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Foreign presence in Persian Gulf detrimental to security: IRGC chief

TEHRAN — Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says Iran regards the presence of outsiders in the Persian Gulf as detrimental to the security of the region.

"The enemies are not capable of reaching their goals and with their presence in the Persian Gulf and other regions, they are merely in-

tensifying tensions," Major General Hossein Salami said on Thursday, Mehr reported.

General Salami said the wars waged by the enemies in the region have been fruitless.

He also said no country can establish security in the entire region as good as Iran can. **→3**

Syria retakes cluster of towns in last terrorist bastion

TEHRAN — The Syrian army has seized control of a pocket of territory in the north-western province of Hama from militants who had held it since the early years of the war.

Troops have pushed deep into a cluster of towns and their environs in the Hama countryside since Friday morning, encircling militants and a Turkish military post

there, Syria's official news agency SANA and a war monitor said.

Army units managed to establish control over the towns of Latamina, Latmin, Maerkaba, Kafar Zita, and Lahaya in Hama's northern countryside after establishing control over the strategic town of Khan Shaykhun in Idlib province, SANA said. **→13**

Former Iraq PM warns Israel of 'strong response'

TEHRAN — Former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is warning of a "strong response" if it is proven that Israel was behind recent airstrikes in Iraq.

In statements issued by his office on Friday, he also said that if Israel continues to target Iraq, the country "will transform into a battle arena that drags in multiple countries, including Iran."

The comments by al-Maliki, who was Iraqi prime minister for eight years and

now heads a Shiite bloc in parliament, came hours after U.S. officials confirmed Israel was responsible for the bombing of an Iranian weapons depot in Iraq last month.

Israel has carried out several attacks targeting bases of Iraqi anti-terror forces "in recent days," the New York Times reports.

Two senior American officials told the newspaper that the attacks targeted Iraqi munition storehouses, alleging that the site was being used "to transfer weapons to Syria". **→13**



REPORT

Ramin Hossein Abadian
Mehr News Agency
journalist

Continuation of Syrian Army advancements in Idlib and escape of terrorists

The Syrian army continues the operation to liberate Idlib from terrorist groups with Russian support.

But many are asking the question whether or not the Idlib liberation operation is easier or more difficult than the previous ones. Looking at the previous battles, it can be said that the battle of Idlib will be longer than the liberation operations of eastern Damascus and southern Syria, not the liberation battles around Aleppo and its eastern part.

It will not be long before the Syrian army takes control of Muttalag-Kafri-zita-Khan Sheikhun and liberates Kabani on the outskirts of Latakia, returning to the Syrian embrace peacefully or militarily.

According to Al-Jazeera, terrorists have fled the cities and towns of the northern outskirts of Hama, while the army has not yet entered the area.

But what is remarkable about the Battle of Idlib is the full support of the Russians. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov says: "Based on documents signed by Russian and Turkish Presidents Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Sochi in September last year, our Turkish counterparts have made commitments to disarm armed groups. And they announced that they would be ready, if necessary, to participate in resolving the situation and problems related to terrorist groups."

Speaking to his French counterpart, Vladimir Putin said: "We support the Syrian government's actions in Idlib and the fight against terrorism in Idlib will continue until its end."

While media report of Russian and Turkish forces clashing as Turkish forces move to Khan Sheikhun and withdrawal of Turkish airplanes, it is also said that Turkey insists on staying in Idlib and that the Russians are no longer waiting. **→13**

Traveler recommends potential tourists to visit Iran before a "big influx"

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN — Many tourism associates believe that Iran is still somewhat of a lesser-known destination for many avid globetrotters, saying the country, despite having enormous potentials, has a long way to go to occupy a dominant position in world tourism market.

There are many reasons behind that I don't want to refer but a way is to reflect the voices, perceptions, and opinions of travelers to the ancient land.

This time, I came across a welcoming Western traveler, named Ray Cook, a New Zealand native, who was checking luggage in his left-hand-drive Toyota Land Cruiser opposite Hally Hotel, which is next to the Tehran Times.

We soon started a friendly chat about his journey. I learned that Ray had driven overland from

Singapore to Europe so far in his Land Cruiser, exploring over 80,000km.

He accepted with open arms to share his views and experiences on Iran leg of his adventure.

"I would recommend anybody who is thinking of travelling to Iran they go before the big influx of tourist starts arriving here. This will soon become a popular place," Ray said.

The text of the interview is given below:

Please tell our readers about yourself and your globetrotting journey.

This trip of driving around the world in a specially fitted out Toyota Land Cruiser has been a bucket list of mine for a long time and planned it.

I have been fortunate to be joined with my son Ryan on this leg of Iran with my adventure. I also have had friends and family

who join up with me at different locations around the world to also experience this amazing life of travel and have so far been to 30 different countries and driven over 80,000 km so far.

As a professional traveler what is your assessment of tourism potential in Iran, particularly for typical European sightseers? What are the strengths and weaknesses from your point of view?

In my opinion I feel that once the world has embraced Iran as a safe destination to travel to there will be an influx of travelers from all over the world interested in this amazing destination that is so rich in history, natural nature, architecture, food, and most importantly its people. They are amazing. **→10**

Putin orders 'exhaustive' response to U.S. missile test

TEHRAN — The Russian Armed Forces will scrutinize a recent cruise missile test, conducted by the US after ditching the landmark INF Treaty, and examine reciprocal measures. However, Moscow says it is not aiming for an arms race.

President Vladimir Putin has ordered the Defense Ministry and other bodies to "study the level of threat posed by these US actions and take exhaustive measures to prepare a symmetrical response."

Putin was speaking just days after the US military test-fired a ground version of Tomahawk cruise missile that travelled about 500km (310 miles) before hitting a mock target.

The weapon, fired from a universal Mk-41

launch system in California, was banned under the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty which the US formally withdrew from on August 2.

According to RT, Washington "vehemently denied the possibility of a sea-based Tomahawk missile being fired from the ground-based Mk-41," Putin said. Now, one "cannot deny" a breach of the now defunct treaty, he added.

In recent years, Russia has consistently voiced unease over US missile systems, stationed in countries such as Romania, or potentially situated in countries such as Poland, being used for offensive purposes. Moscow became increasingly concerned about these types of launchers,

but Washington has always turned a deaf ear to these concerns.

On Sunday, the U.S. Department of Defense tested a modified Navy Tomahawk cruise missile off the coast of California. The Pentagon said it "accurately impacted its target," flying more than 310 miles — a distance that would have breached the limits established by the now obsolete INF treaty.

A senior Trump administration official told reporters earlier this month that the United States would flight-test a weapon system in the coming weeks. He said the country was "years away from having an effectively deployable capability."



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Mazandaran winners of cable ski championship

Mazandaran province claimed the title of the Iran's Cable Ski Championship on Thursday.

The tournament was held in Avidar Lake in Noshahr, in the northern province of Mazandaran.

The event brought 22 skiers together in the lake.

The top three skiers will be invited to the national team.

Cable skiing is a way to water ski (or wakeboard), in which the skier's rope and handle are pulled by an electrically-driven cable, whereas traditionally a waterskier is pulled by a motorboat.



ARTICLE

Sondoss Al Asaad
Political analyst from Beirut

Ramping up the pressure won't weaken Hezbollah

The Lebanese resistance of Hezbollah has evolved significantly from a resistance movement in the early 80s into a major political and military force, with highly advanced capabilities and worldwide presence. It has also created its own charitable, educational, social, economic, touristic, media and agricultural institutions. As a result, Hezbollah today wields significant influence across the Lebanese community. Recently, some have reiterated that the resistance would soon collapse due to the U.S. punitive measures. However, this assumption is far-fetched beyond reality and the measures will not suffice much longer for various reasons.

Let's first remark that Hezbollah represents the multicultural fabric of the Lebanese people, who repeatedly stress their rejection to Western aggression. The strategy of sanctions will not succeed in the face of the strong will of Lebanese people, who have over and over again managed to thwart Washington and Tel Aviv's schemes. Eventually, Hezbollah will emerge victorious over these malicious sanctions for it is a legitimate resistance that owes national duty to defend and safeguard Lebanon's rights and interests. Indeed, the sanctions have been imposed against the resistance due to its courageous and firm stances in the face of the Zionist and imperialist conspiracies. **→13**

Tender of purchasing 200 tons of watermarked papers with the emblem of State Printing Office of Iran (Mould)
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Zarif calls talks with Macron on nuclear deal ‘constructive’

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said talks he held on Friday in Paris with French President Emmanuel Macron on how to implement the 2015 nuclear deal were productive”, according to the IRNA news agency.

Zarif said the talks on the nuclear deal, officially called the JCPOA, were continuation of telephone conversations between President Hassan Rouhani and Macron.

“France presented some suggestions to Iran on how to implement the JCPOA and the steps that both sides need to take. We also presented some suggestions on how to fully implement the JCPOA,” Zarif stated.

“The talks were good and productive,” he said, adding, “Of course, it depends on how the European Union can carry out the commitments within the JCPOA and also the commitments that they made after the JCPOA and America’s exit.”

Zarif reiterated Tehran’s long-held position that it is not possible to renegotiate the nuclear deal.

As Macron will be hosting the G-7 summit on August 24-26 it is an opportunity for France and other countries signatory to the JCPOA to discuss the issue with the G-7 members, Zarif remarked.

“Now that the G7 summit is being held, there will be an opportunity for Mr. Macron and other European members of the 4+1 [JCPOA negotiators] to talk to the other G7 members.”

The G-7 includes Japan, Italy, Canada, Germany, France, Britain, and the United States.

The United States left from the JCPOA in May 2018. Since then, it has slapped the harshest sanctions in history against Iran.

Chinese ambassador to Moscow says nuclear deal cannot be replaced

By staff and agency

The Chinese Ambassador to Russia, Zhang Hanhui, has said that the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, is very “important and cannot be replaced”.

In an interview with TASS published on Thursday, he said that Beijing expects all parties to the JCPOA to take their obligations seriously.

“China highly values Iran’s strict compliance with the plan, which was repeatedly confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency, and hopes that other JCPOA participants will also take their obligations seriously,” Ambassador Zhang insisted.

He was hopeful that the international community would make every effort possible to protect the economic benefits the agreement offered to Iran, creating conditions for Tehran to continue implementing its obligations.

Zhang suggested that “the only real and effective way” to resolve the issue is that the United States rejoin the nuclear deal.

“Together with Russia, China will continue to monitor the situation and take active efforts within the United Nations to resolve the Iran nuclear issue and ease tensions,” the Chinese ambassador said.

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 and enriching nuclear fuel to the purity level of 4.5 percent as the Europeans missed a 60-day deadline to devise a concrete mechanism to protect the country from the U.S. sanctions.

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

President Hassan Rouhani said on August 14 that Tehran will start the next step of reducing nuclear obligations after the second 60-day deadline.

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

Rouhani has described Iran’s moves in reducing nuclear commitments step by step as a “wise” decision.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Monday that Iran is devising the third step of reducing its obligations in a way proportionate to the issues between Iran and the remaining parties to the deal.

On Friday, French President Emmanuel Macron met with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Paris to discuss a plan reportedly presented by France on how to save the JCPOA.

“There are many suggestions and consultations. Mr. Macron [French President Emmanuel Macron] is making efforts in this respect. Other European countries have provided supports in this respect and we will wait to see what result these diplomatic efforts will yield in the little time left to take the third step,” he said in a press conference.

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

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

Zarif said on Wednesday if the Europeans fully honor their commitments to the 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 said in a speech at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

UN Secretary-General’s Chef de Cabinet Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti said on Tuesday that the UN supports the nuclear deal.

Iran makes advanced laser cannons

(Tasnim) — Iran has come into possession of advanced laser cannons which are used to protect the country’s vital centers, a deputy defense minister said.

General Shahrokh Shahram said Tehran has obtained the technical know-how to manufacture and utilize advanced cannons using high-power laser beams.

“Laser is being used in artillery systems for two purposes, and could help increase the volume of fire, mobility and precision,” he said.

According to the general, Iranian military forces are currently employing laser technology in preparing artillery systems, launching artillery ammunition, and in radars, which would accurately detect, track and hit the hostile targets.

Shahram also noted that Iran has developed homegrown weapons with the laser technology.

Bavar-373 missile system more powerful than S-300

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A top Iranian army officer said on Thursday night that the domestically-built missile defense system dubbed “Bavar-373” is more advanced than the U.S. Patriot system and its Russian counterpart S-300.

The long-range surface-to-air missile system was unveiled in a ceremony on Thursday.

“The system has been designed and developed considering the country’s need for a defense system with a high range,” Brigadier General Shahrokh Shahram, a deputy defense minister, told national TV on Thursday night.

Bavar-373 missile system was developed as Iran “needed a missile system stronger than the Russian S-300, given the increasing threats” against the country, he added.

The air defense missile system has a higher interception range and a greater combat power compared with the Russian counterpart, and enjoys over 10,000 compound eyes, each of which serves as a radar, he explained, according to Press TV.

He also compared Bavar-373 with the U.S.-made Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) and Patriot systems, saying it is categorized at a higher class than THAAD and is much better than the Patriot system.

■ **“Bavar-373 is more like S-400”**

President Hassan Rouhani also boasted the production of the advanced missile system,



saying the mobile missile defense system is more powerful than S-300 missile system and is more like S-400.

“This very valuable work is a great present of the armed forces and Defense Ministry for the Iranian people,” Rouhani said during the unveiling ceremony.

Bavar-373 is a mobile missile defense system

designed to intercept and destroy incoming hostile targets. The system employs missiles that have a maximum range of 300 kilometers. The system is capable of simultaneously detecting up to 300 targets, tracking 60 targets at once and engaging six targets at a time, according to Press TV.

The system is a competitor to Russia’s S-300

I am worried by threats to JCPOA: Ban Ki-moon

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has voiced concerns about the threats to the Iran nuclear deal, also known as the JCPOA, saying it was a grave error for the U.S. to walk away from the JCPOA.

In an exclusive interview with the Shargh newspaper published on Wednesday, Ban also said if the agreement with Iran falls apart, it will be much more difficult for the U.S. to reach an agreement with North Korea.

The following is the text of the interview:

■ How do you see the current situation surrounding the JCPOA? Is it working or collapsing?

A: I am worried by the threats to the JCPOA, and to the international nuclear arms control architecture more widely. Multilateral agreements that have taken years of work to put together are being rapidly ripped up, making the world a more dangerous place.

It was a grave error for the U.S. to walk away from the JCPOA. I have spoken about this many times, and so have The Elders, the group of independent global leaders that I am part of. The JCPOA is an achievement of multilateral diplomacy, and it was working until the U.S. withdrew unilaterally. We

should all remember that the JCPOA is not just a multilateral agreement; as it was formally approved by the UN Security Council in a resolution – agreed by the United States government and all other members – it is actually part of international law.

■ How do you see the European efforts to save the deal and Iran’s actions regarding the agreement?

A: The world’s nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), was able to confirm repeatedly that Iran was abiding by all of its commitments under the JCPOA, until very recently – when Iran decided that it would increase uranium production beyond those limits, in response to U.S. sanctions and the failure of other signatories to live up to their obligations under the agreement. I have taken careful note that Iranian officials have repeatedly said they want to remain within

the framework of the agreement and that this decision on uranium enrichment is reversible.

I hope that it will be reversed and that the agreement can be kept alive. All of the signatories other than the U.S. remain committed to the agreement, and want to continue to engage with Iran diplomatically and economically. Iran is known as a country with a proud history; it has made an enormous contribution to the cultural and scientific heritage of the world. Everyone in a position to contribute should work for it to have strong, positive relations of mutual respect with the whole of the international community.

■ How do the prospects of the JCPOA, and in general, the prospects of Iran’s relations with the West look like to you?

A: The JCPOA dealt only with nuclear issues, not with the other political or security disputes between Western countries and Iran,

“The JCPOA dealt only with nuclear issues, not with the other political or security disputes between Western countries and Iran, nor between Iran and its regional neighbors.”

MP calls release of oil tanker a victory for Iran’s diplomacy

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Mohammad Javad Jamali, a senior Iranian lawmaker, has said that release of the supertanker Grace 1 has been a victory for Iran’s diplomacy.

In an interview with ISNA published on Friday, Jamali, a member of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said the tanker was seized upon an order by the U.S. and its release has been “hard” for Washington.

The Gibraltar government, a semi-autonomous territory ruled by London, released on August 15 the Iranian supertanker despite the U.S. attempts to block it.

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

July 4 under the claim that it was carrying oil for Syria.

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

In a tweet on August 15, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called detention of the tanker “100 percent unlawful”.

“Our London Embassy note to UKFCO: -Protested the illegal detention of Grace1; -Repeated public statements about destination; & -Made it crystal clear that EU sanctions do NOT apply to Iran – a position shared by most Europeans. Nothing changes the fact: detention was 100% unlawful,” he tweeted.

UKFCO is an abbreviation for the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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

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

Iranian Ambassador to London Hamid Baedinejad also tweeted on August 15, saying that the U.S. was desperately trying to prevent release of the tanker and faced a humiliating defeat.

“The U.S. in a last minute attempt made a futile effort to block the release of the oil tanker

missile system and brings quite a few substantial upgrades over its Russian equivalent.

Brigadier General Abbas Farajpour, head of the Iranian Air Force Studies Center, said on Thursday that the system was named Bavar (faith) because the Iranians are confident that they are able to build a system which turns the country into a “regional and international power”.

“At a juncture, the country which builds S-300 [Russia] lost its willingness to deliver the missile system to us. So, we came to the conclusion that sometimes even our friends do not want or are not be able to help us. The first spark struck and we took action to manufacture a domestic system which is more sophisticated,” he explained.

He explained that if S-300 system is able to hit 6 targets simultaneously, Bavar-373 can hit 9 targets.

He added that in the near future, there will be more demands to buy Bavar-373 than Patriot missile system.

■ **‘Iran builds 770 defense products’**

General Reza Taleainik, the vice defense minister for parliamentary affairs, said on Friday that 770 types of arms are being built domestically.

During a speech at the Friday prayers in Qom, he said more than 85 percent of defense products are manufactured domestically.



nor between Iran and its regional neighbors. But many hoped that the JCPOA could be a starting point for a much wider process of re-engagement between Iran and other countries. It is vital that the current U.S. administration’s policies towards Iran do not stop the rest of the world from realizing their hopes of working more constructively with Iran.

Beyond Iran itself, the threats to the JCPOA are bad news for non-proliferation efforts around the world. If the agreement with Iran falls apart, it will be much more difficult for the U.S. to reach an agreement with North Korea on its own, [with a] much more advanced nuclear program. The inconsistency on display damages U.S. credibility and undermines international law.

Trump administration ruined opportunity for future talks: Larijani

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In an interview with the NBC’s Lester Holt in Tehran aired on Tuesday, Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said that the administration of Donald Trump ruined opportunity for future talks between Tehran and Washington.

“During the previous administration of Barack Obama [former U.S. president], he offered talks to Iran and Iran accepted it. Because our initial impression was the fact that Mr. Obama was following some principles in his policies. He was our enemy, but he was the wise enemy. It is easier to interact with a wise enemy,” he said.

He said that Trump’s withdrawal from the international agreements is tarnishing the impression of the people across the world.

“That creates the impression that the United States is not trustworthy and this does not serve them good,” he noted.

■ **‘It was not mistake to sign nuclear deal’**

Larijani also said that it was not a mistake to sign the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA.

“From my viewpoint it was not a mistake to sign the nuclear deal. We discussed the issue with the major powers in the world and reached a conclusion. It could have served as the basis to discuss more important issues in the future including sustainable security in the region, but the fact is that they ruined this. I have to note that there were very serious critics in Iran, but overall Iran accepted the deal but what they did changed the calculations very much,” stated the philosopher-turned politician.

Commenting on effects of sanctions against Iran, he said,



“There is no doubt that the sanctions have had impacts. There are problems in our economic system that need to be tackled.”

He added, “We should not have been relying that much on oil. With the sanctions we are accelerating the process (of reducing reliance on oil). Now, with the problems increasing we are increasingly focusing on internal economic capacities to create more grounds for production. When our imports are cut down, we have no other choice but to increase production.”

■ **‘We don’t care what will happen in 2020’**

Larijani also said that Iran does not care what will happen in the U.S. presidential elections in 2020.

“We have the same path and we don’t care what will happen in 2020. We have long term strategies and policies that we

Larijani says Iranian people consider video messages of U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo as “jokes”

follow,” the top legislator remarked.

■ **‘U.S. conduct has strengthened solidarity among Iranians’**

Larijani also said that the Iranian people considers video messages of U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo as “jokes” He went on to say that the U.S. conduct has strengthened solidarity among Iranians.

■ **‘Iran has never sought military conflict’**

Larijani also said he does not think the U.S. commit the mistake of military confrontation with Iran, adding Iran has never been seeking military conflict.

“I think a brief glimpse of the U.S. recent history will lead us to the conclusion that they will not commit such a mistake of military confrontation. Even at the time when Saddam was provoked by the U.S. to attack Iran, Iran did not seek any conflict. During the past 400 years, we have had no single case of aggression against any other country. Military conflict is not strategy of Iran. However, in case of any aggression, we are serious and adamant in defending ourselves,” he stated.

■ **‘It is the Palestinians who should decide for their future’**

Larijani also said it is the Palestinians who should decide for their future.

“Our wish is for the Palestinian people to return to their original land. The proposal was for all the Palestinian people including Muslims, Christians and Jews to participate in a free referendum and to decide for their own future. Our stance is that the decision by the people of Palestine should be followed by everyone,” he said.

Ex-Australian Department of Defense secretary: Incumbent of White House should not decide for our foreign policy

Paul Barratt says “the ANZUS alliance creates no obligation for us to support foolish and illegal acts” by the U.S.

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** - Paul Barratt, a former Australian Department of Defense secretary and a deputy secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade, has criticized the Canberra government for deciding to join the U.S. coalition against Iran in the Persian Gulf, saying the Australians themselves should decide about their foreign policy and not Donald Trump's White House.

Barratt, who currently is the president of Australians for War Powers Reform and an adjunct professor in the School of the Humanities at the University of New England, says it is Trump that has withdrawn the United States from the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and created tension by deploying warships and troops in the Persian Gulf.

“Australian foreign policy should be made by Australians, not by the incumbent of the White House who has trashed one of the best examples in recent years of what diplomacy can achieve,” Barratt wrote in a commentary in the Sydney Morning Herald on August 22.

Following is the text of the article headlined “Echoes of Iraq: why Australia should not be joining U.S. action against Iran”:

A crowning diplomatic achievement of the Obama Administration was the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action negotiated by the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China and Iran, under which Iran agreed to limit its nuclear industrial program in exchange for relief from economic sanctions.

Despite Iran's complete and verified compliance with the JCPOA, in May 2018 President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the agreement, imposed economic sanctions, and threatened countries that trade with Iran.

Since that withdrawal, tensions between the U.S. and Iran have grown to crisis point. Attacks on shipping in the (Persian) Gulf have been blamed on Iran without robust evidence.

Key U.S. administration officials, if not President Trump himself, appear to be itching for military conflict and therefore the U.S. version of events cannot be taken at face value as a justification for military action – remember the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq?

Yet Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Defense Minister Linda Reynolds have announced that Australia will contribute to the Trump-led mission in the Strait of Hormuz.

Morrison says Australia will help ensure freedom of navigation in international waters and that we are acting in response to what he calls “destabilizing behavior” in the (Persian) Gulf. Reynolds says our core concern is de-escalation.

