In remarks on Wednesday, Baqeri said Iran has emerged as an invincible power on the world stage, Mehr reported.

Such level of capability and readiness is a prelude to further unfolding of the Islamic Republic's power before the eyes of other nations, he added.

On Monday, General Baqeri said the Islamic Republic, under the leadership of Ayatollah Khamenei, continues to advance in the path of creating an "Islamic civilization" with all power and deep understanding of the current circumstances.

He said despite all the conspiracies, including the imposed war (Iraq's war against Iran in the 1980s) and all the acts of sabotage and insecurity in Iran by the enemies, the country is at the peak of its power.

He also pointed to the release of the Iranian-operated Adrian Darya 1 supertank-



er, which was seized by British marines in the Strait of Gibraltar last month, saying it demonstrated the Islamic Republic's power at the international level.

"The shooting down of an invading U.S. spy drone, the seizure of the violating British oil tanker, and last but not least, the release

of our country's tanker in Gibraltar, prove the fact that the Islamic Revolution strongly continues on its path to achieve its noble ideals," the general remarked.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Baqeri slammed the efforts launched by the U.S. to form a coalition and hatch new plots in the Persian

Gulf, saying such efforts have already failed.

The top commander further said the efforts were aimed to lay siege on the Islamic Republic and undermine its power in the region.

Baqeri's comments came after the White House announced plans to create a new security initiative in the Persian Gulf by forming a coalition for escorting commercial ships.

However, Washington's call to form the coalition has fallen on deaf ears. So far, only Britain, Australia and Bahrain have agreed to join the coalition.

On Tuesday, IRGC Navy Chief Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran stands firm against trans-regional countries and enemies entering the Persian Gulf to create instability and insecurity in the region."

"The regional countries know that Iran has extended the hand of brotherhood and friendship towards Islamic nations and countries, and the alliance and escort of the vessels cannot interfere in the major mission of the Guards which is to provide security," Tangsiri added.

Zarif advises Brian Hook to study National Security Archive on 1953 coup in Iran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister d e s k Mohammad Javad Zarif has advised U.S. special representative for Iran Brian Hook to study National Security Archive which confirms the U.S. role in the 1953 Iran coup.

In a message on his Twitter account on Tuesday, Zarif posted a link of National Security Archive which declassifies CIA documents on the U.S. role in the 1953 coup in Iran and American and British involvement in overthrowing Iran's government, saying, "For those who are either unaware of, or willfully revisionist on, the history of US involvement in the 1953 Coup against the democratically elected government of Iran."

Reportedly, Hook claimed on Tuesday that CIA had no role in Iran's 1953 coup.

On August 19, 1953, a foreign-backed coup — known in Iran as the 28 Mordad coup d'état — was staged in Iran which saw the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh in favor of strengthening the monarchical rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

Named Operation Ajax by the CIA, the coup was carried out after an earlier coup attempt failed to overthrow Mosaddegh and install General Fazlollah Zahedi, the shah's reliable ally, as prime minister.

As a result, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the shah of Iran, had fled to Baghdad.

With the success of the second coup, however, Zahedi was installed as prime minister, and the shah returned to Iran and continued to rule more fiercely as monarch.



For those who are either unaware of, or willfully revisionist on, the history of US involvement in the 1953 Coup against the democratically elected government of Iran:

Mosaddegh was then arrested, tried and convicted of treason by the shah's military court.

He was sentenced to death, but on the Shah's personal orders, his sentence was commuted to three years in solitary confinement in a military prison, followed by house arrest until his death.

The Shah ruled until 1979, when he was brought down during the Islamic Revolution, which led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic after a referendum.

On Monday, Zarif commemorated the anniversary of

the 1953 coup in Iran, saying the Americans and the British orchestrated the coup following years of "maximum pressure" on Iranians, hinting at U.S. President Donald Trump's "maximum pressure" policy against Iran.

"66 years ago today, a coup instigated by the US and the UK overthrew the democratically-elected Government of Iran. This atrocity followed years of 'maximum pressure' on Iranians," Zarif said in a tweet.

"Our people put an end to such interference in 1979. Time for some to deal with this reality," he added.

New Zealand says has no boats to send to Strait of Hormuz

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — New Zealand's defense minister d e s k says while no formal request for assistance was made, Britain approached New Zealand about whether it had any capacity to help.

"I've said right now both of my frigates are in Canada undergoing refit. We don't actually have any capabilities available," Ron Mark told reporters on Wednesday, according to New Zealand Herald.

Britain asked New Zealand whether it could help patrol the Strait of Hormuz following the seizure of oil tankers by Iran, but we didn't have any boats to send, the minister of defense said.

Mark's statements came as Australia's government on Wednesday announced it was joining a United States-led effort to allegedly protect shipping lanes in the waters between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, a move which has called "provocative".



Tensions in the region rose after Iran in July seized two oil tankers, shortly after the UK had seized an Iranian tanker off Gibraltar.

"The bottom line that I can barely struggle to keep two P3s [surveillance aircraft] flying ... I just don't see that we have any spare capability right now to engage in that kind of a mission."

He said, "If we did have the capacity, Cabinet would have to discuss the matter and that no official request had been put in."

"Everything else is hypothetical beyond that point," Mark said.

National Party foreign affairs spokesman Gerry Brownlee described the admission as embarrassing and said New Zealand needed to join the effort, one way or the other.

"This is simply not good enough. New Zealand's defense force can offer its partners a range of skills and assets in a multilateral effort such as this," he said.

"Just as oil and other goods destined for Australia moves through the Strait of Hormuz, so too does oil and goods destined for New Zealand."

He applauded Australia's effort, saying the clock was now ticking for New Zealand.

Tensions in the region have escalated rapidly in recent months amid Iran's increasing frustration that it is not seeing the economic benefits of a 2015 agreement to limit its nuclear program.

U.S. President Donald Trump pulled America out of the deal and re-imposed sanctions last year. To strangle the Iranian economy, the Trump administration has even banned total ban on Iran's oil exports.

Revolutionary diplomacy behind release of Iranian tanker: MP

TEHRAN (MNA) — A senior Iranian lawmaker has said that the Iran-operated oil tanker Adrian Darya 1 was released as the result of Iran's revolutionary diplomacy which is based on resistance.

"The release of the Iranian tanker proved that a diplomacy based on resistance and revolutionary ideas is effective," Alaeddin Boroujerdi, a member of the parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, told Mehr on Monday.

"Our diplomacy on this issue was based on ensuring national security and interests of the country and also on revolutionary diplomacy of resistance," he added.



Despite all U.S. pressures and requests, Gibraltar government on Wednesday ordered the release of the tanker, formerly known as Grace 1.

Iran's Ambassador to London Hamid Baeidinejad confirmed on Monday that the supertanker had started its journey in international waters 45 days after being seized in Gibraltar.

Britain's naval forces unlawfully seized the vessel, then known as Grace 1, and its cargo of 2.1 million barrels of oil in the Strait of Gibraltar on July 4 under the pretext that the supertanker had been suspected of carrying crude to Syria in violation of the European Union's unilateral sanctions against the country.

"Seizing Iranian tanker was an illegal measure and an act of piracy by England upon U.S. order," added Boroujerdi.

"In line with its legal authorities and in a bid to ensure the security of Hormuz Strait and the Persian Gulf, the Islamic Republic of Iran retaliated against UK's measure; because the security of the Persian Gulf region is the security of the Islamic Republic," noted the lawmaker, referring to seizure of UK-flagged tanker Stena Impero after it had violated international maritime rules in the Strait of Hormuz.

"England's measure was a threat to international maritime security, so the Islamic Republic of Iran decided to give a firm response since many countries send tankers to the Persian Gulf to buy oil and Iran couldn't let the region face a crisis," said Boroujerdi.

IRGC Navy Commander Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri highlighted on Sunday that the Port and Maritime Organization of Iran (PMO) and Iran's Judiciary are responsible to decide on the fate of Stena Impero, adding, "There is no relation between the release of Grace 1 from Gibraltar and the British oil tanker detained by the Guards."

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	266127.2
IFX	3579.29

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,613 rials
GBP	51,106 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$60.95/b
WTI	\$56.73/b
OPEC Basket	\$59.56/b
Gold	\$1,502.45/oz
Silver	\$17.15/oz
Platinum	\$849.00/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Industry ministry approves FDI worth \$554m

1 → Iranian industry, mining and trade sectors attracted \$3.5 billion of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), which indicates a 75-percent growth from the figure of its preceding year, according to Afrouz Bahrami, the director general of Foreign Investment Office of the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade.



Iran expects a 10-fold increase of FDI in industry and mining sectors by the end of the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2021).

Based on the latest report of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Iran has managed to rise its FDI 50 percent to \$5.019 billion in 2017.

Africa's July consumer inflation falls to lowest since January

South Africa's consumer inflation fell more than expected to its lowest since January on Wednesday due to subdued fuel and municipal tariffs prices, raising the chances the central bank will cut lending rates to support a flagging economy.

As stated by reuters.com, the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) lowered lending rates to 6.5% in July, but suggested future cuts were not a foregone conclusion despite calls for it to do more to support the weak economy.

Headline consumer price inflation slowed to 4.0% year-on-year in July, the lowest since January and under a consensus forecast of 4.2%, data from Statistics South Africa showed.

Since the bank's July meeting the rand has suffered a beating, falling around 10% in August alone, as 230 billion rand (\$15.09 billion) bailout for state power firm Eskom and political uncertainty around President Cyril Ramaphosa upped the threat of credit downgrades to junk.



But the subdued inflation print, which analysts say reflects a weakening economy where consumer spending is stagnating and companies are struggling to eke out profits, is set to push the bank to cut rates again to ignite economic activity.

"You're seeing serious levels of disinflation in the economy and the outlook for growth is weak as well.

In this environment the SARB is probably justified in providing a little bit of monetary stimulus," said Jeffrey Schultz, an economist at BNP Paribas.

Africa's most industrialized economy contracted by 3.2% in the first quarter as nation-wide power cuts by the ailing utility Eskom hit mining, manufacturing and retailers.

"There's probably scope for two more 25 basis points reductions to rates, one this year and one next year," Schultz said.

Before the inflation data surprise, a poll in the previous week by Reuters showed all but two of the 20 economists surveyed saw lending rates staying on hold at the bank's September meeting.

Industrial unit establishment permits up over 24%

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— Issuance of permits for setting up industrial units in Iran increased 24.1 percent in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-July 22), IRNA reported citing the data released by the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade.

As reported, some 8,355 licenses were issued during the mentioned four months. The units are supposed to create jobs for 200,972 persons, with 31.2 percent rise year on year.

The ministry has previously announced that issuance of permits for setting up industrial units in Iran increased 16 percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019).

Based on the data nearly 970 trillion rials (about \$23 billion) has been invested in the mentioned industrial units, registering a 26.3 percent increase compared to three last year's figure for the same time span.

In early July, on the occasion of the National Day of Industry and Mining (July 1), Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade outlined 35 plans covering seven major areas for developing the country's industry



and mining sectors.

Improving the business environment

associated with the country's industry,

mining and trade sectors has been given

significant attention in this planning and six specific programs have been defined in this regard.

In this due, reforming production processes and guidelines, eliminating or reducing the timing of license issuances, simplifying rules and regulations impeding production, removing barriers in the way of production and trade, and providing open access to information for the general public are some of the programs which are put on the agenda.

Establishing a comprehensive information system aiming to exchange information with other governmental institutions and executive agencies related to industry, mining and trade sectors, and a strategic plan for managing currency policies, bank profits and macroeconomic goals to support production in the industrial sectors as well as ranking and encouraging investors and entrepreneurs in order to increase the presence of industrial units in the national and international arenas, are some other programs which are to be followed by the industry ministry.

Over 60m tons of goods loaded, unloaded at Iran's ports since March

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — loading and unloading of goods at ports of Iran has exceeded 60 million tons since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 21), the portal of the Roads and Urban Development Ministry reported quoting the minister as saying on Tuesday.

Speaking in an event on the occasion of the World Maritime Day, Mohammad Eslami noted that exports from the country's ports has increased six percent while the imports have witnessed a 25 percent rise in the mentioned period.

While Iran is combatting the U.S. unilateral sanctions on its economy, the country's ports as the major gates of exports and imports play some significant role in this combat. This role makes all-out support to ports and more development of them serious and vital.

Such necessity has led the government to define projects for more development of the ports and also take some measures to encourage investment making in ports, in addition to facilitate loading and unloading of goods, especially basic commodities, there.

On May 21, the deputy director of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said following a

directive by President Hassan Rouhani, IRICA is providing new facilities for importers of basic goods which makes them able to clear their commodities in less than an hour.

"For basic goods such as meat, system formalities and clearance procedures will be carried out in less than an hour and importers can transport their goods soon after," Mehrdad Jamal Orounaqi said.

Connecting the ports which are the major cargo hubs of the country to the national railway network is another project seriously followed up by the government.

The head of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) has recently announced that 59 kilometers of railroads are planned to be built for connecting the major cargo hubs in the country to the national railway network by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020).

Saeed Rasouli mentioned linking the cargo hubs to the railway network as one of the main priorities of RAI in the current year.

All such measures indicate the strong will for strengthening the role of ports especially during this time of sanctions.

And they are bringing results; as the head of PMO has announced that all port development projects are underway



with no halt.

Despite the sanctions and the difficulties resulted from them, there are still high traffics in the ports which show that the country's shipping and port activities are running well, Mohammad Rastad has said and underlined taking advantage of such potential to materialize economic objectives of the country.

Iraqi economic delegation to pay 3-day visit to Kermanshah

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — An economic delegation from Iraq's Babil Governorate will arrive in the western Iranian province of Kermanshah next Tuesday for a three-day visit.

According to the secretary of Kermanshah chamber of commerce Daryoush Panahi, the delegation is to pay several visits to the province's industrial units active in foodstuff production, agriculture, petrochemicals and etc.

They will also hold B2B meetings with Iranian businessmen and officials.

The visit is paid to increase mutual economic cooperation between the two provinces, he added.

Babil Governorate or Babylon Province is a governorate in central Iraq.

It has an area of 5,119 square kilometers, with an estimated population of 1,651,565 people in 2002.

The provincial capital is the city of Hillah, which lies opposite the ancient city of Babylon, on the Euphrates River.

Over 783,000 tons of non-oil commodities worth \$345 million were exported from the



major border crossings of the western Iranian province of Kermanshah during the first three months of the current fiscal (started on March 21), showing steady growth in the

province's exports, a senior official said.

Director General of Kermanshah Customs Administration Khalil Heidari said some 783,000 tons of goods worth \$345

million were exported from Kermanshah, Parvizkhan, Paveh and Khosravi border crossings, indicating an 8% and 15% growth in terms of tonnage and value, respectively, compared with the similar period of last year.

Kermanshah's producers offer their products in 36 foreign markets, with Iraq on top of the list.

Parvizkhan was the province's main transit gate through which some 337,000 tons of goods worth \$183 million were exported, which indicates a 99% jump in terms of value and 28% growth in terms of volume year on year.

Detergents, evaporative products, home appliances, tomato, tile, plastic bags, coolers and potato are among the main goods exported via the province's borders.

The province's total exports during last Iranian year stood at 5.896 million tons with a value of over \$2.907 billion, jumping 44% and 33% growth in terms of value and tonnage, respectively, compared to its previous year.

China may have a new way of boosting its economy

China's Central Bank has changed the way commercial lenders set interest rates for loans — a move expected to bring borrowing costs lower at a time when the Chinese economy needs a boost.

According to cnbc.com, growth in China is slowing down as its trade war with the U.S. looks set to intensify in the coming months.

Chinese authorities have used both monetary and fiscal measures to lift economic activity, but analysts say certain segments of the economy could use more help.

"This is a welcomed move in lowering the costs of borrowing especially for smaller businesses, and it comes at an important time as China's GDP growth is at risk of falling below 6% in 2020 as U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods are repeatedly ramped up," analysts from Singapore's United Overseas Bank wrote in a Monday note.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected China's growth to be at 6.2% in 2019 and 6.0% in 2020.

But those forecasts were made before the latest escalation in the U.S.-China friction, which is expected to lead to more tariffs being slapped on Chinese goods in September and December.

Unlike the U.S. Federal Reserve, China's Central Bank — the People's Bank of China — doesn't have a single primary

monetary policy tool.

Instead, the PBOC uses multiple methods to control money supply and interest rates in the world's second-largest economy.

■ Banks to protect profit margins

Many banks, in a bid to protect their profit margins, refused to price their loans much lower than the benchmark lending rate — which has not been adjusted since October 2015.

Given that the loan prime rate is charged to the best and least risky customers, it became the unofficial minimum interest rates on bank loans in China.

The PBOC has said the implicit lower bound of bank lending rates is an "important reason" why overall borrowing costs in China have not declined even though other interest rates more sensitive to market demand and supply have moved down.

Another tool the Chinese Central Bank uses to adjust monetary policy is the medium-term lending facility rate.

It is considered more aligned to supply-demand dynamics in China's money markets.

The one-year rate for the MLF last stood at around 3.3% — lower than the central bank's benchmark lending rate of 4.35%.

Linking the new loan prime rate to the medium-term lending facility rate is



expected to bring down the LPR, leading to a decline in overall borrowing costs.

On Tuesday, the first day of the new reforms, the new one-year loan prime rate was set at 4.25% — down from 4.31% previously; while the newly introduced five-year loan prime rate was fixed at 4.85% — below the five-year benchmark of 4.9%.

Beijing has for many years tried to change the way interest rates work in

its economy.

It wants to be more in line with the practices of central banks in major economies, which mainly adjust interest rates on short-term funds to influence borrowing costs in the broader economy.

China maintains a so-called command economy — or a centrally planned economy, where its central bank dictates where interest rates for bank loans and deposits should be.

Iran's nominal electricity generation capacity touches 85GW

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** – The nominal capacity of electricity generation at Iranian power plants has reached 84,795 megawatts [84.795 gigawatts (GW)], IRNA reported on Wednesday.

As reported, the capacity of renewable power plants (solar and wind), which stood at 219 megawatts (MW) in August 2015, has now increased to 750 MW, indicating a 512MW increase in the course of the mentioned timespan.

Iran's total power generation capacity stood at 80,000 MW in the past Iranian calendar year 1397 (March 2018-March 2019), up from the 78,484 MW of its preceding year.

According to a report by Tasnim news agency, the country's power generation capacity is set to reach 85,695 MW by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2020).

Currently, with a total generation capacity



of 25,083 MW (nearly 31 percent) combined cycle power plants account for the biggest share in the country's total power generation capacity followed by gas power plants generating about 30 percent.

The share of hydroelectric power plants is 19.87 percent while hydroelectric plants generate 14.8 percent of the country's total electricity, the share of dispersed generation units is 1.5 percent and finally the renewable power plants account only for 0.79 percent of Iran's total power generation capacity.

In early May, the energy ministry announced that the government plans to inaugurate 22 new power plant units with a total capacity of 3,933 MW in the current Iranian year along with upgrading and increasing the efficiency of existing power plants to add another 461 MW of new capacity.

62 power supply projects operational in Government Week

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** – Head of Tehran's Power Distribution Company said 62 power supply projects are going to be inaugurated in the city on the occasion of the Government Week (August 24-30).

"The projects include lighting of streets and public areas, repairing and optimizing the city's power grid and etc.," Haji Reza Teimouri said.

According to the official, in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), 2.95 trillion rials (about \$70.2 million) was allocated for implementing development projects including construction and optimization of electricity distribution networks, which was six percent more than the figure for its preceding year.

He mentioned the Energy Ministry's national smart metering program (known as FAHAM), noting that it will be also followed seriously by Tehran Power Distribution Company.

FAHAM is aiming to monitor the electricity consumption across the country, especially among the large-scale subscribers by replacing old electricity meters with new smart ones.

In early June, the portal of Iranian Energy Ministry (known as Paven) announced that 18,650 smart electricity meters have been installed across Tehran for large-scale electricity consumers.

Later in July, Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (known as TAVANIR) and the Iranian Electrical Power Equipment Manufacturing and Provision Company (SATKAB) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for installing five million smart electricity meters.

Based on this MOU, five million smart electricity meters will be installed across the country within the next two years, part of which are going to be installed in the capital city of Tehran.



New 100,000t SPM system installed in Siraf port

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** – Iran's Fajr Jam Gas Refinery has installed a new 100,000-ton single-point-mooring (SPM) system near Siraf Export Terminal in southern Bushehr province, Shana reported on Wednesday.

