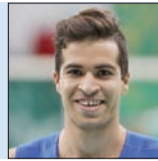




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Tehran, Damascus ink MOU on banking cooperation

TEHRAN — Central banks of Iran and Syria signed a memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Monday for expansion of banking cooperation between the two countries, IRIB reported.

The MOU was signed by the Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnasser Hemmati and his Syrian counterpart, Hazem Younes Karfoul, during a meeting in Tehran.

In the meeting, the two sides stressed the need for expansion of banking ties as a prerequisite for development of economic cooperation.

Mentioning an MOU which was signed between the two countries during the 14th Iran-Syria Joint Economic Committee meeting in the Syrian capital city of Damascus in December 2018, →4

Iran ranks 8th for top papers in AI

TEHRAN — The Islamic Republic of Iran is ranked at the 8th place among the leading countries in terms of publishing top papers in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), Mehr reported on Monday, citing data released by the journal Nature.

Based on the information gained from 1997 until 2017, Iran submitted 34,028 articles about AI and its usage, ranking it at the 14th place in the world in the area of artificial intelligence.

Iran is the 8th country in the world

based on high impact and high citation articles and the only country from the Middle East in the top ten countries in this field.

Iran has submitted 1.3 percent of the high citation articles in the field of artificial intelligence and also 0.02 percent of the hot articles.

The country has also published 271 highly cited papers and 5 hot papers, making it one of the best countries in this field. →11

Hezbollah to 'Israel': Eye for an Eye

TEHRAN — Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem stressed that the Resistance operation targeting the Israeli military vehicle in the northern settlement of Avivim aimed at maintaining deterrence against the Zionist enemy, asserting that the "eye for an eye" retaliation principle is being applied.

Delivering a speech during Hezbollah ceremony to mark the second Ashura Night in Beirut's southern suburb, Sheikh Qassem added that 'Isra-

el' wanted to follow a path of stealth security operations against Lebanon in order to compensate its failure in 2006 war, confirming that its plot was exposed and frustrated.

Sheikh Qassem emphasized that the Islamic Resistance is always there to defend Lebanon against the Israeli aggression and greed, adding that the "eye for an eye" formula will remain till the demise of the occupation entity.

PERSPECTIVE

Hanif Ghaffari
Head of the Tehran Times Politics Desk

Trump is coming to an end!

U.S. President Donald Trump is in the worst possible situation! New polls in the United States suggest that Trump will be defeated by all four Democratic candidates in next year's presidential election. The popularity of Trump has dropped in recent polls in the United States. Donald Trump's calculations have been incorrect in many cases! This has exacerbated Republican concerns over next year's presidential elections. An overview of the results of recent polls in the United States shows that Trump has a difficult path to re-election.

However, Trump appears to have lost the power to manage the crises at the White House. Trump is now worried about the upcoming presidential election. He will take any action in order to get public votes. Most of these actions have a populist aspect. The president of the United States is trying to implement the same formula for the presidential election of 2016 in 2020.

The main point is that the President of the United States of America, both at the state and public levels, has lost popularity with American citizens.

Undoubtedly, Trump will now take steps to win White's votes and gray votes for the 2020 presidential election. Meanwhile, opponents of the U.S. president have begun their campaign to defeat Trump. The popularity of Trump in crucial states such as Florida, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin can make this change in the results of the presidential elections of 2020 at his own expense.

Trump thought his popularity in the economy could lead to a definite Republican victory in next year's presidential election, but recent polls show he was wrong!

Former US Vice President Joe Biden has also made efforts to confront Trump.

How can Biden really overcome this situation? Undoubtedly, the former vice-president of the United States will focus on social services, including health insurance, in the 2010 presidential election race. In this case, Biden can bring the middle and poor Americans. It should not be forgotten that Trump in the field of foreign policy is not well placed in the polls, and only about 40 percent of American citizens confirm their policies in the face of the international system. →7

'Hezbollah weakened Netanyahu's position'

By Mohammad Fatemizadeh

TEHRAN (MNA) — Head of the Center for Political Studies at the University of Lebanon believes that the message of Hezbollah's operation is that Israeli attacks and any aggression on the Resistance in Lebanon or Syria will not go unanswered.

Tensions between Israel and Lebanon began escalating last Sunday, after Beirut accused Tel Aviv of carrying out a drone attack against the media headquarters of political party and paramilitary group Hezbollah.

The Lebanese Resistance movement has shot down two Israeli drones flying near the capital Beirut. Hezbollah's shooting down of the drones came just hours after Israeli forces tried to hit targets in Damascus in neighboring Syria. The missile attacks in Syria martyred two Hezbollah members, while the drone attacks in Lebanon

left no casualties.

In this regard, the Secretary of Lebanese Hezbollah movement Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah has reacted to the recent Israeli aggression on the Resistance movement's positions in Syria and Lebanon, saying that the Israeli attacks will not go unanswered.

He has also advised Israelis to remain on high alert after their attacks in Syria and Lebanon.

The Hezbollah leader said on Saturday evening that Hezbollah has enough precision-guided missiles in Lebanon for any confrontation with Israel, while warning that the Israeli enemy must pay the price for the recent aggression.

On Sunday, Hezbollah militia destroyed at least one Israeli regime's military vehicle near the border area. Israeli regime's military confirmed the report saying that several anti-tank missiles were fired from Lebanon, scoring hits,

and Israeli forces were responding.

To shed more light on the issue, we reached out to Dr. Talal Atrissi, Head of the Center for Political Studies at the University of Lebanon.

Following is the text of the interview with him:

Recently, Lebanese Resistance movement targeted a number of Zionist militias in response to Israeli drone strikes. What is the significance and message of this Hezbollah retaliatory operation?

The clear message of Hezbollah's operation is that Israeli attacks and any aggression on the Resistance in Lebanon or Syria will not go unanswered. The Israelis understand that any aggression will be answered so they will not dare to attack again.

Another major issue is that Hezbollah has also advised Israelis to remain on high alert after their attacks but Israelis have failed to protect themselves. Hezbollah insists on threats and it will deliver on them. →13

Johnson will throw No Deal Brexit rebels out of the Conservative Party within 48 hours

TEHRAN — BORIS Johnson has declared all-out war against Tory Remainers by telling them they will be thrown out of the party as early as Tuesday night if they try to block a No Deal Brexit.

The Sun reported: The PM has opted to threaten the ultimate sanction in an 11th hour bid to deter up to 22 Tory MPs from backing the so-called 'Remainer Alliance' bid to change the law this week.

He has deployed his whips to deliver the "very simple message" to Tory MPs on Monday that failing to vote with the Government on Tuesday will be "destroying the Government's negotiating position and handing control of Parliament to Jeremy Corbyn".

A senior source from the Whips' Office said on Sunday night: "Any Conservative MP who does

this will have the whip withdrawn and will not stand as Conservative candidates in an election."

Around 20 Tory Remainers remained defiant despite No10's threat to deselect them.

It sparked fears of a formal split in the Tory party as early as this week, with many vowing to stand as independent candidates at the next election. A spokesman for the rebel group said: "This is sheer hypocrisy. Almost a quarter of the current cabinet have voted against the party whip.

But this is about the national interest, and we've moved beyond the point where threats will persuade people to abandon their principles."

Commenting on the move by No10 to cancel today's meeting with Mr Johnson, the spokesman

said: "Aside from being deeply discourteous, today's behaviour shows this is not a government interested in compromise. "These MPs want proof that there is a genuine and sincere attempt to get a deal. The fact that the Prime Minister isn't even prepared to meet them suggests there isn't."

On Sunday night relations between No10 and Tory Remainers were in tatters after Mr Johnson pulled the plug on a meeting with Philip Hammond's gang of 22 MPs that was scheduled for lunchtime Sunday in his Commons office.

Instead he invited Mr Hammond, the rebel ringleader, in for one-to-one talks but the ex-Chancellor snubbed the PM and blasted him for being "discourteous". →13



Tehran Times/Majid Asgaripour

Exhibition of posters on Ashura opens in Art Bureau

TEHRAN — The Art Bureau in Tehran is playing host to an exhibition of posters on Ashura. A collection of 40 posters selected from the previous editions of the Ashura Art Exhibit held annually at the Art Bureau during the month of Muharram are on display at the exhibition.

Ashura is the 10th day of Muharram, the day upon which Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions were martyred in Karbala in 680 CE.

"This year we decided to display a selection from the 11 previous editions of the exhibit which offers high-quality works by 37 artists and graphic designers," Art Bureau director Mohsen Momeni-Sharif said in a press release published on Sunday. →16

ARTICLE

Ebrahim Fallahi
Tehran Times journalist

Escalating U.S.-China trade war, a blessing in disguise for Iran's oil industry?!

The U.S.-China trade war, which has been going on for more than a year, entered a new phase last week as China not only imposed new tariffs on U.S. goods in retaliation against Trump's actions, but took the matter a step forward by putting "crude oil" on its tariff list.

The five percent import tariff, which Beijing has imposed on U.S. oil, means that the price of a barrel of oil for Chinese refiners will rise by about \$3 per barrel. This would make U.S. oil imports not economically viable in long term.

The new tariffs on the U.S. crude oil, along with the heavy prices of shipping oil from North America, could push the Chinese buyers back toward Iranian crude oil.

As they are already buying oil from the Islamic country despite U.S. sanctions, the Chinese refiners might find it risk worthy to even increase their purchase of cheaper and more accessible Iranian oil rather than the more expensive and hard-to-get U.S. crude.

Trade war and new tariffs
Since more than a year ago, when the tension between the world's two biggest economies started to escalate, global markets have been shadowed by the concerns of a dismal economic future.

Oil prices have been following a downward pattern in the past few months, as the tension between the two sides has been escalating even more.

On Sunday, the new tariffs that the United States and China imposed on each other last month, came into force and for the first time since the beginning of the row, China officially started targeting U.S. crude oil in its tariffs.

In late-August, the U.S. imposed 15 percent tariffs on several Chinese goods - including footwear, smart watches and flat-panel televisions, and China levied five percent tariffs on the U.S. crude oil.

The issue of imposing tariffs on U.S. oil has come up so many times since the trade war started, however this is the first time that it is coming into effect officially.

Back in June 2018, China announced that it is considering new tariffs on U.S. oil imports. →5

Foreign Ministry: Iran's next step to reduce nuclear commitments to be 'more decisive'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Monday that Iran is ready to take next step in reducing nuclear commitments more decisively.

On May 8, exactly one year after the U.S. withdrawal, Tehran began reducing its commitments to the JCPOA at bi-monthly intervals.

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.

"The third step has been devised and will be more decisive than the first and second steps," Mousavi said.

However, he said, Iran will not take the third step if talks with the Europeans reach a result and they fulfill their commitments under the JCPOA.

"If the situation is favorable, Iran may even revise the first and second steps and return to situation of the past several months and meet its commitments fully," the spokesman remarked.

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

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.

In an interview with the Sueddeutsche Zeitung newspaper published on Tuesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Tehran will begin suspending more of its commitments under the nuclear deal on September 6.

Paragraph 36 of the JCPOA 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.

In a telephone conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron late on Saturday, President Hassan Rouhani said that terms of the nuclear deal are unchangeable.

"Terms of the JCPOA are unchangeable and all parties must be committed to its provisions," Rouhani said.

He noted that Iran's main approach is preserving the nuclear deal. "Full implementation of the commitments by all sides and security of shipping in all waterways, especially the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, are Iran's two main objectives in current talks," he said.

He also said that the United States withdrew from the JCPOA to cause problems for Iran's interaction with other countries.

"Unfortunately, the European countries have not taken practical actions in line with implementing their obligations after the United States' unilateral action," Rouhani lamented.

Rouhani noted that removal of all sanctions lays the grounds for future talks.

Elsewhere, he said that Iran will take the next step in reducing its nuclear commitments if Europe fails to fulfill its obligations.

However, he said that Iran's action is reversible.

Macron pointed to Zarif's visit to France on August 25, saying the trip showed Iran's efforts to meet its interests.

He noted that talks should continue till a favorable result is reached.

Iran says explosion at space center was technical

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian government spokesman Ali Rabiei said on Monday that an explosion at Semnan Space Centre on August 29 was due to a technical fault.

The launch pad in northeast Iran had been vacant when explosion occurred, Rabiei said.

"The explosion was in the launch pad and a satellite had not yet been transferred there," Rabiei said.

"Fortunately, nobody was killed in this incident. It was a technical issue and experts agree on this and it's now clear how this happened."

He added that such incidents even happen repeatedly at technologically-developed countries.

In a tweet on August 30, Trump called the explosion a "catastrophic accident" alongside a high-resolution picture pointing to apparent damage at the site, AFP reported.

Trump said the U.S. had no role in the explosion.

"The United States of America was not involved in the catastrophic accident during final launch preparations for the Safir SLV Launch at Semnan Launch Site One in Iran," Trump said in the tweet.

Rabiei said a media propaganda campaign was launched to "convey that they (foes) are capable of infiltrating our organizations for espionage and sabotage but our experts don't confirm it".

The government spokesman also hit out at Trump over his tweet. "We don't know why the U.S. president would... post a satellite photo, kind of treating the subject gleefully."

He added, "Fortunately, our knowledge in this field is increasing by the day," referring to the space program.

Australia does not agree with Washington's stand on Iran: diplomat

By staff and agency

Australian Ambassador to Russia Graeme Meehan has said that Canberra's participation in the U.S.-led coalition in the Persian Gulf does not mean that the country agrees with Washington's stand on Iran.

"We are quite careful to say that our participation in the maritime action to protect shipping in the Strait of Hormuz doesn't mean that we agree with all the actions that United States are taking in relation to the nuclear deal. Of course, the two things are connected, but there are also differences, and I think that is the same for some of the European countries that are considering participating in the maritime act. The European countries don't generally agree with the United States' action of pulling out of the nuclear deal," Sputnik quoted him as saying on Monday.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced on August 21 that Canberra will take part in the U.S.-led coalition.

"The government has decided that it is in Australia's national interest to work with our international partners to contribute. Our contribution will be limited in scope and it will be time-bound," Al-jazeera quoted Morrison as saying.

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

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

At least 15 percent of crude oil and up to 30 percent of refined oil destined for Australia transits through the Persian Gulf.

Government: Nuclear commitment is reciprocal

Ali Rabiei says Iran's return to full implementation of nuclear deal is dependent on European moves

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The Iranian government reiterated on Monday that Iran will return to full implementation of the 2015 nuclear deal if Europe meets its obligations, saying commitment is reciprocal.

"Commitment in response to commitment is a strategy that we have now adopted," government spokesman Ali Rabiei told a press conference.

Under the nuclear accord, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran was obliged to put limit on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination economic and financial sanctions.

"The two presidents [President Hassan Rouhani and French President Emmanuel Macron] held serious talks in the past weeks. Foreign Minister [Mohammad Javad Zarif] has held talks with the Europeans about the ways to implement their commitments. Fortunately, in most cases the views have become closer," Rabiei stated.