Let's be clear: the destabilizing behavior was in fact initiated by our ally, the U.S., and sending additional troops, planes and ships into an increasingly tense situation is not a move likely to de-escalate tensions.

On June 28 I wrote to the Prime Minister on behalf of Australians for War Powers Reform, urging that Australia resist such pressure for action against Iran.

I appealed to him for a debate in our Par-



Let's be clear: the destabilizing behavior was in fact initiated by our ally, the U.S., and sending additional troops, planes and ships into an increasingly tense situation is not a move likely to de-escalate tensions.

liament on the growing tensions between the U.S. and Iran and steps that Australia could take to reduce them.

The reply, from Assistant Minister Ben Morton, appeared to be a lesson in turning facts upside down. Morton noted with concern

military action against Iran, nor should we be participating in other actions such as economic sanctions or escorting tankers, which are themselves – or could be perceived by Iran to be – hostile acts. Authentic attempts to de-escalate are required, not escalation.

“Iran is a member in good standing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and as such is entitled not only to have a nuclear program for peaceful purposes, but to seek the assistance of the nuclear powers to develop that program. Not only has the West declined to assist Iran, but it has actively sought to thwart its program in every way possible.”

“that Iran has moved away from full compliance” with plan of action, and reassured us that “Australia has repeatedly urged Iran to comply with its JCPOA commitments”. Totally absent was any recognition that President Trump withdrew from the agreement last year. Perhaps it is not surprising that Ira-

The ANZUS alliance creates no obligation for us to support foolish and illegal acts, and its Article 1 echoes our obligations under the UN Charter to settle international disputes by peaceful means.

In the absence of a credible threat to Australia and without an authorising resolution

Attacks on shipping in the (Persian) have been blamed on Iran without robust evidence.

nian enthusiasm for compliance has waned in recent months.

Morton stated that the government has urged Iran “to refrain from escalatory action”. But not only has Australia not called on our

of the UN Security Council, any Australian involvement in attacks on Iran would be an act of aggression and therefore illegal.

Iran is a member in good standing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and as such

Key U.S. administration officials, if not President Trump himself, appear to be itching for military conflict and therefore the U.S. version of events cannot be taken at face value as a justification for military action – remember the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq?

ally to do the same, we have just made a decision to join the U.S. in its escalatory actions. Australia should not participate in any

is entitled not only to have a nuclear program for peaceful purposes, but to seek the assistance of the nuclear powers to develop

Iran only seeking peace, tranquility: cleric

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iran has always been in peace and wants peace for the entire world, says a Tehran Friday prayer leader.

“In the last four years, we showed that the Islamic Republic is seeking peace and tranquility,” Ayatollah Mohammad Emami Kashani said on Friday, addressing worshippers.

On the other hand, Emami Kashani said, the U.S. and its “regional subordinates also showed that they are after war and bloodshed.”

Elsewhere in his sermon, the top cleric praised the production of homegrown missile defense system Bavar-373 (which means faith), which was unveiled by President Hassan Rouhani on Thursday in a ceremony marking National

Defense Industry Day. He said as the name of the defense system suggests, the Iranian nation can resist the enemies through self-confidence and relying on internal capabilities.

Ayatollah Kashani further derided the attempts by the U.S. and its allies against Iran, calling U.S. President Donald Trump and his regional allies “foolish” for thinking that Iran might give in under pressure.

“Mr. Trump! You are stupid and your subordinates are stupid as well. You have shown your stupidity to the world,” he said, adding, “But the Islamic Republic is brave and strong [as] the Leader of the Revolution (Ayatollah Khamenei) and the Imam (Ayatollah Khomeini) have injected the Iranian nation with this bravery.”



Foreign presence in Persian Gulf detrimental to regional security: IRGC chief

1 → The United States has announced plans to form a coalition to supposedly protect shipping in the Strait of Hormuz following a series of mysterious attacks on oil tankers in the strait and the Sea of Oman.

Washington has accused Iran of having a hand in those attacks without presenting a shred of evidence. Iran has strongly rejected the claim. Tehran has warned that such acts of sabotage may be part of a general ploy to target Iran amid increasing regional tensions.

The U.S. has asked its allies to join the coalition, a call which has not been warmly received by several countries, including Germany, Japan and Spain, over apparent fears that such a mission could further ratchet up tensions with Iran.

“No country or coalition of countries would be able to maintain security in this region except the littoral states of the Persian Gulf,” General Salami remarked.

“We believe in a regional security system with participation of the Persian Gulf countries,” he added.



Elsewhere in his remarks, Salami said unlike what the enemies intended, the sanctions have helped the Islamic Republic to reach its economic and political independence.

“Sanctions cannot stop our progress,” he said, adding that if there were no sanctions,

Iran would not achieve its economic and political independence.

The U.S. has ratcheted up pressure on Iran since last year after withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

that program.

Not only has the West declined to assist Iran, but it has actively sought to thwart its program in every way possible.

All evidence indicates that Iran has not sought to develop a nuclear weapons capability.

From 2015 the government of Iran fully observed the terms of the JCPOA, as verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency under what the agency describes as the most robust verification system in existence anywhere in the world.

As late as January 29 this year, in their annual report to Congress on global threats, the U.S. intelligence chiefs told Congress the Iran nuclear deal was working.

Australia has no quarrel with Iran. To participate in sanctions is to agree that there are grounds for sanctions. There aren't. They imply a willingness to use force – with what end in sight?

Hostile actions that draw Iran into armed conflict are not in our national interests, the interests of the Australian Defense Force personnel who would undertake such actions, or the civilians (in this case Iranian) who bear the major brunt of modern wars (and of economic sanctions).

Any significant military action would, again, set the Middle East ablaze for many years. Iran, a country of 80 million people, has substantial capacity to resist and retaliate, as could Iranian proxies elsewhere in the Middle East.

There could be heightened tensions between the Shi'a minorities and the governments in the Sunni world.

Australia has a long and honorable history of effective diplomacy.

The continuity of our diplomatic presence in Iran has enabled us to communicate with the Iranians in a way that few other Western nations could.

We should be engaging in active diplomacy to encourage all parties to the JCPOA to keep the arrangements alive, to encourage our U.S. ally to resume its place in the arrangements.

I again call on the Prime Minister to hold a debate in our Parliament before the ADF is deployed.

It is imperative that no military action – or any hostile action that could foreseeably lead to military action – be undertaken before such a debate occurs, along with a vote by all our elected representatives.

A further prerequisite to military action is authorization by the Governor-General, as the only person with the constitutional power to authorize the deployment of the ADF into international armed conflict.

Australian foreign policy should be made by Australians, not by the incumbent of the White House who has trashed one of the best examples in recent years of what diplomacy can achieve.

Paul Barratt is a former Department of Defense secretary and a deputy secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

He is the president of Australians for War Powers Reform and an adjunct professor in the School of the Humanities at the University of New England.

4th conference of ‘Examples of Patience’ held in Urmia

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – According to the Public Relations Department of the Association for Defending Victims of Terrorism (ADVT), the 4th conference of “The Examples of Patience” was held in Urmia to pay tribute to the martyrs and survivors of terrorism in West Azerbaijan Province.

The conference was organized in partnership with provincial organizations and the United Nations Information Centre in Tehran on the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism on 21 August.

At the beginning of the event, Mansoureh Karami, the chairwoman of the ADVT, welcomed the attendees and lauded the provincial authorities.

She said families of the victims of terrorism are among the most plagued members of the society, whose rights are often ignored. “The Examples of Patience conference has been held in Tehran, Isfahan, and Golestan provinces and the 4th conference is being held in this city today,” she stated.

Karami, wife of nuclear scientist Masoud Alimohammadi who was assassinated in January 2010, added that families of the victims of terrorism are the examples of patience in keeping peace in every society.



Rahim Fa'al, the general director of the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans of West Azerbaijan, said at the event that there are about 200 victims of terrorism in West Azerbaijan, and the victims of terrorism are from all sections of the society, including Sunni and Shia imams, workers, farmers, women and children, who were killed only because of defending truth and justice.

He emphasized that West Azerbaijan is exemplary in defending the values of human society and “we should appreciate families of the victims.”

Then, Maria Dotsenko, the UNIC director in Iran, read out the UN secretary general's statement in a video message on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of, and Tribute to, the Victims of Terrorism.

“This international day reminds us that no matter how long ago an attack happened, victims continue to struggle with its legacy,” the message read.

“We need to provide long-term, multi-faceted support to victims and survivors of terrorism, including through partnerships with governments and civil society, so that they can heal, recover, rebuild their lives and help others.”

In the end of the message, the UN Secretary General stated, “Let us commit to showing victims that they are not alone, and that the international community stands in solidarity with them, wherever they may be.”

Hazratpour, the mayor of Urmia was the next speaker. He said the martyrs who were killed innocently for defending the Islamic establishment are bestowed high positions by God.

He added, “Whenever our society parted from the ideals of our martyrs, the society was close to collapse.”

The Urmia mayor emphasized that the martyrs “have sent messages to all of us which can be guides of salvation. If we follow the martyrs, our society will be saved.”

Tabatabaei, a deputy of the Urmia governor, said that one of the best signs of a developed civil society is the number of its NGOs.

Any increase in the activity of the NGOs in the society is a sign of social dynamism, and because of it, the governorate of West Azerbaijan is ready to help the establishment of a new branch of the association, he said.

Tabatabaei said all the martyrs, in their lives, were the best formidable defenses against the global imperial approaches and the act of killing them is a sign of inability of rouge global imperialists in preventing progress in Iran.

Salari, an advisor to the Iranian foreign minister, said that with dominance of the devils, a hollow definition about terrorism has been propagated and that is why international organizations have been unable to combat it.

Hinting at the aims of terrorism, he said the creation of unpredictable violence against governments for the sake of specific ideologies is one of the aims of this inhuman act.

“All terrorists in our region are supported by the foreign and evil states,” he said.

He said spreading the victims' voice, promoting cooperation between associations of victims of terrorism at national and international levels and also collecting information about the victims are necessary steps to counter terrorism.

Jason McCue, an international lawyer, said in a video message that he had spent a lot of his career in pursuing terrorism through the criminal and civil courts around the world.

“One of the things that takes a lot of time is to create patience through our media outlets, which means making use of the communication strategy,” he said, adding that an important point in terror acts is showing that the victims of terrorism and their families never forget and the act will never be forgotten and justice will prevail no matter how long it takes.

“My only message to all of you is to have patience,” he said.

At the end of the event, Moeinfar, a professor of sociology at Urmia University, highlighted the importance of the social consequences of the terrorism phenomenon and attributed the loss of national identity and the creation of social rifts to terrorist acts.

Stereotyping the ethnicities leads to strengthening of terrorism, he opined.

Terrorists want to sow insecurity in the society, which in turn leads to increased rate of suicide as well as the refugee crisis in the current societies, he emphasized.

Moeinfar asked the association to collaborate with other organizations to further shed light on the Iranian nation's innocence at the national and international levels.

In the conference, the daughter of the martyr Anwar Amini, spoke about the situation of her father's death and said the aftereffects of that attack on her life are incurable.

The 4th conference of “The Examples of Patience” came to an end after special gifts were granted to families of the victims of terrorism in West Azerbaijan province.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	266127.2
IFX	3579.32

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,560 rials
GBP	50,921 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$59.86/b
WTI	\$55.35/b
OPEC Basket	\$60.66/b
Gold	\$1,496.75/oz
Silver	\$17.13/oz
Platinum	\$859.95/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Iran to transfer capital market knowledge, experience to Iraq

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – A group of representatives from Iranian and Iraqi capital markets are set to cooperate in a joint project in which the Iranian side is going to share its knowledge and experience in this field with the Iraqi counterpart, the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) reported.

According to Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) vice chairman for international and foreign affairs, Bahador Bijani, a 10-member delegation from Iraq's capital market has recently visited Iran and held talks in this regard.

"There will be two working groups, one from the Iranian capital market and one on the Iraqi side. They will work on mutual projects and prepare them to be operationalized during a visit of Iranian delegation to Iraq in the next month," Bijani said.

In these projects, SEO is going to help the Iraqi side in the financing structure, he added.

The official noted that for the time being Iran is not financing any projects in this field in Iraq and the cooperation are only at the knowledge transfer level so far but the two sides could continue discussing such matters in the future.

25 airport projects to go operational in Government Week

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – Some 25 major infrastructure projects will be inaugurated at nine different airports across Iran on the occasion of the Government Week (August 24-30), IRNA reported on Friday, quoting an airport official as saying.

According to Siavash Amirmokri, the head of Iran Airport Company (IAC), over 1.6 trillion rials (about \$38 million) has been funded for the mentioned projects.

Ardabil, Isfahan, Tabriz, Mashhad, Mehrabad, Orumieh, Shahroud, Bushehr and Zanjan airports are among the airports in which the mentioned projects will be inaugurated, according to Amirmokri.

The official noted that in addition to the mentioned infrastructure projects, 62 standardization and safety improvement projects are also going to be inaugurated



while 57 other projects worth 8.8 trillion rials (about 209.5 million) are also be commenced in 36 different airports.

Earlier in June, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani inaugurated a new passenger terminal within the Imam Khomeini International Airport in southern Tehran.

The domestically-constructed "Salam Terminal" has a capacity to transport five million passengers per year and is planned to operate both domestic and international flights, Mehr reported.

Back in December 2018, Gholam-Hossein Baqerian, a board member of Airports and Air Navigation Company of Iran had said that 25 airport development projects were under study and 45 ones under implementation throughout the country.

He put the value of these projects at 6.5 trillion rials (about \$154 million).

4-month steel exports exceed 2.24mt

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – Iran's major steel producers exported 2.241 million tons of steel during the four-month period from March 21 to July 22, IRNA reported.

The country's steel exports in the mentioned four months fell 12 percent compared to the same period last year.

Meanwhile, the country's crude steel production in the mentioned time span rose by 7.1 percent to exceed 8 million tons.

Iran's crude steel production stood at 7.518 million tons in the past year's same time span.

Last month, Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) reported that the exports of steel products rose 20 percent during the first quarter of current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21) compared to the first quarter of the previous year.

As reported, the country exported 758,000 tons of steel products during the three-month period of this year.

IMIDRO also put the export of steel ingots at 1.425 million tons in the first quarter of current year, falling 23 percent from 1.854 million tons in the same time span of the past year.

In a press conference on June 8, Iranian deputy industry, mining and trade minister said the ministry has taken necessary measures to maintain the country's metal exports despite U.S. sanctions.

"We have established a special working group in the ministry which is closely assessing the situation and making necessary arrangements to mitigate the impact of U.S. sanctions," Jafar Sarqini told the Tehran Times in the press conference.

The official noted that it is expected for the exports from the country's mining sector to, at least, reach the last year's \$8.5 billion by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2020).

Also, during a meeting with the members of Iran Steel Association on Sunday, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani said the country has achieved a proper self-reliance in steel industry.

Steel industry is one of the industries in which some good investment has been made and today it has become a production advantage, the minister further underscored.

Iran's annual steel production is planned to reach 45 million tons by the Iranian calendar year 1400 (March 2021-March 2022), according to Sarqini.

Referring to the sanctions, the official said, "All those who have imposed sanctions against Iran aim to destroy he country's production capabilities; therefore, the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade prefer that the steel producers focus first on production and in this due development projects with the physical progress of over 70 percent will also help achieve this target."



On June 15, the official had announced that the country's annual crude steel production is planned to reach 30 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year.

He put Iran's crude steel production at 25 million tons in the past year.

Sarqini had also announced that Iran will inaugurate steel projects with the capacity of at least 10 million tons during the current Iranian calendar year.

First Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 98-05/120

Tender Holder:
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Two-Stage Tender:
Purchasing 4K-SNG (Installation included) according to the tender documents.

Deadline of Receiving Documents:
As of publishing second announcement of advertisement latest by the business hour dated on **Wednesday August 28, 2019.**

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

Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participating in Tender:
The amount of **USD 19,021 (equivalent to 2,282,500,000 Rials)** which should be in the form of extendable bank guarantee

Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:
The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted within one main envelope marked with tender number no later than **15 p.m.** on **Saturday September 28, 2019** and submitted to the Secretariat of Commission of Tenders.

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

For more information, please contact the following phone numbers: **0098-21-22166313**
It is obvious that cost of publishing two advertisements shall be borne by the winner of tender.

Public Relations Dept. of IRIB

First Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 98-05/121

Tender Holder:
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Two-Stage Tender:
Providing Satellite Equipment for Jam-E-Jam 3 Channel according to the tender documents.

Deadline of Receiving Documents:
As of publishing second announcement of advertisement latest by the business hour dated on **Wednesday August 28, 2019.**

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

Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participating in Tender:
The amount of **USD 7,042 (equivalent to 845,000,000 Rials)** which should be in the form of extendable bank guarantee

Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:
The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted within one main envelope marked with tender number no later than **15 p.m.** on **Saturday September 28, 2019** and submitted to the Secretariat of Commission of Tenders.

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Public Relations Dept. of IRIB

Thermal power output up nearly 9GW in 6 years

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** – The power desk generation capacity of Iran's thermal power plants has increased by 9,000 megawatts (9GW) over the past six years, IRIB reported, citing the portal of Energy Ministry (known as Paven).

Since August 2013 up to August 2019 a total of 69 thermal power plants have been constructed across the country to add 8,991 MW to the capacity of the country's thermal electricity output.

Over two third of Iran's thermal power plants are owned and operated by the country's private sector.

According to the data published on Paven, private owners are currently generating nearly 67 percent of Iran's thermal power.

Based on the report, the government was seeking to further give up its shares in the operation and ownership of thermal power plants which account for more than 92 percent of Iran's annual electricity generation.

The country's thermal power plants hit a new record last year by generating some 287 billion megawatt hours (MWh) of electricity.



According to Paven, currently more than 80 percent of the country's electricity output comes from thermal power plants across the country.

Earlier this week, IRNA reported that the nominal capacity of electricity generation at Iranian power plants has reached 84,795 megawatts [84.795 gigawatts (GW)].

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).

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.

'NIOC to award South Pars oil layer to a domestic company under IPC'

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** – National Iranian Oil Company is going to award the development project of the South Pars oil layer to a domestic company, under Iran's new model of oil contracts (known as IPC), NIOC director of integrated planning told IRNA.

"Negotiations are also underway with domestic companies for the development of other fields such as Yaran and Sohrab," Karim Zobeidi said.

Noting that NIOC has already signed IPC-based contracts with domestic contractors for developing and increase the recovery factor of various oil fields such as Cheshmeh-Khosh, West and East Paydar, Sepehr, and Jofair, he said, "with these contracts going operational the production capacity of the country's oil fields will increase significantly."

Iran introduced its "Iran Petroleum Contract" in 2016 and replaced it with old buyback models in order to attract more foreign investors into the country's oil and gas sectors.

In early January, the managing director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing Iran's South Pars gas field in the Persian Gulf, had said that this company is in talks with a number of Iranian companies

on development of the oil layer of the field.

Making the remarks in a press conference, Mohammad Meshkinfam said the negotiations were confidential.

Iran started pumping oil from the oil layer in March 2017 with the initial production of 5,000 barrels per day (bpd) which currently stands at 25,000 bpd according to Meshkinfam.

Iran's development of South Pars oil layer is still at the pilot phase, but the country sees positive prospects for 150,000 bpd of recovery in the currently producing reservoir.

Officials have said the development of the layer is a complex process requiring integrated development.

"We are looking for a competent contractor who can make a commitment on production. Iranian companies are interested in getting money and digging wells. We are looking for cumulative production," former deputy head of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Gholamreza Manouchehri said. NIOC was in talks with Denmark's Maersk Group for the second phase development of the South Pars oil layer, then negotiations with the Danish company was stopped after Maersk sold its oil and gas division to French oil major Total in August 2017.



Oil prices nudge higher, eyes on speech by Fed chair

Oil prices clawed back the previous day's losses on Friday, with Brent nudging above \$60 a barrel, as tighter supplies from key producers offset slowing demand growth and investors await clues on the U.S. Federal Reserve's monetary policy.

As per reuters.com, Brent crude LCOc1 rose 29 cents, or 0.5%, to \$60.21 a barrel by 0629 GMT, while U.S. crude futures CLc1 were at \$55.53 a barrel, up 18 cents, or 0.3%. Both contracts were on track for a second week of gains.

A speech by Fed Chair Jerome Powell later on Friday at a meeting of global central bankers in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, was expected to provide clues on whether the U.S. Central Bank will cut interest rates for a second time this year to boost the world's largest economy.

Traders' expectations of further U.S. monetary easing were clouded by comments



from two Fed officials on Wednesday who said they do not see a case for a rate cut now.

"If Powell talks about lower for longer and reverses some of the hawkish comments that we heard from Fed members earlier this week, we could see it supporting oil," said Michael McCarthy, chief market analyst at CMC Markets in Sydney.

McCarthy also said Brent has good support at \$60 a barrel on technical charts and may have some upside potential.

Brent prices fell in July and are down so far in August, dropping after the International Energy Agency and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) cut demand growth forecasts due to risks to global economy from the U.S.-China trade war.

Production cuts from OPEC members and Russia, and reduced exports from Iran and Venezuela because of U.S. sanctions, have continued to support oil prices.

Extreme supply outages prevent oil prices from crashing

The oil market is facing a near-term supply deficit, despite the growing cracks in the global economy and stagnant oil demand. At the same time, the market is poised for a major surplus next year.

According to oilprice.com, the combination of the OPEC+ cuts, and a slowdown in U.S. shale have all helped to tighten up balances.

The second half of 2019 could see a rather significant pace of inventory drawdowns, erasing some of the glut.

In fact, the degree of uncertainty and risk to global oil supplies is staggering, and the sheer number and volume of production outages around the world would have historically sent oil prices skyrocketing.

OPEC is keeping 1.2 million barrels per day (mb/d) offline, Venezuela has lost around 1 mb/d relative to 2017 levels, and Iran's exports have fallen by more than 2 mb/d since the re-introduction of sanctions last year.

The precise oil export numbers offered by Hook differ from other sources, but either way, exports are significantly down from the roughly 2.5 mb/d of exports from early 2018.

■ Non-OPEC production growth

"If the July level of OPEC crude oil production at 29.7 mb/d is maintained through 2019, the implied stock draw in 2H19 is 0.7 mb/d, helped also by a slower rate of non-OPEC production growth."

In short, the market is in a situation where supply is already in a state of deficit, and geopolitical risks put even more barrels at risk.

And yet, oil prices languish.

That is because even as many analysts see a supply deficit, weak demand seems to keep catching forecasters by surprise. In the first half of 2019, demand only grew by 0.6 mb/d, which was largely the result of the 0.5 mb/d increase in China. In other words, outside of China, oil demand barely grew at all.

U.S. oil inventories fell in the latest EIA release, which seemed to offer some small evidence backing up the notion that the market is in a deficit and will



continue to draw down inventories.

However, the bullish impact was offset by an increase in gasoline stocks.

The "inventory report was tarnished by unexpected increases in oil product stocks: gasoline stocks rose by 312,000 barrels while distillate stocks even grew by 2.6 million barrels," Commerzbank said in a note. "Gasoline stocks normally fall at this time of year due to high seasonal demand."

"Just a few weeks before the end of the summer driving season, gasoline stocks are a good 4% up on the long-term average – i.e.

at a comfortable level," Commerzbank added. That has resulted in weaker-than-expected refining margins, which in fact, are at their worst since February.