As reported, the new SPM was installed 1,200 meters off the coast and its loading and unloading capacity is 150 percent more than the previous one which was used in the same area.



With this new SPM installed and stabilized, loading of gas condensate from the Siraf Export Terminal is resumed after a period of suspension.

All the operations pertain to the installation and commissioning of the new SPM have been carried out by local experts, and it is expected for the future condensate loading operations to be carried out with greater confidence.

Following the installation of the new SPM, vessels with capacities up to 70,000

tons would be able to load condensate from Siraf Terminal.

Iran's Fajr Jam Company exports 6.7 million barrels of gas condensates every year via Siraf Terminal to East Asian countries including South Korea and Japan.

Condensate is pumped to the port by pipeline from Fajr Jam Refinery.

The terminal is equipped with four storage tanks each with a capacity of 40,000 cubic meters and can load 1,200 tons of condensates per hour.

Europe could power the entire world with onshore wind farms alone

By Carly Cassella

When it comes to harnessing renewable wind energy, the European Union is not even close to reaching its full potential, according to a new study.

If a wind turbine was placed on every suitable spot of land, research shows it could provide more than 100 times the wind energy currently produced on shore. Calculated at more than 11 million additional turbines, that would be enough to power the entire world between now and 2050.

"Obviously, we are not saying that we should install turbines in all the identified sites," says Benjamin Sovacool, an expert in energy policy at the University of Sussex.

"But the study does show the huge wind power potential right across Europe which needs to be harnessed if we're to avert a climate catastrophe."

Today, the EU is a leader in wind energy output, and together its onshore and offshore turbines make up nearly a third of the world's total wind capacity.

The European Commission has promised that by 2050, at least 100,000 more wind turbines will be either updated or added.

But the new findings push the potential ceiling much

higher, even when excluding offshore wind farms.

Going nation by nation, and using an advanced system of wind atlases, researchers sought to answer one critical question: How much wind power potential does Europe have?

Taking into account infrastructure, built up areas, and protected areas, the authors found suitable lands with favorable wind speeds in 46 percent of Europe's territory. That's almost 5 million square kilometers, and nearly 500 exajoules of power – about 70 more exajoules than the world will need in 2050.

■ The current wind technology

To be clear, this estimate is wide-ranging. The research did not look at site-specific limitations, public acceptance, or whether the land was privately owned; it only highlighted the areas suitable for current wind technology.

As such, the authors say it's just a guide for policy, not a blueprint for development.

Nevertheless, compared to previous estimates, this is one of the most detailed insights yet into Europe's future wind potential.

Using advanced GIS data at national and sub-national levels, the authors have blown other estimates out of the water.

In 2009, for instance, the European Environment Agency

calculated an onshore wind potential three times smaller.

Apart from improved resolution, such a huge discrepancy may have to do with different definitions of 'suitable land' or new technology. In the ten years since the earlier report was published, wind power capacity has tripled across the US as prices drop and wind turbine efficiency improves.

A different study, published just last month by German researchers, estimates that wind farms can only be built on roughly a quarter of Europe's land.

This is more similar to past estimates, but by taking new turbine technology into account, researchers have calculated a much greater wind energy output.

In the end, these studies are all hypothetical and they each come with their limitations. Yet despite the European Union's recent interest in wind power, it is clear that there is plenty more room for growth.

"Critics will no doubt argue that the naturally intermittent supply of wind makes onshore wind energy unsuitable to meet the global demand," says Peter Enevoldsen who researchers wind energy at Aarhus University.

"But even without accounting for developments in wind turbine technology in the upcoming decades, onshore wind power is the cheapest mature source of renewable energy."

(Source: sciencealert.com)

France's solar road is a complete failure

By Joel Hruska

Remember solar roads? Five years ago, the idea of building insanely expensive solar panels on the ground and driving pollution-spewing vehicles over them was all the rage. Scientists pointed out the obvious flaws.

A flat surface that can't tilt or move to capture sunlight doesn't hit very high-efficiency targets.

Driving pollution-spewing vehicles over the solar panels in question would inevitably hurt their ability to gather sunlight as pollution built up on the surface.

Putting solar panels on the ground and then driving over them is an excellent way to smash said solar panels to flinders. In short, the grand push for solar roadways left a lot of very smart people wondering why we didn't just put the same amount of money into building conventional solar panels and wiring them up in the normal fashion.

Naysayers, all of them. The campaigns to build various solar-powered roads took off. The Dutch, at least, saw reason in one regard and deployed them as part of a bike path rather than attempting to craft a workable system from running pollution-spewing vehicles over a surface that gathers energy from sunlight.

Now, some years after the first solar roads opened for business, they're... well, an abysmal failure. According to French newspaper Le Monde, the roadway-building effort failed in part because the builders didn't consider how robust the construction would actually need

to be. The "Wattway," as the French solar road installation is known, is disintegrating much more quickly than its builders anticipated.

This is a fairly common issue. One reason the U.S. highway system requires so much more maintenance than its builders ever anticipated is that the weight of the vehicles we've allowed to travel on the highways has increased so much.

Roadway damage rises as the fourth power of axle weight, which means an 18,000-pound truck does 3,000 times more damage to the pavement than a 2,000-pound car.

■ The vehicle weights

French vehicle weights are going to be different and farm tractors aren't going to weigh as much as a semi. But the point stands: These roads weren't built to the required standard, even though the manufacturer, Colas, promised that the resin would withstand the weight of 18-wheeler trucks.

According to this report, the proposed benefits of the Wattway (above, translation via Google) did not materialize.

The problems, however, go deeper than just vehicle weight.

Thunderstorms have damaged the road. Rotting leaves clogged it.

Pale splinters of resin have broken off the surface and the end of the road is now truncated. It's described as "pale with its ragged joints," with solar panels "that peel off the road," and splinters of enamel resin falling from the panels they were intended to protect.



Total power production has fallen every year the road was in service.

The roadway targeted 790kWh per day but managed just 409kWh/day in its first year of operation.

It fell sharply thereafter due to damage, producing 215kWh/day in 2018 and has slipped down to ~200kWh/day in 2019.

The French government invested a relatively small amount of money in the project (5 million euros), but the efficiency problems with the design were fully apparent before ground was broken.

"Our system is not mature for inter-urban traffic," Etienne Gaudin, Colas' chief executive of Wattway, told Le Monde.

The problem is not the system. The problem is the concept.

There is no known manufacturing method that would allow for the construction of cost-effective solar roads that can both withstand

the weight and strain of daily driving and deliver acceptably efficient power.

■ Improving efficiency of roads

Actions taken to improve the efficiency of a road for gathering energy — like tilting the roadbed to match the sun's travel across the sky and cleaning oil, dirt, and grime from the panels — would make it a less-effective road.

Creating a more effective road by using better protective coatings or cheaper manufacturing materials would make the road a less-effective solar panel.

Given that solar roads are already far less effective at producing energy than conventional solar installations, one wonders why we don't leave the roads for driving and optimize the power infrastructure for the specific job it's good at.

There are lots of great flavors that go together.

Chocolate and peanut butter. Salt and vinegar.

Butter and popcorn.

Ham and cheese. There are also a number of flavors that don't go well together at all, like steak and tetrachlorodibenzodioxin.

We submit that solar roads are much closer to the latter than the former.

The idea might not be completely without merit if evaluated in very sunny areas where people primarily bike or walk, but it's never going to match the efficiency of a conventional array.

Outside of specialized applications, it's time to turn the light off on this idea.

(Source: Extreme Tech)

Rouhani issues directive on supporting oil and gas industry's downstream sector

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** – President Hassan Rouhani has passed a directive on supporting oil industry's downstream sector to the oil ministry, Shana reported on Wednesday.

The bill which was passed in a Majlis public hearing on Monday aims to support the development of oil and gas condensate projects in the industry's downstream sector using public investment.



Based on this directive, the Oil Ministry is obliged to grant the following permits for units subject to this law when granting project approvals:

- 1 - License for exporting the final products.
- 2 - Authorization for supplying the units with crude oil as feedstock after the expiry of the unit's feedstock recess period.

The Oil Ministry is required to get the cabinet's approval on this directive's executive by-laws within two months.

Brent oil prices rise above \$60, buoyed by U.S. stock drawdown

Brent crude oil futures rose above \$60 a barrel on Wednesday after industry data showed a larger-than-expected drop in U.S. crude inventories, but ongoing worries about a possible global recession capped gains.

As per af.reuters.com, Brent crude had gained 33 cents, or 0.6%, to \$60.36 a barrel by 0654 GMT, after settling 0.5% higher on Tuesday.

U.S. crude was up 17 cents, or 0.3%, at \$56.30 a barrel.

U.S. crude oil stocks fell by 3.5 million barrels in the week to August 16, data from industry group the American Petroleum Institute (API) showed on Tuesday. Analysts polled by Reuters had expected a fall of 1.9 million barrels.

"Crude prices should see support from a bullish API stockpile report that could signal the largest Cushing draw since February 2018, if the EIA validates it," said Edward Moya, senior market analyst at OANDA in New York.

"With Canadian heavy crude restrictions being extended, we should see U.S. refiners... struggle to fill the void from lowered shipments from Mexico and Venezuela," Moya said, referring to the Canadian province of Alberta extending mandatory curtailments on crude production by an extra year.

Oil prices were also supported by data showing lower exports in June from Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter.

Saudi Arabia plans to keep its crude exports below 7 million barrels per day (bpd) in August and September despite strong demand from customers, to bring the market back to balance, a Saudi oil official told Reuters earlier this month.

But uncertainty over the global economic outlook amid the U.S.-China trade war capped gains in the oil markets.

The "trade-related tug of war in the oil market will probably extend until we get some semblance of clarity from the next round of U.S.-China trade discussion," Stephen Innes, managing partner, VM Markets, said in a note.

Traders are also waiting for this week's annual U.S. central bank seminar at Jackson Hole, where comments from Federal Reserve Chief Jerome Powell will be in focus.

The "biggest risk to crude prices is if Powell disappoints at Jackson Hole and doesn't signal more easing will be coming," said OANDA's Moya.

Equatorial Guinea to build West Africa's first LNG storage and regasification plant

Equatorial Guinea is set to construct the first liquefied natural gas (LNG) storage and regasification plant in West Africa, advancing efforts to monetize gas resources through the creation of a domestic gas-to-power infrastructure.

According to africaoilandpower.com, located at the Port of Akonikien on the country's mainland, the plant will enable the transportation and storage of LNG from the EG LNG plant at the Punta Europa Gas Complex on Bioko Island, to Akonikien on the southern border of the mainland.

It will then be fed into the regasification plant to be distributed to smaller-scale power plants and LNG power stations throughout the country, as well as exported to neighboring countries.

The Akonikien project is the first gas-to-power development in Equatorial Guinea's LNG2Africa initiative.

Launched by the Ministry of Mines and Hydrocarbons in 2018, the initiative seeks to facilitate the production and trade of LNG through the creation of a domestic gas-to-power infrastructure and intra-African LNG industry.

Spearheaded by local construction and engineering firm Elite Construcciones, the plant will have a storage capacity of 14,000 cubic meters with 12 bullet tanks.

The tanks are currently the largest factory-built cryogenic bullet tanks in the world with a capacity of 1,228 cubic meters and dimensions of 31 meters by 9.3 meters by 8.8 meters.

Built by American manufacturer Corban Energy Group, each tank is estimated to require 12 hours to complete the 12,000-meter distance from the port to the new plant.

Elite Construcciones is also installing a truck loading station and 12 kilometers of 10-inch gas and diesel pipelines.

Other major suppliers include pipe supplier PFF Group, who manufactured 12,400 meters of pipes, shipping agents D&B Shipping Ltd.

who facilitated the shipment of 22 40-foot open-top containers, and Meakin Logistics UK.

Elite Construcciones also worked closely with German companies Noorwerk and ESC on the design and construction of the plant.

Security ties at risk in Seoul-Tokyo trade row

ASIATIMES—With Japan and South Korea locked in a bitter dispute over export controls, the collateral damage may extend beyond the economic space: It could also impact a bilateral intelligence-sharing pact, the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA).

That pact – the only official tie linking the militaries of the two Northeast Asian democracies, which have separate bilateral alliances with the United States – is set to expire this Saturday, August 24.

From the perspective of US-led security efforts in Northeast Asia, it is critical that, regardless of the emotive national sentiments currently roiling South Korea, the agreement be renewed.

The risk to GSOMIA originates not in the security field, but in a bilateral export-control dispute that has dragged Seoul-Tokyo ties to a new low.

This month, Tokyo removed South Korea from its so-called “white list” of preferential export destinations – ostensibly for having inadequate export controls on a range of materials.

That move followed a July action to emplace export restrictions on three key chemicals that are essential to South Korea’s high-tech sector. Seoul has since retaliated by removing Japan from its own “white list.”

Bilateral trust remarkably deteriorated after Seoul’s Moon Jae-in administration, citing negative public sentiment, overturned a bilateral 2015 “comfort women” agreement. Designed to be a final and irreversible resolution to that prickly issue, the agreement had been signed between the former Park Geun-hye administration in Seoul and the Shinzo Abe administration in Tokyo. In addition to an apology from Abe, Japan offered compensation of \$8 million to Korean comfort women.



Then, last year, South Korea’s Supreme Court ruled that Japanese companies Nippon Steel Corporation and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries had to compensate victims of wartime forced labor. Tokyo’s position was that the ruling violated the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea. As part of the 1965 agreement, Japan provided aid and loans to resolve compensation issues and normalize relations with South Korea.

After last year’s court ruling, Tokyo demanded third-party arbitration, per the 1965 treaty. Seoul rejected that, saying the judiciary’s decision is complete and final.

A senior member of Japan’s foreign ministry commented that such refusal is a violation of an international treaty and could prompt a response from Tokyo. More recently, the court has authorized the authorities to seize assets of the defendants in Korea.

Despite this preamble, Tokyo’s recent imposition of export controls caught Seoul by surprise. Tokyo accused Seoul of having only included missile- and weapons-of-mass-destruction-related dual usages in its export control procedures, while ignoring conventional-weapons-related dual usages. Seoul argued back that both parties had agreed on multi-dimensional cooperation, and noted its compliance with relevant international regimes, such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Australia Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Wassenaar Arrangement. In the wake of these developments, various figures in South Korea have advocated a withdrawal from GSOMIA, which is set to either be renewed or go defunct on Saturday.

Signed on November 23, 2016, GSOMIA is seen as vital for Japan and South Korea to jointly cope with North Korea’s weapons of mass destruction programs. Amid a series of nuclear and missile tests by North Korea, the Obama administration urged South Korea to sign the GSOMIA.

The agreement was devised as part of Obama’s “Pivot to Asia” and represented US strategic interests in East Asia, as it sought to contain North Korea and China.

The idea of the two countries sharing military intelligence had originally been proposed by South Korea in the late 1980s, when Seoul’s primary concern was its lack of satellite intelligence. South Korea’s military has acquired substantial capability in signal, imagery and voice intelligence over the past few years, but its area of operation is restricted to the south of the military demarcation line (the actual borderline that runs through the 4-km wide Demilitarized Zone).

Given recent advances in Pyongyang’s missiles and nuke weapons, Seoul, which has no military satellites, can only garner so much intelligence.

Now, Seoul’s threat to stop sharing military information with Japan raises a potential rift in the Japan-South Korea-US relationship. Seoul has every reason to cooperate with Tokyo because Japan’s Self-Defense Force (SDF) already operates three to four intelligence satellites that monitor the northern half of the Korean Peninsula. Moreover, Japan is planning to increase the number of satellites by up to 12 in the coming years.

In addition, the Japanese SDF possess world-class anti-submarine capabilities.

These are critical now that North Korea is developing a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) program.

Lastly, South Korea’s grand strategy is predicated upon its alliance with the United States – which includes Japan’s security in its overall East Asia policy.

As a result, South Korean policy advisers for national security have so far kept GSOMIA intact. And it is not just about weaponry. Seoul and Tokyo have also shared information on North Korea’s sanctions-busting activities with regard to ship-to-ship transfers of oil, coal and banned luxury goods.

All this makes GSOMIA a solid basis for security cooperation in interdicting North Korea’s military and illicit trade operations in the region.

Despite the ongoing export controls dispute, as recently as August 6 South Korea and Japan shared military information on North Korea’s short-range ballistic missile test (SRBM). ➔

By Li Qingqing

GLOBALTIMES – The US Department of Commerce on Monday (US time) announced that it had added 46 additional subsidiaries of Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei to its so-called Entity List. More than 100 Huawei entities have been covered by the restrictions since May.

This is an important US move to comprehensively block Huawei.

It also reflects a clear message of the US strategy: The US wants to launch a technological cold war against China. And the war appears to have started.

Realistic or not, the US has already adopted the strategy to completely decouple with China in high technology, and to force the world to decouple from China in the field. To some US elites, Huawei is not a Chinese company anymore, nor do they care much about whether Huawei’s technology is advanced and practical. In their view, Huawei has become a symbol and a representative: Whoever accepts Huawei stands together with China, and whoever shuts Huawei out chooses the US side.

The US is using a company to set the line, and this is unprecedented and ridiculous.

When facing US suppression, China should cast aside its illusions and get prepared. China should keep walking on the path of independent technological innovation. For example, Huawei’s self-developed Harmony operating system is a good start for technological innovation.

This is an alternative to Google’s Android operating system, and more importantly, it will enable China to have a greater say in technology worldwide. Huawei, as well as other Chinese high-tech enterprises, needs to have a plan B.

The US pressure should never affect China’s reform and opening-up. Under such pressure, China will open up even wider. We always welcome countries and enterprises willing to cooperate with us, including cooperation and opening-up in technology and markets.

China provides the world with its technology, which has the highest possible quality and the lowest possible price.

Unlike rising unilateralism in the US, China has always believed that the world is heading toward multipolarism.

Although the process may be full of twists and turns, China’s pace will never be stopped by any external force.

Washington should understand that its moves will hurt US interests as well. The US hardly has the ability to form a brand-new high-tech system by itself.

The situation is completely different from what it was during the Cold War years. Complete decoupling from China will seriously affect and restrain the US own high-tech development.

It is unlikely that other countries’ high technology will completely follow the US and help the US. After all, many of today’s high-tech breakthroughs do not happen in the US.

Indeed, Washington can impose an export restriction on Huawei. But Washington can never stop the trend of advancement in global technology. By imposing sanctions



The US Department of Commerce on Monday (US time) announced that it had added 46 additional subsidiaries of Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei to its so-called Entity List. More than 100 Huawei entities have been covered by the restrictions since May.

on Chinese enterprises, the US will only isolate itself and lag behind others. Since China’s technology has already become indispensable in the world, other countries will make their own right choice.

Is the sun setting on the U.S.-Japan alliance?

The US plans to send Vice President Mike Pence to Japan in October to attend the coronation of Japanese Emperor Naruhito, according to media reports. Pence is likely to meet Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during the tour to reaffirm the US-Japan alliance.

US President Donald Trump administration’s high-ranking officials frequently reaffirming the importance of the alliance shows that relations between Washington and Tokyo are floundering.

In 1951, representatives from the two governments signed the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between the United States and Japan in San Francisco, giving birth to their alliance.

Japan and the US were enemies during the WWII. Neither of them thought they could become allies later. Even more unexpectedly, their alliance lasts until today.

Since the formation of their alliance more than six decades ago, there have been constant disputes within the relationship, including a trade war and the issue of US

military bases in Japan.

However, the alliance has not suffered much, and the risks have been controllable.

Meanwhile, the significance of their alliance has increased.

After the WWII, the purpose of their relationship was to contain the Soviet Union. After the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, Japan and the US drifted apart for a brief period, but their ties were strengthened soon afterward.

In the two decades after the Cold War, the US-Japan alliance experienced three significant adjustments.

It went from a defense-oriented relationship to one that deals with the situation in areas surrounding Japan, then shifted focus to supposedly maintaining global peace and security.

Japan’s status has risen within the alliance, and the mutual trust between the two has also deepened.

Under such circumstances, the Abe administration has been proactively implementing the US-initiated rebalance to Asia-Pacific strategy and Indo-Pacific Strategy.

As the US strength is believed to be declining, it is anticipated that Japan’s status in the alliance will continue to rise.

But Japan and US relations span an unequal friendship.