"Mr. Araghchi's visit to Paris along with representatives from the Ministry of Petroleum and Central Bank is in line with implementation of the Europeans' obligations," he said.

He noted, "As it has been said earlier,



Iran should sell its oil and receive its money. This is the subject of our talks."

Zarif visited France on August 25 and met with Macron.

Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi along with a delegation was also in Paris on Monday.

President Hassan Rouhani's chief of

staff Mahmoud Vaezi said on Sunday that Araghchi's visit to Paris is intended to discuss a "proposal being discussed between Iran and France".

U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew Washington in May 2018 from the JCPOA, which was reached between Iran and six world powers in 2015.

Afterwards, Washington re-imposed sanctions on Iran that had been lifted under the deal and ordered new ones.

On May 8, exactly one year after the U.S. withdrew from the multi-nation nuclear agreement, Iran announced a partial withdrawal from some aspects of the pact, saying that the country would no longer adhere to some of the limits on its nuclear activities. It also threatened to step up uranium enrichment if an agreement is not made within 60 days to protect it from the sanctions' effects.

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

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.

In an interview with the Sueddeutsche Zeitung newspaper published on Tuesday, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the country will begin suspending more of its commitments under the nuclear deal on September 6.

Russia has been on Iran's side in hard times: Zarif

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Monday called Tehran-Moscow ties "strategic" and said Russia has always been beside Iran in difficult times.

Zarif made the remarks upon arrival in Moscow, IRNA reported.

Zarif said Tehran will never forget the friendly countries which have stood beside the Iranians in difficult days.

In his visit to Russia, Zarif held a meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov.

Efforts to salvage of the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the JCPOA, and security in the Persian Gulf featured high in the talks between Zarif and Lavrov.

Lavrov said that Russia welcomes any step in line with the situation around the JCPOA.

During a joint press conference, Zarif said that Iran will scale back its nuclear commitments more and more if Europeans fail to shield Tehran's economy from sanctions reimposed by the United States after Trump's administration's withdrawal from the deal.

Under the JCPOA, Iran agreed to put limits

on its nuclear work in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

"It is meaningless to continue unilateral commitments to the deal if we don't enjoy its benefits as promised by the deal's European parties," Reuters quoted him as saying.

He also ruled out possibility of renegotiating the JCPOA.

"It is not about renegotiating JCPOA because, as you and I know probably better than anybody else, because both of us were involved in these negotiations from the very beginning, it is impossible to open this Pandora box and close it again," Sputnik quoted him as saying.

Zarif also praised the partnership between Iran, Russia and China.

"The nature of our relations with Russia and China is different from our relations with

the ... other participants of the JCPOA because we believe that Iran, Russia and China have never stopped cooperating ... So we consider Russia and China as partners that have ... held strong positions and who contribute to the continued survival of the JCPOA," Zarif explained.

He expressed regret over European signatories' failure to take necessary action to fulfil their obligations under the deal.

"And that is why we have had to continue our conversations with them, including [during] my visits to France, in order to make sure that the Europeans will be able to implement their obligations under the JCPOA," Zarif noted.

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

On May 8, exactly one year after the U.S. withdrawal, Tehran began reducing its commitments to the JCPOA at bi-monthly intervals.

Iran welcomes Russian proposal for security in Persian Gulf

Zarif also said that Tehran welcomes a Russian proposal for ensuring security in the Persian Gulf.

He said that security in the Persian Gulf is very important for Iran and Russia, and the two countries share close views in this respect.

"We believe that security in this region can be maintained through cooperation of the littoral states and not through rivalry and confrontation. Unfortunately, the United States seeks to raise tension in the region through sending forces," Zarif said.

He added, "Iran welcomes Russia's initiative for dialogue on security in the Persian Gulf and is ready to support non-aggression pact among the Persian Gulf countries."

Elsewhere, Zarif said that Iran-Russia relations are in their "best shape" in view of the past few decades.

The two countries make efforts to expand interaction, he added.

Zarif said, "It is meaningless to continue unilateral commitments to the deal if we don't enjoy its benefits as promised by the deal's European parties."

Iran: Israeli violation of Lebanon's territorial integrity threatens international peace

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Abbas Mousavi, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, on Monday condemned Israel for violating Lebanon's territorial integrity, saying such actions threaten international peace and security.

"The aggressive move of the Israeli regime against Lebanon is an open violation of an independent country's sovereignty and territorial integrity and a move against global peace and security," he said.

The spokesman went on to say that the "bankrupt regime of Israel, under the meaningful silence of the international community and unlimited support by the United States, is trying to undermine the glorious resistance of the Lebanese people who through a powerful army... are seeking to protect their territorial integrity and independence against the Zionist regime's invasions."

Mousavi urged the international community, especially the United Nations, not to remain silent against Israel "which is destabilizing the stability and security of the region and the entire world."


Last week, the Israeli regime orchestrated a failed bombing mission through drones on Beirut's Dahieh region, Fars reported.

The attack came to a swift end after a first drone fell on a building housing Hezbollah's media office and a second one crashed in an empty plot nearby after being detonated in the air. Consequently, Hezbollah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah promised a strong response to the attack.

The resistance movement attacked an Israeli personnel carrier traveling near the illegal settlement of Avivim on Sunday.

On Sunday, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani hailed recent retaliatory operation by the Hezbollah, underlining that Hezbollah is acting to defend the interests of the Lebanese people.

Second Announcement



Iran Alumina

ONE STAGE TENDER INTERNATIONAL CALL

FOR **PURCHASE OF 60,000 MT BAUXITE**

TENDER No: 98/344 **DATE: 31st August, 2019**

- 1.Subject: Iran Alumina Company (IAC)** intends to purchase high quality bauxite in amount of 60,000 +/-10% MT for using in its Alumina Refinery Plant through one stage Tender according to following conditions as mentioned in the relevant Tender documents :
Note: The basic level for Al₂O₃ should be 46% and for SiO₂ should be 6% .
- 2.:Bid Bond Guarantee: 64,000€**(sixty four thousands) Euro/or **8,000,000,000** Rials
- 3.:Tender proposal:.** Since the tendering is to be done in one stage ,thus the eligible Bidders should follow and regard the Tender instructions and present and submit all of required justified documents and the mentioned Tender envelopes in one package together.
- 4.:Closing Date:.** The eligible Bidders should submit their Bids/proposal to the central administration office as mentioned below and also in the Tender documents before 14:00 pm ,local time , on the day **monday , 30th September ,2019 .**
- 5.:Opening Date: 2th October , 2019**
- 6:.** The relevant cost of this publishing Tender call will be paid by the winner as the first ranking Bidder.
- 7.: Contact information .:** For more details and receiving the relevant Tender documents , the Bidders can refer to the following contact information.
Add:. Km 7 of Sankhast Road ,city of Jajarm , Northern Khorasan Province,IRAN,P.O. Box:1135-94415 ,Commercial department / legal and contractual Affairs .

Tel .: **0098-58-32605344** Fax: **0098-58-32272487**
website: **www.iranalumina.ir** E-mail: **info@iranalumina.ir**

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Rouhani admin should have taken all JCPOA-related steps at once: top MP

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has criticized the Rouhani administration's cautious approach with regard to reducing Tehran's commitments to the 2015 nuclear deal, saying the administration should have taken all the necessary measures in one step.

"I believe that the administration, instead of giving time to the other side, should have taken all the necessary measures in one step, but given the current administration in power, even [reaching] the fifth and sixth steps is imaginable," Mojtaba Zonnour said, Mehr reported on Monday.

U.S. President Donald Trump abandoned the UN-backed nuclear accord of JCPOA in May 2018. He reimposed the previous sanctions against the Islamic Republic and added new ones.

On May 8, exactly one year after the U.S. withdrawal, Tehran began reducing its commitments to the JCPOA at bi-monthly intervals.

So far, Iran has taken two steps in reducing its 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.

Zonnour said Iran can further increase its stockpile of enriched uranium. "In the next step, we should restore the Arak reactor to its previous state," he added.

He also said Iran's next steps should be taken more decisively.

President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday that Iran would further reduce its commitments under the JCPOA if Europe does not abide by its obligations under the deal.

In a telephone conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron, Rouhani said Iran's approach is to maintain the JCPOA, but criticized the Europeans for not taking any practical steps to live up to their commitments after the U.S. withdrawal.

He also stressed that the third step will be reversible like the two previous steps.

Earlier, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif had announced that Iran would begin suspending more of its commitments on September 6.

He added that Iran would reconsider its upcoming decision if it reaches an agreement with Europe and the European side starts implementing it.

Shamkhani hails Hezbollah's retaliatory act against Israel

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, has praised the Lebanese Hezbollah for its Sunday attack on Israeli targets, saying the retaliatory operation showed the resistance front's resolve to combat threats posed by the enemy.

In a statement released on Sunday evening, Shamkhani described the retaliatory action, which occurred at the beginning of the days of mourning for Imam Hussein (AS), as the embodiment of the highly-revered imam's motto of "far from us is disgrace," the IFP news reported.



"Countering the American drone that violated the Islamic Republic's airspace and the Lebanese Hezbollah's punishment for the Zionist regime translate into the resistance front's resolve to combat the threats and incendiary acts by the front of destabilizers in the region," Supreme National Security Council secretary Shamkhani notes.

The U.S. and the Zionist regime are making evil moves in the Persian Gulf region and the Levant, said Shamkhani.

"Countering the American drone that violated the Islamic Republic's airspace and the Lebanese Hezbollah's punishment for the Zionist regime translate into the resistance front's resolve to combat the threats and incendiary acts by the front of destabilizers in the region," he added.

The top security official further praised Hezbollah as a genuine, smart and highly popular movement. "Safeguarding the Lebanese people's interests and conforming to what is in their interest is a pivotal policy of Hezbollah in making political and defensive decisions."

Pressuring Israel is the only road to regional peace: Qalibaf

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, a member of the Expediency Council and former presidential candidate, also commented on the attack, saying pressuring Israel is the road toward peace in the region.

"Hezbollah's yesterday response to the drone aggression showed how vulnerable Israel is compared to the past ... and now is the time to put maximum pressure on it," Qalibaf said in a tweet on Monday. "Pressuring Israel is the road toward serenity in the region."

The comments came after Hezbollah said it had targeted an Israeli military vehicle near the border with the occupied Palestinian lands, killing and injuring all forces on board.

According to Hezbollah, the operation was carried out on Sunday by two fighter groups, who targeted two Israeli vehicles. One of the vehicles escaped the Lebanese fighters' fire, but the other one was totally destroyed leaving all those on board killed or injured, Press TV reported.

Hezbollah fighters "destroyed a military vehicle on the road to the Avivim barracks (in northern Israel), killing and wounding those inside," the resistance group said in a statement, which was carried by Lebanon's Al Mayadeen TV.

Following the attack on Sunday, Israeli military sources confirmed that a military vehicle has been targeted at the border with anti-tank missiles.

Israel's military sources claimed that several anti-tank missiles were fired from Lebanon, scoring hits, with Israeli forces responding, Reuters reported.

"A number of anti-tank missiles were fired from Lebanon towards an (Israeli military) base and military vehicles," an Israeli army statement said, adding, "A number of hits have been confirmed. (Israel's military) is responding with fire towards the sources of fire and targets in southern Lebanon."

Qatari nationals can obtain visas upon arrival in Iran: report

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Doha has announced that Qatari nationals who are willing to visit Iran can obtain visas upon arrival in the country.

Iran had decided to issue visa on arrivals for holders of the Qatari passport, Press TV reported, citing a Saturday report on the Qatari Foreign Ministry website.

Qatar has a sizable Shia Muslim population who normally visit Iran for paying homage to holy shrines in the country.

They also use Iran to travel to neighboring Iraq during the Arba'een period to attend huge processions meant to commemorate 40 days after the martyrdom anniversary in Karbala, where Imam Hussein's shrine is located.

Iran's offering of visa to the Qataris comes more than two years after the small Persian Gulf country came under a blockade by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain over a diplomatic dispute.

In the meantime, Qatar has sought to further boost its ties with Iran as a country that could provide Qatar with a major economic lifeline during the blockade.

Recently, Iran and Qatar launched a new direct shipping route, connecting the southern Iranian port city of Bushehr to Qatar's Doha.

The shipping line is scheduled to operate once a week carrying both passengers and cargoes, Siavash Arjmandzadeh, the managing director of Bushehr's Ports and Maritime Department, announced on August 25.

Passengers can go on four- to five-day tours paying \$200 to \$500, he said, adding the tours take 12 hours to 20 hours depending on weather conditions and the speed of the ships.

U.S. not entitled to bar Zarif from UNGA, Foreign Ministry says



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has said the United States has no right to deny entry to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif for the upcoming session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Washington has no right, in legal terms, to ban the presidents or foreign ministers of other countries from taking part in the annual meetings of the UN General Assembly, Tasnim on Monday quoted Mousavi as saying.

The 74th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 74) will open on September 17.

"If all goes well, the trip by Mr. Zarif and his accompanying delegation (to New York) will take place, and he will be pursuing active diplomacy in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly and inside the United Nations," Mousavi added.

Last month, the U.S. blacklisted Zarif for acting on behalf of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei, who is also subject to U.S. sanctions.

Ever since the announcement, there has been a huge torrent of support for the chief Iranian diplomat both at home and abroad.

Major General Qassem Soleimani, commander of the IRGC Quds Force, has said the sanctions demonstrated the deep impact of the chief diplomat on public opinion in the United States.

President Donald Trump has withdrawn the United States from the 2015 nuclear agreement (JCPOA), reimposed the "harshest sanctions" on Iran and at the same time pushed for talks with Tehran.

Tehran says a U.S. return to the JCPOA and lifting of the illegal sanctions are necessary prerequisites for any dialogue with Washington.

Navy employs warships, choppers in Caspian Sea war game



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The Iranian Navy launched the second day of its massive war game in the territorial waters of the Caspian Sea, employing its missile-launching warships and helicopters as well as Navy commandos.

According to Tasnim dispatches, during the military drill in the Caspian Sea on Monday, the Navy marines and commandos managed to capture the mock enemy's vessels using all sorts of equipment and weapons, including high-speed boats and rocket-launching frigates.

The Navy commandos aboard two AB-212 helicopters and rocket launching warships also managed to counteract the mock enemy's offensive operations by adopting combat strategies, relying on intelligence monitoring, and employing radar jamming systems.

Commander of the Iranian Navy Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi said on Saturday that the four-day military drill codenamed "Sustainable Security and

Power" would be held in the near future.

"The war game aims to achieve and preserve collective security and it is natural that the preparedness of forces, equipment, and weapons should always be at a significant level in order to reach security," he said.

Iran's Armed Forces hold routine military exercises throughout the year.

Iranian officials have repeatedly underscored that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities, which are entirely meant for defense, and that Iran's defense capabilities will be never subject to negotiations.

Back in February 2018, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called for efforts to maintain and boost Iran's defense capabilities.