■ The crude oil stocks

"Refineries are likely to respond by reducing their processing rate, which had risen again last week. A significant decline can be expected here in the coming weeks. The resulting lower demand from refineries could cause U.S. crude oil stocks to rise again," Commerzbank said.

Meanwhile, the slowdown in U.S. shale can be interpreted in different ways.

Lower oil prices, financial stress and investor skepticism have forced spending cuts.

That has begun to translate into slower growth, contributing to a tighter oil market – or, at least, tighter than things might have been otherwise. In Texas, well completions fell by 12 percent in the first seven months of 2019 compared to the same period a year earlier. Year-on-year production growth slowed to 1.65 mb/d in May, down from a peak of 2.1 mb/d in August 2018.

But production is still growing by quite a lot. "We expect non-OPEC production growth (YOY) of 1.8mb/d for 2019e and 1.9mb/d for 2020.

These are very high non-OPEC growth rates in an historical context, but significantly below the record-high 2.8mb/d growth (YOY) in 2018," DNB Bank said in a report.

The 1.8 mb/d supply growth from non-OPEC this year stands in sharp contrast to the expected increase in demand of just 0.8 mb/d, according to DNB. OPEC+ cuts have been required to keep the oil market from an utter meltdown.

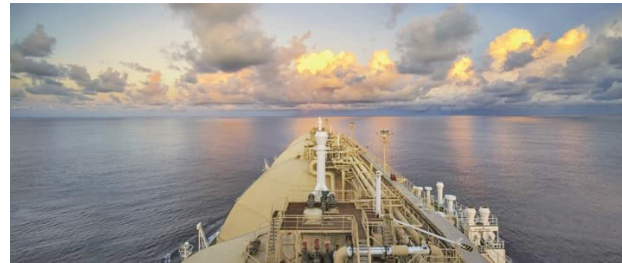
LNG upends Europe's gas market

By Tsvetana Paraskova

Low liquefied natural gas (LNG) spot prices amid abundant supply and weaker Asian spot demand this year have helped Europe to fill its storage tanks to more than average levels this summer.

Natural gas prices in Europe dropped to a ten-year low in early July as Russia and the United States continue to fight for market share.

Thanks to the lowest natural gas prices in a decade, storage tanks in many European countries are higher than the five-year average well ahead of the coming heating season. Traders continue to ship LNG cargos to Europe, potentially waiting for trading opportunities when the winter season approaches and prices rise.



Yet, with storage fuller than what is usual for this time of the year, the question remains how much more of the global LNG supply Europe can take in ahead of the northern hemisphere's winter heating season, Bloomberg's Anna Shiryayevskaya writes.

According to Gas Infrastructure Europe, gas storage in Europe was 89.65 percent full as of August 20, with storage in countries like Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, and the Netherlands more than 90 percent full.

Although northwest Europe has traditionally been the place of LNG imports, this summer Spain is importing high volumes of the super-chilled fuel, as electricity demand in an above-normal temperature summer grows while water for hydropower capacity runs dry, according to Bloomberg estimates.

■ Europe's gas storage capacity

Spain, which accounts for nearly a third of Europe's gas storage capacity, has imported more LNG cargoes this year, thanks to the low spot prices. This year Spain has seen a coal-to-gas switch in the power sector as utilities benefit from importing low-priced spot LNG to use in gas-fueled power generation, Energy Aspects' gas analyst Leyra Fernandez Diaz told Bloomberg.

Spain's gas market could be indicative of the European market which has been upended in the past two years with spot LNG volumes not linked to oil prices – a change from oil-based pricing of long-term gas pipeline supplies.

U.S. exports of LNG to Europe have surged by 272 percent since July 2018, when the United States and the European Union (EU) pledged to boost their strategic energy cooperation, the European Commission said in May.

At the end of last month, the EC said that the since July 2018, the EU has significantly boosted its LNG imports from the U.S. – by more than 367 percent in one year. So far this year, one third of all U.S. LNG exports have gone to the EU. The U.S. is the EU's third-largest supplier of LNG, while the EU has emerged as the primary destination of U.S. LNG exports, according to the European Commission.

In Q2 2019, global LNG demand was 86 million tons, up by 16 percent from Q2 2018, according to GasLog Ltd, owner, operator, and manager of LNG carriers.

"Higher European imports (up 110% year-on-year) accounted for most of the growth, while demand from Northeast Asia (Japan, China, South Korea and Taiwan) was flat year-on-year," GasLog said, citing data from Poten. Due to Europe's soaring LNG imports, the two largest pipeline gas suppliers to the continent – Russia's Gazprom and Norway's Equinor – have lost market share for the first time in at least four years, Reuters reported earlier this week, quoting data and calculations from Refinitiv.

LNG's share of natural gas imported into Western and Central Europe between October 2018 and August 2019 rose to 14 percent from 5 percent for October 2017-August 2018. Norway's share fell to 33 percent from 38 percent amid heavy maintenance and production and exports reduction from Equinor, while Gazprom's share dropped to 32 percent from 33 percent, although the Russian gas giant boosted sales amid growing demand to fight for its market share, Refinitiv data showed.

Going forward, the share of LNG in Europe's gas deliveries will depend on the global LNG demand and supply picture and spot prices, but there's no doubt that LNG continues to upend the natural gas market in Europe.

(Source: oilprice.com)

GRS in South Korea collaboration

German shipping service company Global Renewables Shipbrokers (GRS) has announced the start of a strategic partnership with South Korean wind project development consultancy SerFac.

As stated by oedigital.com, the shipbroker for offshore tonnage in renewable energy said that the aim of the cooperation is to provide project development of offshore wind farm projects in South Korea. As an independent advisor, GRS supports the negotiation of all contracts across all value creation stages of the entire project development. At the subsequent installation and operation stage, GRS, as an internationally operating and independent specialist shipbroker, takes on the chartering of all vessels and crews required as well as the contracting of all further offshore service providers.

The "moment for market entry to South Korea is ideal," explains Matthias Mross, managing partner at GRS. The "South Korean government has ambitious plans for the expansion of offshore wind energy and will be providing us with a lot of opportunities in the coming years. Building on our experience and expertise, we can ensure that mistakes will be avoided and expansion targets achieved."

"We are very happy to have found a partner with GRS who is experienced in wind energy on a global scale. The synergies created will enable us to keep on pushing our expansion in the growing offshore wind energy market in the Asiatic Pacific region," Lim Nam-Hee, managing director at SerFac, points out.

Earlier this month, the South Korean energy ministry announced its intention to boost its renewable energy share in electricity generation by 20 percent by the year 2030. This corresponds to an increase in generation capacity from the current 11,000 megawatts (MW) to around 58,500 MW.

Offshore wind energy will gain in importance and its total capacity will increase by an overall 12,000 MW in the coming eleven years.

Diplomat reveals reason for shift in Emirati, Saudi policy on Iran

IFP—A former Iranian ambassador has explained why Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, two main regional rivals of Iran, have begun to change their policy and reach out to Iran.

While Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's administration has always advocated dialogue with the neighbours, Saudi Arabia has taken a tough line on interaction with Iran, at least until lately.

In a speech in Sweden during his tour of Scandinavia, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif reiterated on Tuesday that Tehran was ready to pay a price for friendly ties with the neighbours. Relations between Tehran and Riyadh have strained over the past years after their conflicting views on regional developments, particularly on Yemen and Syria, became more noticeable.

The relations further deteriorated after a crush of pilgrims in Mina, near Saudi Arabia's Mecca, in September 2015, which killed over 7,000 Hajj pilgrims, including 465 Iranians. Tehran has blamed the deaths on the Al Saud's mismanagement of the Hajj pilgrimage and criticized Riyadh for "lack of cooperation" on restoring the rights of families of the victims. The row between Iran and Saudi Arabia escalated further in January 2016, following Riyadh's execution of prominent Shiite cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, and a subsequent attack by outraged Iranian protesters on the Saudi embassy in Tehran, which resulted in the Arab country's decision to sever its ties with the Islamic Republic.

However, there have been signs of a thaw in Iran's ties with Saudi Arabia's close ally, the United Arab Emirates,



in recent weeks. In late July, an Emirati military delegation visited Iran and signed a memorandum of understanding to promote cooperation on common border security with Iran. Many believe that the shift in the Abu Dhabi's policy on Iran reflects a change in the policies of its close ally, Saudi Arabia. Moreover, Saudis have given the Iranian Hajj pilgrims a warm welcome in this year's pilgrimage. In interview with Fararu news website, Nosratollah Tajik, a Middle East expert and Iran's former ambassador to Jordan, has explained how a shift in the regional situation has made Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — known as Iran's regional rivals in the Arab world — decide to improve ties with Iran.

"Different hardware and software factors have led to such relative thaw or shift in the Saudi and Emirati policies towards Iran.

The instances in the hardware arena are the issue of oil tankers in the Persian Gulf and the downing of the US drone.

These have disappointed Saudi Arabia and the UAE's hopes for a hundred percent American support for their policies against Iran, forcing them to resolve the disputes with Iran politically, not militarily," the former Foreign Ministry advisor said.

"The other part relates to the prolonged war on Yemen. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are under pressure of the international public opinion for the crimes that Saudi Arabia has committed in Yemen, among other things," Tajik added. "In the software arena, I believe that we should mainly monitor the political developments in the region. The UAE's internal disputes, Saudi Arabia's difference with the UAE, and all of these factors force them to address their issues with Iran politically, instead of entering the military phase," he added.

"In the UAE, the internal rifts between Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, the influential Emirati crown prince, and the other six emirs over Yemen and Iran have led them to the conclusion that they should prevent further damages and settle the disputes with Iran.

Another reason behind the UAE's new policy was the outflow of capital of the Iranian residents, and the UAE's vulnerability to the outflow of capital because of its heavy dependence on foreign investment.

The UAE is more susceptible to the Persian Gulf security developments than Saudi Arabia, so it is natural for it to shift its policy towards Iran more rapidly than Saudi Arabia," he added.

"As regards the Saudi stance, there is a part relating to the Yemen war and another part is that Saudis are willing to hold the next year's G-20 summit in Riyadh. As a result, Saudis would naturally adopt the 'zero tension policy' in order to portray a good image of them and demonstrate a safe picture from Saudi Arabia as the world will be watching the G-20 leaders there," Tajik added.

The former ambassador to Jordan also commented on the future prospect of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and the ways to improve the ties, as cited by Zarif, saying, "We have a lot of differences.

Sadly, we live in an undeveloped region; nonetheless, no country could choose its neighbour. We need to be realistic and try to achieve a mechanism on the basis of commonalities.

I believe that the traditional patterns of collective security are not working anymore. We must move towards modern patterns, and preferably towards establishment of peace through economic interaction."

"The governments are in charge of the traditional patterns of security, and since the governments in this region are suspicious about each other and have doubts and fears, we'd better exercise economic interaction and make the private sectors of countries involved in the economic interests, with which the security will be also ensured," Tajik concluded.

What do the new polls say? Diminish public trust in Trump

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN—Polls released in the United States in recent days indicate a decline in public confidence in President Donald Trump. Trump is extremely frightened of the continuation of this process.

Remarkably, Trump has lost his former popularity in the economy. Polls show Trump's economic popularity is also on the decline.

Here are some news, surveys and analytics on this:

CNN Poll: Public's view on the economy dips for the first time in Trump's presidency

Almost two-thirds of Americans (65%) say current economic conditions are good, but that's down since May, representing the first significant decline in public perception of the economy during Donald Trump's presidency, according to a new CNN poll conducted by SSRS. As some economic indicators are beginning to show warning signs of a looming recession, the public's impressions of -- and outlook for -- the country's economic conditions are starting to waver, but they remain mostly positive.

The 65% of Americans who now say economic conditions are good represent a 5-point drop from the May CNN/SSRS poll.

The President's overall approval has ticked down slightly.

Forty percent of Americans approve of the job he's doing, down from 43% in June. Most, 54%, disapprove.

A majority (56%) say they expect economic conditions to be good a year from now. 40% say they will be poor. That's a less-rosy outlook than in December, when 66% said they expected a good economy in a year.

Overall, half of Americans say that economic conditions are good now and will continue to be good in a year (50%) and a quarter say that they're poor now and will be poor in a year (26%).

Of the roughly one in five people who see change happening, 13% say the economy is good now, but will be poor in a year, while 6% think things are poor now, but will improve in the next year.

Those shifts in outlook of the nation's economy haven't had much of an impact on perceptions of Trump, though. Half of Americans approve of how Trump is handling the economy (50%), which has been steady for the last few months. Almost nine in 10 Republicans approve (87%), half of independents and 18% of Democrats.

The declining share who say that the economy is in good shape stems almost entirely from shifts among Democrats (down 7 points since May) and independents (down 6 points).

Trump's approval on handling foreign affairs stands at 40%, while he receives a slightly lower rating on immigration (37%) and a significantly worse one on race relations (32%).

The President's approval rating for handling race relations has dropped 7 percentage points since April. It is significantly lower among non-whites (18%) than among whites (40%), including ratings of just 18% approval among Latinos and 11% among black Americans.

The decline compared with April comes largely among whites (down 9 points while non-whites are about even), women (down 10 points vs. a 3-point dip among men), and independents (down 12 points vs. single-digit shifts among both Republicans and Democrats).

Trump's approval rating for handling gun policy remains low in the wake of mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio.

Around a third of Americans (36%) approve of how Trump is handling gun policy, the same as his rating in March of last year, after the shooting in Parkland, Florida.

Trump initially signaled willingness to support expanded background checks for gun purchases after the shootings, but has since toned down his support in public comments on the matter.

The poll, however, suggests a broad appetite for stricter gun laws among Americans. Three in five Americans favor stricter gun control laws (60%), down since polling conducted shortly after the 2018 mass shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School (70%), but up compared with polling after the 2017 mass shooting in Las Vegas (52%) and the 2016 mass shooting at a nightclub in Orlando (55%).

Almost nine in 10 Democrats favor stricter gun control laws (85%), along with 58% of independents, but just 39% of Republicans agree.

Those in gun-owning households are more likely than Republicans to favor stricter gun laws -- 48% say so. Support rises to 74% among those living in households without any guns.

Democrats are more passionately for stricter gun laws than Republicans are against; 70% of Democrats say they "strongly favor" stricter gun control as opposed to



38% of Republicans who "strongly oppose" such laws.

Still, Americans are less optimistic now than after Parkland that changes to gun laws will lessen the number of gun-related deaths in the country: Just 49% think tighter laws will have that effect, down from 56% in February 2018.

The CNN Poll was conducted by SSRS August 15 through 18 among a random national sample of 1,001 adults reached on landlines or cellphones by a live interviewer. Results for the full sample have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points, it is larger for subgroups.

Biden and Bernie the only Democrats to beat Trump in new poll

As Politico reported, Joe Biden is taking his electability pitch to new lengths. Only eight seconds into his first TV ad launched Tuesday, there's a full-screen graphic showing Biden leading President Donald Trump by from 9 to 13 points in four recent polls. "We have to beat Donald Trump," the narrator says.

"And all the polls agree: Joe Biden is the strongest Democrat to do the job." Jill Biden was equally blunt in New Hampshire on Monday, telling voters, "I know that not all of you are committed to my husband, and I respect that.

But I want you to think about your candidate, his or her electability, and who's going to win this race."

Each Democratic candidate is trying to make the case he or she can beat Trump — but Biden is taking the electability argument further than any candidate in recent memory.

And he has the numbers to back it up: A new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll is just the latest survey showing the former VP with the biggest lead over Trump. It has Biden up 7 points over the president in a hypothetical general election matchup, 42 percent to 35 percent.

Other than Bernie Sanders, who led Trump by 5 points, every other Democrat is either tied with the incumbent or trails him.

Biden's emphasis on his ability to win is a risky campaign strategy: It plays directly to Democrats' desire, first and foremost, to oust Trump.

But if Biden stumbles in polls, his main argument to voters will vanish.

Already, there are signs his favorability ratings, which spiked at the end of the Obama administration, are ticking back down since his return to the campaign trail. Biden isn't alone in making poll-centric appeals to voters.

Sanders has sought to allay fears that, as a self-proclaimed socialist, he would lose in the general.

He points out in interviews and debates that he, too, usually leads the president in head-to-head matchups.

And Trump, the man they're vying to face, frequently mentions his standing in the poll. Just this week, he tweeted a less-than-gold-standard poll that showed his approval rating narrowly above 50 percent and blasted Fox News, usually an ally, for its survey showing him trailing the major Democratic contenders.

Making the case for Biden's electability goes beyond simply highlighting favorable polls.

Much of the campaign's programming is geared toward building the case that the former vice president is the best candidate to take on the GOP incumbent Democrats want to kick out of office so badly that many are willing to put aside their ideological preferences.

"Clearly, his experience, his decency, his connection to the middle class, the fact that he can get a lot done, he has results, he can work across party lines — all of those go into the fact that he can beat Trump," said John Anzalone, Biden's pollster. The 2020 election is still 440 days away, and general-election matchup polls this far out aren't very predictive.

At this point in 2015, Hillary Clinton

had a more-than-10-point lead over Trump in the RealClearPolitics average.

And while primary polling becomes more predictive as the first votes of the nominating process draw closer, general-election polls still lack predictive power until later on.

An analysis by FiveThirtyEight of polls conducted a year before Election Day — so three or four months from now in this cycle — shows they were off by roughly 10 percentage points.

A headline about it, published two months ago, read, "Should We Take These Early General Election Polls Seriously? But Biden is wringing them for all they're worth, and it's easy to see why: His structural advantages over Trump are greater than his opponents, at least for now.

Biden leads Trump by 7 points overall in the POLITICO/Morning Consult survey and also posts larger leads than the other Democratic candidates among independents (by 8 points), self-identified moderates (27 points) and voters in the Midwest (5 points).

Biden "would potentially attract the most broad swath of voters across the ideological spectrum in a matchup against President Trump," said Tyler Sinclair, Morning Consult's vice president.

"Our polling shows 38 percent of independents and 9 percent of Republicans say they would vote for Biden over Trump, respectively.

Bernie Sanders receives the same level of support among independents but less Republican support at 6 percent, while Elizabeth Warren holds at 32 percent of independents and 5 percent of Republicans."

The POLITICO/Morning Consult poll was conducted Aug. 16-18, surveying 1,998 registered voters.

It has a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points. The former vice president's advantage extends to other polls. The Fox News poll last week showed him leading Trump by 12 points, 50 percent to 38 percent.

Sanders (9 points), Warren (7 points) and Kamala Harris (6 points) also led Trump, but by smaller margins.

Early general-election polls might not be predictive, but they do offer some insight.

In this case, the early polls say more about Trump than about the Democrats challenging him. In the POLITICO/Morning Consult poll, Trump ranges from the 7-point deficit to Biden, to an 8-point lead over Beto O'Rourke and Pete Buttigieg.

But that's only because O'Rourke and Buttigieg lack the profile of their party's front-runners.

In fact, despite this wide spread in the margins, Trump comes in at 35 percent or 36 percent in each of the seven different matchups tested — a troubling place for an incumbent, especially when the majority of voters also disapprove of his job performance.

The Fox News poll showed similar results in its four matchups: Trump was hovering just below 40 percent, no matter which Democrat he was matched up against.

Morning Consult is a nonpartisan media and technology company that provides data-driven research and insights on politics, policy and business strategy.

Poll shows Biden, Warren tied with Trump in Arizona

Also The Hill reported that Former Vice President Joe Biden and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) are statistically tied with President Trump in Arizona, a state that hasn't voted for a Democratic presidential candidate in a quarter century, according to a new poll.

The new survey conducted by OH Predictive Insights, a Phoenix-based nonpartisan pollster, shows Biden leading Trump by a 45 percent to 43 percent margin. Trump leads Warren 44 percent to 43 percent, the poll found.

Both results fall within the survey's margin of error, a sign that Trump will have to work harder to win Arizona's electoral

votes than any Republican nominee this century.

The survey shows Trump running better against other potential Democratic nominees. He leads Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) 44 percent to 34 percent; he leads Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) 45 percent to 36 percent; and he leads South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg (D) 43 percent to 38 percent. Trump "is in the low- to mid-40s, which I'd say is a pretty big red flag," said Mike Noble, a Republican pollster and managing partner and chief of research at OH Predictive Insights. "He's not doing himself any favors for 2020 in a state he won in 2016."

In the group's last survey, conducted in May just after Biden entered the race, Trump led every Democratic candidate except Biden by a statistically significant margin.

The May survey showed Biden leading Trump 49 percent to 44 percent. Since that last survey, Noble said, Trump's approval ratings have sagged — and they have taken his head-to-head numbers against Democrats down with them.

As a consequence, Trump now appears vulnerable in a state that has rarely been competitive at the presidential level. Trump's approval rating stands at 47 percent among Arizona voters. Fifty-two percent say they disapprove.

Though there are about 145,000 more registered Republicans than Democrats in Arizona, independent voters there appear to be breaking against Trump.

Just 38 percent of independents approve of Trump's job performance, and 60 percent disapprove.

Trump trails among independent voters against all five Democratic candidates the poll tested.



Biden holds a wide 50 percent to 34 percent lead among those voters, and Warren leads Trump 45 percent to 35 percent. In 2016, Trump won independent voters in Arizona by a 47 percent to 44 percent margin, according to exit polls.

In 2018, when Kyrsten Sinema became the first Democrat to win a U.S. Senate seat in Arizona since Dennis DeConcini won reelection in 1988, Sinema beat Republican Martha McSally among independents by a slim 50 percent to 47 percent margin. No Democratic presidential nominee has won Arizona's electoral votes since 1996, when Bill Clinton beat Bob Dole by about 2 percentage points and Reform Party nominee Ross Perot took 8 percent of the vote.

But Hillary Clinton came closer than anyone since her husband. Trump won just 48.7 percent of the vote in Arizona in 2016, edging Clinton's 45.1 percent.

The Clinton campaign spent a small amount of money to make a play for Arizona's electoral votes.

The poll shows signs, too, that favoring gun control or gun safety legislation is no longer a negative in a state known for its libertarian leanings.

The poll found 56 percent of Arizona voters would be more likely to vote for a candidate who favors gun safety legislation. Only 19 percent said they would be less likely to support such a candidate.

Nearly two in three voters, 64 percent, said they somewhat or strongly support banning assault-style weapons.

Sixty-two percent said they support banning high-capacity ammunition magazines.

A whopping 84 percent said they support so-called red flag laws, which allow law enforcement officials to take firearms away from someone who poses a danger to themselves or others.

And 83 percent said they would support raising the minimum age to purchase a firearm to 21 years old.

The eventual Democratic presidential nominee will be running alongside Mark Kelly, the retired astronaut and husband of former Rep.

Gabrielle Giffords (D) who is running for the U.S. Senate seat McSally now holds. The same OH Predictive Insights poll showed Kelly leading McSally, 46 percent to 41 percent. The survey polled 600 likely Arizona voters Aug. 13–14. It carried a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Amina Taylor: Theresa May first public victim of Brexit

TEHRAN (FNA) — Amina Taylor, journalist, says the UK conservative government as a whole was not ready for Brexit and did not think of the details at the initial steps, leading her to a total failure as the premier of the Britain.

Speaking to FNA, Mrs. Taylor said, “The failure of Theresa May to deliver Brexit has fracked British politics in a way that I fear it may take a generation or more to recover.”

Amina Taylor is a London-based journalist, TV producer and presenter. She has been covering the UK's affairs for decades. Her articles have been published by various media including the Guardian. Below is the full text of the interview:

■ Britain's relationship with the EU overshadowed Theresa May's time in the office. Why do you think she failed to finalize that relationship?