Sanctions undermine 1947 U.S. treaty with UN

TEHRAN (FNA)— When Yassir Arafat was denied a US visa to visit New York to address the United Nations back in 1988, the General Assembly defied the United States by temporarily moving the UN’s highest policy making body to Geneva providing a less-hostile political environment for the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Arafat, who first addressed the UN in 1974, took a swipe at Washington when he prefaced his statement by saying “it never occurred to me that my second meeting with this honourable Assembly, since 1974, would take place in the hospitable city of Geneva”.

The Trump administration, which has had an ongoing battle with Iran, has imposed a rash of political and economic sanctions on Iranian Foreign Minister Javid Zarif – even as Washington, paradoxically, proclaims that the Iranian problem can be resolved only diplomatically while, at the same time, it keeps the negotiator-in-chief away from the US.

The sanctions on Zarif will also prevent him from being a member of the Iranian delegation – and also from addressing the six high-level summit meetings scheduled for late September.

If Zarif is denied a visa, as expected, it will be a violation of the 1947 UN-US headquarters agreement under which Washington was expected to facilitate the smooth functioning of the world body.

While the PLO was not a full-fledged UN member state, Iran is a founding member of the world body.

The Trump administration has already reneged or abandoned several international agreements, including the 2015 Paris Climate Change agreement, the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal, and most recently the landmark 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty with Russia which helped seal the end of the Cold War.

The Trump administration’s sanctions on Zarif at the end of July have dealt yet another blow to diplomacy and the settlement of dangerous disputes.

There is a strong possibility that the US will violate

its responsibilities as UN host country since the travel sanctions will block Zarif from attending UN functions, including the UN General Assembly opening session in late September (as well as subsequent sessions later on).

Such a move would be in breach of the US-UN Headquarters Agreement of 1947.

Traditionally, the opening session brings high-level speakers from around the world.

It is important not only as a moment for high-profile speeches, but also as a time for discussions and negotiations among world officials.

There are three deep problems on the American side. First, they unilaterally pulled out of a multilaterally-negotiated nuclear deal with Iran (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA) unanimously endorsed by the UN Security Council.

The UNSC further called on all states to help implement the deal, to lift sanctions, and to assist Iran’s economic development.

Therefore, by re-imposing unilateral sanctions, it is the US that is in material breach of the agreement and in violation of UNSC demands.

Second, the sanctions on Zarif contravene their stated position of a solution through diplomacy.

You cannot engage in any diplomacy by placing a country’s foreign minister under sanctions.

The third is the General Assembly attendance implication.

On this, it would violate the 1947 HQ agreement.

But in the hierarchy of seriousness, violating the JCPOA is actually more serious and shows the complete toothlessness of the UN and UNSC to hold to account any of the P5 (the 5 permanent members of the Security Council, namely the US, UK, France Russia and China).

The Trump administration is keen to put further pressure on Iran and to further collapse the much-discussed nuclear deal, signed after years of delicate negotiations in 2015.

Apart from Israel and Saudi Arabia, there is little

Since Trump took office in 2017, a series of US moves and diplomatic policies have hurt US-Japan ties.

The Trump administration has withdrawn from a number of international organizations. This has made Japan feel that the US is no longer reliable.

After Trump was sworn in, he pulled the country out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Later, the US withdrew from the 2015 Paris Agreement, UNESCO, the UN Human Rights Council, Iran nuclear deal, the Universal Postal Union, and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

Such behavior reflects the “America First” policy and damages trust among its allies, especially Japan.

According to a joint survey by the Yomiuri Shimbun and the US survey firm Gallup, which was released on December 2018, 30 percent of Japanese respondents said they trusted the US, the lowest figure since 2000. Meanwhile, 39 percent of Japanese respondents said Japan-US relations were “good” or “very good,” a 17 percent decrease from 2017. Japanese mistrust for the US is rising, and doubts have emerged over the US role within the alliance – if Japan suffers a military attack, would the Trump administration, which has been promoting “America First,” step up and offer help?

On the other hand, Trump’s statements on the Japan-US trade deficit and their security treaty have caused concerns within Japan over whether their alliance can remain stable. During Trump’s presidential campaign, he repeatedly expressed discontent with the trade deficit.

Washington will likely pile more pressure on Tokyo during trade talks. Trump has directly asked Abe to buy farm products worth a “huge amount,” Kyodo news agency reported on August 13.

To deal with the trade deficit, the Abe administration has already purchased significant numbers of US-made jet fighters and weapons.

Now, the US is forcing Japan to purchase its agriculture products, which shows that the US is bullying its Asian ally.

Meanwhile, it was recently reported that Trump is considering scrapping the security treaty with Japan because he feels it is unfair to the US.

Although the US government denied the news, the reports have cast a shadow on the alliance.

The US-Japan alliance is no longer as solid as what others have imagined. Although the two will not break up in the near future, whether they can do away with wobbly ties will influence the development of their alliance.

Japan and the US may again drift apart just as they did after the Cold War.

This time, the estrangement won’t come about because the two lack a common enemy, but because the US has participated less in global affairs and its moves have hurt international order.

That being said, the US-Japan alliance lacks significance to exist.

The visit by Pence and other high-ranking US officials may help pacify Japan, but that’s it.

Consolidating the Japan-US alliance will take time and efforts.



enthusiasm internationally for closing the diplomatic doors to this important agreement.

Governments world-wide also strongly oppose the Trump administration’s strong-arm tactics and the US disregard for an open UN, where all member states are able to speak.

This would not be the only time that the US has refused entry to high-level foreign officials, but the push-back may now be especially strong.

In light of the support for the nuclear deal in Europe, Washington could anticipate intense opposition to US high-handedness.

Trump's actions against Ilhan Omar

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — Donald Trump's actions against Muslim representatives of the US Congress, as ordered by the Zionist regime and the AIPAC lobby, illustrate how the devils rule the White House. The same political pressure exerted by Trump and Netanyahu on Ilhan Omar and other Muslims illustrates this fact. The racism of U.S. President Donald Trump has caused outrage and discontent among its citizens. However, it looks like Trump can't hide his racist ideas! Here is a review of some of Trump's actions against Muslim congressmen:

Barring Members Of Congress From Israel-Palestine As Mitchell Plitnick wrote in LOBELOG, In a sudden reversal, the Israeli government decided on Thursday to bar two members of Congress—Reps. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) and Ilhan Omar (D-MN)—from entering Israel. This means that they also cannot enter the West Bank, which was where they intended to spend bulk of their time in Israel-Palestine. After announcing the ban on the two congresswomen, Israel said that Tlaib could visit her family in the West Bank if she agreed “not to participate in any BDS activities.”

The decision to bar entry to the congresswomen met with widespread condemnation in the United States, including by groups that normally march in lockstep with Israel. AIPAC, for example, said they disagree with Tlaib and Omar, of course, but “We also believe every member of Congress should be able to visit and experience our democratic ally Israel firsthand.” The American Jewish Committee said that “AJC believes that, out of two less-than-ideal options, neither of which was risk-free, Israel did not choose wisely by reversing its original decision [to allow Tlaib and Omar in].”

These were typical reactions from the center-right of the pro-Israel community in the U.S. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), one of the most devoted Israel supporters in Congress, typified much of the congressional response, saying “No democratic society should fear an open debate. Many strong supporters of Israel will be deeply disappointed in this decision, which the Israeli government should reverse.”

Steny Hoyer (D-MD), the House Majority Leader who just returned from leading a congressional delegation of dozens of members to Israel and who is as lock-step a pro-Israel voice as any Democrat, said, “The decision of the Israeli government to deny entry to Israel by two Members of Congress is outrageous, regardless of their itinerary or their views. This action is contrary to the statement and assurances to me by Israel's ambassador to the United States that ‘out of respect for the U.S. Congress and the great alliance between Israel and America, we would not deny entry to any Member of Congress into Israel.’ That representation was not true.”

What was so interesting about these responses, beyond the unusual tone of rebuke for Israel, is the seemingly deliberate decision not to blame President Donald Trump. After all, Israel had made it quite clear that they intended to admit Tlaib and Omar, and then reversed its decision quickly after a tweet from Trump, which read: “It would show great weakness if Israel allowed Rep. Omar and Rep. Tlaib to visit. They hate Israel and all Jewish people, and there is nothing that can be said or done to change their minds.”

The timing could not have been coincidental. It doesn't necessarily mean that Israel reversed itself at Trump's behest, but the president clearly influenced the decision to some degree. The proximity of the tweet to the Israeli reversal renders any other conclusion unlikely.

One would think that Democrats would say something about this. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi mentioned Trump's insults to the congresswomen, but did not tie his words to the Israeli reversal. But for the most part, Israel was the target, not Trump.

Later Thursday, an explanation surfaced, when Israeli ambassador to the United States Ron Dermer made his own statement about the reversal. Just last month, Dermer stated that “Out of respect for the U.S. Congress and the great alliance between Israel and America, we would not deny entry to any member of Congress into Israel.” Clearly, this decision left him with considerable egg on his face. Now, Dermer said that “We were not pressured by the Trump administration to do this and this is a sovereign decision that Israel has to make.”

That was an obvious lie. Trump's language, accusing Israel of weakness for letting Tlaib and Omar in, made his wishes starkly clear and it's no secret that Trump and some Democrats were talking with Netanyahu and Dermer in the days leading up to the reversal. In the end, the president got what he wanted. The Democrats and the center-right Jewish groups don't want to get into a public battle against both Trump and Netanyahu at the same time.

Dermer's stated reasons for the reversal don't pass the smell test. According to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), Dermer said their “itinerary listed the destination as Palestine, not Israel, and included no meetings with Israeli officials.” That's true, but it also included no meetings with Palestinian officials either. The sole exception would have been Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, who facilitated the trip.

JTA's report continued, “Dermer added that the congresswomen planned to meet with organizations promoting BDS, one of whose leaders has ties with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which is designated by the U.S. as a terror group. ‘The leadership of our country believes that this visit was designed solely with the intention of promoting BDS and they were gonna use this visit as platform to BDS activities,’ the ambassador said.”

That's just absurd. To start with, the intent of Tlaib's and Omar's visit was clear from the start, so all of this was already known to the Israeli gov-



ernment. They were planning to meet with civil society leaders and representatives of Palestinian groups. Virtually all such groups and individuals support BDS—the very basis of the BDS movement is that it's founded on a call from the full spectrum of Palestinian civil society. There is no evidence at all that the congresswomen were planning any “activities” of protest of any sort in their packed itinerary. The point about a leader with “ties to the PFLP” is probably a reference to Shawan Jabarin, the executive director of the most prominent Palestinian human rights organization, al-Haq. Jabarin did belong to a student group tied to the PFLP in the 1980s and was convicted in 1985 for recruiting for them, but that's the extent of the substantiated charges against him. He had a travel ban imposed on him in 2006, with the court claiming he was still active with the PFLP, based on secret evidence that the court forbade Jabarin and his lawyers to see, for alleged “security reasons.”

There's also some domestic Israeli politics in play here. Netanyahu wants to curry favor with Trump, especially now, when he is surely hoping that he can get another of Trump's famous gifts—as he got when Trump cut off almost all aid to the Palestinians, moved the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and recognized the Golan Heights as Israeli territory—before the Israeli election in mid-September. But by itself, barring Tlaib and Omar is not that big a deal for him, as they are far less “notorious” in Israel than they are among Republicans and the “pro-Israel” groups in the United States.

But Interior Minister Aryeh Deri had his own reasons to bar Tlaib and Omar. According to the anti-BDS law, it is Deri who technically has the authority to decide whether a foreign citizen who supports BDS can or cannot enter Israel. In reality, of course, given the ramifications of the decision especially in a case like this, Netanyahu decides. Still, Deri's voice is an important one in this decision.

It is probably no coincidence that on the same day Tlaib and Omar were barred, the Israeli attorney general received a recommendation that Deri be indicted on charges of corruption. Although the AG is not going to decide on whether to indict him until after the election, Deri—who has already served time in prison for corruption and came back from that to resume his position at the head of the Shas party—surely wanted to draw attention away from a public scandal that so resembled his past crimes. Moreover, Shas is consistently polling at the bottom of right wing parties and, while the polls don't show it to be in danger of failing to qualify for the next Knesset, Deri can certainly use a bump to make sure that the party has a little more breathing room.

The combination of Deri in Israel and Trump in Washington is probably what led Netanyahu to change his mind, but it was Trump who really wanted this. It may be an instance where he should be careful what he wishes for.

Soon after Israel reversed its decision, Trump tweeted, “Representatives Omar and Tlaib are the face of the Democrat Party, and they HATE Israel!” If it wasn't clear enough before, Trump, with his usual subtlety, informs us all that this is another part of his project to demonize “The Squad,” and to paint them as both anti-Israel and as representative of the entire Democratic party. It is this notion that motivated Trump to press Netanyahu to bar entry to the two congresswomen.

But even the Likud Party and its supporters understand that destroying what remains of Israel's support in the Democratic party—support that is far from as iron-clad as it once was but is still considerable—does not serve their interest. Netanyahu and Dermer worked for years to make Israel a more Republican issue to diminish the pressure on the Jewish state to make concessions to the Palestinians. But they never wanted to turn the entire party against Israel, and still

don't. They understand that increasing numbers of Democratic voters are growing uncomfortable with Israel's brazen defiance of international law and cruel violations of Palestinian human rights. They cannot afford to have the so-called “moderates” who are more open to pro-Israel lobbying and pro-Israel campaign contributions lose their patience with them as well.

Beyond that, even Republicans had to object to this move. Marco Rubio tweeted, “Denying them entry into Israel is a mistake. Being blocked is what they really hoped for all along in order to bolster their attacks against the Jewish state.” It is simply unacceptable for an ally—especially one that gets more foreign aid and diplomatic support than any other—to bar members of the U.S. Congress.

Trump, of course, cares about none of this. He has decided that his strategy will be to make “The Squad”—and especially its two Muslim members, Tlaib and Omar—the face of the Democratic party and ride what he expects to be a renewed wave of hate and bigotry to his second term in office. Ultimately, that's why he pressed Netanyahu on this, and that's why, despite all these objections, Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar will be barred from entering Israel and the Palestinian territories it occupies.

Israel barred Democratic Reps. Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib from entering the occupied palestin as part of a landmark visit, in a move that quickly set off a political firestorm in Washington. Omar and Tlaib — the first two Muslim women in Congress — were slated to arrive this weekend, but President Donald Trump had lobbied Israeli leaders to block them from entering the country and again lashed out at the pair.

As politico reported, Omar hit back, saying, “Trump's Muslim ban is what Israel is implementing, this time against two duly elected members of Congress.”

“The irony of the ‘only democracy’ in the Middle East making such a decision is that it is both an insult to democratic values and a chilling response to a visit by government officials from an allied nation,” the Minnesota Democrat added in an afternoon statement.

The controversial decision by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came despite pleas from top lawmakers in both parties to allow the delegation to make its trip. Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) denounced the decision, saying she was “deeply saddened” by the move after the Israeli ambassador announced last month that the two lawmakers would be allowed to visit.

“Israel's denial of entry to Congresswomen Tlaib and Omar is a sign of weakness, and beneath the dignity of the great State of Israel,” Pelosi said in a statement.

Netanyahu defended his decision, saying he changed his mind after learning more details of their trip earlier this week.

“Congresswomen Tlaib and Omar are leading activists in promoting the legislation of boycotts against Israel in the American Congress,” Netanyahu said a statement. “Only a few days ago, we received their itinerary for their visit in Israel, which revealed that they planned a visit whose sole objective is to strengthen the boycott against us and deny Israel's legitimacy.”

Netanyahu did say that a “humanitarian request” by Tlaib to visit her relatives in the West Bank would be accepted “on the condition that she pledges not to promote boycotts against Israel during her visit.”

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), who led a delegation of dozens of House Democrats to Israel earlier this month, had repeatedly asked Netanyahu and other Israeli leaders to allow the freshman lawmakers to enter the country, only to be rejected.

Hoyer and other pro-Israel Democrats, like Nita Lowey of New York, Brad Schneider of Illinois, Ted Deutch of Florida and Josh Gottheimer of New Jersey, also personally lobbied Ron Dermer, Israel's ambassador to the U.S., to allow the visit. Dermer stated several weeks ago that Israel would let the trip go ahead.

U.S. interference in Hong Kong doomed to fail

By Tian Feilong

TEHRAN — The ongoing illegal protests in Hong Kong have challenged the bottom line of the “one country, two systems” principle, harmed the city's rule of law, business environment, international financial center status, and the city's ties with the mainland.



However, some people are trying to ratchet up the pressure to force Hong Kong police to give up protecting the rule of law and Hongkongsers.

For example, US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Republican Senator Marco Rubio have constantly voiced their support for the Hong Kong protesters, tried to interfere with China's domestic affairs. On June 10, the US State Department even threatened to revoke Hong Kong's separate customs territory status. It is such interference that is the source of chaos in Hong Kong.

US politicians have suspected the legitimacy of the Hong Kong police's actions. As always, they have applied double standards. Compared with the police forces in New York and London during the Occupy Wall Street and Occupy London movements in 2011, Hong Kong police have used minimal force. Their response was guided by law and aimed at protecting the people.

The violence by protesters cannot be justified on legal grounds. US politicians have been talking through their hats to meet their agenda and are completely ignorant of the law. They avoid discussing the force that US police have used in previous protests and they know nothing about the Basic Law and the Public Order Ordinance of Hong Kong.

Such interference has not only been limited to rhetoric. The US has been trying to trigger a color revolution in Hong Kong. The interference is systematic.

First, the US has been trying to replace international law with its domestic laws, such as the Hong Kong Policy Act that the US enacted in 1992, in an attempt to interfere with Hong Kong.

Second, the US has been exporting its values and ideology to the city, infiltrating Hong Kong's general education, media system, elite networks, and young people's spirit. Third, the US has been training and helping key members of Hong Kong's social movement.

Fourth, the US has been interacting with activists who support Hong Kong independence, Taiwan independence, Tibet independence, and Xinjiang independence to form an anti-China front.

Fifth, the US has been attacking the authority and popularity of the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), so as to foster populism and paralyze Hong Kong's rule of law. Continued interference from the US has harmed Hong Kong society and young people's mental state.

Many young people do not have a clear understanding of Hong Kong's politics and law and tend to misread social problems and their own condition. Such a phenomenon is rooted in how the US misleads others on the idea of democracy.

The US has been abusing its soft democratic power and global influence while creating turmoil in many countries and regions. Now, it is trying to mess up Hong Kong, promote a color revolution, and sabotage China's sovereignty and development interests.

However, such political interference is doomed to fail. A color revolution can never succeed in Hong Kong. The city is only a special administrative region of China. It has no sovereignty or any condition to be independent. China has maintained its sovereignty under the “one country, two systems” principle. The recent chaos could weigh down China's national development and rejuvenation, but it will never end the “one country, two systems” principle.

Security ties at risk in Seoul-Tokyo trade row

6 → Seoul's threat to cease sharing military information with Japan raises a potential rift in the Japan-South Korea-US relationship. It appears that Seoul's presidential office is using possible withdrawal from GSOMIA as a bargaining tool against Japan. Kim Seong-jo, Moon's chief of staff for policy, in a radio broadcast spoke of games of chance when he mentioned the policy options at the disposal of Korea and Japan in the dispute — an apparent reference to game theory and its related risks. However, Korea's options in intelligence gathering are limited, and Seoul's defense ministry may not be on the same page as the presidential office. In this sense, for Seoul to abandon the military information sharing agreement would be a case of “cutting off the nose to spite the face.”

It would also have wider ramifications. Abandoning GSOMIA would add security risk to ongoing bilateral economic discordance, and cleave a potential rift in the Japan-South Korea-US relationship. Although there is no official trilateral alliance linking the three parties, from a security perspective, the Japan-South Korea-US partnership is the cornerstone of US-led multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia. Using GSOMIA as leverage in a trade dispute will not only damage Korea-Japan relations, but also risk a deterioration in trilateral defense efforts.

Colonial-era history is undeniable and is an indivisible part of South Korea's national integrity. However, related highly emotive issues are now impacting national policy far beyond the history classroom. Amid North Korea's violations of UN sanctions and ongoing negotiations on its nuclear arms, national sentiment related to this harsh past should not take the lead in policy direction. To preserve regional and state security, Seoul must decouple security and economy when it comes to policy toward Japan. Furthermore, it must communicate with Tokyo at the working and senior official levels to avoid future disputes. Lastly, South Korea must be informed by both morality and strategy as it conforms to international norms.