"Without a moment of hesitation, the country must move to acquire whatever is necessary for defense, even if the whole world is opposed to it," Ayatollah Khamenei said at the time.

Deputy FM: Iran waiting for results of talks with Europe to decide on next JCPOA step

TEHRAN (FNA) – Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs Gholamreza Ansari warned that Tehran is prepared to take the third step in modifying its undertakings under the nuclear deal in case talks between Tehran and the European states fail.

"As you know, a long phone talk was held between the Iranian and French presidents last night (Saturday night) again and President Rouhani stressed again that if we do not acquire the desired results, we will take the third step," Ansari said on Sunday.

He underscored Iran's decisiveness in its decisions, and said, "We hope that those sides who have remained committed to the nuclear deal, specially the Europeans, adopt the necessary actions in the remaining days in a way that Iran feels that its views on nuclear deal commitments are materialized."

Tehran has rowed back on its nuclear commitments twice under articles 26 and 36 of the 2015 deal.

Iran says its reciprocal measures will be reversible as soon as Europe finds practical ways to shield the Iranian economy from unilateral U.S. sanctions which were imposed last year when President Donald Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal.

Early in August, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, in a meeting at the Iranian Parliament, reassured that Tehran would undertake the third phase of curbing its commitments to the nuclear deal under the prevailing circumstances.

Touching upon Iran's expectations from the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Zarif said, "All member states of the Joint Commission of the JCPOA have unanimously reached the conclusion that the U.S. has been the cause of all tensions while Iran's demands were clear and transparent from the very beginning and Tehran did not expect anything beyond the JCPOA."

"We have announced that we will partially abide by the

JCPOA if it is not fully observed by the other members of the agreement. However, even these moves of us are also according to the JCPOA," the top Iranian diplomat reiterated.

Referring to the request of not putting into practice the third phase of scaling down of commitments made by the remaining members of the JCPOA, who are now called 4+1, Zarif underlined that it is now within the remit and jurisdiction of the Islamic Republic to whether operationalize the third step or not, "and assuredly this step will be taken in line with the former ones if the other members of the JCPOA fail to meet their commitments."

Washington withdrew from the internationally-endorsed nuclear pact on May 2018, reimposed the toughest-ever sanctions against the country and started a plan to zero down Tehran's oil sales.

Under the JCPOA, Tehran had undertaken to put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for the removal of nuclear-related sanctions.

Yet, Iran continued compliance with the deal after the U.S. withdrawal, stressing that the remaining signatories to the agreement, especially the Europeans had to work to offset the negative impacts of the pullout for Iran if they want Tehran to remain in compliance.

Iranian officials had warned that the European Union's failure in providing the needed ground for Tehran to enjoy the economic benefits of the nuclear deal would exhaust the country's patience.

Almost a year later, however, the EU failed to provide Tehran with its promised merits.

Then, the U.S. state department announced that it had not extended two waivers, one that allowed Iran to store excess heavy water produced in the uranium enrichment process in Oman, and one that allowed Iran to swap enriched uranium for raw yellowcake with Russia.

Until May, Iran was allowed to ship low-enriched



uranium produced at Natanz to Russia before it hit the 300-kg limit and the U.S. measure leaves no way for Tehran other than exceeding the ceiling for storing the enriched uranium in violation of the 2015 nuclear deal.

Also, the United States would no longer waive sanctions that allowed Iran to ship heavy water produced at its Arak facility beyond a 300-ton limit set in the 2015 nuclear deal to Oman for storage which again forces Tehran to store it inside country in violation of the nuclear deal.

In return, Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) announced in a statement on May 8 that the country had modified two of its undertakings under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in return for the U.S. abrogation of the deal and other signatories' inability to make up for the losses under the agreement, warning that modifications would continue if the world powers failed to take action in line with their promises.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	283062.7
IFX	3714.8

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,162 rials
GBP	51,055 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$59.02/b
WTI	\$55.11/b
OPEC Basket	\$60.24/b
Gold	\$1,526.90/oz
Silver	\$18.42/oz
Platinum	\$931.30/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Tehran, Damascus ink MOU on banking cooperation

→ Hemmati welcomed the development of banking cooperation between the two sides and called for an accelerated implementation of the MOU.

According to the official, the signed MOU covers a variety of areas including development of strategic and long-term economic cooperation between the two countries, the presence of the Iranian private sector in Syria's reconstruction, development of joint ventures in the field of transport, housing, services and so on.



Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnasser Hemmati (R) and his Syrian counterpart Hazem Younes Karfoul signed a memorandum of understanding for banking cooperation in Tehran on Monday.

Karfoul for his part underlined Syria's determination for expansion of economic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, adding that "As Iran stood by Syria in the battle against terrorism, it is now our duty to stay with Iran during the economic hardship created by the unilateral U.S. sanctions."

Industry ministry takes steps to reform auto sector

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Iranian industry, mining and trade minister said reforming the country's auto industry requires collaboration of all sectors and the ministry has taken steps in this regard, Shata reported.

"We have good plans for the auto industry, and we need the support of sectors to develop and reform this industry," Reza Rahmani said in a meeting of the parliament's committee on industry and mining on Sunday.

Underlining the fact that most of the foreign automobile manufacturers have left the country under U.S. sanctions pressures, the official noted that legal measures are underway regarding the uncompleted contracts in this industry.

Since the U.S. reimposed sanctions on Iran's economy, most of the foreign companies have left the country on the fear of facing penalties for collaborating with Iranian partners.

So the government, which owns the country's major carmakers, has been focusing on developing the domestic production to counter the impact of the U.S. sanctions on this industry. However, the automobile industry has been recently under serious criticism for the poor quality of the cars and the high prices.

In this regard, the ministry has been taking new steps to improve the quality of the Iran-made cars and to lower the prices. Supporting the domestic manufacturers of car parts has been one of the major policies that the ministry has put on the agenda.

In early August, Rahmani has said that the policy of domestic manufacturing of auto parts should be seriously followed up.

Later that month, director general of the industry ministry's automotive and transportation industries office announced that the ministry has allocated €844 million to support the country's auto parts manufacturers.

Seyed Reza Mofidi noted that according to the ministry's plans, domestic manufacturers are set to produce 1.3 million automobiles by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020) of which 310,000 was manufactured up to August 10.

According to the industry ministry, given the number of vehicles that are anticipated to be manufactured in the country during the current Iranian calendar year, the part manufacturers will need 150 trillion rials of working capital (about \$3.571 billion) for the purchase of raw materials and other required items.

Following the orders of the ministry, domestic car makers have also started a research movement in recent months titled "Domestic Manufacturing of Imported Parts".

The movement is aimed at creating the condition and opportunity for cooperation among domestic manufacturers, knowledge-based companies and startups.

Iran-Armenia economic ties not affected by U.S. sanctions

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN – While the U.S. renewed sanctions on Iran are aimed at isolating the Islamic Republic both politically and economically, Iran's relations, especially in the economic sectors, with its neighbors are seemed not to be affected by the sanctions.

The northwestern neighbor Armenia is one of the countries preserving and expanding its economic relations with Iran regardless of the sanction condition. It has been several times emphasized by the Armenian officials as during a meeting with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in Tehran in late February, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan voiced his country's willingness to boost cooperation with the Islamic Republic in all areas, including agriculture, transport and tourism.

President Rouhani, for his turn, said Iran is satisfied with Armenia's stance on the irrational and illegal sanctions imposed against Iran by the United States.

Also, during the visit of an Iranian press delegation to Yerevan at the invitation of Pashinyan on Saturday, the Armenian official told Donyaye Eqtesad daily that the U.S. sanctions and its policy of most pressure on Iran will have no effect on Iran-Armenia joint economic projects.

"The two countries are already fulfilling their commitments in their joints projects", he emphasized.

"Armenia will never join an anti-Iran movement", the prime minister further reiterated.

Bilateral trade hits record high

As previously announced by Iran's commercial attaché to Yerevan Mohsen Rahimi, the value of trade between Iran and Armenia has hit a record high of \$364 million in 2018.

The official put the worth of Iran's export to its neighbor at \$269 million and said that natural gas, petrochemicals, iron and steel, tiles and ceramics, fruit and nuts have been the major Iranian products exported to Armenia in the past year.



Trade in national currencies on agenda

In a bid to expand their economic and trade ties, the two countries are also investigating the possibility of trade with their national currencies.

"We have proposed to the Armenian president that the two sides establish a financial institution which would operate outside the two countries' banking systems," Hervik Yarijanian, the head of Iran-Armenia Joint Chamber of Commerce, said in mid-July.

Mentioning his recent meeting with the Armenian President Armen Sarkissian, the official noted that the president has positive attitude toward Iran and has called for increasing mutual trade between the two countries.

"Exchanging trade delegations, holding exhibitions and maximum utilization of the capacities of the two countries' private sectors are among the two sides' intended plans for boosting mutual trade," Yarijanian said.

Expansion of banking ties required

In a meeting in Yerevan last week, Iranian Ambassador to Armenia Kazem Sajjadi and Governor of Central Bank of Armenia Arthur Javadyan stressed the need for expansion of

banking ties between the two countries.

During the meeting, the officials pointed to holding banking seminars and symposiums as important and effective instruments for transferring the two sides' knowledge and experience in order for expansion of monetary and banking relations.

Reiterating his country's readiness for development of all-out relations with Iran, Javadyan stated "Development of banking relations between Armenia and the Islamic Republic of Iran is on Yerevan's agenda and I hope that the authorities of the two countries will show greater impetus to enhance the transfer of experiences from both sides."

Electricity, a major field for expanding co-op

In the way of developing their cooperation in different economic, trade and industrial sectors, Iran and Armenia are paying special attention to the electricity sector. The two neighbors signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in Tehran in early July to expand economic cooperation, especially in the field of electricity.

The MOU was signed by Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian and Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan at the end

of the 16th Iran-Armenia Joint Economic Committee meeting. Based on the MOU, the two sides agreed to complete the construction of Iran's third electricity transmission line to Armenia by 2020 in order to increase the country's electricity exports to Armenia to over 1000 megawatts (MW).

Construction of a 100-MW hydroelectric power plant in Armenia was also agreed in the meeting. The power plant will be funded by Armenia's private sector in collaboration with other interested countries and the produced electricity will be purchased by Iran at a guaranteed price.

The MOU also covers cooperation in a variety of areas including road and railway transportation, customs, standardization, establishing free trade zones as well as industry, mining and trade. Also on August 29, Iran's Ambassador to Armenia Kazem Sajjadi held talks with Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of the Republic of Armenia Suren Papikyan to discuss electricity swap between Tehran and Yerevan.

Border FTZs to facilitate bilateral trade

In the way of expanding bilateral trade, Iran and Armenia also take the advantage of their free trade zones (FTZs) which are located on the border with the other side.

During the 16th meeting of Iran-Armenia Joint Economic Committee, which was held at Tehran on July 2, Iranian Energy Minister, who is the Iranian chairman of the committee, emphasized the importance of border FTZs for expansion of trade between the two countries and announced that joint events are about to be held on investment and trade in the free zones of Aras (in Iran) and Meghri (in Armenia).

Also, at the time of inaugurating Meghri Free Zone in December 2017, Armenpress reported that given its geographical position, commercial and logistical capabilities, as well as Armenia's multi-sector preferential trade regimes, the free zone can become a bridge linking Iran, Eurasian Economic Union and European Union. It is also expected to strengthen economic ties with Iran.

Iranian banks' foreign assets up 13%

ECONOMY TEHRAN – The total value of Iranian banks' foreign assets by June 21 stood at 9.245 quadrillion rials (about \$220.11 billion), registering a 13-percent rise compared with the corresponding period of last year.

According to the latest data published by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), the figure stood at 8.188 quadrillion rials (about \$194.9 billion) for the last year's same time span, and it reached 9.171 quadrillion rials (about \$218.35 billion) at the end of the last Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019).

Since the foreign branches of state-run banks are not considered in calculating the foreign assets, private banks and non-bank credit institutions account for the biggest share of the country's banking system's



foreign assets.

As reported, Central Bank of Iran's foreign assets, however, witnessed a slight 1.5-percent decrease in the said period, falling to 4.527 quadrillion rials (nearly \$107.8 billion) from last year's 4.594 quadrillion rials (about \$109.4 billion).

Tehran City's real estate deals down 73% in a month on year

ECONOMY TEHRAN – The number of real estate deals in Tehran City fell 73.7 percent in the fifth Iranian calendar month of Mordad (July 23-August 22), compared to the same month in the past year, Tasnim news agency reported citing the data released by Ministry of Transport and Urban Development.

The number of deals during the fifth month of this year has been 2,931, falling from 11,154 in the same month of the previous year.

As previously announced by Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, the number of real estate deals in Tehran City fell 44.8 percent in spring, which corresponds to the first quarter of Iranian cal-



endar year, compared to the same quarter in the past year.

The ministry's report said that the number of deals during the first quarter of this year has been 21,537, and the housing price has risen 106 percent year on year in the capital city.

Iran's 5-month non-oil exports at \$17.8b

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Iran exported \$17.8 billion of non-oil commodities during the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-August 22), IRIB reported on Monday.

The country exported 60.737 million tons of non-oil commodities in the mentioned time span.

As reported, Iran's total foreign trade stood at \$35.5 billion in the mentioned five months.

The top five importers of Iranian goods in the mentioned period were China, Iraq, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Afghanistan, respectively, which imported a total of more than \$13.377 billion worth of commodities together.

The country imported 14.126 million tons of commodities worth \$17.739 billion in the said period.

China, UAE, Turkey, India, and Germany were top exporters to Iran with over \$12.280 billion worth of exports all together.

As previously announced by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the value of Iran's non-oil exports stood at \$44.3 billion in the previous Iranian year, while \$42.6 billion worth of commodities were shipped into the country.

Iran shares border with fifteen countries, namely the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia, Oman, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kuwait, Qatar, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia.



Based on the data published by Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO), the value of trade with the neighboring countries stood at over \$36.5 billion in the past Iranian calendar year, which is about 41 percent of the country's total non-oil

trade in the mentioned time span.

Iran plans to launch 15 mega export projects to identify more target markets, according to TPO former head.

Mohammadreza Modoudi said with the implementation of these projects, which mainly focus on the markets of neighboring countries, identifying professional trade and promoting export of non-oil commodities will be put on agenda, Mehr news agency reported.

The official further referred to the \$1.7 billion positive trade balance in the country's non-oil trade in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019), and said this positive balance was achieved through cooperation with the private sector.

Germany's economy is careening towards recession in Q3



Germany is again projected to grow by a scant 0.1% in the third quarter -- the same rate as in Q2 -- plunging Germany officially into an economic recession.

As per en.businesstimes.cn, a recession is generally defined as two back-to-back quarters of negative growth. Germany's last recession took place in the first quarter of 2008 when the Great Recession took down most of the world's economies. Germany exited this recession in the first quarter of 2009.

The recession culprit this time around: Trump's trade war that is severely hurting Germany's export-dependent

economy. More than 20 percent of Germany's economic growth stems from manufacturing and this sector has been the hardest hit by Trump's trade war against China.