A: Perhaps one of the unluckiest politicians in the history; someone who in the first instance believed in her own ability to get the job done, despite being clear when David Cameron stick to way from office after the result of the Brexit referendum become public. Because clearly the conservative government as a whole was not ready for how the people voted. They believed that this referendum was a pledge that would have assuaged the more right wing elements of the conservative party, that side of the party that was perhaps leaning towards UKIP. When Theresa May got handed the job of the premiership, when she stood and made one of the earliest speeches where she said Brexit meant Brexit, it was a kind of vagary that summed up the Remain campaign where they expected that people



would know exactly what they mean without saying a whole out of the substance. When Theresa May headed off to Brussels, she was of the mindset that how hard can it be we have a deal; let's just get the things going without really looking into the details; because the details were never considered in the first instance. So, Theresa May became the first public victim of Brexit. But how Brexit became Theresa May's demise? Any politicians who have had attempted that task in the period in which Mrs. May did, would have suffered entirely the same fate.

■ Mrs. May failed to deliver Brexit. How has this failure affected the nation?

A: The failure of Theresa May to deliver Brexit has fracked British politics in a way that I fear it may take a generation or more to recover this particular political chasm that developed. That is not to say that it was not the nation divided previously, because we had seen where the austerity agenda had taken us, where that separated the rich from poor very clearly after the crash of 2008. But what Brexit did and the failure to come to a kind of cohesive policy on Brexit, it underscored a particularly virulent and nasty aspect of British society that we had covered over a very long time. I think the failure of Mrs. May's government to deliver

Brexit also told the British people that all politicians and those who support them, lie. They make promises that they do not have any intentions of keeping that sometimes ideology and an ideological position is far more important to them than the truth of the issue.

■ It is said May formed a minority government and consulted the type of the Brexit with only the 10 most uncompromising MPs. Do you believe it was May's dictatorship, or simply the nature of the Brexit itself, that kept Brexit away from successful delivery?

A: Mrs. May's supply of confidence arrangement with the DUP has been a particularly nasty form of politics, where the tail is wagging the dog, for the people who have been described as being party to some of the nasty elements of society in terms of how they see multiculturalism, the way in which they have dealt with things. They are reluctant to negotiate in a way that benefits many, and not just a few. Theresa May was always having this issue. As she called the election, and unfortunately misjudged the mood of the people, so once those elections were called and the result was so shockingly out of synch with what the Tory party hierarchy would have thought. More than what happened with Britain, more than what happened with the fate of the United Kingdom, what happens to our relationships with Europe and the rest of the world, the way I see it, conservative parliamentarians are more interested in maintaining power at all costs than anything else.

Ex-Bahraini MP: Bahrain's harsh verdicts appalling compliance with western masters

TEHRAN (FNA) — Former Bahraini MP Jalal Fairouz says the Manama government wants to show to “its masters” that it acts in their interest by following their deceptive policies.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with FNA, Mr. Fairouz made comments on the execution of two Bahraini political activists delivered in July, saying, “The regime wants to send a strong message to the people in Bahrain that in case there are some problems in the Persian Gulf countries and if they take to the streets, they will be smashed. The regime uses such harsh verdicts to threaten the Bahrainis to death... They just want to take the control of the situation, at any costs.”

Jalal Fairouz is a former member of Bahrain's parliament. He was a member of the main opposition party al-Wefaq. He is a Bahrain rights activist based in London, after he was stripped of Bahraini nationality by a court verdict for his opposition to the government.

Below is the full text of the interview.

■ Why does the regime issue the harsh verdict of execution against political activists?

A: The regime wants to send a message to the West and misrepresent it the way that it is facing some people who are called terrorists by the Western definitions. The regime claims that it is being targeted by some people who are using force. Also, the regime wants to show to its masters, like Trump, that it is in-line with them to smash any people who might be in any sense pro Iran. Furthermore, the regime wants to send a strong message to the people in Bahrain that in case there are some problems in the Persian Gulf countries and if they take to the streets, they will be smashed. The regime uses such harsh verdicts to threaten the Bahrainis to death.

■ Then why do people continue their protests when they are faced with such heavy handed reactions by the regime?

A: Right after the execution, people poured into the streets, and there were scuffles between people and the regime's forces. The anti-riot forces killed another person,



Mohammad Meghdad, and injured so many others. Still people are demonstrating and there are some clashes as the regime uses excessive force against the people. They just want to take the control of the situation at any costs.

■ Does the nation demand anything which cannot be addressed by the government?

A: The initial condition is a legitimate dialog on a clear agenda between the government and opposition. People are concerned that certain points should be included in the agenda, and they should be discussed in a very serious way, without being overlooked by international accredited bodies. The demands of the Bahrainis have been drafted by the main opposition group, al-Wefaq, along with other major political parties with the vast majority of the representation of people. The main demands include full democracy restored, free and fair elections for a democratic parliament and a legislative branch, an elected government, independent judiciary branch (unlike the present judiciary branch which is totally administered by the regime), freedom for all (not to prosecute

people who are critics of the government) and security for everybody in the country with no political activists in jail. One of the major demand is to stop stealing from people's wealth, which has gone now much worse than any kind of corruption. There is overwhelming control of the Royal family on Bahrainis' wealth. This has to be stopped, and all the stolen lands and properties must be returned to the people.

Tribute to Iranian students' voice on Kashmir

By Quayyum Raja

MASHHAD — On my arrival in Ferdowsi University of Mashhad in early July 2019, Dr. Zargani kindly invited two journalists from the daily Khurasan in his department in order to meet with me. One of the journalists said he visited the Valley of Kashmir, where some Kashmiris showed him the old Persian texts rapped in a piece of cloth like a sacred book. He asked me why I thought there was such a mutual respect between Iranians and Kashmiris since there has been no direct contact between them for a long time.

I said since I could not see anything material benefiting both of them, there must be something spiritual. The meeting terminated after over an hour, but the question asked by the journalist kept me pondering on it. From all the investigation and reading I have done, I think it is all due to the Persian saints like Bulbul Shah, who converted the then king of Kashmir Ranchan Shah to Islam in 14th century as well as contribution made by Syed Ali Shah Hamdani revered so much by the Kashmiris. Some sources claimed that Bulbul Shah was from Central Asia and some other said he was a Turk. Whoever he was, his language was Persian and the Persian influence remained very strong until the occupation of Jammu Kashmir following the partition of India.

The natural connection between the Iranians and Kashmiris was seen once again when students protest suddenly erupted in Mashhad last week against the Indian killings in Kashmir. The first protest took place in Imam Raza University where a large number of students gathered demanding the lifting of curfew and supported the independence movement of Kashmir. The second protest was held in front of the United Nations Office in Sajjad Boulevard near Mellat Park.

I was escorted by a group of Ferdowsi University students. Two buses full of students carried them to Sajjad Boulevard. Many other buses came from other parts of the city carrying both male and females. It was a very well organized and disciplined protest. The buses stopped half a km away from the office of the United Nations from where they walked to the venue. The leader of Ferdowsi university students advised the protesters to keep reciting one word only: Kashmir. As soon as they arrived in front of the UN Office, one of the leaders came out of the crowd and shouted “Kashmir became Karbala.”

Almost everybody had a placard in his hand, which stated “Kashmir is not alone”; “Stop Killing in Kashmir”; and so on.

America and the UN were criticized for their bias on Muslim issues and so was India-Israel alliance. The protesters called on Muslims to unite and protect themselves. The rally was joined and addressed by a local member of Iranian government Mr. Pezhmanfar. The male and female student leaders pledged in their speeches to continue their support for Kashmir.

I have received about 1000 messages so far from Kashmiris all over the world asking me to thank and pay tribute to the Iranian people for their moral support. Let us see who speaks out next for a just cause?

State Printing Office of Iran (SPOI)

Tender of purchasing 200 tons of watermarked papers with the emblem of State Printing Office of Iran (Mould)

Tender NO : 2098001065000004

State printing office of Iran intends to purchase the aforementioned watermarked papers through a public tender. Therefore ,participants in the tender should first receive their tender documents from **Aug. 21-2019 to 16:00** hours on Aug.28-2019 in the Governmental portal address at : www.setadiran.ir and after register needed documents in mentioned address , physically submit envelopes A,B and C to the secretariat of the company before the end of administrative hour **(12:00 PM) on Sep.14-2019**. Tender documents presented after the stated deadline will not be accepted.

The guaranteed amount for participating in the tender is **4/050/000/000 Rials(30/000 EURO)** and should be presented in the form of a bank guarantee in envelope A.

All stages of bid , including receiving tender documents ,submitting price proposal of tenders and opening the envelopes ,will be done through the portal of Governments electronic procurement system at the following address : www.setadiran.ir.

It is necessary that tenders , if not taken membership previously , should carry out the registration stages in the mentioned website and receive the signed and sealed electronic certificate for participating in the tender. For more information , please contact the governmental portal phone numbers at 41934 ,registration office Tel: **88969737** and **85193768**. Envelopes opening date is on **Sunday Sep.15-2019 at 10:30 AM** in Transactions Commission Room of State Printing Office of Iran. Meanwhile , the cost for publishing the advertisement shall be borne by the tender winner.

Address : State Printing Office of Iran, Imam Husein Square, Igbal Lahouri St., Next to Khayyam Park ,No: 29,
Postal code : 1714744153, Tel : 33349079

First Announcement



N.I.S.O.C

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. :08-38-9740009

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

Items	Material Description	Quantity
	SLICKLINE, SPOOLED ON IRON REEL H2S , CO2 AND CHLORIDE ION TRIM TYPE: SUPA-75 OR SANICRO-26 MATERIAL: HIGH CROSION RESISTANCE STAINLESS STEEL UNS N 08926 NDT TEST INCLUDING EDDY CURRENT TEST AND ALSO WRAP TESTS SHOULD BE PERFORM & DOCUMENTED DIAMETER & LENGTH AS SPECIFIED :REF."SANDVICK STEEL" OR OTHER STANDARD APPROVED EQUIVALEN	
01	SIZE 0.082 INCH X 18000 FEET	6
02	SIZE 0.092 INCH X 18000 FEET	6

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their “ Intention to participate” letter via Fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: WWW.nisoc.ir , not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the .tender will be disregarded

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit .a bid bond of 11,195 EURO or 525, 000,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC

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

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

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

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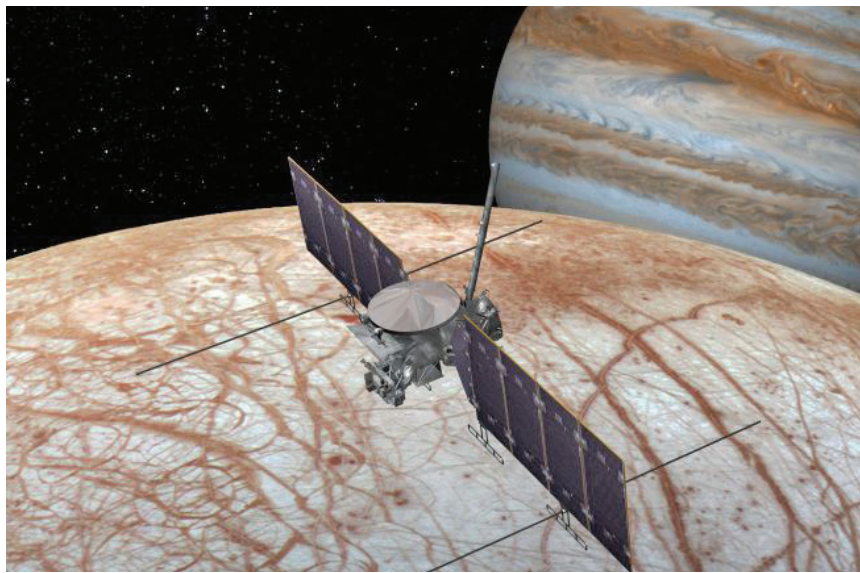
Modern Stadium of Martyrs of Khuzestan Football Club (KFC)



Mission to Jupiter's icy moon confirmed

An icy ocean world in our solar system that could tell us more about the potential for life on other worlds is coming into focus with confirmation of the Europa Clipper mission's next phase. The decision allows the mission to progress to completion of final design, followed by the construction and testing of the entire spacecraft and science payload.

"We are all excited about the decision that moves the Europa Clipper mission one key step closer to unlocking the mysteries of this ocean world," said Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator for the Science Mission Directorate at NASA Headquarters in Washington. "We are building upon the scientific insights received from the flagship Galileo and Cassini spacecraft and working to advance our understanding of our cosmic origin, and even life elsewhere."



The mission will conduct an in-depth exploration of Jupiter's moon Europa and investigate whether the icy moon could harbor conditions suitable for life, honing our insights into astrobiology. To develop this mission in the most cost-effective fashion, NASA is targeting to have the Europa Clipper spacecraft complete and ready for launch as early as 2023. The agency baseline commitment, however, supports a launch readiness date by 2025.

NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, leads the development of the Europa Clipper mission in partnership with the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory for the Science Mission Directorate. Europa Clipper is managed by the Planetary Missions Program Office at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama.

(Source: Science Daily)

Boeing spacecraft astronauts see new frontier for commercial space

A crew of veteran U.S. astronauts and aviators are training in Houston for a manned mission to the International Space Station aboard Boeing's new Starliner spacecraft, which could also be used to take tourists into space on future missions.

The Boeing Starliner mission was originally scheduled for this month, but that has been delayed to at least the end of the year or into 2020 due to technical issues and amid a shakeup in the top echelons of the space agency.

Boeing (BA.N) and rival Elon Musk's SpaceX are competing with each other to become the first private company to resume human space flight from U.S. soil after the space shuttle program ended in 2011.

The companies, with cutting-edge technology, are among those poised to benefit most from the enormous growth opportunities many see in the world's burgeoning commercial space industry.

NASA has been relying for years on Russian rockets and spacecraft to transport personnel to the space station. The \$100 billion science and engineering laboratory, orbiting 250 miles (400 km) above Earth, has been permanently staffed by rotating crews of astronauts and cosmonauts since November 2000.

NASA is paying SpaceX and Boeing nearly \$7 billion combined to build rocket-and-capsule launch systems for ferrying astronauts to the space station.

Reuters was given rare access at Houston's Johnson Space Center to NASA astronauts Nicole Mann and Mike Fincke, and Boeing astronaut and test pilot Christopher Ferguson, who will crew the ISS mission, along with other astronauts training for future missions.

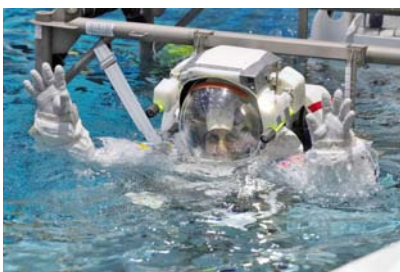
The exercises included training underwater to simulate space walks, responding to emergencies aboard the space station, and practicing docking maneuvers on a flight simulator.

Here's a closer look at the three astronauts training for the ISS flight.

Ferguson, a former NASA astronaut and retired U.S. Navy captain, who helped design the way the crew interacts with the automated Boeing CST-100 Starliner, will lead its maiden voyage.

"They (Boeing) knew how big it was going to be, how it was going to be powered, but they really hadn't thought a whole lot about what the inside would be and how does the crew interface with the vehicle that's designed to operate automatically," said Ferguson.

The design "is a great compromise between keeping it minimalistic yet at the same time giving the pilot the ability to understand where am I, where do I need to be, how am I going to get there, if things go wrong how do I fix them." "It comes down



to watching (the spacecraft's) behavior," said Ferguson, who led NASA's final space shuttle mission in 2011 and spent more than 40 days in space over his career. "We just want to make sure it doesn't throw us a curve ball."

It will be the first trip into space for Mann, 42, a former Navy combat pilot, who said she was looking forward to the excitement a fresh American-based crewed mission to space would create among a young generation that did not grow up watching Apollo and shuttle missions as their parents and grandparents did.

"And so I think it's going to be huge for Americans. It's going to be huge for the younger generation to see us launching from American soil, that we're bringing work and industry back to the United States."

"I think it'll open up a lot more jobs. It'll open a lot more innovation for that young generation. And there's a big future of spaceflight in front of us."

The Starliner mission will lay the groundwork for Boeing's commercial flight program, which includes carrying passenger and cargoes to the space station, and taking tourists into space, said Fincke, a veteran NASA astronaut who has completed three space flights.

"So far, we've only had about 500 people go to space. Hopefully, in the next 10 years, we'll go from 500 to 5,000. And in the next 20 years, maybe 50,000 or more," said the former U.S. Air Force colonel who served as science officer and flight engineer on a six-month space station mission.

Eight years ago, when Ferguson led NASA's last space shuttle mission, he left an American flag aboard the space station for the next crew of U.S. astronauts to collect and bring home. He likes the idea of getting it back himself, traveling on the first manned commercial U.S. spacecraft.

"Sort of like a grown-up version of capture the flag," Ferguson said.

"I would be very happy for them. Who brings it home is unimportant, but the fact that it gets home is most important. And I would be very proud of Doug (Hurley, a NASA astronaut training to fly aboard SpaceX's Crew Dragon space craft), although he's going to lose."

(Source: Reuters)

Maximum mass of lightest neutrino revealed using astronomical big data

Neutrinos come in three flavors made up of a mix of three neutrino masses. While the differences between the masses are known, little information was available about the mass of the lightest species until now.

It's important to better understand neutrinos and the processes through which they obtain their mass as they could reveal secrets about astrophysics, including how the universe is held together, why it is expanding and what dark matter is made of.

First author, Dr Arthur Loureiro (UCL Physics & Astronomy), said: "A hundred billion neutrinos fly through your thumb from the Sun every second, even at night. These are very weakly interactive ghosts that we know little about. What we do know is that as they move, they can change mass between their three flavors, and this can only happen if at least two of their masses are non-zero."

"The three flavors can be compared to ice cream where you have one scoop containing strawberry, chocolate and vanilla. Three flavors are always present but in different ratios, and the changing ratio-and the weird behavior of the particle-can only be explained by neutrinos having a mass."

The concept that neutrinos have mass is a relatively new one with the discovery in 1998 earning Professor Takaaki Kajita and Professor Arthur B. McDonald the 2015 Nobel Prize in Physics. Even so, the Standard Model used by modern physics has yet to be updated to assign neutrinos a mass.

The study, published today in Physical Review Letters by researchers from UCL, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Institut d'Astrophysique de Paris and Universidade de Sao Paulo, sets an upper limit for the mass of the lightest neutrino for the first time. The particle could technically have no mass as a lower limit is yet to be determined.

The team used an innovative approach to calculate the mass of neutrinos by using data collected by both cosmologists and particle physicists. This included using data from 1.1 million galaxies from the Baryon Oscillation Spectroscopic Survey (BOSS) to measure the rate of expansion of the universe, and constraints from particle accelerator experiments.

"We used information from a variety of sources including space- and ground-based telescopes observing the first light of the Universe (the cosmic microwave background radiation), exploding stars, the largest 3D map of galaxies in the Universe, particle accelerators, nuclear reactors, and more," said Dr. Loureiro.

"As neutrinos are abundant but tiny and elusive, we needed every piece of knowledge available to calculate their



mass and our method could be applied to other big questions puzzling cosmologists and particle physicists alike."

The researchers used the information to prepare a framework in which to mathematically model the mass of neutrinos and used UCL's supercomputer, Grace, to calculate the maximum possible mass of the lightest neutrino to be 0.086 eV (95% CI), which is equivalent to 1.5 x 10⁻³⁷ Kg. They calculated that three neutrino flavors together have an upper bound of 0.26 eV (95% CI).

Second author, PhD student Andrei Cuceu (UCL Physics & Astronomy), said: "We used more than half a million computing hours to process the data; this is equivalent to almost 60 years on a single processor. This project pushed the limits for big data analysis in cosmology."

The team say that understanding how neutrino mass can be estimated is important for future cosmological studies such as DESI and Euclid, which both involve teams from across UCL.

The Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument (DESI) will study the large scale structure of the universe and its dark energy and dark matter contents to a high precision. Euclid is a new space telescope being developed with the European Space Agency to map the geometry of the dark Universe and evolution of cosmic structures.

Professor Ofer Lahav (UCL Physics & Astronomy), co-author of the study and chair of the UK Consortiums of the Dark Energy Survey and DESI said: "It is impressive that the clustering of galaxies on huge scales can tell us about the mass of the lightest neutrino, a result of fundamental importance to physics. This new study demonstrates that we are on the path to actually measuring the neutrino masses with the next generation of large spectroscopic galaxy surveys, such as DESI, Euclid and others."

The research was funded by National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) Science without Borders (Brazil), the Royal Astronomical Society, the UK Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), the Royal Society and the European Research Council.

(Source: Science Daily)

Spaceflight consistently affects the gut

A new Northwestern University study discovered that spaceflight both aboard a space shuttle or the International Space Station (ISS) has a consistent effect on the gut microbiome.

The Northwestern researchers developed a novel analytical tool to compare microbiome data from mice as far back as 2011. Called STARMAPS (Similarity Test for Accordant and Reproducible Microbiome Abundance Patterns), the tool indicates that spaceflight causes a specific, consistent change on the abundance, ratios and diversity of bacteria in the gut.

Perhaps most surprisingly, the team also used STARMAPS to compare spaceflight data to data collected from Earth-based studies on the effects of radiation on the gut. They effectively ruled out space radiation as the cause of changes in the microbiome during spaceflight.



"Radiation definitely has an effect on the gut microbiome," said Northwestern's Martha Vitaterna, who led the study. "But those effects do not look like what we saw in spaceflight."

The study published last week in the journal Microbiome. Vitaterna is a research professor in neurobiology at Northwestern's Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences. Peng Jiang, research assistant professor in neurobiology at Weinberg, was the paper's first author.

Vitaterna and longtime collaborator Fred W. Turek, also from Northwestern, led the microbiome section of NASA's Twin Study, which compared physiological changes in astronaut Scott Kelly to his Earth-bound twin Mark. Although the Turek and Vitaterna found that a year in space affected astronaut Scott Kelly's gut microbiome, it was not enough data to draw general conclusions about the effects of spaceflight on the human body.

"If we are going to send humans to Mars or on long missions to the moon, it is essential to understand the effects of long-term exposure of the space environment on us -- and on the trillions of bacteria traveling with us," said Turek, the Charles and Emma Morrisson Professor of Neurobiology in Weinberg, who co-authored the paper. "While we have studied the effects of a year in space on Scott Kelly's microbiota, we need to use mice in larger numbers to establish the effects of space."

NASA has studied the effects of microgravity on mice's biological processes for many years. In fall 2014, it delivered its first group of mice to the ISS for a 37-day stay. Since that experiment (called Rodent Research-1), NASA has subsequently delivered seven more groups of mice to the ISS, including the Northwestern team's Rodent Research-7 experiment.

Vitaterna and Jiang started with samples from Rodent Research-1, which included the spaceflight group plus a matched ground control group, a baseline group and a laboratory group that was housed in a conventional mouse facility for the same duration of the trip. They also looked at mouse samples from the final American space shuttle mission, STS 135, which launched in 2011.

Researchers have struggled to crunch all the data because of the sheer amount of it. There are hundreds of different bacterial species in the gut, and different individuals may have vastly different gut bacterial communities at the start of an experiment. This makes it challenging to detect when there is a consistent response.