Donald Trump's actions against Muslim representatives of the US Congress, as ordered by the Zionist regime and the AIPAC lobby, illustrate how the devils rule the White House. The same political pressure exerted by Trump and Netanyahu on Ilhan Omar and other Muslims illustrates this fact.

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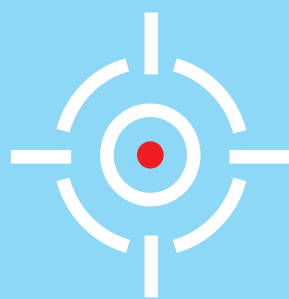
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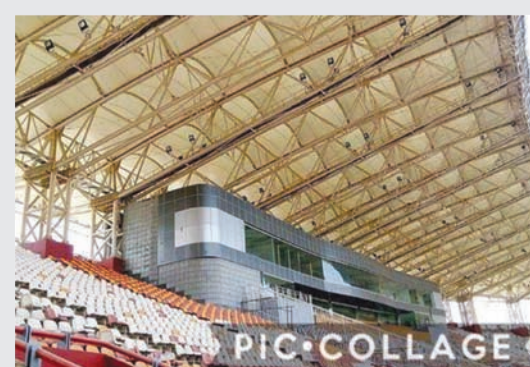
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Space telescope offers rare glimpse of Earth-sized rocky exoplanet

Direct observations from a NASA space telescope have for the first time revealed the atmospheric void of a rocky, Earth-sized world beyond our own solar system orbiting the most common type of star in the galaxy, according to a study released on Monday.

The research, published in the scientific journal *Nature*, also shows the distant planet's surface is likely to resemble the barren exterior of the Earth's moon or Mercury, possibly covered in dark volcanic rock.

The planet lies about 48.6 light years from Earth and is one of more than 4,000 so-called exoplanets identified over the past two decades circling distant stars in our home galaxy, the Milky Way.

Known to astronomers as LHS 3844b, this exoplanet about 1.3 times the size of Earth is locked in a tight orbit - one revolution every 11 hours - around a small, relatively cool star called a red dwarf, the most prevalent and long-lived type of star in the galaxy.

The planet's lack of atmosphere is probably due to intense radiation from its parent red dwarf, which, though dim by stellar standards, also emits high levels of ultraviolet light, the study says.

The study will likely add to a debate among



astronomers about whether the search for life-sustaining conditions beyond our solar system should focus on exoplanets around red dwarfs - accounting for 75% of all stars in the Milky Way - or less common, larger, hotter stars more like our own sun.

The principal finding is that it probably possesses little if any atmosphere - a conclusion reached by measuring the temperature difference between the side of the planet perpetually facing its star, and the cooler, dark side facing away from it.

A negligible amount of heat carried between the two sides indicates a lack of winds that would otherwise be present to transfer warmth around the planet.

"The temperature contrast on this planet is about as big as it can possibly be," said researcher Laura Kreidberg of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is lead author of the study.

Similar analysis previously was used to determine that another exoplanet, 55 Cancri e, about twice as big as Earth and believed to be half-covered in molten lava, likely possesses an atmosphere thicker than Earth's. This exoplanet, unlike LHS 3844b, orbits a sun-like star.

The planet in the latest study was detected last year by NASA's newly launched Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite, an orbiting telescope that pinpoints distant worlds by spotting periodic, dips in the light observed from their parent stars when an object passes in front of them.

But it was follow-up observations from another orbiting instrument, the Spitzer Space Telescope, which can detect infrared light directly from an exoplanet, that provided new insights about its features.

(Source: Reuters)

Black hole holograms

A research team from Osaka University, Nihon University and Chuo University has proposed a novel theoretical framework whose experiment could be performed in a laboratory to better understand the physics of black holes. This project can shed light on the fundamental laws that govern the cosmos on both unimaginably small and vastly large scales.

Recently, the world was transfixed when the first ever images of a black hole were released by the Event Horizon Telescope. Or, to be more precise, the pictures showed the bright circle, called an Einstein ring, made by the light that just barely escaped the grasp of the black hole's immense gravity. This ring of light was due to fact that, according to the theory of general relativity, the fabric of spacetime itself becomes so contorted by the mass of the black hole that it acts like a huge lens.

Unfortunately, our understanding of black holes remains incomplete, because the theory of general relativity -- which is used to describe the laws of nature at the scale of stars and galaxies -- is not currently compatible with quantum mechanics, our best theory of how the Universe operates on very small scales. Since black holes, by definition, have a huge mass compressed into a tiny space, reconciling these wildly successful but thus far conflicting theories is necessary to understand them.

One possible approach for solving this conundrum is called string theory, which holds that all matter is made of very tiny vibrating strings. One version of this theory predicts a correspondence between the laws of physics we perceive in our familiar four dimensions (three dimensions of space plus time) and



strings in a space with an extra dimension. This is sometimes called a "holographic duality," because it is reminiscent of a two-dimensional holographic plate that holds all the information of a 3D-object.

In the newly published research, the authors, Koji Hashimoto (Osaka University), Keiju Murata (Nihon University) and Shunichiro Kinoshita (Chuo University) apply this concept to show how the surface of a sphere, which has two dimensions, can be used in a tabletop experiment to model a black hole in three dimensions. In this setup, light emanating from a source at one point of the sphere is measured at another, which should show the black hole if the spherical material allows holography.

"The holographic image of a simulated black hole, if observed by this tabletop experiment, may serve as an entrance to the world of quantum gravity" says the author Hashimoto. The researchers also calculated the radius of the Einstein ring that would be observed if this theory is correct.

"Our hope is that this project shows the way forward towards a better understanding of how our Universe truly operates on a fundamental level," says the author Keiju Murata.

(Source: Science Daily)

Unexplained shapes in the sky could be from a universe before our own, say scientists

Unexplained shapes in the sky could be evidence of a universe that existed before ours, scientists have said.

Astronomers claim that very unusual points, spotted in the early universe, appear to be sources of vast amounts of information. It is still not clear why those strange parts of the sky would behave in such an outstanding way.

But researchers have now claimed that those spots of energy could be the consequence of "conformal cyclic cosmology", a theory that suggests that our universe existed in another form before ours. They could have formed from black holes, the researchers suggest in a new paper.

As such, those unexplained swirling areas in the sky could be the leftovers of another universe.

"What we claim we're seeing is the final remnant after a black hole has evaporated away in the previous aeon," Roger Penrose, a mathematical physicist at Oxford University and one of the authors of the study, told New Scientist, which first reported the news.

If the universe is going through extreme contractions and expansions, then it is almost certain that just about everything from the previous universe is destroyed when it does, and nothing is carried through into the new one.

But the latest study, published on website Arxiv, suggests that black holes that were around in the previous universe would throw out what is referred to as Hawking radiation, after Stephen Hawking. That radiation could last from one version of the universe into the next, they claim.



Those places where the electromagnetic radiation was especially high -- referred to as Hawking points -- could therefore be left over from the previous universe.

Those anomalous points would therefore be explained by what is known as CCC theory. Rather than being mysteriously glowing points, they would be the final "evaporation" of the supermassive black holes that were in the version of the universe that came before ours.

Many scientists have objected to the idea of the cyclical universe, and Hawking radiation still remains to be confirmed.

But the researchers say that they hope their analysis will at least help to give us a "significant initial indication of the nature of these anomalous regions and provides an important new input into cosmology, irrespective of the validity of CCC".

And they conclude by suggesting that their findings will pose a significant problem for the conventional understanding of the universe, however they are formed. "It is hard to see, however, that they find a natural explanation in the currently conventional inflationary picture," they write.

(Source: The Independent)

A new timeline of Earth's cataclysmic past

Welcome to the early solar system. Just after the planets formed more than 4.5 billion years ago, our cosmic neighborhood was a chaotic place. Waves of comets, asteroids and even proto-planets streamed toward the inner solar system, with some crashing into Earth on their way.

Now, a team led by University of Colorado Boulder geologist Stephen Mojzsis has laid out a new timeline for this violent period in our planet's history.

In a recent study, the researchers homed in on a phenomenon called "giant planet migration." That's the name for a stage in the evolution of the solar system in which the largest planets, for reasons that are still unclear, began to move away from the sun.

Drawing on records from asteroids and other sources, the group estimated that this solar system-altering event occurred 4.48 billion years ago -- much earlier than some scientists had previously proposed.

The findings, Mojzsis said, could provide scientists with valuable clues around when life might have first emerged on Earth.

"We know that giant planet migration must have taken place in order to explain the current orbital structure of the outer solar system," said Mojzsis, a professor in the Department of Geological Sciences. "But until this study, nobody knew when it happened."

It's a debate that, at least in part, comes down to moon rocks collected by Apollo astronauts -- many of which seemed to be only 3.9 billion years old, hundreds of millions of years younger than the moon itself.



To explain those ages, some researchers suggested that our moon, and Earth, were slammed by a surge of comets and asteroids around that time. But not everyone agreed with the theory, Mojzsis said.

"It turns out that the part of the moon we landed on is very unusual," he said. "It is strongly affected by one big impact, the Imbrium Basin, that is about 3.9 billion years old and affects nearly everything we sampled."

To get around that bias, the researchers decided to compile the ages from an exhaustive database of meteorites that had crash landed on Earth.

"The surfaces of the inner planets have been extensively

reworked both by impacts and indigenous events until about 4 billion years ago," said study coauthor Ramon Brasser of the Earth-Life Science Institute in Tokyo. "The same is not true for the asteroids. Their record goes back much further."

But those records, the team discovered, only went back to about 4.5 billion years ago.

For the researchers, that presented only one possibility: The solar system must have experienced a major bombardment just before that cut-off date. Very large impacts, Mojzsis said, can melt rocks and variably reset their radioactive ages, a bit like shaking an etch-a-sketch.

Mojzsis explained that this carnage was likely kicked off by the solar system's giant planets, which researchers believe formed much closer together than they are today. Using computer simulations, however, his group demonstrated that those bodies started to creep toward their present locations about 4.48 billion years ago.

In the process, they scattered the debris in their wake, sending some of it hurtling toward Earth and its then-young moon.

The findings, Mojzsis added, open up a new window for when life may have evolved on Earth. Based on the team's results, our planet may have been calm enough to support living organisms as early as 4.4 billion years ago.

Other co-authors on the study include Nigel Kelly, formerly of CU Boulder, Oleg Abramov at the Planetary Science Institute and Stephanie Werner at the University of Oslo.

(Source: Science Daily)

Enabling longer space missions

The 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing has reignited interest in space travel. However, almost any mission beyond the moon, whether manned or unmanned, will require the spacecraft to remain fully operational for at least several years. The Hall thruster is a propulsion system that is often used by craft involved in long missions. A recent study by Andrey Shashkov and co-workers at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, Russia has shown how the operating lives of these

systems can be further extended; their work was recently published in EPJ D.

The speed or direction of a spacecraft operating in a vacuum can be changed using an ion drive, which creates thrust by accelerating cations. The Hall thruster is a type of ion drive in which the acceleration is provided by an electric field rather than chemical fuel. It is recommended only for use in space missions longer than 3-5 years; currently, these typically involve satellites.

When these thrusters do stop working, it is generally because of surface erosion caused by the propellant; the pattern of surface erosion depends on where, in the Hall thruster channel, ions are formed and then accelerated: the ionisation and acceleration regions (IARs).

Shashkov and his colleagues used computer modelling to investigate how changing the rate of gas flow and the size of the magnetic field affects the location

of these regions. They then tested their findings by measuring the parameters on a laboratory-scale Hall thruster unit in a vacuum. Importantly, they found that it was possible to keep the IARs at the same, optimal locations. Stationary IARs are known to prolong the life of Hall thrusters, suggesting that these drives could be used in spacecraft on even longer missions: many times further than the moon.

(Source: Science Daily)

Practice does not always make perfect, finds study of violinists

With blatant disregard for the public benefits of motivational idioms, researchers have concluded that practice does not, necessarily, make perfect.

A study of violinists found that merely good players practiced as much as, if not more than, better players, leaving other factors such as quality of tuition, learning skills and perhaps natural talent to account for the difference.

The work is the latest blow to the 10,000-hour rule, the idea promoted in Malcolm Gladwell's 2008 book, *Outliers*, which has been taken to mean that enough practice will make an expert of anyone. In the book, Gladwell states that "ten thousand hours is the magic number of greatness".

"The idea has become really entrenched in our culture, but it's an oversimplification," said Brooke Macnamara, a psychologist at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. "When it comes to human skill, a complex combination of environmental factors, genetic factors and their interactions explains the performance differences across people."

The seed for the 10,000-hour rule was a 1993 study of violinists and pianists which found that accumulated practice time rose with musical prowess. On average, top-ranked violinists had clocked up 10,000 hours of practice by the age of 20, though many had actually put in fewer hours. In the study, the authors rejected an important role for natural talent and argued that differences in ability, even among top musicians, were largely down to how much they practiced. Gladwell seized on the round number to explain the success of notables from Bill Gates to the Beatles.

Macnamara and her colleague Megha Maitra set out to repeat part of the 1993 study to see whether they reached the same conclusions. They interviewed three groups of 13 violinists rated as best, good, or less accomplished about their practice habits, before having them complete daily diaries of their activities over a week.

While the less skilful violinists clocked up an average of about 6,000 hours of practice by the age of 20, there was little to separate the good from the best musicians, with each logging an average of about 11,000 hours. In all, the number of hours spent practicing accounted for about a quarter of the skills difference across the three groups, according to the study published in *Royal Society Open Science*.

Macnamara believes practice is less of a driver. "Once you get to the highly skilled groups, practice stops accounting for the difference. Everyone has practiced a lot and other factors are at play in determining who goes on to that super-elite level," she said.

"The factors depend on the skill being learned: in chess it could be intelligence or working memory, in sport it may be how efficiently a person uses oxygen. To complicate matters further, one factor can drive another. A child who enjoys playing the violin, for example, may be happy to practice and be focused on the task because they do not see it as a chore."

The authors of the 1993 study are unimpressed, however. One co-author, Anders Ericsson, a psychologist at Florida State University, said the new paper actually replicated most of their findings. He said there were no objective differences between Macnamara's best and good violinists, so no surprise they put in the same amount of practice.

"When the human body is put under exceptional strain during deliberate practice, a range of dormant genes in the DNA of any healthy individual are expressed and extraordinary physiological processes are activated. The benefit of this type of practice is available to anyone who wants to improve their performance," he said.

Another co-author on the 1993 study, Ralf Krampe, a psychologist at the Catholic University of Leuven, said nothing in Macnamara's paper made him question the original findings. "Do I believe that practice is everything and that the number of hours alone determine the level reached? No, I don't," he said, adding that the quality of practice, teachers and parental support all matter too. "But I still consider deliberate practice to be by far the most important factor."

Macnamara said it was important for people to understand the limits of practice, though. "Practice makes you better than you were yesterday, most of the time," she said. "But it might not make you better than your neighbor. Or the other kid in your violin class."

(Source: The Guardian)

India's Chandrayaan-2 enters moon's orbit

Some 30 days after liftoff, India's Chandrayaan-2 spacecraft successfully entered the moon's orbit on Tuesday after performing one of the mission's most difficult maneuvers, the nation's space agency said.

The spacecraft began orbiting the moon following the completion of a lunar orbit insertion maneuver that took about 28 minutes to execute, the Indian Space Research Organization said.

ISRO Chairman Kailasavadivoo Sivan said it was one of the most difficult maneuvers of the probe's mission as the smallest mistake could have doomed the entire project.

"A higher-than-expected approach velocity would have bounced off the spacecraft into deep space while a slow approach would have led to the moon's gravity to pull Chandrayaan-2 and crash it on the lunar surface," he said Tuesday after the craft had entered the moon's orbit. "The approach velocity had to be just right and the altitude over the moon rather precise. Even a small error would have killed this mission."

He said that with the successful completion of the lunar orbit insertion maneuver, the spacecraft had hit "a major milestone" and was now orbiting the moon at an inclination of 88 degrees.

Next, it is to perform a series of orbit maneuvers to enable it to enter its final pass over the lunar poles at a distance of about 62 miles from the moon's surface, before the lander, Vikram, separates and enters its own orbit around the moon.

The lander will then perform a series of braking maneuvers to "soft land in the south polar region of the moon on Sept. 7," the ISRO said in a statement.

After landing, Vikram will release Pragyan, the rover. Chandrayaan-2 launched from India's Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle in July and had been circling Earth for the past few weeks, slowly using its propulsion system to increase its orbital distance to escape its gravity.

"On Sept. 7, at 1:55 a.m., lander will land on the moon," Sivan said. "Whatever is humanly possible has been done by us."

The next lunar-bound orbit maneuver is scheduled for Wednesday, ISRO said.

(Source: Science Daily)



Mounesan named acting tourism minister

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — In a decree on Wednesday, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani appointed Ali-Asghar Mounesan as the acting tourism minister.

The decision came as the final step for creating a long-awaited ministry for tourism, cultural heritage and handicrafts in the country. Mounesan who doubles as vice president has been steering the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization since August 2017 when he replaced Zahra Ahmadipour who held the post since November 2016.



Ali-Asghar Mounesan in an undated photo

Before now, tourism affairs in the country were running by the Organization, whose head is installed by the president and is acted as the vice-president.

Earlier this month, the Guardian Council, which is empowered to vet legislation in the Islamic Republic, gave its approval to form the ministry in a bid to boost the country's tourism industry.

The bill had already been agreed upon by lawmakers in the parliament (Majlis), but it lately gained the approval of the Guardian Council last year, when lawmakers gave approval to the bill with 137 votes in favor, 41 against and 1 abstention.

The CHHTO was founded in 1985, administered and funded by the Iranian government.

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

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

Climate change ‘could expose more ancient monuments and ruins’

More ancient monuments and historic ruins will be uncovered as extreme weather caused by climate change gets more frequent, an expert has said.

The remains of a shipwreck off the Abergele coast dating back 150 years was revealed by July's thunderstorms.

A prehistoric forest and 200 archaeological sites were also unearthed following extreme weather.

Archaeologist Dr Paul Belford said "you'll see more and more of this" as the world warms up.

Experts have "tentatively identified" the recently-uncovered Abergele wreck as the 35-tonne wooden sloop Endeavour that sunk without trace in gales in October 1854.

The remains of the 45ft long vessel was found at Pensarn beach in Conwy county by a member of the public.

"The stormy weather created giant waves which moved the sand banks and exposed the boat," said Dr Belford, chief executive of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust.

"You'll see more and more wrecks and ancient monuments uncovered as extreme weather events become more frequent due to the impact of climate change.

(Source: BBC)

ROUND THE GLOBE

Sinharaja Forest Reserve

The Sinharaja Forest Reserve, which is located in south-west Sri Lanka, is the country's last viable area of primary tropical rainforest. More than 60% of the trees are endemic and many of them are considered rare.

There is much endemic wildlife, especially birds, but the reserve is also home to over 50% of Sri Lanka's endemic species of mammals and butterflies, as well as many kinds of insects, reptiles and rare amphibians.



Covering an area of 8,864 ha and ranging from an altitude of 300 – 1,170 meters, it consists of 6,092 ha of Forest Reserve and 2,772 ha of Proposed Forest Reserve.

This narrow strip of undulating terrain encompasses a series of ridges and valleys that are crisscrossed by an intricate network of streams. Draining to both the south and north, this detailed matrix of waterways flow into the Gin River on the southern boundary of the property and Kalu River via the Napola Dola, Koskulana Ganga and Kudawa Ganga on its northern boundary. Annual rainfall over the last 60 years has ranged from 3614 - 5006 mm with most of the precipitation during the south-west monsoon (May-July) and the north-east monsoon (November- January).

Sri Lanka is home to 830 endemic species, of which 217 trees and woody climbers are found in the low land wet zone. Of these, 139 (64%) have been recorded in the reserve including 16 rare species.

(Source: UNESCO)

Berlin exhibit to turn spotlight on medieval, modern ceramics from Iran

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Dozens of medieval and modern Iranian ceramics, selected from two German collections, will go on display at the Bumiller Collection, Studio X-Berg, in Berlin from September 12 to November 30.

The exhibit titled "Call Me anything but Ordinary" will also showcase modern works by Iranian crafter Mansureh Najarpour who is graduated from the Art University Isfahan.

According to the organizers, the event will put on show objects from the Bumiller Collection, which is affiliated with the University Museum of Islamic Art, and the Lushey Collection, arranged as an installation by the Frankfurt based artist Jorg Ahrnt in combination with his drawings.