Analysts point to the fact that because manufacturing supply chains are integrated worldwide, it is almost impossible for manufacturing to slow down in one country without also having a similar effect in another country.

In 2018, almost one-fourth of all cars sold in China were German. BMW and Daimler sold more than one-third of their total car sales in China. Volkswagen sold 40% of its cars in China.

The bad news for Germany's automotive industry is that new car sales in China have fallen for 13 straight months. This debilitating slump began in the second half of 2018 when the trade war between China and the U.S. -- triggered by President Donald Trump in June 2018 -- began to intensify.

Germany's vehicle sales fell

In 2018, Germany's vehicle sales in China fell by 3% year-on-year. Passenger car sales sank by more than 4% year-on-year -- the first decrease in over 20 years.

In addition to this already sickening news, German consumer spending is on the wane. Retail sales account for around half the German economy.

It took a heavier hit in July than anticipated by economists, falling to its biggest drop this year in the latest sign

Europe's largest economy is sliding towards recession. Retail continued to recover in June, making the July slump more marked. German retail sales for the first seven months of this year rose 2.8 percent in real terms.

Data from the Statistisches Bundesamt (Federal Statistical Office of Germany) shows seasonally adjusted sales in real terms dropped 2.2 percent in July compared to June. This was the largest slump since the 2.9 percent drop in December 2018, and larger than the 1 percent analysts had predicted. The figure was also 4.4 percent higher year-on-year.

Weak Q2 retail sales confirm household spending won't be there to save the economy from plunging into a recession. Then, there's the huge hit Germany's economy took from the economic mess that is Brexit.

Germany front-loaded its exports to the UK ahead of the first Brexit deadline on March 29. When this deadline passed, the British drew down their inventories and Germany's exports to the UK plummeted.

"This suggests negative GDP data for both 2019 H2 quarters," said a report by London-based financial firm TS Lombard. The firm estimates the third and fourth quarters will likely witness a decline in German economic.

Data released over the weekend by the federal government strongly suggest the German economy will continue to slow in Q3.

Escalating U.S.-China trade war, a blessing in disguise for Iran's oil industry?!

1 -> Following that announcement Chinese refiners halted all their imports and China's imports of U.S. crude oil hit nearly zero in July 2018.

A look at the 2018 situation can tell a lot about the probable reaction of Chinese refineries to the new, actual tariffs. So it won't be inconsequential to expect them to consider Iranian oil as a reliable and economically reasonable source for supplying their needs.

The latest data released by the Chinese customs indicates that the imports of U.S. oil in the first seven months of 2019 stood at 126,000 barrels per day, a 63 percent fall from the figure for the last year's January-July period.

The cuts clearly reflect the impact of the trade war on Chinese oil imports from the U.S. even before Beijing imposed the new tariffs.

An opportunity for Iran

A few days after Beijing announced its decision on imposing new tariffs on U.S. crude, the country's refineries started to look for ways to evade the consequences of the decision.



For instance, in late August, China Petroleum & Chemical Corp (Sinopec) asked the government to be exempted from the tariffs imposed on the U.S. oil.

According to the data from analytics companies Refinitiv and Kpler, Sinopec is expected to ship in eight million barrels of U.S. crude in September and October.

So, if Asia's biggest refiner doesn't manage to get a waiver on U.S. oil imports, it would definitely seek to replace the U.S. oil with crude from other sources, and Iran would be the most probable option.

Less expensive and more accessible Iranian oil makes it so attractive that it would be hard not to consider it at the time that the increase in the U.S. oil prices and the distance from the United States is making the American crude less and less attractive for the Asian country's market.

Let's not forget that, despite all the Trump's attempts and threats, China hasn't stopped its oil imports from Iran even after the waivers on imports of oil from Iran expires in May.

Now considering the recent escalations of the trade war between U.S. and China, it is more than likely that China would not only supply the needs of its refineries by increasing oil purchases from Iran, but also challenge one of Trump's most important foreign policies.

How floating solar power may help Modi government realize its renewable energy dream

As land availability presents a challenge, water surfaces may play a role in the Union government getting close to its target of 175,000 MW of renewable energy (RE) capacity by 2022, with the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy planning to add 10 GW of such capacity across the country.

As stated by financialexpress.com, this is part of a global trend which has seen floating solar gain traction with policy-makers and developers — the global installed capacity is projected to reach 4,600 MW by 2022 from 1,100 MW in 2018.



The Uttar Pradesh cabinet recently cleared a 150-MW floating solar project on the Rihand dam, requiring an estimated investment of Rs 750 crore. According to sources, the Damodar Valley Corporation is planning to install 100-MW of floating solar plants at its dams in Maithon, Panchet and Tilaiya, located in Jharkhand and West Bengal. As per industry estimates, utilizing only 10-15% of India's water resources for floating solar plants could generate up to 300,000 MW of power. The Solar Energy Corporation of India has already called for tenders to build 150 MW of floating solar capacity on the Getalsud and Dhurwa dams in Jharkhand, besides inviting bids for a 250-MW floating plant in Tamil Nadu.

Significantly, while floating solar plants can be set up on any freshwater surface, building them on the reservoirs of hydroelectric dams helps utilize existing transmission infrastructure and lower construction costs. In this mode of renewable power, panels are mounted on floating platforms anchored either to the shore or the water bed. Though 70% of the earth's surface is covered by water bodies, the existing technology is not able to tap the enormous opportunities offered by the oceans. High turbulence presents one challenge, being detrimental to the stability of panels, though the industry is exploring ways to overcome the problem.

Also, since corrosion of solar structures can be harmful to the marine ecology, researchers are trying to make the technology more eco-sensitive. Higher upfront investment costs— \$0.92-2.9 per watt depending on the location and technology requirements—pose another challenge. "Due to the use of special components like floats/pontoons, mooring systems and submerged water cables, the costs of a floating solar plant are 20-25% more than for ground-mounted solar at present," says Sunil Rathi, director, Waaree Energies.

Says Kuldeep Kumar Jain, business unit head-EPC, Vikram Solar, "besides the set-up required for a conventional ground-mounted system, a floating system installation requires specialists for underwater anchoring piling and special machinery for underwater work". His company had implemented a 10 kilo-watt floating solar project in Kolkata in 2015. The "1-MW floating solar plant being executed by us for Hindustan Zinc is one of the first MW-scale private floating projects in India," he adds. According to Bridge to India, a renewable energy consultancy firm, "sufficient domestic manufacturing capacity and growing volumes are expected to help reduce the cost disadvantage for floating solar projects to 10-15% by 2020".

In what constitutes an advantage, floating solar projects produce 3-5% more power compared to land-based assets of a similar size, owing to the cooling effect of the water surface on panels. They can also help in water conservation by lowering the speed of evaporation from water surfaces. As Eicke Weber, professor, UC Berkeley, mentioned in his keynote address to the International Floating Solar Symposium in 2017, "more water evaporates from reservoirs than is consumed by humans".

Oil falls as U.S., China add more tariffs in trade war

Oil prices weakened on Monday after new tariffs imposed by the United States and China came into force, raising concerns about a further hit to global growth and demand for crude.

As per reuters.com, Brent crude slipped 22 cents, or 0.4%, to \$59.03 a barrel by 0620 GMT, while U.S. oil was down 2 cents at \$55.083 a barrel.

The United States began imposing 15% tariffs on a variety of Chinese goods on Sunday - including footwear, smart watches and flat-panel televisions - as China put new duties on U.S. crude, the latest escalation in a bruising trade war.

U.S. President Donald Trump said both sides would still meet for talks later this month. Trump, writing on Twitter, said his goal was to reduce U.S. reliance on China and he again urged American companies to find alternate suppliers outside China.

Beijing's levy of 5% on U.S. crude marks the first time the

fuel had been targeted since the world's two largest economies started their trade war more than a year ago.

"Despite President Trump dismissing concerns about a protracted trade war, we are of the view that the latest escalation would not result in a trade deal anytime soon," said Samuel Siew, investment analyst at Phillip Futures in Singapore.

Elsewhere, oil output from members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) rose in August for the first month this year as higher supply from Iraq and Nigeria outweighed restraint by top exporter Saudi Arabia and losses caused by U.S. sanctions on Iran, a Reuters survey found.

In the United States, energy companies cut drilling rigs for a ninth month in a row to the lowest level since January last year.



China eyes stake in Southeast Asia's newest oil frontier

By Tsvetana Paraskova

One of the world's youngest countries, East Timor in Southeast Asia, could turn to Chinese investment to help it develop a large oil and gas field estimated to hold \$50 billion worth of resources.

At present, the projects for development of the Greater Sunrise fields and related energy infrastructure would be too risky economically for the tiny Pacific nation sitting just 400 miles north of Australia's north coast, politicians in Timor-Leste, as East Timor is also known, told the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age.

That's why politicians from the ruling and opposition parties say that they would welcome Chinese investment — or any other additional investment for that matter — in the \$15-billion Tasi Mane project as part of the Greater Sunrise development.

East Timor's Minister for Legislative Reform and Parliamentary Affairs and acting Minister for Economic Affairs, Fidelis Magalhães, told the Sydney Morning Herald that any investor willing to partner with the state-owned oil and gas company Timor Gap is welcome, yet any decision regarding Chinese or other participation would be "based on a commercial decision."

Australia has been wary of growing Chinese influence across the Pacific and in Southeast Asia in particular. China, for its part, is claiming resources and territory in the South China Sea.

Last week, the United States accused China of interfering with oil and gas drilling operations off the coast of Vietnam in the disputed waters of the South China Sea.

Untapped oil and gas resources

According to the U.S., China's actions in the basin have blocked its neighbors' access to an estimated \$2.5 trillion in untapped oil and gas resources.

While Australia is concerned about growing Chi-



nese influence in its backyard, Canberra will have a stake in the fields in the Greater Sunrise area, which are estimated to contain 5.13 trillion cubic feet of gas and 225.9 million barrels of condensate, according to operator Woodside.

Early last year, Australia and East Timor reached an agreement in their long-running dispute over their maritime border and on a pathway to develop the gas fields in the Greater Sunrise territory they share.

Since East Timor gained independence in 2002, Australia and East Timor have been unable to establish permanent maritime borders to regulate how much each of the countries should receive in revenues from the Greater Sunrise basin within their borders—revenues estimated at billions of dollars.

Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison visited East Timor this week to strengthen the partnership between the two countries and to bring into force the 'Treaty Between Australia and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste Establishing their Maritime

Boundaries in the Timor Sea' on August 30, 2019. Australia is expected to control 30 percent of the Greater Sunrise area.

Majority of the fields

Yet, development of the Greater Sunrise oil and gas fields would need more partners after majors Shell and ConocoPhillips sold their stakes in the fields earlier this year, leaving the majority of the fields in the hands of East Timor's state-held energy company, Timor Gap.

ConocoPhillips sold its 30-percent interest in the Greater Sunrise Fields to the government of East Timor for \$350 million plus customary adjustments. Shell also sold its 26.56-percent stake to the government, saying that "We understand the importance of this resource to the Timor-Leste nation and respect the Government's determination to pursue an alternative path to development through an onshore facility."

Timor Gap, however, will need a lot of financial resources to start tapping the oil and gas resources in Greater Sunrise fields.

The government's main revenue generator is the oil and gas from the Bayu-Undan gas-condensate field in the Timor Sea, operated by ConocoPhillips.

Oil and gas extraction account for a massive 80 percent of East Timor's gross domestic product (GDP).

However, the Bayu-Undan field is entering the final phase of its life cycle and is expected to stop producing oil and gas sometime between 2021 and 2023, according to ConocoPhillips.

This suggests that East Timor's government revenues will continue to diminish and the country will need partners — be it China or others — in its new ambitious projects to develop the Greater Sunrise fields.

(Source: oilprice.com)

New wind farm boosts renewable energy for South Burnett



The South Burnett Regional Council area in Queensland is set to receive a renewables boost, with the Queensland government announcing it has approved a new \$128 million wind farm for the area.

According to utilitymagazine.com.au, Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning, Cameron Dick, said the wind farm is expected to be operational by 2020.

The "Queensland government is committed to supporting investment in regional Queensland and renewable

energy projects," Mr. Dick said.

"During construction, 100 new jobs will be created and there will be a further five ongoing jobs once the wind farm is operational.

"It's a huge jobs boost for the area and will help us achieve our renewable energy target."

Mr. Dick said, once complete, the 64MW wind farm would be the second one in operation in the area, with Coopers Gap initially approved in 2017. "Wind farms don't just provide an economic boost for the state, the environmental

benefits are equally important," Mr. Dick said.

"As more people call Queensland home, we need to continue to support sustainable ways to provide power to existing and new houses and businesses.

"This project will deliver 16 new turbines and, coupled with the 123 turbines in nearby Coopers Gap, that's nearly 140 turbines delivering power to the region."

Minister for Energy, Dr. Anthony Lynham, said this project added to the state's numerous renewable projects, placing further downward pressure on electricity prices and taking the state closer to its renewables target of 50 percent by 2030.

"Queensland's renewable revolution is full steam ahead, and we continue to show the way for the rest of the nation," Dr. Lynham said.

"This project is one part of over \$1.6 billion worth of renewable energy investment underway or recently operating in the Darling Downs and South West regions, creating more than 1,000 jobs

in construction and 860MW of renewable generation capacity."

This includes Coopers Gap Wind Farm, 250km north-west of Brisbane between Dalby and Kingaroy, which has a total capacity of 453MW. It is the largest wind farm by capacity in Australia with enough energy to power 264,000 homes.

A spokesperson for Australia Energy Windfarm said construction would commence as early as March 2020.

"Once constructed, the wind farm is expected to generate enough energy to power the equivalent of around 35,000 homes and will reduce carbon dioxide output by an estimated 150,000 tons each year," the spokesperson said.

"Wind farm technology has significantly advanced during recent years, and the 16 turbines on site will each produce between 4-5.5MW of energy. "Before operations commence, we will be upgrading local roads leading to the site and delivering the associated infrastructure such as a substation."

Second Announcement



Iranian Offshore Oil Company (P.J.S)
INVITATION TO PUBLIC TENDER (Pre-Qualification)
CHARTERING OF ONE FIREFIGHTING TUG BOAT
TENDER No. 97/072/OT/TI
1398-3387

Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) intends to open Pre-Qualification for above tender with the following conditions:

Scope of work:
Chartering Of One Firefighting Tug Boat

Location:
IOOC Oil Fields in Persian Gulf

Performance Period:
2 Years

Other item shall be considered:

- 1: Ability of submission Bid Bond as in the amount of **Iranian Rial 10,635,774,720 for Iranian bidders and EURO 85,992.00 for foreign bidders.**
- 2: Ability of submission 10% of total Contract Price value as performance guarantee in case of winning according to Company's procedure.
- 3: Proposals should be submitted with no condition, incomplete, ambiguous or adverse of Package specification in deadline.
- 4: Company shall reserve the right to accept or reject any or all of proposals or part(s) thereof according to Tender Law.
- 5: The validity of the submitted financial proposals shall be 3 months from the Financial Bids opening Date and extendable for one further period.
- 6: for invitation to above tender, it is necessary to achieve the determinate minimum score in the Pre-qualification.