"There wasn't a statistical approach for doing this work," Vitaterna said. "The tools didn't exist, so we invented them. It's a classic case of how necessity is the mother of invention."

"We knew that spaceflight affects the microbiome, so we could have looked at this anecdotally," Jiang said. "But there are a lot of limitations to that. We needed a more comprehensive, high-level view. Then we could say that microbiome changes are comparable among multiple spaceflights."

STARMAPS provides a new method to put all the data from different experiments into the same multi-dimensional space. Then users can more readily see patterns where different types of bacteria become more or less abundant under different conditions.

Using this tool, the Northwestern researchers immediately noticed that microbiomes in the spaceflight and ground control mice looked very differently from the other two groups. The ground control group lives in an environment simulator that directly matches the spaceflight habitats. The gas composition, temperature and diet are exactly the same.

"We found that habitat has a big impact," Vitaterna said.

Although the researchers did not use STARMAPS to analyze samples collected from astronaut Scott Kelly during his year in space, they did notice that his data fit the same, consistent pattern caused by spaceflight.

"Some of the high-level changes are similar," Jiang said. "We saw the ratios of the same major types of bacteria change in the same direction and a slight increase in overall diversity. That is consistent."

But, still, the spaceflight and ground control mice's microbiomes were quite different from each other. This proves there is a distinct effect from spaceflight. To find what might cause that effect, the researchers dug deeper.

One possibility was that exposure to radiation in space might cause the microbiome shift. Jiang found multiple Earth-based studies on the effects of radiation on the mouse microbiome and analyzed them with STARMAPS. They discovered that the microbiome shifts caused by spaceflight versus radiation did not match.

Vitaterna and Jiang believe microgravity might cause the spaceflight effect, but they agree more work needs to be done. They are currently processing samples from Rodent Research-7 and hope that data will hold more clues. Vitaterna said the diversity and ratios of gut bacteria during spaceflight look most similar to stress.

"Understanding the factors that can reduce this kind of microbiome change would be useful information to have -- for offsetting the effects of stress on Earth," she said. "Understanding what genetic factors contribute to differences in bacterial strains will be useful for developing countermeasures that can protect your microbiome during stressful periods."

(Source: Science Daily)

For an asteroid, Ryugu has surprisingly little dust on its surface

Ryugu is a neat freak. The surface of the small, near-Earth asteroid is surprisingly free of dust, observations from Germany's MASCOT lander show.

The asteroid, thought to have formed from the breakup of a larger body around 700 million years ago, has no atmosphere to protect it from interplanetary dust streaming through the solar system. These miniature missiles pummel exposed space rocks at high speed, breaking down their surfaces into thin layers of dust and dirt, such as those found on the moon and the asteroid Vesta.

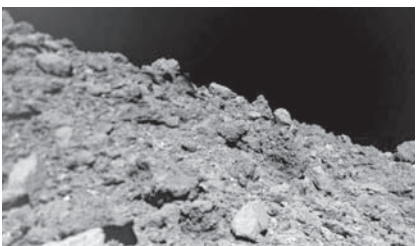
But when MASCOT bounced across Ryugu in October 2018, the lander took high-resolution photos that show no sign of any dust-sized particles, down to a resolution of about 100 micrometers, about the thickness of a sheet of paper, researchers report in the

Aug. 23 Science.

"After a few tens of millions of years, you should have dust on the surface," says planetary scientist Ralf Jaumann of the German Aerospace Center in Berlin. "If it's not there, you should have some kind of physical, geological processes which clean up these bodies."

Ryugu could hide its dust in larger, porous rocks or deep in its interior, Jaumann and colleagues say. Shaking due to a meteorite impact may shuffle the particles into bigger surface rocks or down through small surface cracks to the asteroid's center and out of sight, the way small nuts end up at the bottom of a cup of trail mix.

Or Ryugu could spray dust into space when sunlight heats patches of trapped ice and releases volatile gases. A similar asteroid, Bennu, seems to spew plumes of



small rocks into space, according to NASA's OSIRIS-REx spacecraft. But Jaumann thinks that explanation is less likely for Ryugu. Observations from the Japanese Hayabusa2 craft, which has been orbiting Ryugu since June 2018 and brought MASCOT along, suggest that Ryugu has less water in its minerals than Bennu.

There's another possible explanation

for Bennu's dust sprays, says OSIRIS-REx principal investigator Dante Lauretta of the University of Arizona in Tucson. He thinks frequent temperature changes on Bennu's surface as the different sides of the asteroid rotate in and out of sunlight could make the asteroid's larger rocks fracture like a snapped cracker, spraying crumbs into space.

If something similar happens on Ryugu, "then Ryugu should also be ejecting particles," he says. Hayabusa2 may just not be in the right position to see the sprays. "It would be very cool if we saw it."

But snapping rocks might create more dust, not less, he notes. An answer to the mystery may not come until after Hayabusa2 returns to Earth with samples of Ryugu's surface and subsurface in late 2020.

(Source: sciencenews.org)

Canadian consulate suspends travel for Hong Kong staff

The Canadian Consulate in Hong Kong said Friday it has suspended official travel for local staff, following the detention of a UK Consulate employee during a trip to mainland China.

A spokesperson for the Canadian mission confirmed the new measure in an email to TIME, but did not elaborate on its reasons or the scope of travel restrictions.

“At present, locally-engaged staff will not undertake official business travel outside of Hong Kong,” the spokesperson said.

China’s foreign ministry confirmed Wednesday that an employee of the U.K. Consulate, Simon Cheng, had been detained in Shenzhen, a city bordering Hong Kong.

Cheng had reportedly been on a one-day business trip to the mainland when he disappeared on Aug. 8. Chinese state media accused him of soliciting prostitutes, a claim his family dismissed as “a made-up crime,” according to Agence France-Presse.

Hong Kong, a semiautonomous territory of China, has been wracked by almost three months of antigovernment protests sparked by a proposal to allow the extradition of fugitives to the mainland.

The extradition bill has since been suspended, but the protests snowballed into a movement calling for more democratic freedoms.

Beijing has accused the U.S., UK and other Western countries of being behind the unrest, warning foreign governments against meddling in its internal affairs.

Chinese authorities have reportedly heightened inspections at the busy customs crossing in Shenzhen, including searching travelers’ mobile devices for media related to the protests.

(Source: TIME)

U.S. travel to Canada highest since 2007

Some 12.3 million U.S. residents headed to Canada in the first half of 2019, the highest first-half record since 2007, according to Statistics Canada.

CTV News in Canada first reported these findings.

Canada, the vast North American country known for a bevy of cool offerings, including poutine, polar bears and Northern Lights, is welcoming U.S. visitors this year at a near-record rate.

For many U.S. residents, especially those in bordering states, Canada is a mere road trip away. James Laviano, a Boston resident, recently drove up to Montreal with his wife, Karin, and their three children. The drive from Boston is only five hours, and, says Laviano: “Montreal feels like Europe.”

It was the Laviano kids’ first time out of the country, and a relatively easy one at that, explains Laviano since no passports are needed for children under 16.

Others take advantage of direct flight offerings that don’t just take visitors to Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, the country’s biggest cities. Colorado residents, for example, can fly direct from Denver to Winnipeg, Manitoba, a province which many Canadians consider the country’s heart, because of both its location and friendly, low-key vibe.

But Manitoba isn’t the only welcoming province. “Canada,” says Kristen Learned, communications specialist with Destination British Columbia, “has long held the reputation as the friendly neighbor in the North.”

Learned also attributes increased air travel between the countries as adding to the increase in U.S. tourism, saying “air capacity (availability of flights/seats) between U.S. and BC continues to grow each year, providing opportunity for long-haul high-yield travelers to visit BC.”

(Source: CNN)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Ephesus

Located within what was once the estuary of the River Kaystros in Turkey, Ephesus comprises successive Hellenistic and Roman settlements founded on new locations, which followed the coastline as it retreated westward.

Excavations have revealed grand monuments of the Roman Imperial period including the Library of Celsus and the Great Theatre. Little remains of the famous Temple of Artemis, one of the “Seven Wonders of the World,” which drew pilgrims from all around the Mediterranean.



Since the 5th century, the House of the Virgin Mary, a domed cruciform chapel seven kilometers from Ephesus, became a major place of Christian pilgrimage. The Ancient City of Ephesus is an outstanding example of a Roman port city, with sea channel and harbor basin.

Founded by the 2nd millennium BCE, the sanctuary of the Ephesian Artemis, originally an Anatolian mother goddess, became one of the largest and most powerful sanctuaries of the ancient world.

When Asia Minor was incorporated into the Roman Empire in 133 BCE, Ephesus was designated as the capital of the new province Asia.

Excavations and conservation over the past 150 years have revealed grand monuments of the Roman Imperial period lining the old processional way through the ancient city including the Library of Celsus and terrace houses.

■ Integrity

The serial components contain sites which demonstrate the long settlement history of the place, each making a significant contribution to the overall Outstanding Universal Value. Together the components include all elements necessary to express Outstanding Universal Value and the property is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes which convey the property’s significance.

(Source: UNESCO)

Traveler recommends potential tourists to visit Iran before a “big influx”

1 → The big strength to Iran is that travelers are always looking for new and exciting destinations to visit.

■ Were you ever discouraged by family or friends when you first revealed your plans to travel to Iran? How did your preconceptions change after visiting the country?

From the time myself and my son Ryan entered Iran at the border from Turkey with the assistance of my Iranian guide Mr Hossein Ravanyar of Iran Overland my perceptions have excited me. In fact it was my birthday the day that I entered Iran and Mr Hossein Ravanyar surprised me by inviting me to his daughter’s house where she had prepared a surprise birthday lunch even with a birthday cake. This was so hospitable of them.

Lots of my friends and family have questioned why I have persisted to enter Iran with all the uncertainty.

I had done a lot of online research with other similar travelers who have recently crossed through Iran and they all commented what a wonderful and safe place to visit. So, this alleviated my concerns. I can say they have no reason to be concerned about Iran. It’s been an amazing place so far and I will be recommending to others online who are also thinking about visiting.

■ What do you think about media coverage of Iran in the world, particularly in the West?

I believe that all this negative media coverage is unfounded news.

■ You’ve passed through different countries to reach Iran, on your detailed itinerary. What is the most special and unique thing about the country and its people that you might want to talk about? Is there anything



Ray Cook is seen in his Land Cruiser opposite the Tehran Times headquarters in downtown Tehran, August 19, 2019.

I had done a lot of online research with other similar travelers who have recently crossed through Iran and they all commented what a wonderful and safe place to visit. So, this alleviated my concerns. I can say they have no reason to be concerned about Iran.

different that makes it stand out among places you’ve been to?

The lack of crowds of foreign tourist as I have found in other countries which are over-

crowded. It is also value for money to travel here compared to other Western countries and not to forget your helpful and friendly people where ever I have visited so far.



Ray Cook and his son Ryan glance at a copy of the Tehran Times on August 19, 2019.



Ray Cook (C) and his son Ryan (L) come across a honey farming couple in northern Iranian province of Mazandaran, August 2019.

Ancient skeletons with alien-like heads unearthed in Croatia

Archaeologists have unearthed three ancient skeletons in Croatia — and two of them had pointy, artificially deformed skulls.

Each of those skulls had been melded into a different shape, possibly as a way to show they belonged to a specific cultural group.

Artificial cranial deformation has been practiced in various parts of the world, from Eurasia and Africa to South America. It is the practice of shaping a person’s skull — such as through using tight headaddresses, bandages or rigid tools — while the skull bones are still malleable in infancy.

Ancient cultures had different reasons for the practice, from indicating social status to creating what they thought was a more beautiful skull. The earliest known instance of this practice occurred 12,000 years ago in ancient China, but it’s unclear if the practice spread from there or if it emerged independently in different parts of the world, according to a previous Live Science report.

In this case, archeologists found these three skeletons in a burial pit in Croatia’s Hermanov vinograd archeological site in 2013. Between 2014 and 2017, they analyzed the

skeletons using various methods, including DNA analysis and radiographic imaging — a method that involves using radiation to view the inside of an object such as a skull.

Their analysis revealed that the skeletons were all males who had died between ages 12 and 16. They all showed evidence of malnutrition, but that’s not necessarily how they died. They could have had “some kind of disease that killed them quickly and didn’t leave any traces on their bones,” such as plague, said senior author Mario Novak, a bioarchaeologist at the Institute for Anthropological Research in Zagreb, Croatia.

The archaeologists didn’t find artifacts in the burial that could have revealed the boys’ social status, Novak said.

Analysis also revealed that the three had lived between 415 CE and 560, a time that corresponds to the Great Migration Period, which is “a very turbulent period in Europe’s history,” Novak told Live Science. Right after the fall of the Roman Empire, completely new populations of people and cultures began to arrive in Europe and become the basis for modern European nations. “In other words, this period set the foundations of Europe as we know it today,” Novak said.

Indeed, DNA analysis of the ancient trio revealed that one of them had a West Eurasian ancestry, another a near-Eastern ancestry and the third an East Asian ancestry.

The boy who was of near-Eastern ancestry had a circular-erect type cranial deformation, which means that the frontal bone behind the forehead was flattened and the height of the skull was “significantly increased,” Novak said. The boy who likely came from West Eurasia didn’t have any skull deformation, and the boy with East Asian ancestry had a skull with an “oblique” deformation, which means the skull was elongated diagonally upward.

“We propose that different skull deformation types in Europe were used as a visual indicator of association with a certain cultural group,” Novak said. As of yet, it’s unclear what cultural groups they belonged to, though the East Asian boy could have been a Hun.

Now, Novak and his team hope to find more samples of cranial deformation from Europe to understand this phenomenon on a larger scale.

(Source: Live Science)

A walk through Jameh Mosque of Hamedan

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Photos show interior and exterior views of Jameh Mosque of Hamedan, August 20, 2019.

The Qajar-era (1789-1925) monument is where communal prayers are said five times a day by the faithful. Form another point of view, its culture and architecture have been sources of charm for travelers to the west-central Iranian city.

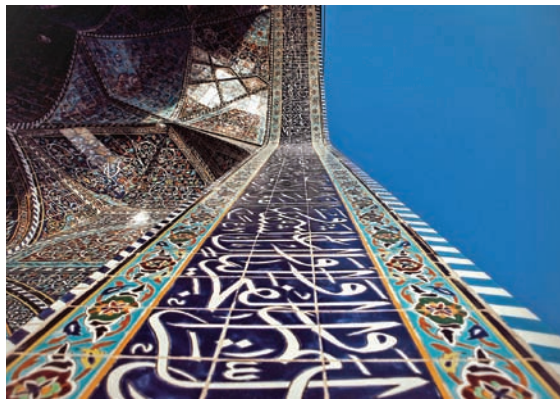
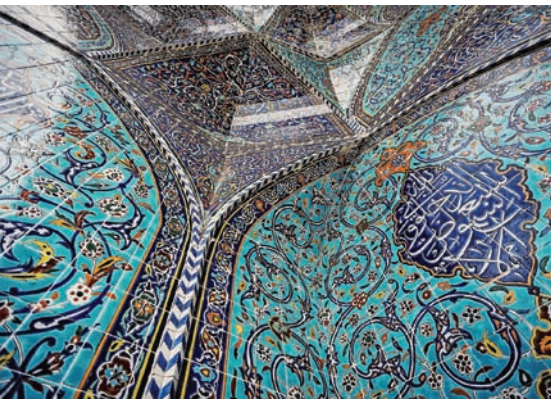
The mosque is rectangular in shape. It used to have four ivans (porticos) of which three have been remained. The mosque comprises of two areas for communal prayers, a brick dome, and a relatively vast courtyard with a huge pool in the center.

It also has two shabestans, six minarets and three balconies in northern, eastern and southern directions. Shabestan is an underground space that can be usually found in Iran’s traditional mosques, houses, and schools.

The mosque, which is a national cultural heritage, has a double-shell dome, decorated with colorful glazed tiles, it also boasts intricate stuccowork, woodwork, and tilework, many of which embellished with arabesque designs.

The terms “Jameh Mosque” or “Masjed-e Jameh” or “Friday Mosque” is used in Iran for a grand communal mosque where mandatory Friday prayers are performed: the phrase is used in other Muslim countries but only in Iran does it designate this purpose.

Known in classical times as Ecbatana, Hamedan was one of the ancient world’s greatest cities. It was the capital of Media and subsequently a summer residence of the Achaemenian kings who ruled Persia from 553 to 330 BC. Ali Sadr cave, Ganjnameh inscriptions, Avicenna mausoleum, Hegmataneh hill, Alaviyan dome, Jameh mosque, and St. Stephanos Gregorian Church are amongst Hamedan’s attractions to name a few.



Iranian knowledge-based company manufactures robotic surgery system

HEALTH **TEHRAN** – An Iranian knowledge-based company has manufactured a robotic surgery system which is projected to be used in surgeries by the next three years, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

The system can be used mostly for abdominal surgeries, the company's managing director Alireza Mirbakeri explained.

The system is as big as an operating room and took 15 years to be designed and manufactured, he added.

The system is composed of two parts: the first one is a surgical console which is controlled by the surgeon and the second one is surgery robots which carry out surgery inside the body of patients, he said.

The system has already been examined on animals, however, it must pass further tests in order to be used for humans, he concluded.



■ **What is a robotic surgery system?** Robotic surgery, or robot-assisted

surgery, allows doctors to perform many types of complex procedures with more

precision, flexibility and control than is possible with conventional techniques, according to mayoclinic.org.

Robotic surgery is usually associated with minimally invasive surgery — procedures performed through tiny incisions. It is also sometimes used in certain traditional open surgical procedures.

Surgeons who use the robotic system find that for many procedures it enhances precision, flexibility and control during the operation and allows them to better see the site, compared with traditional techniques. Using robotic surgery, surgeons can perform delicate and complex procedures that may have been difficult or impossible with other methods.

Robotic surgery involves risk, some of which may be similar to those of conventional open surgery, such as a small risk of infection and other complications.

Cancer more common in females with severe sleep apnea

Some studies have identified links between sleep apnea and cancer. Now, new research reveals that rates of cancer are higher among females with pronounced symptoms of apnea.

New research finds that women with a severe form of sleep apnea are more likely to receive a cancer diagnosis.

The recent study, which features in the European Respiratory Journal, analyzed data on 20,000 adults with sleep apnea.

About 2% of the participants also had a diagnosis of cancer in their medical history.

The data came from the European Sleep Apnea Database (ESADA), which has medical and visit records on adults registered at 33 centers across Europe.

The international research team points out that while the findings do not prove that sleep apnea causes cancer, there appears to be a clear link in females.

"It's reasonable to assume that sleep apnea is a risk factor for cancer or that both conditions have common risk factors, such as [being] overweight," says Ludger Grote, an adjunct professor and chief physician in sleep medicine at Gothenburg University in Sweden.

"On the other hand," he adds, "it is less likely that cancer leads to sleep apnea."

■ **Obstructive sleep apnea**

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), or sleep apnea, is a condition in which a person experiences short and repeated interruptions of breathing while asleep. The condition results from the inability of the throat muscles to keep the airway open.

There is another form of apnea called central sleep apnea, which occurs due to a failure in brain signaling. Of the two types of apnea, OSA is by far the most common. Researchers propose that screening for and treating obstructive sleep apnea could help reduce symptoms of depression.

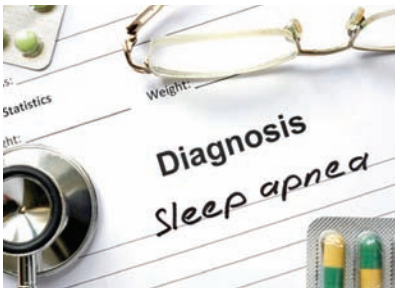
OSA can cause disturbed, fragmented sleep and lead to an insufficiency of oxygen. The combination of low oxygen and sleep disruption can give rise to high blood pressure, heart disease, memory problems, and mood disturbance.

According to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), OSA affects 5–20% of adults in the United States.

The estimate comes from studies that used formal tests and assessments. The NSF suggest that the actual percentage of people in the U.S. with sleep apnea is likely to be greater.

"The condition of sleep apnea is well-known to the general public and associated with snoring, daytime fatigue, and elevated risk of cardiovascular disease, especially in men," Dr. Grote explains.

He and his colleagues note that while there is growing evidence for a link between OSA and cancer, it remains under debate.



The main reason appears to be the small numbers of study participants and "poor characterization" of types of OSA and cancer.

■ **Theories about cancer and sleep apnea**

Scientists have proposed several theories for a link between OSA and cancer. One theory emphasizes that the two conditions share common risk factors, such as age and obesity.

Another theory is that intermittent hypoxia — a condition in which the body does not get enough oxygen — and sleep fragmentation, both of which occur in OSA, may also explain the link to cancer.

This type of link could involve changes in the development of blood vessels, immune function, and the tissue environment of tumors.

However, until the recent research, very few studies had examined whether biological sex made a difference to the link between OSA and cancer.

In their results, Dr. Grote and his colleagues found, as expected, that there was an association between older age and a higher risk of cancer.

However, when they adjusted the results of the analysis to take out the potential influence of age, sex, body mass index (BMI), alcohol intake, and smoking, they found a possible association between intermittent nocturnal hypoxia and higher rates of cancer.

■ **Stronger link in females**

In addition, the analysis revealed that the link between nocturnal hypoxia and higher rates of cancer was stronger in females and weaker in males.

The results suggest that the risk of cancer is two to three times higher in females with severe symptoms of sleep apnea.

Dr. Grote says that previous research has tended to focus on the link between OSA and malignant melanoma. In the light of his team's findings, "Cancer of the breast or womb may now become a new area," he suggests.

Perhaps a combination of female sex hormones and stress arising from nocturnal hypoxia in OSA triggers the start of cancer or reduces the body's immune defenses, he muses.

(Source: Medical News Today)

Health tips to promote back-to-school success

Healthy kids do better in school -- something parents need to think about as they prepare for a new academic year.

"As a parent and grandparent, I know that back-to-school time is a busy time. Yet, I encourage parents and students to be mindful of some health essentials to add to your to-do lists," said Dr. Robert Redfield, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Getting a flu shot this fall, frequent hand-washing, and staying active all contribute to a healthier and more productive academic year," he said in a CDC news release.

Hand-washing with soap and water is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid illness and prevent the spread of colds, flu and other diseases to others. At school, students should wash before eating; after using the toilet; and after blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing.

Healthy eating and physical activity are also important. Most children consume nearly half their calories at school, making it an important place to learn and practice healthy eating habits.

Physical activity can ease anxiety and help kids focus in school. Experts say children should get at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day. They point out that nearly 20% of U.S. kids are obese, making them more likely to have health problems such as asthma and high blood pressure, and to be shunned, depressed and have lower self-esteem.

Vaccinations are one of the most important ways to protect your child's health. Getting immunized also protects classmates, friends, relatives and others in the community.

Electronic cigarettes are a growing problem among American youth. In 2018, more than 3.6 million young people -- including 1 in 5 high school students and 1 in 20 middle school students -- had vaped in the past month.

The nicotine in e-cigarettes can harm a youngster's developing brain, especially areas responsible for learning, memory and attention.

Parents and teachers should explain why e-cigarettes are harmful for kids and set an example by being tobacco-free. Schools should adopt tobacco-free-school policies that include e-cigarettes.

■ **Remember our child's health as school starts**

Keep your kids healthy for the start of a new school year.