Organized in collaboration with Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, the exhibit is intended to pay homage to ceramics from the Iranian region and to build a bridge between the Orient and the Occident in a way to connect tradition and modernity in a lively way.

It also aims to stage "outstanding" and various achievements of medieval ceramists and to put into dialogue with contemporary art from Germany and Iran.

Techniques and motifs spread through the trade routes between the Near East and China at that time and led to an artistic syncretism that created new formal languages in Iranian space. The exhibition shows that ceramics is by no means just a commodity, but also serves as a ubiquitous image and information medium.

"The Frankfurt artist Jorg Ahrnt arranges the fragments of the Lushey collection into an installation and shows selected drawings. In his graphic work,



Bowl, ceramic, Nishapur (Neyshabur), Iran, 11th century

he refers to historical objects of Iran and reflects the radiance of the shell floors - the center of the objects - as an image carrier and central point of view. For two decades, Ahrnt has been traveling to Iran on a regular basis, and his artistic work has been influenced both by Persian culture and archeology and by the country's presence. In his works he questions his own, western view of the objects and the examination of the material and the language of form," the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization reported.

Mansureh Najarpour (born 1990), a young Iranian artist from Isfahan, has devoted herself to experimental firing and glazing techniques. She will showcase an exhibition on contemporary Iranian pottery with her work.

Accompanying the exhibition is the first volume of the new publication series "Studies on the Bumiller Collection". "From Ordinary to Luxury" which is a scientific documentation and analysis of 190 objects from the Bumiller Collection.

The Bumiller Collection comprises over 6000 objects from the 7th to the 13th century, among them the world's largest collection of early Islamic bronzes. An important assemblage of ceramics, glass, manuscripts, stone and ivory carvings as well as coins complement the spectrum of early Islamic Art.

The objects are mostly from the Iranian region, which includes the present countries of Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan as well as northern India. They enable a fascinating insight into the medieval world along the Silk Road. Objects from Syria, Egypt and Moorish Spain complement the



Star-shaped deer-tile, ceramic, Kashan, Iran, 13th century

Iranian marquetry master to hold exhibit in Tehran

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — A collection of marquetry works by Mehran Amir-Inanlou, a trendsetter, applauded Iranian artist, will go on display at an exhibition in the Sa'dabad Cultural-Historical Complex.

The collection is composed of 30 works, of which eight haven't gone on a public display so far, CHTN reported.

The opening ceremony will be held on August 2 from 15 to 19 local time. The

exhibit titled "Resurrection of the Wood" will be running through September 2, the report said.

Born in 1967, Amir-Inanlou is one of the prominent masters of marquetry (wood inlaying), known as the innovator of a new style in marquetry which involves incorporating color rendering into the art, according to IRNA.

He holds a first-class art degree and

a high diploma of honor from the International Iranian Innovators and Elites Institute and has won distinctions in several domestic and international exhibitions.

Sprawled on about 110 hectares of a mountainside parkland, the Sa'dabad complex was once a royal summer residence during Qajar era (1789–1925) and its subsequent Pahlavi epoch (1925–1979).



What's it like to live in an over-touristed city?

Locals explain how the influx of travellers has affected them, how authorities are responding and how visitors can remain respectful of people who live there year-round.

for tourists with its iconic Golden Gate Bridge and Fisherman's Wharf, but the Silicon Valley tech boom here has put additional strain on the resources of the city, even as tourist numbers continue to grow. In the index, San Francisco ranks in the highest quartile for overall 'crunch'.

One of the landmark lightning rods in the city right now is Lombard Street, known as 'the crookedest street in the world' for its winding, steep hairpin turns. "The traffic backup to travel down this little stretch spills over into neighboring streets and blocks the flow of traffic," said Kristine Dworkin, whose family has lived here for generations. "Groups stop to take selfies at the bottom with seemingly no notice of the cars coming towards them. Pedestrians also don't seem to realize that the homes along Lombard are private property and frequently trespass in the yards." In response to the complaints, the city recently approved a toll-based reservation system, which could go into effect as early as next year.

■ Prague

Ranking in the highest quartile for overall crunch and the density of tourist traffic, the Czech Republic's capital (a city of just 1.3 million people) attracted a record 7.9 million visitors last year. Most tourists never leave the area of Prague 1, the district with Old Town, Mala Strana (The Lesser Quarter) and the castle area, which keeps the negative effects contained.

"It's something of a shame that the centre has now been surrendered to tourists but even there, locals can find refuge and cheap-ish beers in places known mostly to university students," said Charlie Neville, originally from London, who has lived in Prague since 2002 and works for custom tour operator JayWay

Travel. "We enjoy a much less busy version of Prague in neighbourhoods like Letn? with its beer garden with one of the best views of the city, tree-lined avenues of Vinohrady, trendy Karlin, and hipster Vrsovice."

■ Barcelona

Barcelona has struggled in recent years to manage the number of tourists descending on its sun-soaked streets, and ranked in the index's highest quartile for overall 'crunch'. With more than 30 million visitors last year, tourists can far outnumber the local population of 1.6 million, which puts a strain on city resources.

"Tourists bother me when a group of eight or more take the neighbourhood bus – a small minibus that neighbours use to go uphill to their homes, especially for elderly and families with kids or strollers or people carrying heavy shopping bags," said Barcelona native Marta Laurent Veciana, owner of tour company ForeverBarcelona.com. Big tourist groups also often block the subway ticket validating machines. "Leave at least one machine available for locals so they don't have to wait until your entire group has validated their ticket to go in."

■ Toronto

Not every city sees the growing number of visitors as a bad thing. "Personally, I love seeing more people flocking to our great city of Toronto," said Kyle Collier, founder of tech startup Phaze. "I've lived in Shanghai, China, so from my standpoint Toronto has lots of space." That doesn't mean Toronto doesn't face challenges ahead – the index ranks the city in the highest quartile for overall 'crunch'.

While the tourism industry seems ready to take on the influx of visitors, according to locals, it's housing where residents are feeling the real pressure. "Toronto was already facing an affordable housing shortage. Especially in the downtown core, this has been exacerbated by the advent of holiday rentals (such as Airbnb)," said resident Eric Wychopen, who blogs about the province at Ontario Away. "It's common now to see condo terms and conditions prohibiting renters from posting their properties for holiday rent. However, it's also common knowledge that some tenants still illegally rent their properties."

(Source: BBC)

Blockchain, an inevitable part of industrial revolution: expert

By Setareh Behroozi

Blockchain is an inevitable part of the fourth industrial revolution, which is characterized by a range of technologies, an expert with the Information Technology Organization of Iran (ITO) said on Sunday.

Mohammadreza Forouzandehdoust made the remarks during a workshop held for information and communication technology (ICT) reporters and journalists at the venue of ICT Ministry.

In his speech, he explained about different aspects of blockchain technology with an emphasis on its important role in digital economy and the transparency and authenticity of the blockchain technology as a peer-to-peer network.

The challenges of using blockchain, its history, different kinds of blockchain, government and blockchain and the application of blockchain in industry were other issues discussed during the event.

He named the effect of blockchain on authenticity of legal contracts, polls, smart services, e-health, internet of things (IoT) and internet-based transactions as the "disruptive technology".

For example, in smart contracts, the data on loan and refund are coded with blockchain technology and the process of refunding the loan is done automatically, he said.

In electronic health record (EHR), which is based on blockchain, the patient can decide how much of his or her medical record can be available for the physician and even the patient can limit the time for his or her physician to access the EHR, he added.



■ Cryptocurrency and its challenges in Iran

For his part, the ITO director Amir Nazemi explained about cryptocurrency, threats and opportunities with an emphasis on the current situation of mining in Iran.

In his speech, he called cryptocurrency and mining as an important manifestation of blockchain, in which the public can take part and reap benefits.

"In fact, hi-tech may not be amongst the public interests, however, some parts of these emerging technologies can directly affect the life of citizens and we are responsible to pave the way for introduction of new technologies," he explained.

Though in late July, the Iranian government approved cryptocurrency mining as an industrial activity, the energy ministry and the ICT ministry do not agree with the cost of electricity used for mining, he noted.

He said that the emerging technologies should be welcomed in the country, since they may become important part of interaction with other countries in the near future.

■ ITO plans blockchain projects

To highlight the importance of hi-tech, the ITO plans to secure votes and poll results with blockchain technology under a project and also urges Iranian popular football teams Persepolis and Esteghlal to use blockchain for their clubs' transactions, an official with

ITO Sajjad Fallah announced.

The transparency provided by blockchain is a great achievement for holding polls worldwide, he said.

The ITO calls for startups active in the field of blockchain in order to apply blockchain technology on polls conducted by the unions in November 2018, he noted.

"A total of 26 startups have applied for participation, of which five will be selected to run the project."

The blockchain will be applied on unions and associations' polls, which will be held at the ministry of science, he said.

He explained that the project is in its final stages and will be implemented soon.

Fallah then talked about the other project of the organization, which is the usage of blockchain in Iranian leading football clubs, Persepolis and Esteghlal.

One of the main impediments for privatization of these clubs is that their financial transactions are not transparent, he explained.

Another factor is that they are considered as loss-making firms, he said, adding that both of the issues can be solved by applying blockchain technology.

Using proof of authority mechanism of blockchain can limit those who have access to information of the clubs to fans, sports federations and sport ministry, he said.

"They can create token for their fans in order to follow the decisions and financial resources of the clubs."

Fallah said that the infrastructure will be created in one month, however, "we need a common sense to accept these changes," he concluded.

D-8 sec. gen. visits Pardis science, technology park

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The secretary-general of the Developing Eight Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8), Dato' Ku Jaafar Ku Shaari, heading a delegation of officials paid a visit to Pardis science and technology park on Monday.

Iran National Technomart, Technology Transfer and Exchange Network (TTEN), Mustafa Prize, International Innovation and Technology Exhibition (INOTEX) and international cooperation were discussed with Pardis managers

during the visit.

The Iranian side proposed negotiating with the Islamic Development Bank to sponsor TTEN activities and visiting innovation factories established in Tehran by the park.

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



It might surprise you where the tech jobs are

Tech is showing the way – perhaps, as its advocates claim, to a glorious future of communication and connectivity, but more immediately to employment in overlooked regions of the country. That assertion may seem counterintuitive. The media has consistently described tech in terms of a focus on the "super cities" of the coasts, where presumably it can find super talent in needs (in other words in the places where the media lives.) But the statistics from both the tech companies themselves and the Labor Department tell a different story. The much-dismissed (and dissed) "flyover" might have captured a lot more than the headlines suggest.

The understandable tendency among most commentators is to look at tech in terms of education. It needs highly educated staff and so people naturally look at locations with a lot of college graduates. Closer examination of the nature of tech operations however shows that they do not always want the same people. It is not all coders, not by a long shot. A more detailed look at what tech firms are doing also shows that since tech costs lie predominately in salaries and bonuses, managements of these firms have a powerful incentive to locate in lower cost areas where they can pay a lower wage and still buy a good lifestyle for their employees. And because of the nature of tech operations, these firms are remarkably flexible in this regard.

Amazon and Apple are exhibits one and two. The former's warehouses are seldom located in super cities. Rather, they are found in the exurbs where both land and labor are cheap. To be sure, Amazon made headlines with talk of locating in New York City but only after receiving huge concessions that would have protected profitability from New York's otherwise high living costs, concessions that eventually scotched the deal. Meanwhile, Apple has gone even further from the expensive coastal cities to do much of its production. Almost all its assemblies are done in China.

Aside from these stark contrasts between tech behavior and the common narrative, location also takes account of the different sorts of employees involved in tech. The popular narrative's focus seems to lie entirely on the coders, what are commonly called "youthful creators." But this approach only captures part of the picture. These young people do indeed cluster in the super cities on the coasts. Their youthful energy compensates them



for incomes, that though higher than national averages, do not go far in New York or San Francisco or other such expensive localities. If reporting by the tech companies themselves is any indication, these employees tend to have very short tenures, giving their firms a few highly stressful years in exciting locales to innovate and improve their resumes before moving on to jobs in less stressful, less expensive places. By contrast to these workers and their ilk, there are the many engineers and managers also in the employ of tech firms. They tend to have longer tenures, 7-8 years in contrast to 2.5 on average for the urban coder. Accordingly, they are more likely to stress lifestyle and so have preference for less expensive, less stressful locales.

These preferences are evident in just about all the available statistics. Apple, for instance, reports that it has located about at third of its staff and its entire hardware-engineering division in Austin, Texas instead of the firm's Cupertino headquarters. Labor Department data on the predominance of engineers completes the picture. To be sure, Silicon Valley still has the greatest number of engineers per capita in the country, but Houston and Bakersfield, even Dayton far outpace what are usually considered the coastal super cities. The figures of engineers per capita for Los Angeles barely match the U.S. average, and New York is well below that average. San Francisco has seen its computer and math-related employment fall from ranking third nationally in 2010 to 25th in 2017, the most recent year for which complete data are available. It is not just tech, either. Cost of living has also driven other sorts of engineering operations, such as Bechtel and Jacob Engineering out of San Francisco, along with Occidental Petroleum and the Japanese auto manufacturers Toyota and Nissan. McKesson Pharmaceuticals has decamped for Dallas.

(Source: forbes.com)

Tech companies may listen when you talk to your virtual assistant

Big tech companies don't like to talk about it. And when users find out it's happening, they're often surprised – and disturbed.

Yes, if you talk to a virtual assistant, such as Amazon's Alexa, a human may listen to a recording of your chatter.

Recent reports have highlighted what is actually a longstanding practice meant largely to improve the artificial intelligence that underpins the virtual assistant-powered gadgets and services that are popping up throughout people's homes and lives.

The practice raises privacy concerns for smart-speaker users in particular, who might have known that Amazon, Google, and Apple create recordings each time you speak to Alexa, Google Assistant, and Siri, respectively, but not that people might review them.

The companies have said only a small percentage of recordings are listened to by humans. Still, Google and Apple have temporarily halted human reviews of their recordings, while Amazon recently changed its settings to make it easier for people to avoid such review at all. Last week, Facebook said it, too, had paused human review of some users' audio clips, such as those sent as audio messages via the social network's Messenger app. Facebook had been using humans to listen in, as part of an AI-transcription feature.

An Amazon Echo Plus smart speaker photographed on a kitchen counter, taken on January 9, 2019. (Photo by Olly Curtis/Future via Getty Images)

An Amazon Echo Plus smart speaker photographed on a kitchen counter, taken on January 9, 2019. (Photo by Olly Curtis/Future via Getty Images)

Lost in the shuffle of these revelations is whether people are truly needed to make these AI-dependent systems work, and how much companies should tell users about this process.

■ How to stop your Alexa voice recordings from being reviewed by a human

Numerous experts in AI, ranging from academics to startup entrepreneurs, told CNN Business that there is a legitimate need to listen to some snippets of conversation in order to make all kinds of voice-operated technology work — no matter if it's a smart speaker in your living room or a virtual server at a drive-through restaurant.

At the same time, they think tech companies should do much more to make

it clear what happens to any recordings from these systems, and what risks there may be to your privacy.

"If you think about it, why would you want a stranger in your home, listening to your private conversations?" asked Mainul Mondal, founder and CEO of San Francisco-based startup Ellipsis Health, which uses AI to analyze conversations patients have with doctors and other healthcare providers.

■ AI is not magic

Virtual assistants are powered by machine learning algorithms, which comb through massive amounts of data, searching for patterns. To work, these assistants need to be trained on lots of data — in this case, lots of conversations.

It takes about 20,000 hours of audio to train an assistant that can be rolled out to users, according to Jason Mars, CEO and cofounder of Clinc, an Ann Arbor, Michigan-based startup that builds conversational assistants for banks and other companies.

These assistants can be trained to do all kinds of tasks, like telling you what the weather is or playing a song on command. Still, people remain vital not just for providing the information to train these systems in the first place, but also for helping them improve over time, which is why someone somewhere might be listening to a recording of you asking Alexa to play "Truth Hurts" by Lizzo.

Justine Cassell, a professor of language technology at Carnegie Mellon University, said humans are "essential" for making AI-powered, voice-controlled products, since the technology is still bad at figuring out how people talk — that is, how we choose the way to say what we say (which can vary depending on whether we're talking to, for instance, a coworker or a family member).

AI is also not good at figuring out how to respond to us appropriately. For instance, if you ask Siri to tell you a joke, and you respond to the punchline by saying, "That's not very funny," it will respond with a robotic, "I'm not sure I understand."

"Machines are not good at this, and that's why people listen to human speech: because we're really good at classifying that kind of stuff," Cassell said. "I know whether, to some extent, you feel positive about what I'm saying or negative about what I'm saying."

(Source: CNN)

26 million Iranians do not use internet: report

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Some 26 million Iranians of six years old and above do not use internet, the Statistical Center of Iran and Information Technology Organization of Iran announced in a joint report, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

Of the figure, 11.864 million are men and the rest are women, according to the report.

About 18.307 million Iranians have announced that they do not need internet technology.



Over seven million people do not use internet due to lack of knowledge, skills and self-confidence and over 3.5 million people do not use internet due to high cost of internet and 1.3 million people are concerned about privacy, the report announced.

According to the statistics, 1.250 million people do not have access in their cities or villages and 1.769 million people do not use internet due to cultural reasons including immoral contents, the report says.

Meanwhile, 7.632 million people do not know anything about internet and 7.936 million are illiterate for using internet.

A total of 2.709 million people do not use internet because they do not have permission to use it and 1.231 million people believe that there is no good contents and services available on internet, the report added.

The statistics say that 59,249 people do not use internet due to their physical disabilities.

According to a report released by the Information Technology Organization of Iran in late July, the highest internet penetration rate is amongst students with 89.6 percent.

A total of 36.5 percent of internet users are employed individuals, 26.7 percent are housekeepers, 23.8 percent are students, and 6.3 percent are unemployed individuals, according to the report.

According to the statistics about 29.4 million of Iranians (63.4 percent) are 'usual' internet users.

Smart cities need to spend more on security tech, study suggests

The world's largest cities need to invest billions of additional dollars into their infrastructure in order to secure citizen data, new research suggests.

Of the roughly \$135 billion expected to be spent globally on cybersecurity for critical city infrastructure in 2024, 44% will be split across data protection provisions for energy, health care, public security, transport, water and waste industries, analyst group ABI Research concluded in a study published Tuesday.

That equates to about \$59.4 billion and will not be enough, Dimitrios Pavlakis, an analyst at ABI Research, said.

In a statement accompanying the study, he said lackluster digital security investments could "jeopardize the key elements of intelligence, efficiency and sustainability of future smart city deployments."

The concern echoes a growing consensus across government and industry that too little oversight is given to the fundamental technologies used to build connected cities. The U.S.-led black-listing of next-generation 5G mobile networking products made by Huawei Technologies Co. -- the type being deployed to connect buildings, machines and people -- was driven by fears of espionage or attack by foreign state actors. The Chinese company has repeatedly contested such claims.

In their current states, urban areas with intertwined surveillance, health care and utilities networks in particular lack appropriate levels of security to deflect data breaches and cyberattacks, according to ABI Research.

The number of wide-area network connections used for objects such as street lamps, surveillance cameras and air quality sensors is projected to jump to about 1.3 billion by 2024, according to ABI Research, up from about 696 million today. Only half of those will be set up on networks capable of handling cyber-threats, the group said.

(Source: bloomberg.com)

World's longest-running webcam going offline after 25 years

The founders of the webcam say it is "a throwback to the early days of the internet when anyone could do anything".

After 25 years of live broadcasting, what is thought to be the longest-running webcam in the world is finally going offline.

Students Jeff Schwartz and Dan Wong installed it on the roof of a campus building at San Francisco State University in 1994.

At the time, Bill Clinton was U.S. president, JK Rowling was years away from publishing the first Harry Potter, and there were still only three Star Wars films.

The gadget was pointed towards the frequently foggy Holloway Avenue and became known as FogCam.

It has streamed without much in the way of interruption for two-and-a-half decades.

But its creators, known online as Webdog and Danno, have announced that - much like the Walkman and the VHS - the time has come for it to be consigned to gadget history.

The long-running feed - found at fogcam.org - will shut down at the end of this month.

In a tweet from the FogCam account, the pair said: "After 25 years, FogCam is shutting down forever at the end of August."

"Webdog & Danno thank our viewers and San Francisco State University for their support over the years. The internet has changed a lot since 1994, but FogCam will always have a special place in its history."