Bidders who have ability and are willing to participate in the Pre-qualification are requested to submit a written request to Contract Department, within One Week from Second Announcement by representative and collect the Pre-Qualification Forms.

Closing Date for submission of the Pre-Qualification documents shall be up to 14 days after the deadline of collecting Pre-Qualification documents. Place and time of submission and opening of proposals will be stated in Tender Documents.

Address for willing to participate and submission Pre-qualification Documents: 5th Floor, #12, Touraj St., Khakzad st., Vali-e-Asr Ave., after Balal Mosque, before Modarres Crossroad, Tehran, Iran. Tel: +9821-23942510

Note: Additional information is available at IOOC website address: www.iooc.co.ir on the day of Second Announcement.

Iranian Offshore Oil Company Public Relations

Western glorification of violence in Hong Kong

TEHRAN (FNA) – On Saturday, a group of Hong Kong protesters waved American flags, sang the US national anthem and urged President Donald Trump to “liberate” the city from China.

More than a dozen men wearing masks to hide their identities carried the flags as tens of thousands of demonstrators defied a police order to rally in downtown Hong Kong. China has accused the US of stoking the protests that began in June against a bill allowing extraditions to the mainland.

Trump in recent weeks has tied the protests to his trade negotiations with China, telling reporters that the talks were “keeping down the temperature” in Hong Kong. Speculation has risen that Hong Kong’s government may invoke emergency powers or seek help from Chinese troops to stem the unrest.

As is, the city is still up in flames. In Hong Kong, violent activists hurl petrol bombs in the direction of police officers, as well as targeting high-profile properties. High-profile activists, as well as the Western media, appear to glorify the events rather than expressing concern for the widespread damage and threat to public safety.



The BBC praised the protesters as “strategic, organized and increasingly willing to resort to violence” – painting their activities purely in the light of self-defense from the police. The West believes that it truly has what is best for Hong Kong, and is willing to proclaim that loudly and clearly. However, what it is encouraging and supporting today has become nothing short of monstrous.

Far from the self-proclaimed “Asia’s World City” – activists and enablers have now created a morbidly dystopian war zone where unprecedented levels of violence, destruction and chaos have become the norm of interaction. If continued, these “scorched earth” strategies will surely mark the end of the city as a global financial and capital hub – destroying its reputation, credibility and iconic image. The behavior of many protesters in Hong Kong is enabled by the blanket support of the Western media. It is very much an established convention that no matter what the protesters do, no matter how destructive or contemptible it may be, they will receive blanket and uncritical support from governments and journalists who will frame it as justified response against the state and police, fighting for a noble cause.

Last night was perhaps one of the strongest examples of that. The images of carnage are hailed and praised, even though few would tolerate it so frequently in their own neighbourhood. Anywhere else in the world, arson, which can be defined as the deliberate initiation of fire with the intent of causing harm or damaging property, is a serious crime punishable by imprisonment. Yet in Hong Kong, it is something to be treated as a normal and noble means of resistance in the view of the Western media.

If the police fight back to secure public order, safety and stop the perpetrators, they are depicted as the ones in the wrong. If they turn hoses at activists causing fires, it is apparently “police brutality.” Up is down, white is black and left is right.

However, what will the “prize” be to Hong Kong in the end? These activists will not get what they want, but they will literally and metaphorically burn their city to the ground. Scenes like this do not reflect Hong Kong as the iconic “Asia’s world city” famed for its prestige business, financial opportunities and iconic cultural traits.

They increasingly show it to be a dystopian, dysfunctional and destitute place marked with destruction and desolation. Investors will stay away and tourists will think twice. The stain to its credibility will run deep, and things may never be quite the same again. It’s what the West wants, after all.

African continent is no place for Japan-China rivalry

By Hu Weijia

China has no intention of making Africa a forward position for a jostle with Japan, but any Japanese provocation against China is a dangerous game.

A three-day conference attended by top leaders of more than 40 African countries concluded recently in Yokohama, Japan, where Prime Minister Shinzo Abe warned Africa against accumulating too much debt. What was the target of Abe’s words? Many believe he was trying to provoke disputes between Africa and China, as the latter’s lending has been described by some in the West as “debt-trap diplomacy.”

While Abe warned Africa about debt, he encouraged Japanese investors to lend more to projects in Africa. According to the Japan Times, Abe on Wednesday pledged to aggressively promote private-sector investment in Africa, although he failed to set a new numerical target on funds to be funneled to the continent.

China is a key factor in Japan’s Africa policy. This may explain why there is an inherent contradiction in Abe’s words. He warned about debt because he wants to reduce China’s business presence in Africa, but he is also trying to increase Japan’s influence by lending more to the continent. Japan’s policy on Africa may make the continent a new strategic tool of geopolitical competition with China.

Abe said that he hopes to cooperate with African countries to safeguard the Indo-Pacific, which connects Africa and Japan, according to the Japan Times. It seems Japan is not only a supporter of the US-led Indo-Pacific strategy, but it also wants to play an important role in the strategy, or even replace US leadership and take the helm, pushing it forward in line with Japan’s own national interests. China is always glad to see Africa building diversified cooperation partnerships with different countries including Japan. China hopes Africa’s economic cooperation with China and Japan can be complementary. However, Japan’s policy makes that almost impossible. Japan’s strategy has a tendency to contain China.

China is unlikely to turn a blind eye to Japan’s implicit hostility. We advise Japan to rethink its strategy on Africa and make sure that its own presence in Africa, along with other countries’, can coexist in harmony instead of clashing. If Japan deliberately adopts a strategy to counter China’s influence, this will work against the interests of Africa and harm regional cooperation.

U.S. prefer to maintain ISIS against Syria: Rick Sterling

By Damir Nazarov

WEST SIBERIA/ TYUMEN – Rick Sterling is a journalist and member of the Syria solidarity movement. Below is the full text of the interview:

Q: What do you think is connected with the sudden activity of businessmen from the UAE in Damascus?

A: It was good to see the United Arab Emirates re-open its Syria embassy last December.

Q: Now it is good to see them at the Damascus International Fair which is taking place now. We will see if they make significant investments or not.

A: Just the other day, the US issued a warning.

Q: The US is threatening repercussions against any country or company which does business in Syria.

A: We will see if the UAE business community stands up to this bullying or not.

Q: We hope that the UAE will stand up to the USA and invest in redevelopment and reconstruction in Syria.

A: The US imposed sanctions on a Lebanese Bank Jammal Trust Bank, formerly Washington has sanctioned individuals associated with the official Damascus and businessman Samir Faza.

Q: For what purpose is the US pursuing a policy of sanctions against Syria?

A: Economic sanctions have been used by Washington to punish many countries. In Chile under Salvador Allende the US set out to “make the economy scream” in preparation for the 1973 coup.

Q: In Nicaragua the Sandinistas were punished in the 1980’s and again now. Iraq in the 1990s was under horrendous sanctions as the US prepared to invade.

A: Today we have Iran, North Korea, Russia, Venezuela and many countries under



some form of US sanctions.

Q: Regarding Syria, the US wants to prolong the conflict and prevent the Syrian people from recovering. Thus they maintain the sanctions and try to bully other countries into compliance.

A: They don’t care if it hurts ordinary civilians.

Q: The purpose is to punish countries that disobey the US dictates and make an example as a warning to others.

A: In April 2014, as part of an international delegation, you visited several cities in Syria.

Q: Could you tell us briefly whether the protesters had “political leadership”? And what were the local, so-called “moderate opposition”?

A: Yes, in April 2014 we met with lead-

ers of seven different opposition groups in Damascus.

Q: This is the real moderate opposition as opposed to the armed militants.

A: These individuals, both men and women, were very impressive.

Q: They wanted changes in Syrian policy in various ways. Some of them said that they supported President Assad in the current crisis; some did not.

A: But all of them denounced the armed opposition and said it was foreign funded.

Q: They called for dialogue and stopping the foreign funding of armed groups. The groups called “moderate rebels” in the West do not exist.

A: It is a pretense to allow the West to continue supporting fanatics and mercenaries who are the armed opposition.

Q: Is it true that public figures living in the West and criticizing the activities of the “White helmets” often face threats?

A: Those who criticize the western narrative on Syria, including the White Helmets, used to be harshly criticized and sometimes threatened. Supposedly the opposition wanted “freedom and democracy” in Syria but opposition supporters would try to shut down anyone who questioned their narrative.

Q: Sometimes they issued threats of physical harm.

A: Even though the media broadcast their narrative 95% of the time, they tried to shut down and threatened people who presented the facts.

Q: Now that the Syrian government has prevailed, and the facts about the White Helmets have been more widely seen, opposition supporters are on the defensive and not so outspoken and aggressive.

Q: Are there reasonable politicians in the US Congress who support the Syrian Government in the fight against international terrorism?

A: On the national level Tulsi Gabbard has tried to get Congress to pass the “Stop Arming Terrorists in Syria” resolution.

Q: She understands the US has been colluding with terrorists like Al Qaeda.

A: She is trying to make the public aware of this and open it up to debate. Most Americans agree with her but the political establishment does not. They are trying to derail her candidacy to be the Democratic Party nominee and to stop the discussion that she wants to initiate.

Q: Bernie Sanders is another national politician who would probably stop US collusion with terrorism in Syria.

A: As for the rest of candidates, we don’t know but they seem compliant to the foreign policy establishment which is unduly influenced by Israeli interests.

Q: Israel and the US prefer to maintain Al Qaeda and ISIS as a tool and threat to the Syrian government.

No chance for Washington to attack Iran: Federico Pieraccini

By Damir Nazarov

WEST SIBERIA/ TYUMEN – “Federico Pieraccini” is a freelance writer specialized in International Affairs, Conflicts, Politics and Strategies.

Q: Career. As of 2019 Pieraccini was writing exclusively for the Strategic Culture Foundation and L’Antidiplomatico. His works have been translated into dozens of languages and republished.

A: Below is the full text of the interview:

Q: The USA has an advantage in all major types of weapons of mass destruction. Why did Washington initiate a new arms race with regard to Space?

A: I do not agree that the United States has a military advantage in all major weapon systems. In the nuclear field, Moscow boasts first-rate systems of equal North American capacity if not higher in some areas, with the new RS-28 ICBM in development. Not to mention areas such as Hypersonic missiles, with Moscow and Beijing in clear advantage, even according to assessments made public by the United States congress. In the field of missile defense, Moscow boasts an undisputed primacy with the A-135, A-235 systems and the various S-300, S-400 and the future S-500 system. This goes without mentioning other weapon systems presented by Putin on March 1, 2018, in the famous conference on Russia’s military response to the US’s violation of the ABM and INF treaties.

Q: The United States with President Trump has decided to create a sixth force, called Space Corp. Trump’s intention is to invest tens of billions of taxpayers money to finance the creation of some kind of space-based weapons systems. It’s the prosecution of Ronald Reagan’s weaponizing of space. It remains to be seen when these systems will be operational, how much they will cost and how effective they will be. The Latest US military productions in terms of cost and efficiency leave much to be desired with the super ship Gerald Ford and its known propulsion problems, the alleged Zumwalt stealth ship and it’s engine problems. Take for example the US Anti-Ballistic Missiles Systems (ABM) failed tests or the repeated missiles launched by the Houthis in Yemen that successfully violated Saudi Airspace, defended by US Patriot systems. All this, without mentioning the already known problems of the F-35.

A: As I have written in various articles, the United States suffers from an enormous military spending that floods the few companies (totally private) that develop weapons, with tons of money. This creates the conditions for little competition between companies and leaves open huge margins for corruption and failed projects. The creation of a space force should be seen more in the perspective of Trump, which seeks to ingratiate itself as much as possible with the North American military industrial complex (MIC), covering them with gold, possibly avoiding at the same time satisfying their wishes for a new war for new profits.

Q: The MIC always pushes a US president to war, along with

the various power lobbies, Trump tries to avoid this event, still creating profits for the MIC with the creation of a new force, in this case a Space Force.

Q: In the case 3rd World War as a whole are clear main key players. Liberal Western World led by the US and China-Russia alliance. But what about India, Pakistan and North Korea? They also have Weapon of mass destruction and regional problem.

A: In the case of a third world war, therefore a clash between military superpowers, the chances of an exchange of Nuclear weapons is very high. In case of an atomic exchange between superpowers, the world in which we live in would be completely different, as many scientists have pointed out.

Q: The consequent climatic changes and the radiations, ignoring the destruction caused from the nukes, would provoke a complete change of the global scenario. For these reasons the hypothesis of a third world war between superpowers is to be considered improbable, even in an uncertain context such as the multipolar one we live in.

A: Although historically multipolarity results in instability in a geopolitical framework, with the current technology, transformed into nuclear deterrence called ‘MAD’, the nuclear factor stabilizes international relations, avoiding the possibility of a clash between powers or superpower.

Q: In the specific case of a war between Pakistan and India it is unlikely for these reasons, just as a US intervention in North Korea proved impossible due to the nuclear (and conventional) deterrence posed by Pyongyang.

Q: Western propaganda regular say about “Russian lobby in Europe or China threat”. But no proof. How you think Europe really have parties or organizations who have “anti EU and anti US” agenda?

A: European countries in the EU have no military sovereignty, given that most of them are in NATO. European countries lack economic and financial sovereignty in a system like the Euro where the central bank is one for all countries and lives in the shadow of the decisions taken by the FED in New York.

Q: The treaties signed over the last 20 years by European countries have deprived national parliamentary decisions that no longer have the economic, financial or military levers to make autonomous decisions in their own interest. In this sense I do not see socially relevant parties or groupings in EU countries that can understand the historical turning point in which we are, with the attention that must be turned to the east towards Russia, India, China, Iran and other markets.

A: Europe is the victim of its own foreign policy decided in Washington, in the interests of the Pentagon and the FED, and as long as it remains subordinate to the United States it will not be able to take decisions in its own interest.

Q: How you think, is there a risk aggression vs. Iran from trio US-Israel-Saudi Arabia?



A: I see no chance for Washington to attack Iran, essentially for two basic reasons. If Trump unleashes a war, he loses the 2020 elections. This hypothesis seems to be shared by the vast majority of US policy experts and from what we can pick up, the administration and Trump are aware of this possibility.

Q: The other main reason that prevents Washington’s aggression against Iran has to do with two aspects: the first is the cost of this aggression in terms of human lives for the United States, the second is the economic cost to be borne. Iran is capable of severely damaging both Israel and Saudi Arabia, as well as closing the Strait of Hormuz, or in any case raising the costs of insurance of oil ships to the point of boosting the price of oil to levels that would cause an economic crisis of vast proportions, coupled with the first signs of a global recession.