You've got the pens, the notebooks, and a few fresh new pairs of clothes. But what have you done to look after your children's health as they head off to school? Follow this checklist and discover the problems



and solutions that impact the health of your star students, including overloaded backpacks, bullying, and back-to-school separation anxiety.

■ **Healthy lunches are essential to kids' success**

Little changes can make a big difference over time. Changing the way you pack your kids' lunches can make them healthier over the long term. Plus, you're helping them appreciate what healthy food tastes like. Try filling their lunchboxes with colorful fruits and vegetables. Grapes, apples, mangoes, berries, and thin slices of red bell peppers and carrots are often popular, or mix in a few of your kid's favorites. Switch juices and sodas for water. And consider substituting white bread for whole grains to add more fiber to their diets.

■ **Prepare with good sleep hygiene**

Reading a book at bedtime is much healthier than iPad screen time.

Sometimes the long days of summer throw sleep routines out of whack. Your kids will be more alert and focused in class if you start to get them ready for their school schedule ahead of time. School-aged children need at least 10 hours of sleep every night. Teens need between nine and 10 hours. For good sleep hygiene, get kids accustomed to the same bedtime every night. Also, try removing screen devices from their rooms at night, like cell phones, tablets, computers, TVs, and other gadgets.

■ **Immunize, immunize, immunize**

Get your kids vaccinated before classes begin.

Polio was once one of the most dreaded childhood diseases in the United States, causing paralysis and even death. In 1955 a vaccine was created and widely implemented. Today polio has been nearly wiped out worldwide.

Vaccinations save children from unnecessary pain, illness, and death. That's why all 50 states require school-aged children to be immunized against diseases like measles, mumps, rubella, pertussis, and chickenpox. Be sure your child's immunizations are up-to-date for their safety, and for the safety of others.

(Source: medicinenet.com)

Washing raw chicken won't clean it, but it could make you sick

Here's proof that washing raw chicken can splatter unwanted bacteria around your kitchen.

It's the gooey bits on raw chicken that compel Rita Ross to rinse it off in her kitchen sink before cooking it.

"There's this little film between the skin and meat that I don't like. It's kind of like slime," Ross, 63, of Raleigh, North Carolina, said. "I just feel like washing it makes it cleaner."



The problem with rinsing raw chicken, however, is that instead of making it "cleaner," it splatters potentially harmful bacteria onto kitchen counters and even other food that's already been properly washed and ready to eat.

That's according to research published Tuesday by the Department of Agriculture.

"A lot of people prepare their salads around the sink, so it's cross-contaminated," said Mindy Brashears, deputy undersecretary for food safety at the USDA.

The USDA partnered with North Carolina State University to investigate how home cooks handle raw meat, and how those practices affect nearby food.

The researchers recruited 300 people to prepare chicken and a salad in test kitchens at N.C. State. Some participants were shown food safety messages on social media ahead of time that discouraged rinsing raw chicken. Most of those participants followed the advice.

But among the control group — those who did not get the safety messages — 61 percent rinsed their raw meat. And nearly 30 percent of those participants' salads were later found to be contaminated with bacteria from the chicken. "How many times have you been peeling a vegetable and drop it into the sink, and you just pick it up and go on," Brashears said. "At that point, you've contaminated your vegetables."

■ **Microbiological horror stories**

Some of the participants "washed" their chicken by soaking it in the sink, either with water only, or adding soap, vinegar or lemon juice.

"These are horror stories from a microbiological standpoint," said Ben Chapman, a food safety specialist and professor at N.C. State. Chapman said there's no good evidence that soaking raw chicken in vinegar or lemon juice kills bacteria.

Meg Kirchner, a PhD candidate in food science and microbiology at NC State, swabs the area around the sink to look for contamination.

"What surprised me most was just how much food preparation happens in and around a sink after someone washes chicken," he said. Often participants rinsed lettuce in a colander in the sink where they'd just had raw chicken.

Contaminated water from the basin then splashes onto the lettuce. "We in the food safety community didn't really have a good sense of this until the work we did here," said Chapman.

No one ate the food prepared in the studies. Investigators went into the test kitchens after the meals were prepared, swabbing the sinks and counters, finding them contaminated even after participants cleaned them.

Spice containers also showed signs of contamination.

The CDC estimates that 48 million people — one in six — get sick from a foodborne illness each year.

Salmonella is the kind of bacteria most people associate with raw poultry, and leads to about a million illnesses in the U.S. annually, according to the CDC. Most have diarrhea, a fever and stomach cramps, and most recover, but nearly 400 die each year from salmonella.

Another type of bacteria, campylobacter, is also found on raw or under-cooked poultry, and accounts for about 1.3 million illnesses every year.

Even food safety experts are at risk. "I had campylobacter about a decade ago," Chapman said. "I won't go into details, but it was not fun whatsoever."

■ **"I always saw my mom and dad do it"**

The chicken-washing phenomenon is nothing new. Indeed, it's been happening in kitchens for decades.

"Growing up, I always saw my mom and dad do it," said Ashley Williams, 23, a grad student at N.C. State.

The USDA and N.C. State recreated the study to illustrate their findings for NBC News. Both Williams and Ross were participants, and both rinsed their raw chicken.

"I've just always done it this way," Ross said. "That's what people around me did when I was growing up. I picked it up from the culture."

And it's likely those decades of chicken-washing caused illnesses that went unreported.

"You've probably gotten sick from food and just don't know it," Brashears said. "People say, 'Oh, I had a 24-hour flu' and never went to the doctor."

Children, the elderly and people with compromised immune systems are most at risk for foodborne illness.

Food safety experts say it's critical to re-educate the next generation, and get kids into the kitchen to teach them not only how to cook, but how to do it safely.

"Just because your mom did it doesn't mean you have to do it," said Brashears. "You can be the one who causes change and stops the cycle of foodborne illness."

Other ways to reduce the risk of cross-contamination include:

- Washing hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and water, drying hands with a paper towel, then throwing the paper towel away
- Sanitizing the sink and kitchen counters before and after food preparation
- Using a meat thermometer to make sure chicken reaches 165 degrees
- Using separate cutting boards and utensils for raw meat and other food.

(Source: nbcnews.com)

How you can 'reprogram' your taste buds to like vegetables

Don't say no to that asparagus just yet. New research suggests people may find the taste of bitter green vegetables more enjoyable if they eat them more often.

Don't like the taste of bitter green vegetables? Good news! The way they taste can improve the more frequently you eat them. Getty Images

Christopher Gardner's son was the typical picky eater. He knew what he liked and knew what he didn't like.

That suddenly changed right around the time he became a teenager. He began liking "adult" foods and became more adventurous.

Gardner was surprised at how abruptly the change came about, but, as a nutrition science PhD-holding researcher and professor at Stanford University's Prevention Research Center, he was glad to see his son embrace new and different flavors.

"Gen Z is really great at exploring food," Gardner told Healthline. "They want to blow their taste buds away."

But that doesn't mean they all come out of the womb as adventurous eaters. Some take longer, and new research suggests our dietary likes and dislikes aren't ingrained in our DNA.

Because even when we think we don't like the taste of something, our tongues haven't quite made up their minds yet.

Bitter, for example, is a complicated taste. It typically serves as a warning sign; as in, if something tastes bitter, then it might



be poisonous.

Unfortunately, that includes cruciferous vegetables, like broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale, radishes, and arugula.

Otherwise known as the short list of foods lots of kids often don't like. At least at first.

Recent research out of the University at Buffalo (UB) conducted on rats suggests that trying more bitter foods — particularly those found in a healthy plant-based diet — changes proteins in saliva that affect how we perceive the taste of food.

The researchers filled two water bottles with different tasting

solutions and trained rats, some genetically modified with activated salivary proteins akin to those who had been raised on a diet of bitter foods, to choose from the two bottles to indicate whether it tasted bitter or sweet.

But Ann-Marie Torregrossa, PhD, an assistant professor in UB's department of psychology and the associate director of the university's Center for Ingestive Behavior Research, says those rats with the bitter-induced salivary proteins turned on couldn't taste the bitterness at higher concentrations when compared to others that didn't have the same protein activated.

"Once these proteins are on board, the bitter tastes like water. It's gone," Torregrossa told UB's news service.

The research, published in the journal Chemical Senses, suggests that repeated exposure to bitter foods can change the proteins in saliva, essentially calming the initial distaste for bitter and other flavors.

"If we can convince people to try broccoli, greens, and bitter foods, they should know that with repeated exposure, they'll taste better once they regulate these proteins," Torregrossa said.

While rats and humans are drastically different in many ways, the research does offer insight into how our palates can adapt to the foods we're given with repeated exposure.

(Source: healthline.com)

Hurricanes help aggressive spiders spread, study finds

Aggressive spider colonies are more likely to survive and re-produce after hurricanes than more docile ones, according to new research.

Scientists studied colonies of *Anelosimus studiosus*, known as the communal spider or tangle web spider, which live throughout North and South America.



They found the temperament of a colony can be the difference between life and death: aggressive colonies had a higher rate of reproduction following a tropical storm, whereas in regions with no storms, more docile colonies did better, according to researchers from McMaster University in Ontario, Canada.

The study suggests the increase in extreme weather events will have a significant evolutionary impact on populations of spiders.

Researchers looked at spiders in the Gulf and Atlantic coast of the US, an area which is exposed to hurricanes that form in the Atlantic basin from May to November. They looked at the effects of three subtropical storms that hit the area in 2018 – subtropical storm Alberto, Hurricane Florence and Hurricane Michael.

Researchers sampled 240 colonies throughout the region and compared them to control sites, according to the study, published in *Nature, Ecology & Evolution*.

They divided the spider colonies into two groups of inherited personality traits – docile and aggressive.

The aggressiveness of a colony is determined by the speed and number of attackers that respond to prey; the tendency to eat each other and how easily foreign spiders get into the nest.

Aggressive colonies are better at acquiring resources but are more prone to infighting if they are deprived of food or the colony has got too hot.

Scientists worked out how aggressive the colony was by vibrating the web and counting the number of spiders that attacked.

They returned to the site 48 hours after the hurricane to see which colonies had survived and then on two later occasions they went back to see how many eggs had been produced and how many spiderlings had hatched.

The analysis showed that after hurricanes, more aggressive colonies produced more eggs and had more spiderlings survive into early winter. Researchers found this trend was consistent across multiple storms of different sizes and duration.

Lead author Jonathon Pruitt, an evolutionary biologist at McCaster University said: "Tropical cyclones likely impact both of these stressors by altering the numbers of flying prey and increasing sun exposure from a more open canopy layer.

"Aggressiveness is passed down through generations in these colonies, from parent to daughter, and is a major factor in their survival and ability to reproduce."

He added: "As sea levels rise, the incidence of tropical storms will only increase. Now more than ever we need to contend with what the ecological and evolutionary impacts of these storms will be for non-human animals."

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Sri Lanka airport attack

(July 25, 2001)

Sri Lanka is counting the costs following an attack by rebel Tamil Tigers on the country's only international airport, in which 18 people were killed and many more injured. The BBC's correspondent in Colombo Frances Harrison reports.

It's taken the Sri Lankan authorities longer than they thought to clear the **smoldering wreckage** of aircraft from the one runway at the international airport. Six passenger planes were **set on fire** by rebel mortars and suicide bombers. The **ash** had to be removed from **the tarmac** lest it **clog** the engines of the planes, **endangering** passengers who've already been through **a harrowing ordeal**.

The tourist board has asked hotels in the capital to give free accommodation to tourists who were **caught up in** the fighting, between the Sri Lankan military and Tamil Tiger rebels. But there are concerns this will damage the country's important tourism industry, which had seen record numbers of visitors last month. It's estimated there's been up to half a billion US dollars worth of damage to aircraft and **infrastructure**. In terms of economic cost, this is the worst attack **inflicted** by the rebels in two decades of civil war. There will also be embarrassing questions for the defense establishment about how **a handful** of rebels managed to **penetrate** one of the most **strongly fortified** bases in the country.

Words

smoldering: if something smolders, it burns slowly producing smoke but no flame

wreckage: when a car, building or plane has been destroyed, what remains is the wreckage

set on fire: start something burning

ash: the grey powder that remains after something has burned

the tarmac: the airport runway where planes land and take off

clog: if something clogs an engine or other machine it blocks it so that it cannot work properly

endangering: putting in danger

a harrowing ordeal: a very nasty, unpleasant experience

caught up in: if you are caught up in something, you are involved in something which is not in your control

infrastructure: the infrastructure of a country or an organization is the structure and services which help it to function properly

inflicted: if you inflict something unpleasant on someone, you make them suffer

a handful: a small number

penetrate: enter

strongly fortified: not easy to attack because it is surrounded by strong walls, fences, guns etc.

(Source: BBC)

‘Joblessness caused 10% of migrations to urban areas last year’

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Over the past Iranian calendar year (March 2018-March 2019), 588,312 individuals left villages for cities, while the reason behind 10 percent of total migrations was the lack of appropriate jobs and sufficient income, Mehr news agency reported on Wednesday.

A total of 711,154 people have migrated from the place they used to live last year, 122,841 of them have moved to rural areas.

According to the statistics published by the center of statistics at the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare, following the family members is the top reason behind migration with a share of 52.8 percent.

The second most important contributor to migration is job seeking, accounting for 10 percent of the total migrations.

Moreover, finding a decent job with better income is the third cause of migration, constituting 6.5 percent.

In regard to migration to urban areas, the three aforementioned contributors hold 53.9 percent, 10.1 percent and 6.4 percent shares, respectively.

However, migration to villages from cities



based on following the family members, job seeking and finding a decent job with better income was reported to be 47.8 percent, 13.5 percent and 9.1 percent, respectively.

Among the people who migrated last year, 302,817 were among the working population, of them 234,064 were employed and 68,753 were unemployed.

The statistics show that 77.3 percent of the migrant population were employed and 22.7 percent were unemployed.

The lowest important causes of migration of the working population last year were graduation, education and military service, respectively.

Abolfazl Razavi, deputy vice-president for rural development and deprived areas, has said that some 60 percent of migrations from rural to urban areas are caused by the lack of appropriate jobs and sufficient income for educated people.

Measures taken to reverse migration by making people to move to rural areas including providing facilities and sustainable job generating has increased rural population in some provinces of the country, he highlighted.

Air pollution linked to mental health issues, research suggests

People who grow up in areas with poor air quality are more likely to develop depression and bipolar disorder in later life, a new study has suggested.

Analysis of health data from millions of patients found a “significant link” between mental health disorders and exposure to air pollution, especially in childhood.

The research, based on population data from the US and Denmark, is the latest of a number of studies to link air quality to ill health.

Led by scientists at the University of Chicago, the study used an American health insurance database of 151 million people with 11 years of inpatient and outpatient claims for neuropsychiatric diseases. Researchers then compared those claims to measurements of 87 potential air pollutants.

They found countries with the worst air quality had a 27 per cent increase in bipolar disorder and a 6 per cent higher incidence of major depression when compared with those with the best air quality.

“There's quite a few known triggers [for mental illness] but pollution is a new direction,” said the paper's author Andrew Rzhetsky, professor of medicine and human genetics.

He added: “Research on dogs and rodents shows air pollution can get into the brain and cause inflammation which results in symptoms resembling depression. It's quite possible that the same thing happens in humans.”

The Chicago team applied the same methodology to data from 1.4 million Danish patients to validate their findings.

In collaboration with researchers at Denmark's Aarhus University, they examined the incidence of neuropsychiatric disease in Danish adults who lived in areas of poor environ-

mental quality up to the age of 10.

The team found there was a 29 per cent increase in mental health disorders for people living in the most polluted areas.

Exposure to high levels of air pollution was linked to a more than two-fold increase in schizophrenia among the Danish patients as well as higher rates of personality disorder, depression and bipolar, the study found.

“Our studies in the United States and Denmark show that living in polluted areas, especially early in life, is predictive of mental disorders,” said computational biologist Atif Khan, co-author of the study, published in PLOS Biology.

However, academics who were not involved in the research said other factors may account for the correlation.



Faecal transplants could save koalas by expanding their diet, research suggests

Faecal transplants could save koalas by helping them expand their diet, new research has suggested.

Some koalas feed on just one type of eucalyptus tree which means they are extremely vulnerable to habitat loss. To make them diversify their diet, scientists gave them pills containing faecal microorganisms from another koala that ate a different type of eucalyptus.

Researchers found the faecal inoculations changed the koalas' microbiomes, which meant they could eat different types of eucalyptus, according to the study published in *Animal Microbiome*.

The Australian marsupial is under increasing pressure from habitat loss, disease and climate change. They deal badly with droughts

and heatwaves which are expected to become more common in the years to come.

“In 2013 the koala population reached very high densities, leading them to defoliate their preferred food tree species, manna gum,” said Lead researcher Dr Michaela Blyton from the University of Queensland. “This led to 70 per cent mortality due to starvation, which was very distressing.

“What was interesting was that even though the koalas were starving, they generally didn't start feeding on a less preferred tree species, messmate, despite the fact that some koalas feed exclusively on messmate.”

Researchers caught wild koalas that only ate manna gum and kept them in temporary captivity at the Cape Otway Conservation Ecology Centre.

They collected faeces from radio-collared wild koalas that ate messmate and concentrated the microorganisms within them. They then packaged them into acid-resistant capsules and gave them to the captive koalas that only eat manna gum.

18-day period and assessed how the microbiomes changed after the inoculations, comparing their diets to those of control koalas that received manna gum microbes,” said Dr Blyton.

Scientists found after eating the pills of faeces, koalas could subsequently eat messmate.

“This could affect all aspects of their ecology including nutrition, habitat selection and resource use. Koalas may naturally have trouble adapting to new diets when their usual food trees become over browsed or after being

moved to a new location,” said Dr Blyton.

“This study provides a proof of concept for the use of encapsulated faecal material to successfully introduce and establish new microbes in koalas' guts. In future, capsules could be used to adjust koalas' microbiomes prior to moving them to safer or more abundant environments, and as probiotics during and after antibiotic treatment.”

Eucalyptus leaves are not nutritionally rich. They are so low in protein that koalas – which spend up to 20 hours a day asleep – have to eat 700g of them a day to survive.

Koala is an aboriginal word that means “doesn't drink” – this is because koalas get more than 90 per cent of their moisture from eucalyptus leaves.

(Source: The Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

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A ← → ج

3 million Iranians have organ donor cards

Some three million Iranians have organ donor cards and some 10 percent have signed online consent forms for organ donation, Farahnaz Sadeq-Beigi, head of organ procurement program in Masih Daneshvari Hospital, a national research institute for tuberculosis and lung diseases, has said.

Traffic accidents are the main reasons of brain deaths in Iran, she said, lamenting that out of 4,000 brain deaths reported by forensics only 1,000 donate their organs.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“eury-”

■ **Meaning:** wide

■ **For example:** The red fox is a **eurytopic** species widespread in the area.

PHRASAL VERB

Hammer something out

■ **Meaning:** to decide on an agreement, contract etc. after a lot of discussion and disagreement:

■ **For example:** Leading oil producers tried to hammer out a deal.

IDIOM

Bring up the rear

■ **Explanation:** someone who brings up the rear is the last person in a group of people who are walking or running

■ **For example:** “The pupils walked calmly down the corridor, with the teacher bringing up the rear.”

۳ میلیون نفر در کشور کارت اهدا عضو دریافت کردند

فرحناز صادق بیگی مسئول واحد فراهم آوری اعضا بیمارستان مسیح دانشوری اظهارداشت: تاکنون ۳ میلیون نفر از افراد کشور کارت اهداء عضو دریافت کرده اند و ۱۰ درصد از افراد کشور در سامانه های مختلفی که در جهت اعلام رضایت در زمینه اهدای عضو راه اندازی شده ثبت نام کرده اند.

وی تصادفات رانندگی را شایع ترین علت مرگ مغزی دانست و گفت: سالانه ۴ هزار مورد مرگ مغزی در کشور ثبت می شود که سال گذشته تنها ۱۰۰۰ نفر از این افراد قابلیت اهدای عضو را داشته اند.

U.S. Patriot failing against Yemeni drones: UAE report

TEHRAN — Saudi Arabia has failed to repel Yemen's retaliatory drone strikes despite relying on the U.S. Patriot air defense system, a matter which has caused a slump in Saudi troop morale, according to a UAE intelligence report.

The UAE report revealed critical weaknesses in Saudi Arabia's ability to thwart the retaliatory attacks, London-based Middle East Eye (MEE) news outlet reported.

The damning report, issued originally in May, had a limited publication intended for top Emirati leadership by the Emirates Policy Center (EPC), a think tank close to the Emirati government and its security services.

"Air defenses such as the Patriot are not capable of spotting these drones because the systems are designed to intercept long and medium range Scud missiles," the report wrote.

The intelligence assessment highlighted an instance where Saudi Arabia's southwestern Najran airport, which is used in Riyadh's operations against Yemen, was hit by Yemeni drones despite the deployment of a Patriot battery.

Riyadh launched a devastating war on Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing the government of former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi back to power and crushing Houthis.

Yemen's resistance, however, has pushed the Saudi war to a stalemate, with Yemeni forces increasingly using sophisticated



weaponry in retaliatory attacks against the Saudi-led coalition.

Referring possibly to a deadly Yemeni drone attack on a large air base occupied by Saudi mercenaries in the southwestern Lahij province in January, the EPC report highlighted the Saudi failure to thwart such attacks.

"The attack on the Lahij Military Base demonstrates a weakness in Saudi air defenses and the lack of capacity in electronic war if we take into account that these drones are basic and are not launched on tarmac,"

it wrote.

The EPC reported that there had been as much as 155 Yemeni drone attacks against Saudi targets between January and May, a figure much higher than previously admitted.

Saudi attempts to destroy the drones have also failed, with the report noting that Riyadh has launched numerous airstrikes on caves allegedly used to store the drones, without any success.

■ Saudi 'unprofessionalism'

The intelligence assessment also slammed what it described as a sign of Saudi "un-

professionalism", as Riyadh quickly rushed to attribute attacks to Yemen's Ansarul-lah movement without carrying out any investigation first.

The report compared Saudi Arabia's "panicked" approach to that of Abu Dhabi which, according to the report, has a protocol of falsely denying the occurrence of such strikes when "serious" targets are attacked.

"This is a protocol which the Emiratis follow in time of serious attacks, such as the one that targeted Abu Dhabi airport (and claimed by the Houthis). It left the door open for the investigation to implicate Iran through evidence in these attacks," the report read.

The July 2018 drone attack on the airport had been previously denied by UAE officials but was later corroborated by footage released by Yemeni forces this year.

According to Press TV, also referring to a mysterious and unclaimed attack on four oil tankers near the UAE's port of Fujairah in May, the report said the "Emirati position emphasized the importance of completing investigations before taking any decision."

"The Emiratis were careful not to give the Houthis any credit that may enhance their international status," it added.

Despite the UAE report's allegations, however, Saudi authorities are known to have covered and denied successful Yemeni retaliatory drone and missile strike on numerous occasions.

N. Korea calls Pompeo 'diehard toxin,' says ready for dialogue or standoff with U.S.

TEHRAN — North Korea's top diplomat said on Friday that U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was a "diehard toxin" who only complicates denuclearisation talks and North Korea was ready for both dialogue and standoff.

Talks aimed at dismantling the North's nuclear and missile programs have stalled since a failed second summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in the Vietnamese capital of Hanoi in February.

Trump and Kim met again in June at the inter-Korean border and agreed to reopen working-level negotiations, but that has not happened.

Since the Vietnam summit, North Korea has demanded that Pompeo be replaced with a "more mature" person, while lauding the rapport built between Kim and Trump.