Mr. Schwartz, who goes by Webdog, told local news website SFGate that he and his colleague were studying computer science when they set up the webcam, which updates every 20 seconds.

"It was just a little pet project that developed a life of its own," he said.

"People liked it so we kept it going."

(Source: Sky News)

‘Traffic-related accidents incurred \$480m loss last year’

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Traffic-related accidents brought heavy economic burden amounting to 20 trillion rials (about \$480 million) for the country in the past Iranian calendar year (ended March 20), Tehran traffic police chief Teymour Hosseini has said.

Road crashes and casualties annually constitute about 5 percent of the country’s gross domestic product, which is so costly and must become the country’s top priority, he stated.



“We should stop construction and development of roads for at least 10 years and spend all the budgets to improve the existing situation of roads,” Hosseini suggested.

Cars, roads and human are the leading causes of accidents, however, human is responsible for over 92 percent of the road accidents, he lamented, ISNA reported on Monday.

To reduce the crashes and losses, the first way is using capabilities of Information Technology Services (ITS), which track driving violations, he said, adding, “Currently, we only track driving at an unsafe speed while it can also track the drivers who run between lines as well as drowsy driving.”

“The second way is to eliminate the field of violation so that people do not have to violate the rules. In all suburbs, when comparing speeds in suburban areas with regulatory speeds, we find that people drive at higher speeds.”

He went on to highlight that motorcycles should be designed in a way that their power and speed fit the needs of the community to reduce the share of motorcycles in road crashes.

Equipping the provincial traffic police with smartphones which send instant messages to the violators can be really efficient in preventing those vehicles from causing crashes, he concluded.

Traffic police chief Seyed Kamal Hadianfar in July said that road crashes claimed lives of 4,129 Iranians during the April 21-July 22 period.

“To reduce car crashes, we must develop facilities and emergency fleet, both in emergency medical services and traffic polices,” he noted, adding, actually, 33 organizations are responsible for traffic accidents reduction.

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

WORDS IN THE NEWS

India’s reaction to the Agra summit

(July 18, 2001)
India and Pakistan failed to reach an agreement over Kashmir at the Agra summit, the first such meeting in two years. Some opposition party leaders in India have criticized the Indian government for its handling of the summit. Jill McGivering reports from Delhi. Opposition leaders aren’t **sparing the government any embarrassment**. Senior members of the Congress Party called the **summit a lost opportunity** - and said the level of expectation created before the meetings had been unrealistic. One **called on** the government to explain in parliament what went wrong. In Indian Kashmir, which had been a **divisive issue** at the talks, there was **widespread disappointment**. Many said they feared an increase in violence as a result. One **separatist leader** accused the Indian government of being **intransigent**. He praised General Musharraf for taking what he described as a **principled stand** in representing Kashmir and called on the two countries to accept the help of a **third party** to resolve the **dispute**. This is a move the Indian government has consistently resisted.

Two militant groups in Indian Kashmir have said the **collapse** of the summit **justifies** their position that change will come only through violence and not through political dialogue.

■ **Words**
sparing the government any embarrassment: avoiding saying anything that will make the government feel ashamed
summit: meeting between leaders of different countries to discuss important issues
lost opportunity: a missed occasion for doing something positive
level of expectation: the degree of hope that something would be achieved
called on: appealed
divisive issue: a cause of hostility
widespread disappointment: sadness or displeasure caused by the non-fulfilment of one’s hopes distributed over a large area or number of people
separatist leader: leader of a group of people who want to establish their own separate government instead of being ruled by the existing government of the country
intransigent: having ideas which cannot be changed by other people
principled stand: behavior based on the moral principles that guide the way people act
third party: someone who is not one of the two main people or groups involved in a discussion
dispute: disagreement
collapse: a sudden failure of an institution or undertaking
justify: show or prove to be right or reasonable

(Source: BBC)



Without
earth no
birth!

‘Govt., judiciary slow to submit bill on protection of animals’

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — The government and the judiciary have been slow to submit a bill proposed over 3 years ago (to the Majlis) on protection of animals and wildlife, Mohammad Reza Tabesh, head of the Majlis environment committee has stated.

Referring to a video emerged online showing the killings of stray dogs in Tehran suburbs, he lamented that “I declare that the government and the judiciary have delayed in submitting the bill to prohibit animal cruelty, which will incur financial burden.”

“The issue is on the center of public attention; therefore, we are good at procrastination, deferment and causing financial losses for the country,” he regretted.

Any animal cruelty and violation of animal’s right is considered a crime and should be pursued by legal entities, he stressed, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

Despite the municipality’s response to the recently released video claiming that it has been recorded about 2 years ago and the contractor has been dismissed, it has triggered people’s emotions, he added.

For the past several years, with the help of NGOs, artists, and lawyers, a bill was drafted to ban animal cruelty, and the government was going to either pass the bill or put it forward to the Majlis, he said, adding, actually, it might have been rejected by the Expediency Council for its financial burden.

“Therefore, we have been negotiating with the presidential office for legal affairs and have requested to submit it as soon



Postponing the bills which arouse public emotion causes the country heavy costs, so, the government and the judiciary must take urgent measures in this regard, and resolve the dispute to send the bill to the Majlis as soon as possible.

as possible with the assistance of NGOs and those interested in animal rights,” he also said.

Given that penalties were required by the law, the judiciary claimed that should submit the bill, initially, he stated, adding,

Forest elephants defend against climate change by promoting carbon-storing trees, study says

Poaching destabilises nations, disrupts ecosystems and threatens biodiversity. A recent study suggests still another consequence: Some types of poaching may also accelerate climate change.

Forest elephants – the smaller, endangered relatives of African savanna elephants – promote the growth of large trees that excel at storing carbon, according to research published in the journal Nature Geoscience.

Should forest elephants disappear, scientists estimated, Central Africa’s rainforest will lose about 3 billion tons of carbon – the equivalent of France’s total CO2 emissions for 27 years.

“This new paper points to something that we in Central Africa have suspected for a long time, but now this group has thrown some serious science at the issue,” said Fiona Maisels, a conservation scientist at the Wildlife Conservation Society and at the University of Stirling in Scotland.

“With the loss of forest elephants,” she added, “loss of carbon stocks can be added to the list of ecosystem services that are no longer provided by these animals.”

Over recent years, researchers have gained a more detailed understanding of the links between animals and climate.

Wild grazers, for instance, can reduce the intensity and frequency of fires that emit greenhouse gases. Methane emissions from livestock significantly contribute to global warming.

Scientists have also known for decades that large herbivores such as elephants play important short-term roles in ecosystems by promoting biodiversity, recycling nutrients and dispersing seeds.

Fabio Berzaghi, an ecologist at the Laboratory of Climate and Environmental Sciences in France and the lead author of the new study, suspected that elephants might also play a profound long-term role in shaping Africa’s rainforest, second in size only to the Amazon’s.

The Amazon lost its large herbivores 12,000 years ago, among them ground sloths that weighed over 3 tons, elephant-like creatures called gomphotheres and armadillo-like glyptodonts that were the size of small cars.

The loss of these and other large herbivores likely contributed to the Amazon’s higher density of smaller trees, with a lower overall amount of vegetation compared with Africa’s rainforest.

“We were thinking elephants may play a role in the differ-



ences between these two continents’ forests,” Mr Berzaghi said. “We also really wanted to know what the long-term consequences of losing this species would be.”

Mr Berzaghi and his colleagues selected two field sites. One lies in the Democratic Republic of Congo, from which elephants disappeared 30 years ago because of poaching; the other is the Republic of Congo, where elephants lived at high numbers until recently.

Both sites were relatively pristine and differed only in the presence or absence of elephants. The researchers measured the trunk size of all the trees in the study areas and noted the species, giving them an idea of the short-term effects of elephant loss.

To determine the long-term effects, they created a computer model that simulated the basic functions of the African rainforest, including tree growth and death, competition, photosynthesis and reproduction. The model allowed them to include or exclude elephants.

Forest elephants almost exclusively stomp down trees with a diameter of 12 inches or less, and they prefer to eat fast-growing softwood trees. By clearing the understory of vegetation, the researchers found, elephants not only alter plant composition but also affect light penetration and water availability.

This results in an ecosystem that favours large, slow-growing hardwood trees. Such species store significantly more carbon than the equivalent volume of smaller softwood trees.

the judiciary accepted to review the bill, however, the process was so slow.

He went on to say that postponing the bills which arouse public emotion causes the country heavy costs, so, the government and the judiciary must take urgent measures in this regard, and resolve the dispute to send the bill to the Majlis as soon as possible.

“The draft is now ready, and we are waiting for the government and the judiciary to submit the bill just because of its financial costs,” he said.

Referring to the current laws condemning animal right violators, he highlighted that if the animals are poisoned or killed, the violator would face imprisonment for 91 days to 6 months, or would be fined and in some cases the person will be imprisoned for 2 to 10 years.

However, the law needs to be revised because it does not fully comply with animal rights today, he noted.

He called on the responsible bodies to pursue the issue and pass the bill, and expressed sorrow toward the incidents that triggered strong emotion in the country.

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

The Department of Environment (DOE) proposed the bill, which must be approved by the presidential office for legal affairs and then to be submitted to the Majlis and in case of approval to be sent to the Expediency Council.

“As a tree, there’s a trade-off – you can’t have it all,” Mr Berzaghi said. “You either invest in growing fast or in building a lot of structure with carbon to be more resistant.”

Extrapolating their findings to the whole of Africa’s rainforest, Mr Berzaghi and his colleagues found that the disappearance of elephants would result in a 7 per cent loss of vegetation – the equivalent of 3 billion tons of carbon storage.

Put another way, elephants provide a carbon storage service valued at \$43bn (£35.6bn).

“This is the first study I have seen attributing large, multimegataton changes in carbon to a particular species,” said Rosie Fisher, a scientist at the National Centre for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, who was not involved in the research.

“It really opens a new frontier in how we think about interactions between large animals and carbon storage.”

Save for a few surviving populations, forest elephants are functionally extinct in almost all of their former 850,000-square-mile habitat.

The species declined by 62 per cent from 2002 to 2011. Ms Maisels and her colleagues found, and poaching has largely continued unchecked since then.

According to Iain Douglas-Hamilton, founder of Save the Elephants, a conservation organisation based in Kenya, the killing has most recently spread to Gabon, which holds half of the world’s remaining forest elephants and was previously protected from poaching by its relative isolation.

“This study comes at a time when forest elephants are threatened as never before,” Mr Douglas-Hamilton said.

“It is appalling that just as we are beginning to understand how elephants might have a key role in Africa in sequestering carbon, they are under real threat of eradication.”

One limitation of the study, Mr Berzaghi said, is that we do not know how much carbon has already been lost because of the elephants’ decline. But it does seem certain, he added, that putting a stop to poaching and restoring forest elephant populations would bring climate benefits.

“There’s evidence mounting that elephants are a key species that benefit not just their ecosystem, but all ecosystems,” he said.

“Climate change is a complex issue that will probably require a lot of small solutions, and this might be one of those solutions.”

(Source: The Independent)

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A ← → ج

Iran Association of Social Workers holds two seats in IFSW

Iran Association of Social Workers holds two seat in the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and has a great potential to become a role model for other countries, the association’s head Seyed Hasan Mousavi Chalak has said.

Mousavi Chalak who is also Asia Pacific Regional Representative for the IFSW Global Committees and Ethics Committee went on to say that social services know no boundaries and Iran is capable of and willing to share its first-hand experience and achievements in this field.

“60 years of social work in Iran” conference, held in Iran with 8 countries attending the event, was a chance to set the scene for fostering international cooperation, ISNA quoted Mousavi Chalak as saying on Sunday.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-burg, -burgh, -boro, -berg”

■ **Meaning:** to form name of a city or town
■ **For example:** Each year The City of **Harrisburg** hosts almost 100 family-oriented events.

PHRASAL VERB

Have somebody up

■ **Meaning:** to make someone go to a court of law because you think they have committed a crime
■ **For example:** Last year he was had up for stealing his neighbor’s car.

IDIOM

Burden of proof

■ **Explanation:** the necessity imposed by the law to prove that what one says is true.
■ **For example:** The burden of proof lies with the claimant.

اختصاص دو کرسی به ایران در فدراسیون جهانی مددکاری اجتماعی

سید حسن موسوی چلک رئیس انجمن مددکاری اجتماعی ایران با تاکید بر اینکه ایران قادر است تا الگوی کشورهای دیگر در این عرصه باشد از اختصاص دو کرسی به ایران در فدراسیون جهانی مددکاری اجتماعی خبر داد.

موسوی چلک که به عنوان کمیسر اخلاق و عضو هیئت رئیسه فدراسیون جهانی مددکاری اجتماعی در منطقه آسیا و اقیانوسیه در فدراسیون جهانی مددکاری اجتماعی انتخاب شده است همچنین گفت: گسترش خدمات اجتماعی نباید محدود به مرزهای جغرافیایی باشد، و ایران قادر و مایل است تا دستاوردها و تجربیات خود در این حوزه را در جهان ترویج کند.

وی در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا گفت: کنگره بین‌المللی «۶۰سال مددکاری اجتماعی در ایران» با ۸ کشور ، منجر به افزایش تعاملات بین‌المللی ایران در این حوزه شده است.

Turkey provides clear, support to terrorists in Syria's Idlib: Assad

TEHRAN — President Bashar al-Assad has censured Turkey over sending a military convoy to Syria's embattled northwestern province of Idlib, stressing that the move clearly shows that the Ankara government is offering generous support to Takfiri terrorists who have lost ground amid government forces' push to retake the last militant-held area in the country.

Speaking in a meeting with a visiting Russian delegation from the ruling United Russia political party in Damascus on Tuesday, Assad said the recent developments in Idlib point to Turkey's clear and unlimited support for the foreign-sponsored extremists.

He added that Syrian army troops have, nevertheless, succeeded to score victories against terrorists, particularly in Idlib, irrespective of support provided by Western and regional countries to them.

Assad stressed that the territorial gains prove the determination of the Syrian nation and army to continue fighting terrorism until every inch of the Syrian soil is liberated.



Dmitry Sablin, for his part, expressed confidence that the incumbent Damascus government will eventually manage to restore

security and stability across Syria.

Sablin added that he has recently toured a number of Syrian provinces, finding life

returning to normal more than eight years after the start of the Syria crisis.

On Monday, Syria's official news agency SANA quoted an unnamed source in the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, denouncing Turkey's move as an act of "aggression."

The source added that the Turkish convoy would not affect "the determination of the Syrian Arab Army to keep hunting the remnants of terrorists" in the town Khan Shaykhoun or elsewhere.

According to Press TV, the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) and local sources reported on Tuesday that militants had pulled out of Khan Shaykhun in the southern part of Idlib province and a nearby area in neighboring Hama province.

The withdrawal came after Syrian army troops and their allied fighters managed to enter the town of Khan Shaykhun, which had been occupied by foreign-backed terrorists since 2014.

Migrants disembark Open Arms rescue ship on Italian island of Lampedusa

TEHRAN — Nearly one hundred migrants who had been stranded on the Open Arms rescue ship off the coast of Lampedusa disembarked on the Italian island on Tuesday night, ending a prolonged stand-off between the Spanish charity operating the boat and the government in Rome.

The migrants, mainly from Africa, were removed from the boat after an Italian prosecutor ordered the seizure of the ship and the evacuation of the people on board.

The ship docked at Lampedusa's harbor just after 2330 CET. The Open Arms ship, run by a Spanish charity of the same name, had rescued the migrants heading for Europe off the Libyan coast. But after Italy refused to let it dock the ship had been stranded at sea for nearly three weeks, with the charity saying that the migrants were distressed and urgently needed to find shelter.

Open Arms' director and founder, Oscar Camps, con-

firmed earlier on Twitter that the ship would be seized temporarily, adding it was "a cost that Open Arms assumes to ensure that people on board can be served."

"We consider it essential to prioritize the migrants' health and safety in this humanitarian emergency," he said.

Spain sent a naval vessel on Tuesday afternoon to rescue the migrants and take them to Mallorca after some of them jumped overboard.

But the Spanish navy is only due to reach Lampedusa in three days and Open Arms repeatedly said that the situation on board was desperate and some migrants were suicidal.

The passengers were sleeping jammed together on deck and sharing two toilets.

After the charity said nine had tried to swim ashore, Reuters footage showed another five people jump, although it was not immediately clear if some were lifeguards.



Trump says 'could certainly' back Russia's return to G8

TEHRAN— U.S. President Donald Trump says he would support Russia's return to the Group of Eight (G8) advanced industrialized countries if another member proposed such a reinstatement.

"I could certainly" support Russia's return, Trump told reporters at the White House on Tuesday.

"It's much more appropriate to have Russia in. It should be the G8, because a lot of the things we talk about have to do with Russia," he added.

Back in 2014, the US, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan decided to suspend Moscow's membership in the G8 over its alleged role in the Ukrainian conflict.

Some of the members later called for reinstating Russia's membership but the US, the UK, and Canada had always conditioned it on resolving the situation in Ukraine.

Russia, which denied having a role in Ukraine, announced its permanent withdrawal from the G8 in 2017.

In June 2018, Trump suggested that Rus-

sia should participate in a forthcoming G7 summit in Canada. A Kremlin spokesman, however, appeared to snub the idea, saying Moscow was "focused on other formats."

In his comments at the White House on Tuesday, Trump also accused his Democratic predecessor, Barack Obama, of wanting Russia out of the G8, and said he would support a bid by another member to restore Moscow's membership.

"I guess President Obama... because Putin outsmarted him... President Obama thought

it wasn't a good thing to have Russia in. So he wanted Russia out," Trump said.

"So, I could certainly see it being the G8 again and if someone would make that motion, I would be disposed to think about it very favorably," he added.

According to Press TV, Trump's comments come ahead of the 45th annual summit of the G7, in Biarritz, France, which is scheduled to begin on August 24.

Trump is due to host the next G7 meeting in the United States next year.

What early U.S. presidential polls tell us about the 2020 race

➔ But in the 2016 cycle, both the eventual nominees, Clinton and Republican Donald Trump, held significant leads in the polls by August 2015. Like this year's Democratic contest, the Republican field from which Trump emerged was enormous by historical standards.

Past results are not necessarily an indicator of what will happen this time around, experts warned.

"We only have this happen every four years," said Joe Lenski, executive vice president at Edison Research, which conducts national exit polls. "It's not like we have thousands of examples."

■ How trustworthy are primary polls?

Primary polls are considerably less predictive than general election polls pitting two nominees against each other.

For one, voters' preferences are more fluid ahead of primaries, in part because they cannot rely on party affiliation alone to determine their choices. In a general election, most voters flock to the candidate who represents their preferred party.

"Primaries are a lot harder, because there isn't that partisan signaling," said Chris Jackson, who runs the public polling unit at Ipsos.

The size of the Democratic field this cycle may also contribute to the uncertainty by giving people so many options.

Voters may engage in strategic behavior, shifting allegiances based on how candidates are performing. Howard Dean led most Democratic primary surveys in 2003 until John Kerry, the eventual nominee, won the early voting states of Iowa and New Hampshire, sending him skyrocketing in national polls.

Name recognition also plays a major role at this stage, when many Americans simply are not focused on the campaign.

That said, name recognition is often based on factors that reinforce a candidate's strength. Joe Biden, who is leading most polls in the 2020 Dem-



ocratic race, is well known because he was a vice president for two terms and has deep ties to the party's establishment.

Analysts expect turnout in 2020 to hit levels not seen in decades, given the high level of political engagement in the era of Trump. That introduces more uncertainty for pollsters, who must make assumptions about voters who have not historically cast ballots but who are likely to do so next year.

"The pollsters don't really know who's going to show up in a primary," said Michael McDonald, a professor at the University of Florida who studies polling.

General election polls at this stage - pitting Trump against various possible Democratic nominees - are virtually meaningless, according to research by the polling analysis website FiveThirtyEight. That's because they are asking about hypothetical matchups involving candidates who remain unfamiliar to many Americans.

■ So what should we look for?

Some analysts suggest looking at tiers of candidates, rather than focusing on small differences between individuals, to get a better sense of who

is in the best position.

At the moment, Biden stands in a class by himself at around 30% support, with a second tier comprised of U.S. Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren holding at half that figure. Another handful of candidates, including U.S. Senator Kamala Harris and South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg, make up the next group.

Lenski said polls often include other information beyond the top line figures that can illuminate which candidates have more potential upside.