A: Trump is aware that in the event of an economic disaster caused by a war with Iran, all the blame would fall on him, both by his voters for the electoral betrayal of not starting new wars, both by his detractors that would hold him responsible for the financial disaster.

Q: A global financial crisis, fueled by a devastating war, would lead Washington isolated. The Saudis, devastated by the conflict with Iran and betrayed by Washington that could not protect Riyadh from Tehran’s retaliation, could even decide to dump the dollar. The Europeans and the rest of the world would agree in a nutshell, moving to a basket of alternative currencies to the petrodollar for the sale of oil. This would lead to the collapse of the United States in a short period of time. The petrodollar system is a red line that the Pentagon and the Fed cannot afford. It is the source of their status as a superpower (the USD being world currency reserve) and not even a war on Iran with strong Saudi and Israeli interests pressing on Trump will lead to such an obvious suicide of U.S. hegemony.

HK situation shows sign of change, but remains complex

GLOBALTIMES – This past weekend, Hong Kong remained chaotic, with many violent demonstrations taking place. But the number of people involved in the demonstrations has come down significantly, and the techniques used by radical protesters to break the order and foment chaos with the help of flash mobs have become more obvious. The situation in Hong Kong is showing signs of change, but remains highly complex.

Q: The Global Times reporting team in Hong Kong has the following impression of the situation.

A: First, Hong Kong police are more resolute and the morale appears to be high. In addition to stepping up arrests in recent days for inciting, organizing and participating in illegal protests, they have also been more decisive in dealing with the situation. Up

close, their momentum can overwhelm the arrogance of the mob. Thugs are still afraid of the police, wherever the cops start clearing, the mobs disperse.

Q: Second, the composition of the people involved in the demonstration is complex. In the absence of mass rallies, the average protesting crowd is small, at least for this weekend.

A: Third, the demonstrators are mostly young. They tend to act in unison and are clearly organized. There was another illegal rally at the airport on Sunday. On our way to the airport, we saw a bus next to us almost entirely filled with young people. They dressed in black as they approached the protest site. We filmed them and they immediately turned away their faces. It seems they’re wary and afraid of showing their face.

Q: Fourth, there were a lot of arson incidents in Hong Kong this weekend. Some of these arson fires were provocative, and didn’t cause serious damage. Rioters set things ablaze to brush up their presence and boost their morale and put pressure on the HKSAR government and the public.

A: Fifth, the media professionals whom we met with in Hong Kong generally agreed that violence is wrong. But their logic is that the government’s disapproval of the five major demands of the demonstrators is the cause of the violence.

Q: Sixth, Western public opinion still has a huge impact on Hong Kong society. Media people who sympathize with the opposition and demonstrators value their shared values with Western media organizations and politicians, but generally fail to understand the

differences between the interests of Hong Kong society and those of the US and Britain.

Q: Seventh, Hong Kong is not out of kilter. Chaos occurs at specific times and places, although the spillovers are also significant. The HKSAR government and the police force still have more legal resources and means at their disposal, but that does not mean restoring order will be easy.

A: Eighth, more than two months of turmoil in Hong Kong has had a serious impact on the economy, especially on the tourism industry in general, making life difficult for many people. There is no doubt that the negative impact of violent demonstrations is increasing. The most important thing is to help the general public of Hong Kong realize that it is the result of the unrest itself, rather than having people misinterpret those shocks.

Trump is coming to an end!

1 → Biden, meanwhile, specializes in foreign policy, and his vision is more than approved by American citizens. Meanwhile, Biden's only concern is the trump control in the economy.

Here's a look at some of the latest news and analysis on Trump and America's latest political situation: Trump's worst 2020 poll yet

As Washington Post reported, Trump hasn't seen many good polls these days, but he might have just seen his worst of the 2020 election cycle.

A new Quinnipiac University poll has plenty of bad news for Trump — from his 2020 matchups with Democrats, to his own personal image, to his biggest asset in the 2020 race: the economy.

The poll shows him trailing all five Democrats tested by between nine and 16 points. He trails Joe Biden 54 to 38, Bernie Sanders 53 to 39, Elizabeth Warren 52 to 40, Kamala D. Harris 51 to 40 and Pete Buttigieg 49 to 40. These represent his biggest deficits to date against all five candidates, according to RealClearPolitics's compilation of polls.

The poll also shows his approval/disapproval declining to 38/56, with just 27 percent approving of him strongly and 50 percent disapproving strongly. That's the worst those splits have been in Quinnipiac polling since February 2018.

He earns the approval of just 32 percent of independents and the disapproval of 60 percent. In every matchup with a Democrat, he trails among independents by at least 18 points. This is a demographic that he won in 2016 by four points.

The bad news extends, perhaps most significantly, to the economy. While six in 10 registered voters still regard the economy as "excellent" (18 percent) or "good" (43 percent), for the first time since June 2016 more Americans say the economy is getting "worse" (37 percent) than say it's getting "better" (31 percent). As recently as one year ago, more than twice as many people thought the economy was getting better as thought it was getting worse. The poll also shows, for the first time, slightly more Americans say Trump's policies are "hurting" the economy (41 percent) than say they are "helping" (37 percent).

The economic findings may be the most ominous of the entire poll for Trump. While we have yet to see a significant downturn in the American economy, there are increasing signs that it's a possibility, and analysts are tying those growing odds to Trump's trade war with China. The economy is by far Trump's best issue: His approval is 38 percent or less on every other issue tested, including immigration and trade, but 46 percent on the economy. If it does decline, he'll lose his most compelling case for reelection on an issue that is generally the most important to voters.

This is but one poll, and we'll have to see if other polls suggest a similar decline for Trump. A Suffolk University/USA Today poll also released Sunday showed Trump's approval remaining at 44 percent, and Trump has yet to trend downward in RealClearPolitics's polling average.

But a new EPIC-MRA poll in Michigan on Wednesday also showed Trump trailing every Democrat in that crucial state, which Trump narrowly won in 2016, by between three and 10 points. And pretty much every high-quality national poll, including a Fox News poll earlier this month, has shown Trump trailing his top would-be 2020 opponents, including by large margins with the better-known ones.

There's plenty of time, and polls aren't predictive, but for now it appears he's starting from behind.

Trump trails Democrats by a historically large margin. As CNN reported, The Quinnipiac poll was the second probability poll that meets CNN standards and was conducted in August which found Trump down by at least 5 points against all his most likely challengers. In both the Fox News poll out earlier this month and Quinnipiac's latest, he trailed his most likely challenger, Biden, by double-digits. In fact, in an average of all the August polls (those that meet CNN standards and not), Biden was up by a 49% to 39% margin.

We're still over a year away from the 2020 general election, so don't take these polls to the bank.

Still, it's worth pointing out the historically bad position Trump is in. No incumbent president has ever polled this poorly against his likely challengers at this point in the campaign.

I went all the way back to World War II era in the Roper Center archive to see how presidents were polling at this point against their eventual challengers. I selected the worst poll for the incumbent if there was more than one poll taken in order to give Trump the most generous comparison. In years in which no polls were taken in August the year before the election (i.e. when the last poll for 2020 was conducted), I chose the poll taken closest to this point.

What's clear is the vast majority of incumbents were ahead at this point in the campaign: nine of the 11 were ahead. And for the average incumbent, they led their eventual challenger by 12 points at this point.

Again, Trump trails Biden by 10 points in the average August poll. Trump has not been ahead of Biden in a single national poll taken this entire cycle.

Only two of 11 incumbents in past years, Jimmy Carter in 1979 and Barack Obama in 2011, were behind at this point. They were down by 4 points and 1 point respectively to their eventual challengers (Ronald Reagan and Mitt Romney). Carter went on to lose reelection. Obama went on to win with a small reelection margin -- and there were many polls at this point that had him ahead. (Remember, I'm looking at the worst poll for past incumbents.)

Put another way, Trump's worst poll against any of the top five Democrats at this point is 5 points worse than the worst poll for any incumbent since World War II against his eventual challenger. It's 12 points worse against his most likely challenger, Biden.

As I've already mentioned, we don't know if these polls will hold. What is notable, though, is that Trump is not punching above his approval rating right now. Trump's approval rating has been consistently below his disapproval rating, just like he has been consistently behind Biden. That lines up with what



occurred in the 2018 midterms: Republican House candidates got the same share of the votes as Trump's approval rating, 45%.

Trump has time to turn his reelection ship in the right direction. But in the 10 months since the Republicans lost the House in 2018, he's in no better shape. You could even argue he's in a worse position.

Two polling methods, Two views of Trump's 2020 re-election chances

As New York Times reported, There are two major theories about President Trump's standing heading into his re-election campaign. Over the last few months, they have found backing from two very different kinds of polls.

One theory holds that Mr. Trump is fundamentally like any other president. This would be good news for his chances in 2020: Many presidents have gone on to win after having approval ratings like Mr. Trump's today, and many presidents have won after a midterm drubbing. The state of the economy could be pivotal; if it stayed strong, he would have a real chance to win. His approval rating could rise, like that of prior presidents, once voters began to assess his presidency in comparison with the alternative. His relative advantage in the Electoral College could put him over the top.

Another theory holds that President Trump and this polarized era are unique. In this view, Mr. Trump is deeply unpopular, and opinions of his presidency are entrenched. The economy cannot save him from defeat. After all, his approval ratings are poor despite low unemployment; nothing short of fundamental changes in his conduct could improve them. In this view, the 2018 midterm election, when Democrats won the national House vote by almost nine percentage points, would be a harbinger of the general.

Of course, the truth could be somewhere in between (and probably is). But these two theories have different consequences for how to think about the campaign in 2020.

In the more traditional view, Mr. Trump would have a solid chance following the same playbook as George W. Bush and Barack Obama, at least if the economy stayed strong enough. He would attack his opponent and use wedge issues (like immigration) to both mobilize his base and lure back some voters who are dissatisfied with his performance. Democrats, meanwhile, would want someone who could keep voters focused on why they're dissatisfied with the incumbent's conduct, defuse wedge issues, and appeal to the sort of Obama-Trump voters who have soured on the president.

But if Mr. Trump and this era are unique, then 2020 might hinge on turnout: In a polarized environment with few persuadable voters left, little else would matter. Democrats might not need to worry about whom they nominate, as long as they can energize irregular voters. In the extreme, you could argue that the president has basically already lost re-election: Voters have made up their minds, and too many dislike him for him to win.

These theories are impossible to test before the election. But the main evidence for the polarization theory comes from the polls. They have always shown the president's approval ratings well under water, with around half of voters saying they strongly disapprove of his performance. If that ever stopped being true, it would essentially disprove the theory.

What Draws Hundreds to This Lake Bed? Spell-binding Crystals

'I Looked Around and Saw a Man Holding His Phone Up Surreptitiously'

Leslie Jones Is Leaving 'S.N.L.' Here Are Her 10 Funniest Moments.

Since the end of the government shutdown, the president's approval rating has been stable in online polls, but far more variable in telephone surveys. Estimate is calculated using polls taken both before and after the date. That's why movement in the polls has been particularly interesting lately. Over the last few months, online polls and live-interview polls have split in a way that would either support or undermine each of these theories, depending on which set of polls you believe.

The online polls support the polarization story: They show that the president's approval rating has been astonishingly steady throughout his presidency, including over the last month.

But the telephone polls have been more variable, particularly over the last few months. In June and July, live-interview polls seemed to show the president's approval rating matching the highest level of his term. If that's accurate, it undermines the polarization theory and suggests the president still has the ability to broaden his appeal.

The president's peak came in early July, just after

the first Democratic debate, which could mean that the Democrats helped his cause, perhaps as a result of voters assessing his performance through the lens of the alternative. Democrats might have been particularly helpful to Mr. Trump if they repelled some persuadable voters by focusing on busing, ending private health insurance, extending health insurance to undocumented immigrants, or decriminalizing unauthorized entry into the United States.

Since then, the president's ratings have dropped by several points, and there is no shortage of potential explanations: his verbal attacks on four congresswomen; mass shootings in El Paso and Dayton; growing concern about the economy and the trade war. A decline in the president's ratings wouldn't be good for his chances, of course, but it nonetheless suggests that public opinion is at least somewhat responsive to events, the economy and his conduct. If his ratings can go down, they can also go up.

It's hard to know which set of polls is right. Live-interview polls have long been considered the gold standard in survey research. But they're increasingly rare, which makes it harder to be sure of where they stand at any given time. They also aren't typically weighted by a measure of partisanship, like party registration, so they're more susceptible to shift with changes in which groups are likeliest to respond to polls.

U.S. shoots Americans in the foot

GLOBALTIMES — The US imposed fresh tariffs of 15 percent on \$125 billion of Chinese imports starting mid-night Sunday. China applied new tariffs ranging from 5 to 10 percent on the first batch of \$75 billion US goods on the same day as a countermeasure. As the US is bent on provocation, the US-launched trade war against China has once again escalated.

However, the new wave of tariffs is a turning point in the trade war.

First, a vast majority of ordinary US families will directly face the impact of tariffs on imported Chinese goods. The Chinese products range from smart watches, shoes, diapers, sporting goods to meat and dairy products, all closely bound up in daily American life.

The Washington DC-based Peterson Institute for International Economics estimated in a report on August 14 that the US September 1 duties will hit 77 percent of the country's clothing imports from China and 45 percent of footwear. "For the first time, [US President Donald] Trump's trade war is likely to directly raise prices for a lot of household budget items," the report said.

Second, Washington is almost at the end of its wits. It is clear about the consequences of rising tariffs on daily consumer goods and had been trying to avoid targeting these products. However, the US underestimated China's resilience in the trade war. Therefore, Washington would rather damage itself now in an attempt to make China surrender.

Third, growing voices against the trade war have been emerging in the US. There is unprecedented opposition in US public opinion to Washington's sudden move of going back on its own word by imposing more tariffs on Chinese products. Even some cabinet members who are tough on China do not support the fresh tariffs. Not to mention the US industries.


It is worthy of attention that mainstream Western media outlets have been highlighting the latest tariffs' damage to Americans, implicitly or explicitly pointing out that Washington's paranoid trade war is becoming increasingly unpopular. The Trump administration acts as if it doesn't care about these voices, but it actually does, especially when the 2020 election campaign is underway. Washington dares not go against mainstream public opinion in the US.

Fourth, the US economy cannot sustain its superficial prosperity and is facing a bigger risk of decline. US GDP growth was 2.1 percent in the second quarter of 2019, 1 percentage point lower than the first quarter. The trade war's impact on US imports and exports becomes more and more apparent.

This is the result of Washington's own action and of Beijing's resolute resistance under the former's maximum pressure.

The Trump administration has shot Americans in the foot. When more and more Americans feel the pain, maybe it will be time for Washington to recover rationality.