North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho, who took part in the Hanoi summit along with Pompeo, called the chief U.S. negotiator the "diehard toxin of the U.S. diplomacy" who employs "hackneyed sanctions rhetoric".

Ri referred to Pompeo's remarks in recent press interviews in which he said sanctions would be kept until North Korea takes concrete actions on denuclearisation.

"He is truly impudent enough to utter such thoughtless

words which only leave us disappointed and skeptical as to whether we can solve any problem with such a guy," Ri said in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency.

Ri also accused Pompeo of casting "dark shadows" over the talks and being more interested in his political ambitions than in U.S. foreign policy.

"If the U.S. still dreams a pipe dream of gaining everything through sanctions, we are left with two options, either to leave it enjoying the dream to its heart's content or to wake it up from the dream," Ri said.

"We are ready for both dialogue and standoff."

U.S. envoy Stephen Biegun, who leads working-level talks with North Korea, was in Seoul this week to discuss ways to get negotiations back on track.

Talks were expected to be reopened soon, South Korea's deputy national security adviser Kim Hyun-chong said on Thursday, giving an upbeat assessment after meeting Biegun.

"We look forward to the progress of denuclearisation talks in terms of mutual trust and respect between the U.S. and North Korea, culminating in good results," said deputy spokesman Kim Eun-han of South Korea's Unification Ministry on Friday, when asked about Ri's statement.



North Korea has fired a series of short-range missiles in recent weeks in protest against U.S.-South Korea joint military exercises and the adoption of new weapons, complicating the reopening of the talks, Reuters reported.

South Korea to scrap intelligence-sharing pact with Japan amid dispute over history

TEHRAN— South Korea said on Thursday it will scrap an intelligence-sharing pact with Japan, drawing a swift protest from Tokyo and deepening a decades-old dispute over history that has hit trade and undercut security cooperation over North Korea.

Seoul's decision not to extend the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) shows how the political and trade dispute between the Asian neighbors and U.S. allies has hit some of the region's most sensitive security issues. The agreement had been due for automatic renewal on Saturday.

The arrangement was designed to share

information on the threat posed by North Korea and its missile and nuclear activities - a threat underlined by the North's recent launch of a series of short-range ballistic missiles.

South Korea's Kim You-geun, a deputy director of the presidential National Security Council, said Japan had created a "grave change" in the environment for bilateral security cooperation by removing South Korea's fast-track export status this month.

"Under this situation, we have determined that it would not serve our national interest to maintain an agreement we signed with

the aim of exchanging military information which is sensitive to security," Kim told a news conference.

Relations between South Korea and Japan began to deteriorate late last year following a diplomatic row over compensation for wartime forced laborers during Japan's occupation of Korea.

They soured further when Japan tightened its curbs on exports of high-tech materials needed by South Korea's chip industry, and again this month when Tokyo said it would remove South Korea's fast-track export status.

The United States, which fears weak-

ened security cooperation in the region, expressed dismay.

"We're disappointed to see the decision the South Koreans made about that information-sharing agreement. We're urging each of the two countries to continue to engage," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told reporters in Ottawa, Canada.

"There is no doubt that the shared interests of Japan and South Korea are important and they're important to the United States of America," he added, saying he had spoken to South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha earlier on Thursday, Reuters reported.

Ghani says Afghanistan will survive after U.S. troop withdrawal

TEHRAN — Afghan President Ashraf Ghani says a partial withdrawal of U.S. troops from the country will not have a crucial impact on the lives of the Afghan people.

President Ghani told Afghanistan's TOLONews on Thursday that the withdrawal of some 5,000 troops from the country "will not bring basic changes in our lives."

He said the remaining number of forces "will support our Air Force, our Commando Force, and other Defense and Security Forces and will help the Resolute Support to continue [its mission in Afghanistan]."

Currently, there are about 20,000 foreign troops, mostly American, in Afghanistan as part of a U.S.-led mission to

purportedly train, assist and advise Afghan forces.

Ghani further said he had called on U.S. President Donald Trump in a letter seven months ago to reduce the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

"The number of troops has not been mentioned in the bilateral agreement [between Afghanistan and the U.S.] and in multilateral agreement with NATO... Reduction or increase in the number of troops is conditions-based," he said.

"Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed," Ghani added.

It was reported that some 5,000 U.S. troops will be withdrawn in 135 days from five bases in Afghanistan.

President Ghani said the bases are small and that they

will be handed to the Afghan forces.

■ U.S., Taliban launch new round of talks in Doha

Ghani made the remarks as representatives from the US and the Taliban militant group resumed a new round of talks in Qatar's capital city, Doha, on Thursday.

A senior U.S. official said that Afghan negotiator "Zalmay Khalilza will inform the top Afghan leaders about the peace deal and then finalize a declaration to end the war in Afghanistan."

Ghani, however, said previously that peace was only possible with an agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

Former Iraq PM warns Israel of 'strong response'

➔ The report comes amid a series of unclaimed strikes in the past month targeting bases belonging to Iraq's pro-government Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), better known as the Hashd al-Sha'abi.

On July 19, a drone was reported to have targeted a PMU base near the town of Amerli in northwestern Iraq.

The New York Times report on Friday cited an unnamed senior Middle Eastern intelligence official as saying that Israel was specifically behind the July 19 attack.

Earlier this week, another attack rocked a PMU position near a strategic air base north of the capital Baghdad.

The attack prompted second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units Abu

Mahdi al-Mohandes to announce that the group held United States fully responsible.

"We have accurate and credible information that Americans brought in four Israeli drones this year via Azerbaijan to operate within the U.S. fleet to carry out sorties aimed at Iraqi military headquarters," he said.

Following the strike, the PMU vowed to target any unidentified aircraft near its bases. On Thursday, the group reported that it had shot down unidentified spy drone over capital Baghdad.

The report by the New York Times comes a day after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hinted at possible Israeli strikes in Iraq.

"We are operating – not just if needed, we are operating in many areas against a state that wants to annihilate us. Of course

I gave the security forces a free hand and instructed them to do anything necessary to thwart Iran's plans," said Netanyahu when asked whether Tel Aviv was considering operations in Iraq.

The tacit acknowledgment came as Israeli military authorities had previously threatened to attack the Iraqi anti-terror force.

Israeli officials, along with Washington, have labeled Iraqi units operating under the PMU organization as being "Iran-led terrorists groups", an allegation sharply rejected by the Iraqi officials.

The PMU was formed and joined forces with the Iraqi military in 2014 after the Daesh terrorist group launched a campaign of bloodshed and destruction against the Arab nation.

The combined push, reinforced by Iraq's

allies including Iran which has been lending military advisory support to the Iraqi military, led to Daesh's expulsion in late 2017.

The group was already the target of numerous airstrikes as it fought against terrorist forces not only in Iraq but also in Syria, with many observers pointing to Israel and US culpability for the attacks.

In a notable instance, Hashd al-Sha'abi fighters came under attack in Syria's border town of al-Hari in the eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr, as they were chasing Daesh terrorists out of the area last June year.

Nearly two dozen anti-terrorist forces were killed in the deadly airstrike.

Both Washington and Tel Aviv have for long been seeking to counter the emergence of a united front of forces, usually known as the "Resistance Axis", in the region.

Continuation of Syrian Army advancements in Idlib and escape of terrorists

➔ "It is clear that Russia and Syria have been hampered by the actions of Turkey and the Jabhat al-Nusra terrorist group and have decided to use the military option and seize the last bases of armed groups dominating the city of Idlib under the leadership of Tahrir al-Sham," writes Arab analyst Abdul Bari Atwant, an Arab analyst.

This is while as Ankara promised to find a political solution to the crisis in northern Syria a year ago during a meeting of Turkish and Russian leaders in Sochi, but failed to deliver.

Russian and Syrian fighters bombed a Turkish military column, including 50 military vehicles and seven tanks, on Monday.

The column intended to prevent the Syrian army's entrance in Khan Sheikhun by reinforcing al-Nusra elements. In fact, the Syrian army's attack on Khan Sheikhun underlines an end to the agreements reached at the Sochi summit and closure of the mission of the 10 Turkish post control center in Idlib and its outskirts.

Atwan believes that Erdogan has two options: First: to stand by his supported armed groups in Idlib. Second, to disarm the armed groups and get them out of Idlib.

Ramping up the Pressure won't Weaken Hezbollah

➔ Since its emergence, Hezbollah's self fundraising is intended to guarantee the movement's future independence and to ensure it would function on its own.

Undeniably, Iran and Syria are not only believed to fund Hezbollah, supply it with heavy arms and provide training and logistical support to its military units, but there is major cooperation at various levels. The resistance also receives significant financial support from supporters living abroad, particularly from Lebanese wealthy nationals.

The resistance receives also funds from diversified charities that are not directly tied to Hezbollah, Lebanese and non-Lebanese, Islamic, Christian and secular supporters, out of national and ideological affinity.

Besides, Hezbollah relies on fellow sympathisers and members of local expatriate communities to run health, social, agricultural, industrial and educational institutions, which provide needy citizens with health care, utilities, and construction services. Lebanon's President Michel Aoun, the first president to openly align himself with Hezbollah, argues that Hezbollah's weapon will no longer be a problem when the causes behind its existence disappear. In February 2006, Hezbollah and the (Christian) Free Patriotic Movement, formerly led by Aoun, signed a memorandum of understanding, forming a political alliance.

The vast majority of Lebanese people show utmost readiness to serve their resistance, to preserve its achievements and to be a resounding voice in the defence of its cause to the fullest, in face of regional and international conspiracies. They are fully aware that the Saudis are ready to pay billions of dollars to incite their U.S. and Zionist allies to wage war against their hometown. Unfortunately, they would not remain silent about the failure of their scheme in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, but would work hard to provoke regional sensitivities.

Therefore, the sanctions would never compensate for their failure in military confrontations. Such a measure is nothing but an idiot psychological war, which definitely fail to tarnish the resistance's image. The U.S. sanctions would fail to change the policy of the Lebanese government towards this part and parcel of the national fabric, which has governmental and parliamentary representatives, elected by the Lebanese people in a fair election monitored by international bodies.

As expressed by Hezbollah's leaders and officials, the sanctions are a medal of honour on the chest of the resistance's people who have all resisted the occupation and forced the Zionists to withdraw unconditionally from southern Lebanon, in 2000, and did so also in 2006. Despite all the challenges, Hezbollah still has solid support in Lebanon. The U.S. sanctions have no value because of the people's keen interest in undermining colonial goals and commitment to resist the illegitimate Zionist entity and its Takfiri terrorist offspring.

Syria retakes cluster of towns in last terrorist bastion

➔ Government troops, meanwhile, started an operation Friday to cleanse Khan Shaykhun of remaining terrorists and dismantle mines and explosives in the region.



Large parts of Idlib Province, occupied by foreign-backed terrorists since 2014, and parts of Hama constitute the last major militant stronghold in Syria.

On Thursday, SANA reported that the army had opened a humanitarian corridor in both provinces for the safe exit of civilians fleeing violence by foreign-backed militants.

The new corridor would allow civilians to leave the southern part of Idlib and the northern part of Hama, where troops have advanced against militants with aerial cover, an unnamed official told the news agency.

Those civilians who pass through the corridor to reach the army lines will be provided with shelter, food, and healthcare, and other necessities, the official added.

According to Press Tv, Syria has managed to take back control of many territories from the Daesh and other terrorist groups which have been wreaking havoc in the country since 2011. The foreign-backed war has displaced millions of people inside the Arab country.

Mustafi and Elneny should move on, says Arsenal’s Emery

Shkodran Mustafi and Mohamed Elneny should seek moves away from Arsenal for the good of their careers as they are unlikely to get much playing time this season, manager Unai Emery has said.

German centre back Mustafi made 31 league appearances last season in a defence that leaked 51 goals, more than double the number conceded by champions Manchester City (23), while midfielder Elneny was stuck on the fringes of the first team.

The Premier League window for incoming transfers closed on Aug. 8 but with the Italian, Spanish, German and French windows not closing until Sept. 2 there is still time for players to find other clubs outside the English top flight.

“They are very big players but for one circumstance or another they are going to have fewer chances to show their capacity or to be happy with us and the minutes they play in matches,” Emery told reporters.

“Last year ... when they didn’t play they weren’t happy. “I spoke with them a lot of times last year and this pre-season. “I think it’s positive for them to leave, sign for another team where they can be protagonists and be happy and continue their careers.”

Arsenal, who have won their opening two games, face leaders Liverpool at Anfield on Saturday.

(Source: Reuters)

Anderlecht coach Kompany takes on new match-day role

Vincent Kompany’s role as Anderlecht player coach has been changed and he will no longer have a decision-making position on match day so he can concentrate on playing, the Belgian club said on Thursday.

The 33-year-old will act as team captain and take no other decisions, leaving his assistant Simon Davies in charge from the dugout.

Davies, who started his playing career at Manchester United and won a single cap for Wales, arrived at the Brussels club with Kompany at the start of the season from Manchester City.

Kompany returned, after more than a decade at City, to his first club, seeking to lift them out of the doldrums.

But Anderlecht have made their worst start to a season in 21 years with only two points from their first four games and the change has been made ahead of Friday’s trip to champions Racing Genk.

Davies, 45, who had been on City’s coaching staff from 2013, will now handle the tactics and changes on match day, leaving Kompany to take over as captain and provide more on-field leadership.

The poor results have come as Anderlecht have fielded youthful sides in a bid to return to their days as producers of young talent in a mould similar to that of Ajax Amsterdam from the neighboring Netherlands.

Kompany’s kids have struggled but the former Belgium captain has vowed to continue to pursue the policy.

(Source: Goal)

‘I was completely in the wrong,’ says McGregor about pub incident

Former two-weight UFC champion Conor McGregor says he was “in the wrong” and will “face what’s coming” after an altercation in a Dublin pub in April.

Video footage of the incident released earlier in August appears to show McGregor, 31, punch a man in the head.

The Irishman, who announced his mixed martial arts retirement in March, says seeing the video is “like a dagger into my heart”.

“I must take accountability and take responsibility,” McGregor told ESPN.

“It doesn’t matter what happened there - I was in the wrong. That man deserved to enjoy his time in the pub without having it end the way it did.

“I have been making amends to be better - to be a better father, be a better human, to be a better role model to these kids.

“I have to realize that is not the attitude or behavior of a leader, of a martial artist or a champion. I must get my head screwed on and get back in the game, fight for redemption, retribution, respect - the things that made me the man I am.

“I was completely in the wrong. It was unacceptable behavior.”

Police in Ireland have been investigating the incident and McGregor said: “Whatever comes my way, I will face it. Whatever comes my way, I deserve it. I will face this head on. I will not hide from it.”

Asked if he has an anger problem, he replied: “I must be calm. I must be Zen. I must lead by example. I need to get a hold of this and I am working very hard to do this.

“I am taking the necessary steps.”

The Dublin incident took place a month after McGregor was arrested for allegedly smashing a fan’s phone in Miami, USA.

(Source: BBC)

Sources: Barca consider Neymar-Dembele swap

Barcelona will return with a third offer for Neymar and are weighing up including Ousmane Dembele as a makeweight in an attempt to convince Paris Saint-Germain to sell, sources have told ESPN FC.

Barca have already seen two bids turned down for Neymar, who left the club for France in a world record €222 million transfer in 2017.

PSG rejected a first offer which included Philippe Coutinho, Ivan Rakitic and €80m and then dismissed their request to take him on loan this season ahead of a permanent move next summer in a deal which would have been worth around €190m.

With less than two weeks to go before the transfer window closes on Sept. 2, Barca are against the clock to come up with an offer which suits PSG.

The French champions could set a deadline for any potential deal, too, as they want to have their squad finalized as soon as possible.

Barca’s next offer, therefore, could be their last. The club’s hierarchy are not in complete agreement over a move for Neymar but are working on a formula which they hope will finally secure Neymar’s Camp Nou return.

(Source: Soccernet)

New-look Juventus begin Serie A defense without ailing Sarri

Juventus begin their Serie A campaign at Parma on Saturday looking to push their record Scudetto run to nine but with a different style of football under new coach Maurizio Sarri, who will miss the opening fixtures with pneumonia.

Behind, Napoli and Inter Milan are waiting in the wings hopeful that Sarri’s arrival can lead to turmoil in Turin and a changing of the guard in Italy.

Carlo Ancelotti’s Napoli have not won the title since 1990 and open at Fiorentina Saturday with Antonio Conte’s Inter at home to promoted Lecce on Monday.

Like Sarri, Conte last coached at Chelsea, and along with three-times Champions League winner Ancelotti, Serie A have a world class coaching setup this season.

Juventus start the season without Sarri however who will miss the Parma game and his former club Napoli in Turin on August 31 with pneumonia. The 60-year-old is still overseeing training.

Sarri has replaced Massimiliano Allegri whose pragmatic style of football fell out of favor despite his trophy-laden five years.

Juventus are targeting a 36th Scudetto but their main objective remains the Champions League which they have not won since 1996.

After splashing out on Cristiano Ronaldo last season Juventus have again reinforced with midfielders Aaron Ramsey and Adrien Rabiot and Dutch defender Matthijs De Ligt.

“Sarri has prepared us well and gave us his philosophy,” said former Paris Saint-



Germain midfielder Rabiot.

“I’m managing to create an excellent affinity with Cristiano Ronaldo, because he also plays on the left.

“Training with him allows me to improve myself a lot and his presence is very good for the group.”

■ ‘Raised the bar’

In Milan, Conte, who led Juventus to the first three in their series of eight titles, has also been given money to spend to give Inter a first Serie A title since 2010.

“Conte’s arrival has brought enthusiasm but above all, it has raised the bar,” said Inter defender Danilo D’Ambrosio.

“From a mental point of view, Conte and his staff are winners.”

Chinese-owned Inter paid 65 million euros (\$72 million) for Manchester United’s Belgian forward Romelu Lukaku.

Atletico Madrid defender Diego Godin has also arrived along with Italian midfielders Stefano Sensi and Nicolò Barella.

Inter are still in talks with Manchester

United for Chilean forward Alexis Sanchez with the transfer window slamming suit on September 2.

Radja Nainggolan and Ivan Perisic have both left with the conflict between the club and former captain Mauro Icardi still not resolved.

Juventus remain favorites, insists Italy coach Roberto Mancini.

“Juve are absolutely the strongest,” said Mancini who won three Serie A titles with Inter.

“Let’s not forget that they have been winning for eight years and they have again reinforced.

“I see Napoli as dangerous, they have the same players who have been playing together for years while Inter have made four to five changes and lose important players like Icardi and Perisic.

“For the moment I would line out in a row Juve, Napoli and Inter.”

Behind are Atalanta, a surprise third last season, followed by AC Milan, Lazio and Roma.

The side from Bergamo play at SPAL with AC Milan at Udinese with Roma hosting Genoa.

Lazio start at home against Sampdoria, now coached by former Romer boss Eusebio Di Francesco.

Promoted Brescia head for Cagliari with new signing Mario Balotelli sitting out a four-match ban, with Verona at home against Bologna.

(Source: Eurosport)

World’s fastest man investigated over three alleged missed drugs tests



American sprinter Christian Coleman is under investigation over concerns he may have missed three drugs tests, BBC Sport has been told.

If found guilty he would face an automatic one-year ban and would miss the World Championships in Qatar and the Olympic Games in Tokyo next year.

He is alleged to have had three possible failures under the ‘whereabouts’ system in the last year.

Coleman is understood to be contesting at least one of those cases.

Neither athletics’ governing body the IAAF, the World Anti-Doping Agency, the US Anti-Doping Agency nor the Athletics Integrity Unit has commented on the situation, which was first reported in the Daily Mail.

BBC Sport has approached Coleman for comment.

Coleman won the US National Championships last month in a time of 9.99 seconds, having already set the fastest time of the year so far - 9.81secs in the Diamond League meeting at Stanford, California in June.

The 23-year-old won the silver medal at

the 2017 World Championships in London behind fellow American Justin Gatlin and has a personal best of 9.79secs, making him the seventh fastest man in history.

He also set a new world record for the 60m when he claimed gold at the World Indoor Championships in Birmingham last year and was talked about as a new superstar sprinter in the post-Usain Bolt era.

However he pulled out of a Diamond League event in Birmingham last Friday.

Under the ‘whereabouts’ system, athletes must let officials know where they will be for one hour every day as well as details of overnight accommodation and training.

Former Great Britain 400m Olympic champion Christine Ohuruogu received a year’s ban in 2006 for three failures under the ‘whereabouts’ system for three missed tests.

However, cyclist Lizzie Deignan won a successful appeal at the Court of Arbitration for Sport in 2016, which allowed her to compete at the Rio Olympics and prevented a two-year ban after she missed three out-of-competition tests in a 12-month period. One of those tests was later declared void.

(Source: BBC)

Manchester United’s Solskjaer urges crackdown on online abuse



Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said players need more protection from social media companies, describing racist abuse and death threats directed at them as “serious incidents.”

United midfielder Paul Pogba was the target of online abuse after missing a penalty in Monday’s 1-1 Premier League draw at Wolverhampton Wanderers, prompting the club to issue a strong statement condemning the views.

Chelsea manager Frank Lampard last week urged social media companies to take action after 21-year-old striker Tammy Abraham was targeted after the team’s UEFA Super Cup loss to Liverpool.

“We need to protect individuals. When there’s death threats and racism, it’s serious allegations, serious incidents,” Solskjaer told reporters on the eve of Saturday’s clash with Crystal Palace.

“Sometimes you get annoyed, what can we do about it as Manchester United? We’re not going to ban our players on social media, we have to spread the good word instead.”

Solskjaer backed Frenchman Pogba to rise above the abuse and emerge stronger.

“Paul is fine, he’s a strong character and

it makes him stronger. I cannot believe we still sit here in 2019 talking about these instances,” the Norwegian added.

“Social media is a place where people can hide behind fake identities. There’s so many Ole Gunnar Solskjaers on social media that I know are not me.

“The authorities have got to do something about the ones who spread this hate. You feel sorry for them really — they must have problems themselves.”

Pogba will continue to share penalty duties with striker Marcus Rashford despite the miss against Wolves.

“I’m sure you’re going to see Pogba score a penalty again for United. Let’s see when we get the next one. We’re practising penalties still,” Solskjaer said.

“There’s no fighting amongst them. We’re disappointed that we didn’t win the game, but the talk is always more difficult when you don’t get a result.”

United are holding talks with other clubs over the transfer of Chilean forward Alexis Sanchez, who played in a behind-closed-doors friendly with Sheffield United on Tuesday.

(Source: Reuters)

Russell Crowe slams ‘joke’ seating at USA-Australia basketball

Oscar-winner Russell Crowe led a chorus of criticism Friday of the seating arrangements at a basketball clash between the United States and Australia, with many fans paying big money to see very little.

The pre-World Cup showdown, on Thursday evening at Melbourne’s Marvel Stadium, was played in front of 51,000 fans -- the biggest crowd ever to watch a game of hoops in Australia.

But in a venue that usually hosts Australian Rules and football, a raised basketball court was dropped in meaning those on white plastic seats at ground level had restricted viewing, including Crowe.

“\$1500 a ticket for this view. AUS v USA. Jokes on me,” tweeted the Hollywood star after Australia were beaten 102-86. “If you weren’t among 50,000 there and you chose to watch it on tv at home, good decision.”

He later added: “The only thing achieved by Basketball Australia was enjoining with the promoters in ripping off well meaning lovers of the sport. It was a farce.”