For instance, some polls will ask respondents to identify which candidates they support aside from their first choice, or to say whether they have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each candidate.

Among lesser-known candidates, someone like New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, who is polling around 1% and has poor favorability ratings, has less room to grow than someone like U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, who is also at 1% but is well liked by those who have heard of her.

Given pollsters use different methodologies and have varying track records of accuracy, it's better to look at several polls for a more reliable snapshot. When considering trends, such as whether a candidate has gained or lost support over time, comparing previous surveys from the same pollster will yield more accurate results.

■ What about state-based polls?

The biggest advantage of state-based primary polls compared to national primary polls is they reference actual elections, since there is no national primary.

A candidate who shows more strength in polls of a key state - Iowa, for example - might pull off an upset and gain momentum throughout the rest of the campaign.

State polls also have a greater margin for error because they rely on smaller samples, Reuters reported.

Syrian army gain strategic win in Idlib

➔ After Idlib is freed, the Syrian government goes back to its normal situation before the crisis. This means that all the people and countries who started this war in Syria will have to go back to their countries empty-handed and Damascus will be the true winner of this war. This is surely contrary to what American wants, so they would make every effort to prevent this scenario.

Anyway, the war in Syria that first started from Aleppo and Qalamun Mountains is nearing its end in Idlib which is among the last areas under the control of the terrorists.

The further the Syrian army goes toward victory, the further the terrorists and their supporters try to influence the media and abuse the non-military people to create fake news for the media.

Surely, capturing the city of Khan Sheikhoun in the south of Idlib province is among the most importing victories of the Syrian army over the last five years; that is why the victory has caused great worries for the Americans and officials of Ankara.

Undoubtedly, after this we will see many bigger achievements from Syrian army.

Now that the terrorists are surrounded in the northern part of Hama, they have no choice other than death or fleeing the region with the help of Turkey. It means that the whole northern part of Hama will be freed and cities of Moharade and Al-Suqaylabiyah will reach some peace after suffering daily missile attacks for a long time.

Yemen air defense forces shoot down Saudi-led drone

➔ On Tuesday evening, dozens of Saudi-sponsored militiamen were killed when Yemeni army soldiers and their allies launched an offensive against their position in the kingdom's southern border region of Jizan.

An unnamed Yemeni military source told Arabic-language al-Masirah television network that Yemeni soldiers and allied fighters launched a domestically-developed Zelzal-1 (Earthquake-1) missile and artillery rounds at al-Mostehadeth military camp, leaving dozens of Saudi mercenaries killed and injured.

Yemeni army soldiers and Popular Committees fighters had earlier shot and killed ten Saudi troopers east of al-Doud Mountain in Jizan.

According to Press TV, Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched a devastating campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing the government of former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi back to power and crushing Ansarullah.

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

The war has also taken a heavy toll on the country's infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories. The UN says over 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme levels of hunger.

General al-Burhan sworn in as head of Sudan's new ruling body

TEHRAN — General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan has been sworn in as chairman of Sudan's newly-formed sovereign council that will steer the country through a three-year transition to civilian rule.

"General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan Abdel Rahman was sworn in as president of the sovereign council," the official SUNA news agency reported on Wednesday.

Al-Burhan headed the Transitional Military Council (TMC), which ruled the country since longtime leader Omar al-Bashir was deposed in April.

Prime Minister-nominee Abdalla Hamdok, as well as the remaining 10 members of the sovereign council, will be sworn in later on Wednesday.

Sudan's pro-democracy movement and the army announced a joint ruling body on Tuesday, days after they signed a final power-sharing deal following pressure from the United States, the African Union and its Arab allies amid growing concerns the political crisis could ignite a civil war.

The council includes six civilians and five soldiers. It will be headed for 21 months by al-Burhan, followed by a civilian leader appointed by the protest movement for the remaining 18 months.

General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the TMC's deputy head widely known as Hemedi, was appointed to the council along with Yasser Atta, Ibrahim Gaber and Shams al-Din Kabashi, Al Jazeera reported.

Italy government crisis: PM Conte quits amid coalition row

TEHRAN— Italy's Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte has resigned following a blistering attack on coalition partner Matteo Salvini.

Mr Conte said Mr Salvini had been "irresponsible" in creating a new political crisis for Italy for "personal and party interests".

Mr Salvini, the leader of the nationalist League party, had tabled a no-confidence motion against Mr Conte.

He also said he could no longer work with his coalition partners Five Star.

The League and the anti-establishment Five Star Movement formed a coalition to govern just 14 months ago with Mr Conte as an independent as prime minister.

Italian President Sergio Mattarella accepted the resignation of Conte and is due to begin consulting party leaders on Wednesday.

Mr Mattarella has asked Mr Conte to remain in office while the discussions continue.

If there is not the political will to form a new government, the president will dissolve parliament and call early elections, BBC reported.

U.S. and Venezuela confirm 'secret' talks

He declined to say which officials were engaged in the talks, saying only that "we are talking at a very high level," and adding that "representatives at different levels of Venezuela" were involved.

Maduro confirmed the talks later on Tuesday, saying that "for months, there has been contact between senior officials of the United States, of Donald Trump, and the Bolivarian government that I preside

over," in a message broadcast on radio and television.

He described the talks as "secret meetings in secret places with secret people that nobody knows".

"Just as I have sought dialogue in Venezuela, I have sought a way in which President Donald Trump really listens to Venezuela," Maduro said, also without confirming which officials were involved in the talks.

He followed up his address with a post on Twitter, saying Venezuela was "seeking to normalize the conflict that exists with the U.S. empire," and ending with: "I believe in Dialogue, I believe in Peace!"

Maduro's comments came a day after Vice President Diosdado Cabello denied allegations that he was in secret talks with members of the U.S. administration.

TEHRAN — U.S. President Donald Trump and his Venezuelan counterpart Nicolas Maduro have said that talks were under way between senior officials from their governments to attempt to resolve the Latin American country's deepening crises.

"We are in touch. We're talking to various representatives of Venezuela," Trump told reporters at the White House on Tuesday.

Beckham’s proposed Miami stadium site ‘contaminated’

The proposed stadium site for David Beckham’s Inter Miami franchise in the MLS has arsenic contamination levels more than twice the legal limit, says an environmental report.

Melreese golf course has been closed until further notice by Miami’s city council after the findings.

Plans are in place to build a stadium, shopping mall, hotel and public park on the site as part of a \$1bn development.

“This obviously causes great concerns,” Miami Mayor Francis Suarez said.

“Basically, the site has significantly more contamination than is commercially reasonable,” Suarez added in an interview with the Miami Herald.

Long-term exposure to the chemical arsenic can lead to a variety of chronic health conditions, including skin disorders, cancers of the lung and bladder and cardiovascular issues.

Environmental firm EE&G, commissioned by Inter Miami, found barium and lead levels also exceeded legal limits. The site used to be a waste site for incinerator ash.

A deal to build a stadium for Inter Miami on the proposed Miami Freedom Park has not yet been finalised.

An Inter Miami spokesperson said: “Miami Freedom Park has continued to move forward with the various studies needed for the redevelopment of the site.

“Our legal team and engineers have been meeting with city commissioners and staff about the environmental report our consultants conducted on the city’s land.

“We will be working with the city to implement a remediation plan that is thorough, and provides residents and visitors a destination that is safe for all to enjoy.”

Inter Miami are set to join the MLS in 2020 as a new franchise and will initially play in an 18,000-seat arena in Fort Lauderdale.

(Source: BBC)

Russian race walker Bakulin gets eight-year ban for doping

Russian race walker Sergey Bakulin has been suspended for eight years for an anti-doping violation, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) said on Wednesday.

Bakulin, who has served a doping suspension in the past, had already been stripped of his 50 km world title from 2011.

The AIU, which oversees integrity issues in international athletics, including doping, said the ban was linked to abnormalities in Bakulin’s biological passport.

It comes into effect as of April 3, 2019, it said.

Bakulin had been coached by Viktor Chegin, who was suspended for life in 2016 after a report commissioned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) found there had been a “systematic doping regime” under Chegin’s influence at the training facility where he was head coach.

Reuters reported in June that Chegin had won state contracts to provide security at the facility after his ban, giving him access to the athletes training there.

The Russian athletics federation later said the country would cancel the state contract between Chegin and the facility because his access to athletes is a “sensitive matter for anti-doping services.”

Russia’s athletics federation has been suspended since a 2015 WADA-commissioned report found evidence of state-sponsored doping in the sport.

Global athletics ruling body the IAAF has nonetheless authorized some Russians to compete as neutrals after having demonstrated they are competing in a doping-free environment.

(Source: Reuters)

Ronaldo: I’d be worth €300m in today’s market

Cristiano Ronaldo has said transfer fees in football have got out of hand and that a player of his calibre in the market would now sell for €300 million.

His transfer to Real Madrid from Manchester United in the summer of 2009 was a then world record £80m, but eight years later, Neymar left Barcelona for Paris Saint-Germain for €222m.

Asked what he would likely be sold for now, he told Portuguese TVI: “Based on how football is nowadays? It’s difficult to calculate.

“Today there is a lot of emphasis placed on potential and the football industry is different. I’m going to put aside [Portugal international Joao] Felix’s [€120m transfer to Atletico Madrid from Benfica] case. Nowadays, any player is worth €100m having proved nothing, there is more money in football.

“A goalkeeper, a centre-back is worth €70m, €80m -- I don’t agree. But this is the world which we live in, the market is like that and you have to respect it. Is there a football player that has more records than me? I don’t think there is a player that has more records than me.”

Ronaldo left Real Madrid to join Juventus for €100m last summer and, pressed on what his worth would now be, he added: “If I were 25, if a goalkeeper is worth €75m, a player that does and has done what I have done in recent years has to have a value of three or four times that, easily, but I no longer have that desire.”

The 34-year-old also said “the challenge” of winning individual and collective trophies at the top level keeps him motivated to continue playing football. The Juve forward said he could retire next year if he wanted as he has amassed a fortune in wages, endorsements and investments yet the temptation is there to play until he’s 41 as he craves more silverware.

(Source: Soccernet)

Official: Fiorentina sign Ribery

Fiorentina have officially signed former Bayern Munich and France winger Franck Ribery on a free transfer.

Ribery has put pen to paper on a two-year contract with Fiorentina, reportedly worth €4m a season plus bonuses.

The Viola also confirmed in a statement that he would be unveiled on Thursday at 16:30 BST.

The 36-year-old began his career at hometown club Boulogne and later played for the likes of Galatasaray and Olympique Marseille.

However, he is best known for his 12-year spell at Bayern, whom he joined in 2007, going on to win a record nine Bundesliga and the Champions League in his 425 appearances, which also yielded 124 goals.

He played 81 times for France, helping them reach the 2006 World Cup Final, where they lost to Italy.

Ribery becomes Fiorentina’s fifth major summer signing after Pol Lirola, Milan Badelj, Kevin-Prince Boateng and Erick Pulgar.

(Source: Football Italia)

Paralympic chief hails Tokyo 2020 prep but hotels ‘biggest concern’

The Paralympics chief has said the 2020 Games are “on track,” but raised alarm bells over a dearth of accessible hotel rooms in Tokyo with only one year to go.

“I couldn’t be happier with the preparations so far. With one year to go, we’re totally on schedule, on track,” Andrew Parsons told AFP in an interview to mark 12 months until the start of the games on August 25, 2020.

However, he admitted that his “biggest concern” was still the poor selection of hotel rooms equipped for the thousands of disabled supporters, journalists and coaches poised to descend on Tokyo for the 13-day competition.

Athletes and some support staff will be housed in the Olympic village where there will be enough wheelchair-friendly rooms.

But outside the village, currently only half of the fully accessible rooms needed for the Games are available and Paralympic officials do not want hotels to be too widely dispersed around the vast Japanese capital for fear of creating a knock-on transport headache.

Japanese legislation previously required hotels with 50 or more rooms to have just one wheelchair-friendly option and although this has recently been slightly improved to ensure one percent of rooms are accessible, the change will not come into effect until after the Games.

Parsons said the lack of accessible hotel rooms highlighted a social stigma sometimes faced by disabled people in Japan.

“Most probably it is perceived in Japan that people with disabilities don’t travel for



leisure, for business, so why have accessible hotel rooms?” said the 42-year-old Brazilian.

The change in legislation will be a positive legacy from the Games and Parsons hoped the competition would also promote a change in attitude.

“What the Games will hopefully show is that persons with disabilities can travel, they can do anything that anyone else can if you offer them the conditions,” he said.

He cautioned that the hotel problem “may affect the Games and it may affect the Games experience of some of our clients” but said

organizers and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government were working on a solution.

“They understand they have an issue. They understand this is a problem for us, for the Games, so we are working on it together.”

■ **‘Over-protective’ attitude**

Parsons said he hoped the later start date for the Paralympics would reduce some of the problems feared from heat and humidity during the Olympics but noted that there were specific issues faced in disability sport.

For example, many quadriplegic athletes are unable to sweat, meaning they need to

take additional measures to cool their body, he said.

Like the Olympics, organizers have brought forward the start time for the marathon to beat the blistering sun but this also brings its own challenges for Paralympians.

“Wheelchair users need more time to prepare, so it probably means they will have to wake up at 2am but the wellbeing of athletes is the number-one priority for us,” stressed the IPC boss.

Tokyo mayor Yuriko Koike has repeatedly insisted that Tokyo 2020 will only be a success if the Paralympic Games goes off without a hitch and the ageing Japanese capital is hoping to seize on the opportunity to improve infrastructure for the elderly.

But Parsons emphasized the need to change attitudes towards disabled people in Japan, which he said was “over-protective.”

He noted that despite an accessible transport system, “you don’t see persons with disabilities moving around because there is a cultural barrier. There is an expectation that they should stay at home,” said Parsons.

But opinions are already changing in Japan, he added, pointed to the recent election of two disabled people to the Upper House of parliament.

He predicted that an improved performance by the home team, which failed to win a single gold at the 2016 Rio Paralympics, plus a broad marketing campaign in Tokyo will see packed-out stadiums.

(Source: AFP)

Real Madrid and the final say on Neymar



There are 13 days left until the transfer window closes and Barcelona and Real Madrid are constantly being linked with a move for Neymar.

Although there are negatives and risks surrounding signing the Brazilian, the opportunity to beat your fiercest rival to one of the world’s best players is one that both clubs are desperate to grasp.

Aside from his injuries and off the field antics, Neymar can win you a game on his own and possesses ability that very few players have.

Real Madrid and Barcelona are deploying completely different tactics when it comes to persuading Paris Saint-Germain to let Neymar go.

Barcelona continue to put across their desires to bring their former player back, their negotiations, their offers, their meetings and their journeys, almost is if it’s just an elaborate bluff to keep Lionel Messi happy. Los Blancos are doing the same thing, but with Paul Pogba instead.

Having already failed to sign Neymar three times before (2013, 2017 and 2018), Real Madrid are operating more

discretely.

They’re in constant contact with PSG but are working as if the subject of Neymar is not theirs to worry about. With the transfer deadline approaching, they’re bidding their time and waiting for the chance to pounce.

Barcelona might have made the first move for Neymar, but they didn’t land the knockout blow.

Their loan offer for the Brazilian was rejected by PSG, but the French club are open to letting him go on loan if Barcelona agree to an obligation to buy.

This gives both Barcelona and Real Madrid the chance to seal a deal and get one over on their rivals.

What better way to make a statement than sign the player you’ve dreamed about for the last seven years? Florentino Perez is prepared to play the villain in this story.

After their initial talks with Leonardo, Los Blancos know that PSG value Neymar at around 250 million euros and they’re prepared to include players as well as pay around half that figure in cash.

(Source: Marca)

Mo Salah U-turn on teammate’s harassment scandal divides Egyptians



Egypt and Liverpool star Mohamed Salah has reignited heated views about a sexual harassment scandal involving his national team-mate Amr Warda in a CNN interview which aired Monday.

After Salah sent controversial tweets that demanded the disgraced Warda be given a “second chance” during this year’s Africa Cup of Nations held in Egypt, Salah directly addressed his revised stance.

“What I meant to say is that (sexual harassment) happened before and is happening now. He has to get treatment or rehabilitation just to make sure that it is not going to happen again,” Salah told CNN.

Warda was kicked out of Egypt’s squad over multiple claims of sexual misconduct that surfaced online in June but was reinstated at the request of his team-mates.

Salah denied having a role in Warda rejoining the team.

His wide-ranging interview, which also took shots at Egypt’s football federation, attracted both supportive and critical reactions.

One Egyptian tweeted “Salah is lying... he did have a direct role in bringing Warda back to the team. He supported him with this tweets”.

Another young woman enthusiastically posted “we love and support you Mo Salah!”.

Former national goalkeeper Ahmed Shobair waded into the debate, noting that Salah’s tweets were written in coordination with the federation’s former chairman Hany Abou Rida.

The EFA board tendered its resignation after highly-fancied Egypt crashed out of the tournament at the last-16 stage following a 1-0 defeat to South Africa, a match in which Warda played.

Salah, who helped Premier League giants Liverpool win the Champions League in June, reiterated in the interview that “my position is still the same... the people misunderstand what I am saying”.

The outcry on social media is still raging though.

One woman criticized how Salah had handled the scandal differently for Egyptian and international audiences.

“What a pathetic attempt to save your image in the West, sexual harasser supporter. You’re not fooling anyone but your fans who were already looking the other way,” she posted on Twitter.

(Source: AFP)

Juventus call for earlier kick-off for Asian market



of Premier League clubs.

All of the Italian top-flight matches on the opening two weekends of the campaign kick off at either 17:00 BST or 19:45.

Speaking in March, Serie A president Gaetano Micciche said the possibility of playing a Serie A match in China within the next three years had been discussed, but it was unlikely to happen in that timescale.

Deloitte’s Football Money League, published in January, placed Juventus 11th in the table of the world’s 20 richest clubs.

Ricci said that an aggressive commercial strategy,

including becoming the first Italian club to open a branch, in addition to offices in Asia in Hong Kong, is aimed at increasing revenues as they pursue winning the Champions League for the first time since 1996.

Juventus have proceeded with their plans despite the recent civil unrest in Hong Kong.

Juve have also bought high-profile players, signing Portugal forward Cristiano Ronaldo for £99.2m from Real Madrid in 2018 and £67.5m Netherlands defender Matthijs de Ligt from Ajax this summer.

Although they have won the Italian title on 35 occasions - including for the past eight seasons - they have lost five Champions League finals in the past 23 years.

Several Premier League clubs have offices in Hong Kong, including Manchester United and Manchester City, and Federico Palomba, head of Juventus’ Asia-Pacific operation, says it is a region “with huge scope for growth”.

Since Ronaldo joined last year, Juventus have carried out studies that showed their global fanbase has risen by 16% and their ‘digital community’, their combined followers on various social media platforms including Weibo, has risen by 59% to 81 million.

“In the 1990s, Serie A was very popular in China. Now it is coming back again,” added Palomba.

(Source: BBC)

Iran league will start on Thursday amid unsolved problems

By Masoud Hossein

TEHRAN — The new season of Iran Professional League (IPL) will kick off on Thursday however there are a number of problems that need to be solved.

Titleholders Persepolis will raise the curtain on the new season at home against Pars Jonoubi but the Iran Football League Organization has announced that Azadi Stadium's second floor is not ready for the match.

On Thursday, so many football fans will miss the IPL opening match at the stadium since the second floor is under construction.

It's a weird thing because the new season has been delayed for about one month, but the officials have yet to solve the problems.

Iran League Organization has a duty to provide the football fans with an adequate standard of attending the match. The league competition should be equipped with electronic ticketing, seat numbering systems and CCTV cameras in the new season but they need more time to be done.

Iran has made change the league regulations in order to improve it according to FIFA standards since the previous version needed to be reformed according to new standards.

All AFC affiliates are mandated to follow, from the professional to amateur leagues. The clubs will be granted a license after fulfilling five requirements: Infrastructure, personnel administration, business, legal and sporting.

Iranian Football Federation is also under pressure since FIFA has asked it to provide a timeline towards women being able to buy tickets for the 2019 World Cup qualifiers.

Iran Deputy Minister of Sports, Mohammad Reza Davarzani, has recently said they are not ready yet to allow the women to attend football matches in the league competition because infrastructures are not



ready, however they can attend the match against Cambodia scheduled for Oct. 10.

FIFA and AFC also want the Iranian officials to allow the women to attend the league matches.