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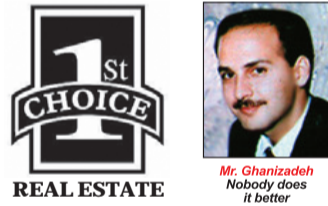
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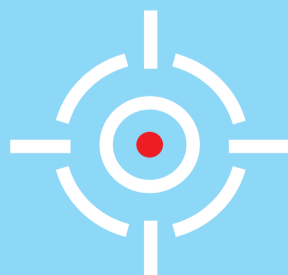
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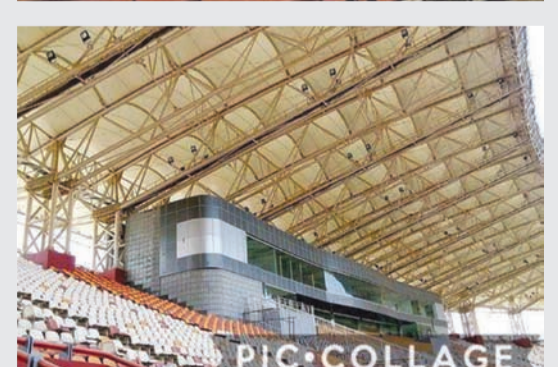
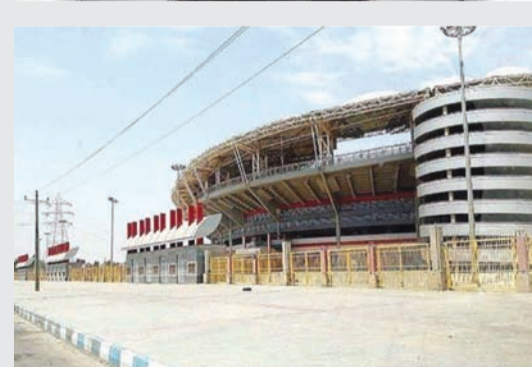
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Physicists mash quantum and gravity and find time, but not as we know it

A University of Queensland-led international team of researchers say they have discovered "a new kind of quantum time order."

UQ physicist Dr. Magdalena Zych said the discovery arose from an experiment the team designed to bring together elements of the two big — but contradictory — physics theories developed in the past century.

"Our proposal sought to discover: what happens when an object massive enough to influence the flow of time is placed in a quantum state?" Dr. Zych said.

She said Einstein's theory described how the presence of a massive object slowed time.

"Imagine two space ships, asked to fire at each other at a specified time while dodging the other's attack," she said.

"If either fires too early, it will destroy the other."

"In Einstein's theory, a powerful enemy could use the principles of general relativity by placing a massive object — like a planet — closer to one ship to slow the passing of time."

"Because of the time lag, the ship furthest away from the massive object will fire earlier, destroying the other."

Dr. Zych said the second theory, of



quantum mechanics, says any object can be in a state of "superposition"

"This means it can be found in different states -- think Schrodinger's cat," she said.

Dr. Zych said using the theory of quantum mechanics, if the enemy put the planet into a state of "quantum superposition," then time also should be disrupted.

"There would be a new way for the order of events to unfold, with neither of the events being first or second -- but in a genuine quantum state of being both first and second," she said.

UQ researcher Dr Fabio Costa said although "a superposition of planets" as described in the paper -- may never be possible, technology allowed a simulation of how time works in the quantum world -- without using gravity.

"Even if the experiment can never be done, the study is relevant for future technologies," Dr Costa said.

"We are currently working towards quantum computers that -- very simply speaking -- could effectively jump through time to perform their operations much more efficiently than devices operating in fixed sequence in time, as we know it in our 'normal' world."

Stevens Institute of Technology and the University of Vienna scientists were co-authors on Bell's Theorem for Temporal Order, published in Nature Communications.

(Source: Science Daily)

Ancient farmers irreversibly altered Earth's face by 3000 years ago

By Mohi Kumar

When we think of how humans have altered the planet, greenhouse gas warming, industrial pollution, and nuclear fallout usually spring to mind. But now, a new study invites us to think much further back in time. Humans have been altering landscapes planetwide for thousands of years: since at least 1000 B.C.E., by which time people in regions across the globe had abandoned foraging in favor of continually producing crops.

"This is the first project of its kind within archaeology," says Lucas Stephens, an archaeologist and environmental researcher at the Environmental Law & Policy Center in Chicago, Illinois, and the lead author of a study that presents the expert opinions of hundreds of archaeologists around the world. "There's never been a global synthesis like this."

Scientists have long sought to model ancient land use to accurately inform modern climate reconstructions and to set a start date for when humans first made their mark on the planet. The most commonly used model, however, uses estimates of estimates: It takes other scientists' guesses of the human populations of various regions, then estimates how much land would be required to sustain them. That model places the start date for continuous global farming at only 500 years ago.

To pinpoint a more accurate date, researchers divided Earth's land into 146 regions covering every continent except Antarctica. They then invited more than 1300 archaeologists with expertise in ancient land use to complete a roughly 80-question survey, asking how humans in each region used land for the past 10,000 years. Questions included when ancient people



transitioned from foraging to farming and whether they developed pasturelands for grazing animals. The survey also asked how confident the archaeologists were in their answers.

The 711 responses from 255 archaeologists (researchers could take the survey multiple times if they were experts in multiple regions), were weighted according to confidence and then aggregated. The results of this ArchaeoGLOBE project—which counted 112 of the respondents as co-authors—reveals that hunter-gatherer lifestyles declined globally between 10,000 and 3000 years ago as they were replaced by continuous farming, the researchers report this week in Science. By about 1000 B.C.E., all of the world's regions that now practice farming were annually cultivating crops.

Those trends also imply that ancient humans may have been influencing climate by raising livestock and razing forests to create croplands. Researchers debate the size of the climatic impact, but by 3000 years ago the effects were significant, "albeit smaller than those of today," says co-author Erle Ellis, ArchaeoGLOBE's

project leader and an environmental scientist at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

The timing suggests the Anthropocene, a newly proposed epoch that marks when humans first started to leave their geological mark on Earth, needs an earlier start date, writes Neil Roberts, who studies environmental change and archaeology at the universities of Plymouth and Oxford in the United Kingdom, in an accompanying editorial.

The Anthropocene Working Group (AWG), a group of mostly earth scientists tasked with defining the epoch's start, have generally agreed on the mid-1950s, when radioactive particles from hydrogen bombs embedded themselves in sediments across the globe, where they will linger for tens of thousands of years.

AWG chair Jan Zalasiewicz, a geologist at the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom, calls the new study "useful" but says it "doesn't show anything dramatically new." There's no doubt humans have altered landscapes throughout prehistory, he explains, but for the Anthropocene to be recognized as a formal geological epoch, it needs to show a distinct signature in the rock record, which the study doesn't provide.

The authors do, however, show a unique approach to crowdsourcing data collection, says Ruth Duerr, a data management researcher at the Ronin Institute for Independent Study in Westminster, Colorado, and former head of the Earth and Space Science Informatics section of the American Geophysical Union. She says the robust survey methods, the mass authorship, and the crowdsourced open data make the study a "model" model. "There are lots of crowdsourced citizen science projects out there," she says, "but here they're crowdsourcing from experts. The methodology is just so cool."

Trapping the tiniest sound

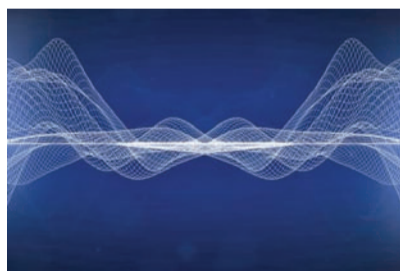
By Leila Sloman

Researchers have gained control of the elusive "particle" of sound, the phonon. Although phonons—the smallest units of the vibrational energy that makes up sound waves—are not matter, they can be considered particles the way photons are particles of light. Phonons commonly store information in prototype quantum computers, which aim to harness quantum effects to achieve unprecedented processing power. Using sound instead may have advantages, although it would require manipulating phonons on very fine scales.

Until recently, scientists lacked this ability: just detecting an individual phonon destroyed it. Early methods involved converting phonons to electricity in quantum circuits called superconducting qubits. These circuits accept energy in specific amounts; if a phonon's energy matches, the circuit can absorb it—destroying the phonon but giving an energy reading of its presence.

In a new study, scientists at JILA (a collaboration between the National Institute of Standards and Technology and the University of Colorado Boulder) tuned the energy units of their superconducting qubit so phonons would not be destroyed. Instead the phonons sped up the current in the circuit, thanks to a special material that created an electric field in response to vibrations. Experimenters could then detect how much change in current each phonon caused.

"There's been a lot of recent and impressive successes using superconducting qubits to control the quantum states of light. And we were curious—what can you do with sound that you can't with light?" says Lucas Sletten of U.C. Boulder, lead author of the study published in June in Physical



Review X. One difference is speed: sound travels much slower than light. Sletten and his colleagues took advantage of this to coordinate circuit-phonon interactions that sped up the current. They trapped phonons of particular wavelengths (called modes) between two acoustic "mirrors," which reflect sound, and the relatively long time sound takes to make a round trip allowed the precise coordination. The mirrors were a hair's width apart—similar control of light would require mirrors separated by about 12 meters.

Sound's "slowness" also let the experimenters identify phonons of more than one mode. Typically, Sletten says, quantum computers increase their capacity through additional superconducting qubits. But having just one qubit process information with multiple modes could achieve the same result.

"This is definitely a milestone," says Yiwen Chu, a physicist at ETH Zurich, who was not involved in the study. Analogous experiments with light were a first step toward much of today's work on quantum computers, she notes.

Similar applications for sound are far off, however: among other things, scientists must find a way to keep phonons alive much longer than they currently can—about 600 nanoseconds. Eventually, though, the research could open new paths forward in quantum computing.

AI uncovers new details about Old Master paintings

Artificial intelligence has been used to analyse high-resolution digital x-ray images of the world famous Ghent Altarpiece, as part of an investigative project led by UCL.

The finding is expected to improve our understanding of art masterpieces and provide new opportunities for art investigation, conservation and presentation.

Researchers from the National Gallery, Duke University and UCL worked with technical images acquired from the brothers Van Eyck's Ghent Altarpiece, a large and complex 15th-century altarpiece in St Bavo's Cathedral, Belgium.

The paper, 'Artificial Intelligence for Art Investigation: Meeting the Challenge of Separating X-ray Images of the Ghent Altarpiece', demonstrates how academics used a newly developed algorithm to study mixed x-ray images containing features from the front and back of the painting's double-sided panels, which scientists have deconstructed into two clear images.

These images are part of a comprehensive set of high resolution pictures acquired using different imaging techniques as part of the altarpiece's on-going conservation by the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA), providing a wealth of data to interrogate and interpret.

"This approach demonstrates that artificial intelligence-oriented techniques—powered by deep learning—can be used to potentially solve challenges arising in art investigation," commented lead academic Dr Miguel Rodrigues (UCL Electronic & Electrical Engineering).

"We'd like to see the impact that the development of similar AI-oriented approaches will have on our ability to reveal other hidden features in a painting, such as earlier concealed designs," he continued.

The Ghent Altarpiece originally consisted of twelve panels. The two wing sections, each originally made of four panels -- painted on both sides -- could be opened fully on



feast days to reveal the four central panels. The painting has survived near destruction over the centuries and seizure by the Nazis in the 1940s.

X-ray images are a valuable tool for examining and restoring paintings as they can help to establish a piece's condition and provide insights into an artist's technique.

However the penetrating nature of x-rays means that everything in its path will contribute to the resulting image, which is informative but can produce images that are difficult to interpret. This is particularly true for panels painted on both sides, or where an artist has re-used a canvas.

By separating the complex x-ray images, the new algorithm enables art historians, conservators and heritage scientists to better understand Old Master paintings, and the information revealed can help experts when protecting and restoring delicate pieces.

Deep learning approaches are now being used to address challenges arising in other sectors including healthcare, fintech, defense and security.

Hélène Dubois, Head of the Conservation Project of the Ghent Altarpiece, Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA) said: "The application of AI to x-ray image processing will provide very useful tools to decrypt complex technical images. The structural weaknesses of the wooden supports and of the ground and paint layers could be diagnosed with more precision."

(Source: Science Daily)

Fly fossils might challenge the idea of ancient trilobites' crystal eyes

By Susan Milius

Fossil crane flies found in Denmark have crystals in their eyes — individual, see-through mineral pieces where the living eyes' lenses once were.

Those little crystals of calcium carbonate are renewing a fuss about more mysterious ancient animals, the trilobites. Fossils of those extinct, shield-shaped invertebrates also have crystalized mineral lenses in their eyes. There are no living trilobites, but since at least the 1970s, scientists have been imagining how crystal lenses might have worked for the creatures when they were alive. Now the crane fly researchers argue that crystal lenses, in crane flies as well as in trilobites, are just quirks of fossilization.

Living crane flies don't have crystal lenses, the researchers note online August 15 in Nature. Neither do other known living insects or any of the bigger group of jointed-legs animals, the arthropods, says coauthor Johan Lindgren, a molecular paleontologist at Lund University of Sweden. These animals sometimes grow tinier calcite crystals in their eyes or in their rigid exoskeletons for strength, but not "one big crystal basically in each individual lens," he says.

In these fossilized crane fly eyes, dark, lacy networks outline the many pale spots where individual lenses once lay in the living fly.

In the new eye study, Lindgren and colleagues focus on beautifully preserved crane fly specimens of several ancient kinds. The fossils were found in 54-million-year-old sediments in what was once a waterway in today's Danish peninsula of Jutland. Like modern crane flies, the fossil ones look a bit like mosquitoes, but with longer legs.



One surprise in studying the fossils was their eye-shade pigments. Several kinds of lab analyses identified signs of eumelanin, a form of melanin, in the flies "despite the fact that they're not supposed to have it," Lindgren says. Curious about living insects' pigments, Lindgren and colleagues checked a modern species, the tiger crane fly. They found eumelanin there too, adding to the case that ancient relatives could have had it as well.

Colors added to a highly magnified image of a fossil crane fly eye show hexagonal pieces found to contain lots of calcium (pink), indicating mineralized lenses. Rims contain abundant carbon (green) and other elements as expected from a screening pigment.

Vertebrates use forms of melanin to screen their eyes from stray light that's not focused by the lens. But biologists had thought that while insects and other arthropods use melanins for body coloring, among other functions, these animals just had a different kind of eye-shading pigment, called ommochromes. Crane flies are the first of any arthropod group, living or extinct, shown to have a melanin pigment in their eyes, Lindgren says.

So far, the evidence looks "suggestive" of eumelanin in the extinct crane fly eyes, says biophysicist Doekele Stavenga from the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, who wasn't involved in the study. He would like to see some more kinds of tests identifying the fossil pigment.

Unlike with the pigment, crystal lenses don't show up in living crane flies — a result that doesn't surprise Lindgren. "There are only deficits of having rocks in your eyes," he says. For one, crystals of calcium carbonate have optical quirks that need just the right alignment with incoming light to avoid double images. Some mollusks known as chitons have calcite-lensed eye spots that can pick up spatial information about looming predators. That's not fancy vision, but it may be enough for mound-shaped animals creeping around the sea floor instead of flying.