Plenty of other fans agreed.

“It’s called greed! There is a stadium across town which is purpose built for this kind of event called Rod Laver Arena capacity of 15,000,” said one Twitter user.

Basketball Australia and promotor TEG Live said in a joint statement that feedback from the event was



“strongly positive”. But they acknowledged that “clearly there have been some fans that feel their expectations were not met on their purchased seats”.

It claimed that of 11,000 floor seats, only 200 people wanted to be moved, and just two asked for a refund.

■ Flood of complaints

The visit of Team USA was already embroiled in controversy, with Australia’s consumer watchdog launching a probe into the use of absent NBA superstars to promote their exhibition games.

While the USA boast a host of top young talent guided by San Antonio Spurs coach Gregg Popovich, they lack

the top names used to sell the event after a series of player withdrawals.

A change.org petition for refunds attracted more than 2,700 supporters claiming they had been ripped off, with a fresh flood of complaints about the seating fiasco.

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission chief Rod Sims said it was investigating whether people had been misled.

“We did have discussions with the promoters, and out of those discussions there was a suggestion from them of refunds,” he told reporters, referring to the pre-game advertising.

“We’ve now added to that investigation whether or not consumers have been misled over the seating and the quality of the seating.”

He added that the commission takes such allegations “very seriously” with the potential penalties “significant”.

Basketball Australia and TEG did not explicitly address the pre-game advertising, only saying that “these games feature the best available players that have been selected to represent their respective nations at the 2019 World Cup”.

Australia and the USA will play a second game at the same venue on Saturday.

(Source: AFP)

Iran's Behrouzirat wins bronze at ICF Paracanoe World Championships

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Shahla Behrouzirat from Iran claimed a bronze medal at the women's KL3 Women 200m on day three of the International Canoe Federation Paracanoe World Championships in Szeged, Hungary.

The Iranian athlete earned the bronze medal, finishing in 48.96 seconds. Behrouzirat also secured a quota spot for her nation at next year's Paralympic Games in Tokyo.

Behrouzirat also represented Iran at the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio.

Uzbekistan's Shakhnoza Mirzaeva crossed the line in 47.29 to win the gold medal and the silver medal went to Britain's Laura Sugar.

ICF Paracanoe World Championships are being held in Szeged, Hungary from Aug. 21 to 24.

Paracanoe is canoeing for athletes with a range of physical disabilities. The Paralympic version of the sport is governed by the International Canoe Federation (ICF), and a va-a-specific variant is governed by the International Va-a Federation (IVF).

A meeting of the International Paralympic Committee in Guangzhou, China in 2010 decided to add paracanoe to the Paralympic program. As a result, paracanoe debuted at the Rio 2016 Summer Paralympics where single kayak races were contested.

The two main types of paracanoe boat are kayaks (K), with a double-blade paddle, and outrigger canoes called va-as (V) where the paddler has a second hull as a support float and uses a single blade paddle with a T-top handle.



Chinese Taipei defeat Iran in Asian Women's Volleyball Championship



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Chinese Taipei defeated Iran 3-1 (25-22, 23-25, 19-25, 12-25) in Pool E of the 2019 Asian Women's Volleyball Championship at the Jamsil Indoor Gymnasium in Seoul, South Korea on Friday.

Iran had lost to powerhouses Thailand 3-0 on Thursday.

Iran and Kazakhstan will contest the fifth-to-eighth-place playoffs.

Semi-finals, 5th-8th playoffs and 9th-12th playoffs will be held on Saturday

while the finals, the awards presentation and closing ceremony will take place the day after.

More importantly, the Championship also serves as the Continental Olympic Qualification Tournament, which will see top eight teams, except the Tokyo 2020 hosts Japan and qualified China, make the cut for the January 6-12 event. Only the eventual winning team in the Continental Olympic Qualification Tournament will join the other 11 teams in the Tokyo 2020.

Czech Republic stun holders Iran at Volleyball U19 World Championship



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Czech Republic overpowered Iran at the 2019 FIVB Volleyball Boys' U19 World Championship on Friday.

Sixth seeds Czech Republic defeated defending champions Iran in straight sets (25-17, 25-17, 25-22) in Pool B in Tunisia.

Matous Drahonovsky led Czech Republic with 18 points and Amirhossein Toukhteh scored 17 points for Iran.

Iran had started the campaign with a 3-1 win over Bulgaria on Thursday.

Iran will meet Colombia and Italy on Saturday and Sunday respectively.

The 2019 edition of the FIVB Volleyball Boys' U19 World Championship features 20 teams playing across four pools from August 21 to 30.

The top four teams in each group will all advance to the last-16 of the tournament with the final scheduled for August 30.

Iran are the defending champions, having won their second title in Bahrain.

Tokyo 2020: Tickets go on sale in Japan

Tickets for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics have gone on sale with organizers looking to attract a family audience to next year's Games.

Residents from Japan have until 11:59am (local time) on 9 September 2019 to participate in the lottery for the initial offering of Paralympic tickets.

International spectators are invited to register for tickets to the Games from the IPC Global Authorised Ticket Reseller (ATR) or other designated ATR within their country of residence.

Tickets for all sport events are being offered at affordable prices. Seats at competitive events are priced from JPY 900 and will cost no more than JPY 7,000. This is part of the Organizing Committee's commitment to enhance the family atmosphere at the Games and attract as many young spectators as possible. Tickets for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies will cost from JPY 8,000 to JPY 150,000. An



estimated 2.3 million tickets are available for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

Residents of Japan must apply for tickets online via the

Tokyo 2020 Official Ticket Website. Pre-registration on the TOKYO 2020 ID portal is required to enter the lottery. The lottery results will be announced on 2 October, with payments due by 15 October.

The initial ticket window is the best opportunity for Japanese residents to get the tickets they want for the Paralympic Games. However, should they not be successful, they will still be able to request tickets during the second lottery, which will commence in early 2020. A further phase of ticket sales will start in spring 2020, offering first-come, first-served sales on a global basis.

The Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games will be the biggest and most exciting to-date. Over just 12 days, from the day following the Opening Ceremony on 25 August until 6 September, 22 sports and 540 events will be contested by a record 4,400 athletes.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Abe wants Urawa Red Diamonds to keep shining

Yuki Abe had to wait 10 years to add a second AFC Champions League winner's medal to the one he won with Urawa Red Diamonds in 2007, but the veteran defender is hoping he can secure a third Continental title by the time this year's campaign comes to its conclusion.

Now 37 years old and in the twilight of his career, Abe is the only member of Urawa's playing staff remaining from the side that defeated Sepahan of Islamic Republic of Iran in the final of the 2007 AFC Champions League as Reds became the first Japanese club to win the title.

Ten years later — and with Abe still in the team — Urawa repeated the feat, seeing off Al Hilal from Saudi Arabia to become only the fourth club — along with Al Ittihad from Saudi Arabia, Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors of Korea Republic and China PR's Guangzhou Evergrande — to win the trophy twice since the AFC Champions League was created in 2002.

"In the history of Urawa we've managed to win two AFC Champions League titles, but it took 10 years from the first time to win the second and that showed us just how difficult it is to win such a title," says Abe. "Having been part of that history, I can say it's a great honour for the club."

Urawa's first AFC Champions League win came when the club was on the crest of a wave, having won their first — and so far only — J.League title the year before under German coach Guido Buchwald (pictured below, left).

And while Buchwald had been replaced at the helm by his compatriot Holger Osieck (pictured below, right), Reds boasted a team that featured Japan international midfielder Makoto Hasebe, prolific Brazilian striker Washington, inspirational captain Keita Suzuki and the versatile Abe.

After a 1-1 draw in the first leg in Esfahan, Urawa won the second leg at Saitama Stadium 2-0, with Abe scoring the second to confirm the Japanese side as the new champions of Asia at the end of a season that had seen them crisscross the Continent on their quest for the title.

"Of course I remember the moment we won in 2007 and the way that the tournament unfolded because at that time, after the group stage, both east Asia and west Asia were combined in the knockout stage," he says.

"Even though time has passed since that win it's still a tournament that I can clearly remember.

"In 2007 we won that title without los-

ing a single match and we managed to get through some tough away matches and then win our home games, which helped lead to eventually claiming the title.

"Comparing that to 2017, things were more difficult where we lost the first leg (in the Round of 16 against Jeju United and in the quarter-finals against Kawasaki Frontale) and then had to fight back to overturn things in the second legs.

"In 2007 there was great delight in being able to deliver the first AFC Champions League title for Urawa Red Diamonds and you could really sense that there was a feeling of unity throughout the club.

"So, if you consider that we were able to overcome great obstacles to win that first title in front of our home fans and at our home stadium, then that first title brought great pleasure to the club."

Having waited a decade to register their second AFC Champions League win with a 2-1 aggregate win over Al Hilal — with the second leg once again played out in front of their own fans at the imposing Saitama Stadium — Urawa were forced to sit out the 2018 edition due to a disappointing domestic campaign the year they claimed the Asian title. Victory in the Emperor's Cup last sea-

son, though, ensured Reds returned for the 2019 tournament and, with a place in the quarter-finals sealed, Abe is hopeful the club will not have to wait another 10 years before becoming the first club to win the trophy for a third time.

"Our aim is to win the title, but we need to overcome the various obstacles that are in our way," he says. "Of course in any tournament there are many really difficult matches and naturally this year and this AFC Champions League is no different, but it's not just the players or the team that will be able to achieve our aims.

"We must be united as an entire club to make sure we keep taking one step and then another towards meeting those aims. "This is another chance to make the name of Urawa Red Diamonds known across Asia. Given that it took 10 years for the club to win our second title we must fight with all our power when we have the chance to win again.

"We can then look to those players who haven't had this experience before being able to build on that experience. So, I think that being able to win that third title would be very important for the future of the club and we'll do our best to make sure that happens."

(Source: the-afc)

Iran's Wushu Junior team runners-up at Asian championships

IRNA — Iran's Wushu Junior team finished in second place in the Brunei Asian Championships bringing another success in the field.

The tenth round of the Asian Junior Wushu Championships which began on Monday with 400 Wushu players from 20 countries in Brunei ended on Friday.



In the end, the Iranian junior team in the Sanda Division won 6 gold, one silver and 4 bronze medals and won the second place in the competition.

China with 8 gold, 2 silver and one bronze medals were crowned champion, and Vietnam stood on the third place with 2 gold, 2 silver and 4 bronze.

In total, in the Sanda and Taolu divisions, Iran won the third place in the Asian Championship with 7 gold, 5 silver and 11 bronze medals.

China came in first with 20 gold, two silver and one bronze, and Macau came in second with 9 gold, 3 silver and 2 bronze, only because of more silver than Iran were ranked second. All of the Macau gold medals were achieved in Taolu.

Iranian team repeated the results of the previous round of the tournament held in South Korea in 2017. It also had finished runners-up in the previous round in Sanda, finishing third overall.

The Iranian team succeeded in this year's competition with domestic coaches, despite numerous financial difficulties.

In the previous period, the Iranian team had 3 Chinese coaches in various divisions and only Amir Oujagi was the Iranian head coach of Sanda.

Saeid Mollaei to participate at IJF World Championships

TASNIM — Iran's Saeid Mollaei will take part at the International Judo Federation (IJF) World Championships.

The competition will be held from August 25 to September 1 at the Nippon Budokan, which will also host the 2020 Olympic competition.

World number one and world champion Mollaei, 27, has hit form at the right time with medals at his last three events. The Iranian hero won bronze at the Paris Grand Slam in February before capturing Grand Prix gold in Hohhot and bronze in Zagreb last month.

The owner of the red backpatch in the -81kg category is widely fancied to hold onto his title in Japan.

The competition will bring 860 athletes from 149 registered countries together.

Omar Abdulrahman called up for UAE camp

United Arab Emirates head coach Bert van Marwijk has announced his 27-player preliminary squad list ahead of their Asian Qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023, which includes talismanic midfielder Omar Abdulrahman.

Abdulrahman has been out of national team action after suffering a knee injury last October that saw him miss out on the 2019 AFC Asian Cup, where UAE ended their campaign in the semi-finals.

Van Marwijk will be counting on the 28-year-old playmaker to power his side to an opening Group G win against Malaysia, who they play in Kuala Lumpur on September 10.

Goalscorers Ali Ahmed Mabkhout and Ahmed Khalil Junaibi are also among the list of 27 players, who will all come together on Sunday for a one-week training camp in Bahrain, before playing two friendly matches against Sri Lanka and Dominican Republic on August 30 and 31 respectively.

(Source: the-afc)

Real Madrid loan Japan's Kubo to Mallorca

Spanish giants Real Madrid will send 18-year-old Japan midfielder Takefusa Kubo on-loan to Mallorca this season, the clubs announced on Thursday.

Madrid signed Kubo, who has been dubbed the "Japanese Messi" in his home country, from FC Tokyo in June but have allowed the teenager to leave to gain experience.

"Real Madrid and RCD Mallorca have agreed to the loan of Takefusa Kubo for this season until June 30, 2020," Real Madrid wrote in a statement.

Mallorca added: "Kubo is one of the great talents of world football and stands out for his daring and his great quality with the ball at his feet.

"Kubo speaks Spanish perfectly after coming through the academy of FC Barcelona and at 18 he is an international with Japan."

Kubo will train with his Mallorca teammates for the first time on Friday, ahead of the team's second La Liga game of the season at home to Real Sociedad on Sunday. The newly-promoted club began with a 2-1 win over Eibar last weekend.

After joining Barca's academy aged 10, Kubo returned to Japan in 2015 as a result of FIFA sanctions handed to the club for breaching rules on signing under-age players.

Barca kept tabs on the attacking midfielder but Real Madrid jumped in this summer with an offer of around 2 million euros.

Kubo made his international debut for Japan against El Salvador in June.

(Source: AFP)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A soft tongue is often more effective than being quarrelsome.

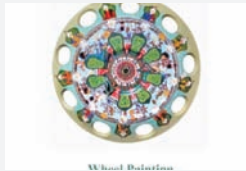
Imam Ali (AS)

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Painting



■ Paintings by Vida Shadmehr are currently on view in an exhibition at Shalman Gallery. The exhibit titled "View Point" will be running until August 28 at the gallery located at 27 Kavusi Alley, West Rudbar St., off Mirdamad Blvd.



■ An exhibition of paintings by Milad Gholami is underway at Seyhun Gallery. The exhibit named "Wheel Painting" will run until September 4 at the gallery located at No. 11, 4th St., Vozara Ave.



■ Elaheh Khanmohammadi, Mahnush Purbosseini and Aida Rajabi are displaying their latest paintings in an exhibition at White Line Gallery.

The exhibition entitled "The Other One" will run until September 2 at the gallery, which can be found at 22 Parvin Alley, off Jame Jam St. off Vali-e Asr Ave.



■ Golestan Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Soheila Mansuri. The exhibition will be running until August 28 at the gallery located at 42 Kamasai St. in the Darus neighborhood.



■ A group of artists, including Nilgun Badii, Zeinab Movahed, Neda Hakimian, Afra Nasrollahi, Meysun Katan, Maryam Niaki and Nasim Zakeri, is showcasing their paintings in an exhibition at Negar Gallery.

The exhibition will run until August 28 at the gallery that can be found at 33 Delaram Alley, Roshanai St. in the Qeitarieh neighborhood.



■ A collection of paintings by Fatemeh Divandari is on display in an exhibition at Tehran's CAMA – Contemporary and Modern Art Gallery.

The exhibit named "Emancipation" will run until August 28 at the gallery located at No. 44, 10th Golestan, Pasdaran St.



■ Banafsheh Nili is showcasing her latest paintings in an exhibition at Hoor Gallery.

The exhibition will be running until September 13 at the gallery located at 12 Naeimi Alley, North Mirza Shirazi St., off Motahhari Ave.



■ An exhibition of paintings by Maryam Sabbaghpur is currently underway at O Gallery. The exhibition named "The Day I Was a Rabbit" runs until September 3 at the gallery located at 18 Shahin St., Sanai St.

Drawing



■ Drawings by Setareh Behbahani, Peyman Davam, Nasim Goli, Mahsa Mohammadi and several other artists are on display in an exhibition at Saye Gallery. The exhibit titled "Line, Paper" will run until August 28 at the gallery located at No. 21, 13th Alley, Sanai St. off Karim Khan Ave.

Multimedia



■ Sculptures and sets of installation by Farzaneh Vaziritabar are on view in an exhibition Shirin Gallery. The exhibit entitled "Form Follows Farzaneh" runs until September 4 at the gallery located at No. 5, 13th St., Karim Khan Ave.

"A House for You" named best doc at Iran Cinema Celebration

A R T TEHRAN — "A House for You" directed by Mehdi Bakhshi-Moqaddam has won the award for best feature documentary at the 11th Independent Celebration of Iranian Documentary Cinema, which is part of the Iran Cinema Celebration.

Produced by Mehdi Shahmohammadi, the film is about Davud who has been diagnosed with lung cancer, and his dream is to build a house for his beloved wife.

The film also brought Mohammad Haddadi the award for best cinematographer during the celebration, which was held at the conference hall of the National Library and Archives of Iran on Thursday.

Mehrdad Zahedian was picked as best director for "It Is Winter" about Tehran's Lalezar Street, which was considered as Iran's Broadway during 1950s and 1960s.

Director and producer Hadi Masumdoost was honored with the special jury award for "The Day That Went" about the historical structure of the northeastern Iranian city of Mashhad, which has been destroyed by new urban planning projects over the past two decades.

The documentary also won Masumdoost the award for best research of the year. The award for best sound engineer was presented to Amir-Hossein Qasemi for his collaboration in this film.

In the mid-length documentary category, "The Little Owl's Song" co-produced by Mehdi Nurmohammadi and Sediqeh Khodai was selected as best film.

The documentary is about two owls that live peacefully in a forest. The calm is shattered as man steps into the forest.

Loqman Khaledi was named best director for "Goodbye Party", which is about a 60-year-old house and art center in Tehran that has been sold to a builder due to the owner's financial and personal problems. The building is going to be demolished to make way for a tower, so the family and art students gather together to hold a goodbye party.

The film also won Habib Khazaifari the award for best composer.

The award for best editor went to Esmaeil Monsef for his collaboration in "Time" directed by Maria Mavuti. The film



Producer Mehdi Shahmohammadi speaks after accepting the award for best film for his documentary "A House for You" during the 11th Independent Celebration of Iranian Documentary Cinema at the conference hall of the National Library and Archives of Iran on August 22, 2019. (Mehr/Behnam Tofiqi)

is about an Iranian man who moves to Turkey along with his family to start a new life, but he separates from his wife and children as a result of an unexpected move.

"The Hidden" produced by Mohammadreza Jahanpanah was named best short documentary and Mina Mashhadi-Mehdi won the award for best director for the short documentary

"Where the Wind Blows".

The Iranian House of Cinema organizes the Iran Cinema Celebration every year to commemorate the National Day of Cinema, which is September 12. However, this year's celebration will be held on August 30 due to its coincidence with the Muharram mourning season.

Iranian photographer Mahbubeh Farajollahi wins award at Armenian Intl. Photo Festival



"Just Laugh" by Mahbubeh Farajollahi won the Bronze Medal at the 1st Armenian International Photo Festival.

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian photographer Mahbubeh Farajollahi has won the Bronze Medal at the 1st Armenian International Photo Festival (AIPF) in Yerevan, Armenia.

She won the award for her single black and white photo "Just Laugh", which depicts two boys laughing through a window, the organizers announced last week.

Kaushik Majumder from India received the AIPF Gold Medal for his photo "Race", while Yesayi Durmuzyan

from Armenia won the AIPF Silver Medal for his photo "Sevan".

The awards will be given to the winners during the opening ceremony of the festival today.

A selection of the submissions to the festival will be put on display during the festival, which will run until September 28.

Over 15 Iranian photographers, including Omid Farrokhi, Mardin Ahmadi, Rezvan Motahhari, Mohammadreza Keivanfar and Hamidreza Gohari, participated in the festival.

Tehran Symphony Orchestra to perform pieces from MIKTA countries



A poster for MIKTA countries' concert in Tehran.

A R T TEHRAN — The Tehran Symphony Orchestra under the baton of maestro Shahrdad Rohani will be performing pieces composed by musicians from the MIKTA countries during a private concert at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on August 25.

"Cry in Vain", a composition by Rohani, will also be performed at the concert, the Embassy of South Korea in Tehran, which is also the organizer of the event, told the Tehran Times.

The concert has been organized to

reinforce cultural relations between Iran and the MIKTA countries – Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey and Australia.

The ambassadors of the countries are also scheduled to deliver short speeches before the concert.

MIKTA is a grouping of middle power states that was formed on the margins of the UN General Assembly in 2013.

The five countries of MIKTA come from quite diverse cultures and regions, yet share core values and similarities.

Mexican, Dutch experts to hold workshops at Marivan theater festival

A R T TEHRAN — Theater experts from Mexico and the Netherlands will be holding workshops during the 14th Marivan International Street Theater Festival, which is currently underway in the northwestern Iranian city.

Mexican director, actor and writer Miguel Vaylon – Misha will be holding the workshop on body, voice and action, the organizers have announced.

Dutch expert Titia Bouwmeester will be holding a workshop on character creation through imaging.

Born in Mexico City, Vaylón, better known as Misha, is the founder of the Nadiesha International Cultural Collective. He has been working as a cultural manager

and creating exchange projects between Mexico and the world for years. He currently lives Kita-ku, a special ward located in Tokyo, Japan.

Bouwmeester makes site-specific theater performances about communities in transition, those people that are finding their way in a changing world and also about warm-blooded theater in which texts, images and music surprisingly interweave with the landscape, creating shared experiences that open people to one another and the world around them.

The Marivan International Street Theater Festival opened on Friday and will be running until August 27.

The festival has also organized exhibitions to showcase handicrafts from western Iranian cities.



A scene from "Breathing" by Farshid Ayyubinejad.

"Breathing", "Azadeh" from Iran honored at Argentine festival

A R T TEHRAN — The Iranian short films "Breathing" and "Azadeh" have won awards at the 41st Argentine and International Film and Video Festival – UNCIPAR in the city of Pinamar.

"Breathing" by Farshid Ayyubinejad won first prize while "Azadeh" by Mir Abbas Khosravinejad received an honorable

mention, the organizers announced on Wednesday.

"Breathing" is about several workers who work in a stone factory and are forced to hide in a dark room every time the insurance agent visits the factory.

"Azadeh" tells the story of a girl who wants to meet her father but her mother and brother won't give her permission.

"The Collection" by Emmanuel Blanchard from France received second prize and "Ashmina" by Dekel Berenson from the UK received an honorable mention.

Two more Iranian films, "Are You Volleyball?!" by Mohammad Bakhshi and "Pedovore" ("Child Eater") by Mohammad Kart, were also on screen during the festival, which was held from August 17 to 19.

Voice actor Nasser Ahmadi dies at 75

A R T TEHRAN — Veteran voice actor Nasser Ahmadi, who lent his voice to many leading actors of the world cinema such as Jack Carson and Peter Postlethwaite, died after years of illness on

Thursday. He was 75, the Iran Dubbing Association has announced.

Ahmadi was also a radio announcer in his birthplace Damghan, Semnan Province. He later moved to Tehran

and continued his career as a dubber and a TV announcer.

He was also popular for his collaboration in dubbing the German TV series "Alarm for Cobra 11" and the South Korean TV series "Jewel in the Palace" aired on IRIB channels.