"We respect the local law, but we also want to promote the game. Everybody needs to be catered, it's an

inclusive game. Women play the game in Iran, men play the game, so everybody should be able to watch," AFC general secretary Windsor John told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview.

It seems there is still a long way ahead of Iranian sports officials.

Brazilian forward Brandão happy to wear Persepolis No. 7



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — New Persepolis signing José Brandão Gonçalves Júnior says he is very happy to wear No. 7 in the team.

Brandão has penned a one-year contract with Persepolis on loan from Bulgaria's Ludogorets II.

The 24-year-old striker has been awarded No. 7 in Persepolis.

He is excited to wear the iconic jersey which

is previously worn by great name Ali Parvin.

Talking about the iconic shirt he said, "First, I wanted to wear No. 99 or No. 9 in the team but I am granted No. 7. I know how important is the jersey for the Persepolis fans," Brandão said in an interview with the club's official website.

"No. 7 is the most important jersey in Persepolis and I want to do my best for my team but I need my teammates' help. I am

ready to win the Iranian league for the fourth time in a row, that's why I am here," the Brazilian added.

"I promise the Persepolis fans to score many goals, however Mr. Caderon (Persepolis coach) will decide my position," Brandão stated.

Persepolis will open the new season of Iran Professional League with a match against Pars Jonoubi on Thursday.

Brazilian Elkeson earns landmark China call-up

China named Elkeson in their squad Wednesday for their opening World Cup qualifier with the Brazilian poised to become the first without Chinese ancestry to play for the country.

The move has divided Chinese football fans and experts, however, as coach Marcello Lippi attempts to guide the nation to only their second World Cup.

Lippi has long complained about a dearth of attacking options and has moved to plug the gap with the 30-year-old striker, who will use the Chinese name Aikese.

The move to naturalize the Brazilian comes after China similarly gave a passport to London-born midfielder Nico Yennaris.

The Beijing Guoan player has taken the Chinese name Li Ke and made his debut for Lippi's side in June this year.

The former Arsenal man, however, is half-Chinese, whereas Guangzhou Evergrande striker Elkeson qualifies for China having played in the country since 2013.

Elkeson has scored more than 100 goals in about 150 games in the Chinese Super League.

Along with Espanyol forward Wu Lei and Yennaris, Elkeson is part of a 35-man squad named by Italian World Cup winner Lippi for China's game in the Mal-



dives on September 10.

Elkeson appears likely to be the start of a growing trend for perennial under-achievers China, who languish 71st in the FIFA rankings and made the World Cup just once, in 2002.

Fellow Brazilians Ricardo Goulart and Fernando are both reportedly set to be naturalized, along with

English defender Tyias Browning, also of Evergrande.

Although many other nations, notably 2022 World Cup hosts Qatar, call up players born in other countries, China had resisted doing so until now.

Some fans and pundits, desperate to see China play at a World Cup again, have backed the naturalization policy.

Others brand it short-sighted and question why a country with a population of 1.4 billion cannot find homegrown players that are good enough.

Reacting to Elkeson's inclusion in the China squad, one sports think tank was unimpressed.

"It's not in line with the original intention of football and the long-term development of the industry in China," wrote an opinion piece by Vning on social media.

The organization also questioned how effectively the likes of Elkeson and Yennaris -- who is having intensive Chinese lessons -- will be able to communicate with their teammates.

"Whether they can be integrated into the team and whether they can fight with honor in face of difficulties are hard to say," Vning added.

(Source: AFP)

Volleyball's new generation out to shine in first global appearance

They've performed at home and excelled regionally, but volleyball's new generation of under-19-year-olds are now making their debut before a world audience over the next couple of weeks, as the 2019 FIVB Boys' U19 World Championship got underway on Wednesday in the Tunisian capital - though there's a handful of players that do have some impressive previous exposure to world-level volleyball.

Iran are in Tunisia to defend the title they won two years ago in Bahrain, when they beat Russia 3-1 in the final at Riffa. That was Iran's second title in the history of the competition, after their success in 2007 when they edged China 3-2 in an all-Asia affair in Tijuana.

The Asian powerhouse will also be looking at replicating the triumph of their men's U21 team last month, when they beat Italy 3-2 in the final of that age-group World Championship, also in Bahrain.

Indeed, as many as four players from that squad from last month's U21s are here in Tunis to try and get their personal second world championship gold of the season. This includes both starting middle blockers, Amir Hossein Toukhteh and Mehran Feyz, alongside Mahdi Jelveh, yet another middle blocker, and opposite Bardia Saadat.

The three middle blockers, despite their young age, could be considered 'veterans', amongst the debutantes of

this World Championship: At 17, they had all already been part the Iran squad that won the 2017 U19 gold in Riffa.

Brazil are the only team in the history of the competition to have competed in all 15 previous editions and they lead the medals table with six gold and one silver. But the South American powerhouse have not been on the podium in 14 years, since the last time the competition was held in Africa, in 2005 in Algiers, when they ended up with their sole silver after losing in five sets to Russia in the final.

Brazil themselves are fielding a couple of players who were in at the U21 Worlds last month in Bahrain. Setter Gustavo Andre, who celebrated his 17th birthday earlier this month, will be captaining Brazil here in Tunis, alongside outside hitter Nathan Mota. Both were on the South American squad that beat Russia in the bronze medal match at the 2019 U21 Worlds.

Cuba, who were 10th in Bahrain last month, have the most players carrying over to the younger squad in Tunis - as many as six, including setters Christian Thondike and Adrian Chirino, outside hitters Jose Gutierrez and Victor Andreu, middle blocker Luis Allen and libero Ricardo Gomez.

The 2019 FIVB Boys' U19 World Championship involves a total of 20 teams representing all five continental confederations. Amongst the top



favorites and other old hands, there's two countries making their debut in the competition - Colombia and Nigeria.

The 20 teams are divided into four pools of five for the first phase of the competition. The top two of each pool will advance to play for positions 1-8 in a knockout phase, with the rest carrying on until the very end for classification matches.

All matches will be played in two venues, both in Tunis. Pool A (Chinese Taipei, Belarus, Cuba, Brazil, Tunisia) and Pool B (Bulgaria, Italy, Czech Re-

public, Colombia, Iran) are in El Menzah; Pool C (Mexico, Argentina, Egypt, Germany, Japan) and Pool D (Dominican Republic, USA, Korea, Nigeria, Russia) are at Rades.

The so-called 'youth veterans' will surely form the foundations of their squads as they seek to excel in Tunis, but it's going to be an exciting two weeks coming up, to watch in action for the first time all the fresh talent that's bound to keep the volleyball world thrilled for the next decade or more.

(Source: fivb.org)

Iran win three more golds at Asian Junior Wushu C'ships

MNA — Iranian practitioners collected three gold, one silver and four bronze medals at the 2019 edition of Asian Junior Wushu Championships, underway in Brunei.

On Wednesday and in the 12-15 age group of boys' Nanguan form, Iran's Shahin Banitalebi snatched the gold medal with 9.32 points. Representatives from Malaysia and Indonesia stood next. Banitalebi had already won two other bronze medals in two other forms of Taolu.

Nazanin Bazdar earned the silver medal of Nanguan form in the 12-15 age group of girls' category on Wednesday with 9.31 points. She had earlier gained a bronze medal of Nandao form.

On Tuesday, Iran's Younes Shahraki overpowered his Indian rival in the final of boy's 45kg Sanda to earn the gold medal.

Also, another gold was gained by Soheil Mousavi who defeated his Chinese rival in the final boy's 56kg Sanda competitions.

Monireh Panahi, who had won a bronze of duel event in the opening day of the event, received another bronze this time in Jianshu form of girls' 15-18 age group.

The 2019 edition of Asian Junior Wushu Championships kicked off on Monday and will go through August 23 in Taolu and Sanda categories. 265 athletes from 16 countries are participating in the event which is being held in Brunei.

Kamal Kamyabnia undergoes surgery

TASNIM — Persepolis football team midfielder Kamal Kamyabnia underwent shoulder surgery Tuesday night.

Kamyabnia will be sidelined for two months.

He had already suffered shoulder dislocation several times and Persepolis coach Gabriel Calderon asked him to undergo surgery to solve the problem.

Persepolis Iraqi midfielder Bashar Resan also underwent shoulder surgery in May.

Defending champions Persepolis will begin the new season of Iran Professional League with a match against Pars Jonoubi on Thursday.

Iran players bag gold in World Transplant Games 2019

IRNA — Two Iranian athletes snatched gold medals in Pétanque category of World Transplant Games 2019 which is underway in Newcastle, England.

Bahareh Beigi and Elham Mohammadi Taghdir earned gold medals. Mohammadi had earlier grabbed a silver medal in individual category.



Iranian players have so far received 21 medals, including 9 gold, 8 silver and 4 bronze.

The World Transplant Games (WTG) are staged by the World Transplant Games Federation.

Held over seven days, the Summer Games are held every two years in host cities around the world.

This inspiring event is a celebration of a second chance of living life to the full, demonstrating the success of transplant surgery and raising public awareness of organ donation.

Allow Iranian women to attend matches, says Asian soccer official

Iranian women should be allowed to attend men's World Cup qualifiers later this year, a top Asian soccer official said on Tuesday, ramping up pressure on Tehran to end a long-running ban.

Iranian women have long been barred from watching men's teams play, but Tehran relaxed the rule last year to allow hundreds of women to watch the Asian Champions League final organized by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

The AFC, the Asian football governing body which has 47 members that includes Iran, said it was working to help world soccer governing body FIFA find an "amicable solution" that would allow them to attend future games.

"Everybody needs to be catered, it's an inclusive game. Women play the game in Iran, men play the game, so everybody should be able to watch," AFC general secretary Windsor John told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview.

"For us at the end of the day we respect the local law, but we also want to promote the game," he said at the AFC headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

FIFA wrote to the Iranian Football Federation in June asking it to provide a timeline towards women being able to buy tickets for the qualifiers, which begin on Sept. 5.

John lauded the access for Iranian women at the Asian Champions League final last year, but said the current situation involved "different scenarios".

"(The concern is) if it starts with football, will there be other ripple effects, will other forces or entities now ask for the same privilege," said the No. 2 at the AFC.

"A lot of things are on the table at the moment, we really don't know which direction it is going."

FIFA has pledged to expand women's role in the sport, appointing Fatma Samoura in 2016 as its first female secretary general, and this year's women's World Cup drew record crowds and television audiences.

(Source: Reuters)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

God has given man intelligence to deliver himself from distress and anxiety.

Imam Ali (AS)

Ceramics from Medieval and Modern Iran to be shown in Berlin

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Bumiller Collection Studio d e s k X-Berg in Berlin will be showcasing ceramics from Medieval and Modern Iran in an exhibition named “Call Me Anything But Ordinary”.

The exhibit pays homage to the art of ceramics from the Iranian realm arranged as an installation by the Frankfurt-based artist Jörg Ahrnt in combination with a selection of his drawings.

The event opening on September 12 will feature objects from the Bumiller Collection and the Luschey Collection, Bumiller Collection has announced.

German archaeologist and art historian of Iran and the Middle East Heinz Luschey (Berlin 1910 -1992), has carried out great achievements through his comparative studies in classical archaeology. Luschey and his studies in Iran have made considerable contributions towards elucidating the history of the land of the Achaemenids.

Businessman, economist and tax adviser Manfred Bumiller (1928-2018) decided in the early 1980s to set up an art collection and his collection, the largest worldwide of early Islamic bronzes, is housed in a historical town-house in the heart of the old city of Bamberg as the Bumiller Collection.

Also, an exhibition of modern ceramic artworks created by Iranian artist Mansureh Najjarpur from the historical city of Isfahan will open on the sidelines of the exhibit.

“Call Me Anything But Ordinary” will be running until November 30.

Bojnurd to host Iran, Turkmenistan cultural festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — A cultural festival putting d e s k the spotlight on commonalities between Iran and Turkmenistan will open today in the northeastern Iranian city of Bojnurd.

The event will be hosting a delegation of 20 Turkmen artists in the fields of handicrafts and ritual and traditional dance as well as a number of Iranian artists.

Organized by Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO), the two-day festival aims at expanding cultural relations between the two countries.

James Bond movie gets a title – “No Time to Die”

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — The new James Bond film finally has a title - “No Time to Die” - and an April 2020 release date, producers announced on Tuesday.

“Daniel Craig returns as James Bond, 007 in... NO TIME TO DIE. Out in the UK on 3 April, 3, 2020 and April, 8, 2020 in the U.S.,” according to a brief posting on the official 007 Twitter account.



Actor Daniel Craig arrives for the royal world premiere of the new 007 film “Skyfall” at the Royal Albert Hall in London October 23, 2012. (Reuters/Paul Hackett)

Filming for the new movie, previously known only as Bond 25, got under way in Jamaica in April when producers announced that Oscar winner Rami Malek will play the villain in latest entry in lucrative British spy franchise. Craig confirmed in 2017 that he would return for a fifth time as secret agent 007.

Producers said on Tuesday that the new film would see Bond enjoying a tranquil life in Jamaica after leaving active service before an old friend, Felix Leiter, from the CIA turns up asking for help.

Bond embarks on a mission to rescue a kidnapped scientist, which puts him on the trail of a mysterious villain armed with dangerous new technology, they added.

“No Time to Die” was initially expected to arrive in movie theaters in November 2019 but that date was pushed back to 2020 after Britain's Danny Boyle pulled out as director and was replaced by American Cary Joji Fukunaga.

The film is also being shot in London, Italy and Norway and actors reprising their roles will include Ralph Fiennes as M, Naomie Harris as Moneypenny and Ben Whishaw as Q. The Bond franchise is one of the movie world's most lucrative with 2015's “Spectre” raking in \$880 million at the box office worldwide, while “Skyfall” in 2012 grossed more than \$1 billion globally.

U.S. sanctions’ deadly effects under spotlight in Tehran photo exhibit

A R T **TEHRAN** — “Silent War”, an d e s k exhibition of photos putting a spotlight on U.S. sanctions and their deadly effect on medical treatment in Iran, will open in the Iranian Artists Forum on Friday.

The photos were taken by Seyyed Mehdi Hosseini, who has lived with many people whose lives have been affected by sanctions.

Hosseini has created a photo book of their lives, some of which will be displayed in “Silent War”.

In a statement published for the exhibit, Hosseini wrote, “It all started from the last few days of year 2012 when I heard the sad news of my father's illness. He was diagnosed with Liver cirrhosis.”

“I didn't know what the cause of my father's fatal disease was. But I knew something for sure, doctors had great hopes for him. They assured us that there were some treatment procedures which could slow or delay the progression of his disease.”

“Unfortunately, however, his condition coincided with some significant changes in the country due to economic sanctions. My father's illness, along with the economic and social instability, caused our family to face a crisis. We had been overwhelmed by lots of prescriptions for rare medicines while sanction statements were piling up at international agencies,” the statement reads.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had claimed that “the U.S. does not, and never did, sanction food and medicine. They are exempt from sanctions.” But limits on financial transactions have caused problems in the process of buying and producing medicine.

In June, vocalist Mohammad Motamedi said that due to the U.S. sanctions on Iran, doctors in the country



A poster for “Silent War”.

are struggling with a critical shortage of specialized drugs and medical instruments to treat their patients.

“It has been two months since I have been waiting for a simple pH meter to continue my treatment for an

operation on my stomach. But the necessary instrument has not been delivered to the country due to the sanctions,” he had said in a post published on his Instagram. The exhibit will be running until September 21.

Khayyam Intl. Exhibition of Photography to go to Russia



A poster for the 6th Khayyam International Exhibition of Photography in Penza, Russia.

A R T **TEHRAN** — A d e s k selection of works shown during the 6th Khayyam International Exhibition of Photography will go on display in an exhibition opening today in the Russian city of Penza.

The exhibit will be held at the GBUK Penza Regional Library, the director of the exhibition, Ali Samei, said in a press release on Wednesday.

The 6th Khayyam International Exhibition of Photography initially opened in January at the Iranian Academy of Arts in Tehran.

The exhibit toured several Iranian

cities and later was taken to Konya in Turkey and Bilbao in Spain.

The latest exhibition was held in the Spanish city of Gijon in August and it is currently underway in Urmia, the capital of West Azarbaijan Province in Iran.

Iran's Focus Photo Club organizes the exhibition annually with the help of the Photographic Society of America (PSA) and FIAP.

The Khayyam exhibit aims to elevate the art of photography and provide facilities for increased interaction between Iranian and world photographers.

Iran attends Beijing book fair



Iran's pavilion at the 26th Beijing International Book Fair.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iran d e s k Cultural Fairs Institute (ICFI) is attending the 26th edition of the Beijing International Book Fair, which is currently underway in the Chinese capital.

A number of award-winning Iranian books on Persian literature, art, children, religion and sacred defense (1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war) are on display at a pavilion covering an area of 18-square meters dedicated to Iran at the fair.

Iranian illustrators Alireza Golduzian and Afsaneh Sanei, and writer Zahra

Nematollahi are also attending the book fair.

Iran has arranged some programs including teaching painting to children, holding workshops on illustrating and holding meetings with Iranian and foreign publishers.

Iran was the guest of honor at the Beijing International Book Fair in 2017 and China was the special guest of the Tehran International Book Fair this year.

The Beijing International Book Fair, which is one of the major Asian events in the publishing industry, will come to an end on August 25.

Four cineastes receive lifetime achievement awards at Iran Cinema Celebration

I → Speaking at the ceremony, Iranian House of Cinema director Manuchehr Shahsavari called culture the field of friendship, respect and unity, and said, “If an individual enters cinema without these, he/she will not succeed.”

“What gives us the opportunity to work in the field of cinema, despite all these hardships, is our unity, and if we don't take the time and have patience, the future of Iran's cinema will be dark and painful,” he added.

“Tonight is the night to feel relieved after 53 years of constant work,” Zanjanpur said after accepting his award.

“I am happy to be honored by my colleagues at the Iranian House of Cinema. Artists are lonely and this loneliness gives credit to an artist, and I am one of the lonely ones,” he added.

Mohtashem was the next honoree, and prominent make-up artist Abdollah Eskandari talked about Mohtashem on stage and said, “The history of make-up in Iranian cinema is mingled with Mohtashem. During those years when make-up had no meaning in cinema, Mohtashem went to the U.S. to learn the art and returned back home and trained many students, including me.”



From left to right art elites Hassan Zahedi, Sirus Alvand, Akbar Zanjanpur and Bijan Mohtashem pose for a photo with their lifetime achievement awards during the 21st Iran Cinema Celebration, August 20, 2019. (ISNA/ Borna Qasemi)

“Tonight is a big honor for me to be beside masters of cinema. I must express thanks to those who I have worked with all these years,” Zahedi said on stage.

Alvand was the last who went on onstage to receive his lifetime achievement award.

“Four nights are very important for me, one is my birthday night, the other is the night I married my only love Nahid Abbasi, the third was the night I received the best director award and the fourth surely is tonight,” Alvand concluded.

The Iranian House of Cinema organizes the celebration every year to commemorate Iran's National Day of Cinema, which is September 12. However, this year's celebration will be held a few weeks earlier due to its coincidence with the Muharram mourning season.

“When the Moon Was Full” and “Sheeple” led nominations at the 21st Iran Cinema Celebration, as each of the movies got the jury's nods in 14 categories.

The movies are competing in best film, best director, best actor, best actress, best costume design, best stage design and several other categories.

“Vico and Herder” comes to Iranian bookstores

A R T **TEHRAN** — d e s k Prominent Russian-British theorist and philosopher Isaiah Berlin's book “Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas” has been published in Persian in Tehran.

Edris Ranji is the translator of the book, which has been released by Qoqun Publications.

In the first section of the book written in 1976, Berlin studies the philosophical ideas of Giovanni Battista Vico, a profound

and original thinker, who, after being overshadowed by Montesquieu, has been rediscovered at intervals ever since, but has even more to say to the present age than to his own.

Johann Gottfried Herder, the subject of the second study, although commonly regarded as the father of European nationalism, originated three perhaps equally influential currents of thought: populism, the idea of artistic commitment and art as the voice of its time and social

milieu’, and the idea of the autonomy of cultures and the equal validity of many dissimilar systems of values.

Isaiah Berlin was renowned for his conversational brilliance, his defense of liberalism, his attacks on political extremism and intellectual fanaticism, and his accessible, coruscating writings on the history of ideas.

Photo: Front cover of the Persian version of “Vico and Herder: two studies in the history of ideas” by Isaiah Berlin.