If crane flies' lenses fossilized into calcite lumps, the assumption that trilobite eyes likewise calcified after death seems "more probable," says Gerhard Scholtz, a zoologist specializing in arthropod evolution at Humboldt University in Berlin. "I always had doubts about the calcitic nature of trilobite eye lenses."

But physiologist Brigitte Shoememann at the University of Cologne in Germany is sticking with the idea that living trilobites saw through lenses that were mainly calcium carbonate. One advantage is the mineral's power to strongly bend incoming light underwater, a help in collecting and focusing ample illumination. Also, she says that trilobite eyes that fossilized under a variety of conditions nonetheless show such lenses. She's prepared to accept that crane flies didn't see through mineral crystals but is not ready "to raise this singular finding, as excellent as it may be, to a general principle touching trilobites." Clearly, the debate goes on.

50 years ago, scientists thought they knew why geckos had sticky feet

The secret of what enables the agile gecko lizard to stroll upside-down across glass and perform other remarkable sticky-footed feats has been revealed.... Microscopic suction cups provide Gekko gecko his phenomenal grip. Using a scanning electron microscope, Joseph F. Gennaro observed that the chevron-shaped pads on the lizard's toe were composed of an array of brushlike structures called setae ... capped by minute suction cups which help the lizard cling to the surface.

Gennaro was partly correct. Gecko feet don't have suction cups, but the feet have enough tiny setae — hundreds of thousands — to increase adhesion via van der Waals forces, which are very weak forces between molecules. Collectively, the hairs create enough adhesive force for the reptiles to stick even to slick surfaces, scientists discovered in 2000. Gecko feet have inspired new materials and technology, such as a robotic gripper for grabbing space junk and hand pads to help people climb glass panes.

(Source: Sciencenews.org)

Iran-Iraq border open to Arbaeen pilgrims

TOURISM TEHRAN — Iran-Iraq border crossing of **d e s k** Khosravi was opened to Arbaeen pilgrims on Sunday in order to facilitate the commute of people who want to visit the holy city of Karbala.

Iran's Police Chief Brigadier General Hossein Ashtari said the border crossing was opened based on a previous agreement between Iran and Iraq, adding that this year, Iranian pilgrims could cross from Chazzebeh, Shalamcheh, Mehran and Khosravi borders, Mehr reported.



File photo shows thousands of Shia pilgrims, reuniting in the holy city of Karbala to commemorate Arbaeen, the end of a 40-day mourning period after the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (AS).

Another agreement has come into effect, based on which visa requirements are removed for the pilgrims, Ashtari said, describing it as a "positive step" toward paving the way for Iranian pilgrims visiting the neighboring country.

Iraqi armed and defense forces are endeavoring to ensure the security of the pilgrims, he added.

According to the latest official data, some 102,000 Iranians have so far registered to participate in the Arbaeen pilgrimage.

The event, aka Arbaeen trek, is a characteristic spiritual exercise in which hundreds of thousands of Shia and Sunni Muslims, even Christians and Zoroastrians, etc. from various nationalities participate.

The long trek will be destined to Karbala, where Imam Hussain (AS), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), is laid to rest.

Arbaeen marks an end to the 40-day mourning period following martyrdom of the Imam and his loyal companions at the Battle of Karbala on Muharram 10 in the year 61 AH (680 CE).

This year, Arbaeen falls on Saturday, October 19.

A super new moon is coming — and a stunning crescent moon will follow

On Friday the moon will be at its closest to Earth since February and will cause 'king' tides across the world.

Some natural phenomena can't be seen with the naked eye, but their effects can be. Such a phenomenon happens this Friday when our satellite swings particularly close to Earth. It will do so just a few hours after a new moon, which will bring rare "king" tides... and will even send a huge wave backwards up a mighty river. So what is a super new moon, and why is it so important?

What is a super new moon?

New moon is when our satellite's orbit takes it between the Earth and the sun. It's not a precise match-up — that would be a solar eclipse — but when the moon is close to the sun as seen from Earth, only its far side is illuminated.

This happens every 29 days, once per lunar orbit, but this month's new moon is a little different. It's closer than any other new moon of 2019 at precisely 357,175 km from Earth. That makes it a super new moon.

(Source: travellandleisure.com)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Vilnius historic center

Political center of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the 13th to the end of the 18th century, Vilnius has had a profound influence on the cultural and architectural development of much of Eastern Europe.

Despite invasions and partial destruction, it has preserved an impressive complex of Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and classical buildings as well as its medieval layout and natural setting. They constitute a townscape of great diversity and yet at the same time demonstrating an overarching harmony.



The Vilnius historic center began its history on the glacial hills that had been intermittently occupied from the Neolithic period; a wooden castle was built around 1000 CE to fortify Gedimino Hill, at the confluence of the Neris and Vilnia rivers. The settlement did not develop as a town until the 13th century, during the struggles of the Baltic peoples against their German invaders.

By 1323, when the first written reference to Vilnia occurred, it was the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. At this time, some brick structures had apparently been erected on a small island formed when the Vilnia changed its course. By the 15th century, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, with its capital Vilnius, had become the largest country in Europe, stretching from the Baltic Sea in the North to the Black Sea in the South.

(Source: UNESCO)

Dutch archaeology show in Tehran wraps up

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A significant exhibition of arts and archaeological objects, which was on loan from the Drents Museum, has come to an end at the National Museum of Iran, CHTN reported on Sunday.

The exhibit, which was officially wrapped up on August 31, pulled in some 66,000 visitors since the opening date on October 2, 2018.

A total of 66,669 people visited the exhibit titled "Dutch Archaeology and Art: Highlights from the Drents Museum", said Jebreil Nokandeh, director of the National Museum of Iran.

The show, which was primarily arranged to end on April 6, showcased 331 objects including stone tools, jewelry, and natural human mummies in three sections of archeology, pottery, and paintings, the latter is dedicated to artworks of the 18th to the 20th centuries.

"This cultural event was able to present its visitors a different image of the rich and ancient culture of the Netherlands and to change their views of Europe's history and civilization in Europe, which dates back to over 50,000 years," Nokandeh said.

Many of its visitors, either foreign or domestic, were not familiar with such an



age-old culture in Europe, he noted.

The Drents Museum, which is located in Assen, in return, showcased some 200

Iranian antique items in an exhibit titled "Iran - Cradle of Civilization". The exhibit was running from June to November 2018.

Talking about the Tehran exhibit, the official added, "This achievement owes much to the fruitful cooperation of the two museums in establishing intercultural communication just like that the Drents Museum succeeded in hosting the exhibition 'Iran: Cradle of Civilization', it introduced the rich culture and art of Iran to the people of the Netherlands and other foreign tourists..."

Back in March, Harry Tupan, the director of the Drents Museum paid a visit to the National Museum of Iran, saying that he was thrilled to visit such a museum.

"I am very happy that I was able to visit this museum today and am excited to see these amazing historical works," CHTN quoted Tupan as saying.

He also called for strengthening cultural cooperation between Iran and the Netherlands.

The Dutch museum also won an audience prize from New York's prestigious Global Fine Art Awards on March 12 for its contribution to host such an enormous exhibit of the history of Persia.

"Iran, Cradle of Civilization" is currently on show at the Archeological Museum of Alicante (MARQ) in southeastern Spain, running from March 14 to Sept. 1.

47 pre-Islamic gold plaques seized from smugglers

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Iranian authorities have seized 47 pieces of gold plaques dating back to pre-Islamic era, which were kept unlawfully by smugglers in Zanjan, western Iran.

"51 objects, including 47 gold plaques, were recovered from smugglers while making a deal," CHTN quoted Abolfazl Moradi, a police official in charge of protecting cultural heritage, as saying on Tuesday.

Along with the gold plaques, police also seized a platter, a belt buckle and clay vessels, that later proved not bearing historical importance, the official added.

"These plaques date from the pre-Islamic era, and according to [our] investigation they were attached to a piece

of clothing or leather," said Parastoo Qasemi, a provincial official in charge of museum complexes.

Talking about the gold relics, Qasemi added that "Malileh [tapestry] motifs are evident in these works."

Iran is a major center of ancient culture. It is rich in valuable natural resources, especially metals, and played an important role in the development of ancient Middle Eastern civilization and trade.

From prehistorical times, Persia (Iran) was home to talented and well-trained artisans and goldsmiths who were able to produce intricate yet delicate jewelry without any modern tools. They made everything from necklaces and bracelets to finger rings, anklets and hair pins in both gold and silver.



Have Instagram influencers ruined travel for an entire generation?

What a great platform Instagram has been for influencers to show off the world's best destinations. Inspiring wanderlust and uncovering new hidden gems. Then, almost overnight, everyone seemed to want to do the same thing. Become an influencer, whilst missing the part about actually being influential.

Images became less about the destinations, and more about pretty and edited images where individual egos and a drive for self-fame took over from the overriding message of inspiring travel. The destination took a back seat, and in an ever increasing attempt for 'insta-fame' people portrayed perfect lives of 365 days travel a year. Recent stories that have surfaced of apparent influencers editing the same pictures of clouds into different images does little to throw any water on the flames of the current argument.

Almost overnight, the word influencer became one of the most toxic words on the internet. The audience woke up to the fact that entitled 'influencers' actually have very little qualification to tell their audience what to buy, where to go and what to think, simply because they take set-up pictures.

And rightly so people have woken up to this reality. There are plenty of influential people on social media - that is very different to 'influencers' who have seemingly largely now renamed themselves to 'content creators' - simply discounting from the actual talented content creators ranging from photographers to videographers out there.

The crowd piling into the 'influencer' bandwagon also unfortunately discounted from those that could be classified as an



influencer and being influential. Granted, that certainly exists—there are many people on social media that have built-up an adorning audience that cares about what they have to say, and where they go, but it has now become increasingly difficult to distinguish these people in amongst the wider noise.

Having followers doesn't translate to actual influence. This was recently demonstrated by the revelation that an 'influencer' with over 2 million Instagram followers couldn't sell 20 T-shirts to her audience.

How many times have you seen a beautiful picture of an overwater villa in the Maldives on Instagram? Could

you actually remember the name of any resorts you see though in the Maldives or the hotel captured in those perfectly set up floating breakfast tray shots in Bali, with overly edited pictures?

Looks great doesn't it? Double tap images, and then move on with your day. The remaining marketing message that you have been left with is that you want to go to said promoted destination, eventually. We are being sold a dream of a room that costs thousands of dollars a night, by people that (largely) couldn't and wouldn't be able to afford to stay there off their own accord, without complimentary nights to market the message—influencers have been using a follower count to live

complimentary lifestyles sold to whoever pays the most—paid for, in kind, by their followers.

Would that be considered false advertising? Perhaps, but that's a different topic altogether. The very problem here, and with the never ending push for influencers to get more 'wow' content, is that what we are seeing visually, is rarely what we are likely to experience when we travel in reality.

So what happens when we see this visual stimulation? We as the audience see someone's supposedly perfect life and we wonder why and how this person has these amazing experiences and we don't.

Importantly, we see all these amazing destinations and when we as the audience make that once in a lifetime trip to them, it leads to disappointment that said destination isn't how we have been made to believe it looks like. The book 'Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass' gives an interesting insight into this. Douglass talks about slaves never being made to feel worthy. This hypothesis can be translated to how influencers make an audience feel, that they have got it so 'right'. We as an audience seeing all these beautiful destinations feel less worthy and over time, we actually need this 'expert' even more, so we can figure out how they are doing so well. We need to buy their product, their service, their presets even! But no you don't, you categorically don't. Because that's how so many of these 'influencers' are able to portray such beautiful images onto us and continue this lifestyle. The audience inevitably pays.

(Source: Forbes)

Burned buildings reveal sacking of ancient Turkish city 3,500 years ago

More than 3,500 years ago, a rising kingdom called the Hittite Empire was expanding, testing the limits of its strength. It would soon destroy Babylon, but first, its army sacked and burned a city nestled in the mountains of modern-day Turkey called Sam'al—located on a major route of trade between Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean Sea.

The charred ruins from that fateful day were uncovered for the first time in millennia during an excavation by the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. The excavation is part of the OI's mission to understand the ancient Middle East, which has helped shape our picture of Western civilization.

"It's an incredibly lucky find. Every archaeologist hopes for an intact destruction layer because it gives you a snapshot of a day in the life of this town," said David Schloen, a professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and a leading scholar of the ancient Middle Eastern world who co-directs the excavation. "Pottery is still sitting inside the buildings where the inhabitants left it in 1650 BC. You know that everything is where it would be on a typical day, which is really valuable cultural knowledge."

The site, located at Zincirli (pronounced "Zin-jeer-li") in southern Turkey, has been excavated by the OI since 2006 (in collaboration with the University of Tübingen in Germany since 2014). Millennia ago, it was the city of Sam'al, and the excavation has documented its rise and fall as an Iron Age kingdom.

Finding an earlier Bronze Age layer beneath it was a surprise, the scholars said. But their latest field season revealed a clear destruction layer, including two burned buildings that had been sealed under collapsed bricks and roof debris. Inside were 10 rooms, small figurines, and shattered but complete sets of pottery. "You can tell the burning was intense," Schloen said; for example, several storage pots had deeply burned debris around them as though they had contained flammable materials like oil or wine. In another room, a dagger lay on the floor where its owner had dropped it millennia ago.

And unusual for such a finding, the team named the likely culprit. "We're ready to say a well-known Hittite king, named Hattusili I, did it," Schloen said.

Hattusili was a founding ruler of the Hittite Empire,



situated with its capital near modern-day Ankara in Turkey. At its largest, the empire stretched across what is now Turkey and northwestern Syria. In the early 17th century B.C. the Hittites were testing their ambitions—and Sam'al was in their radius.

(Source: phys.org)

Iranian product cuts agricultural water usage by half

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — Researchers at the International University of Imam Khomeini have manufactured a product, capable of reducing water consumption in farms by 20 to 50 percent.

Due to the fact that high water usage in the agricultural industry is one of the biggest problems facing the country, the Iranian researchers have made the product known as the "flow control valve for reducing water usage," IRNA reported on Monday, citing the vice-presidency for science and technology.

This product has passed the conventional testing procedures and has proven that when applied to the irrigation systems, it is capable of reducing water usage by 20 to 50 percent.

One of the problems with the modern irrigation systems that are currently being used is the uneven water distribution which causes loss of water, but with the above mentioned invention, water is distributed evenly throughout farms.

Iran, located in an arid and semi-arid area, is facing water shortage due to low precipitation amounts and climate change coupled with shortsighted managerial decisions.

The chief of the Department of Environ-



ment Issa Kalantari said in August 2018 that the government must tell the people the truth about water shortage as a serious challenge

the country is facing.

"People need to know the truth about the environmental issues, as if they know, their

actions will be hundreds more efficient than the government," he said.

Using water more sensibly is one of the most effective factors in preventing environmental degradation, he added.

Meanwhile, Saeed Pourali, an Iranian professor of cross-cultural environment management at the Phoenix University, said in July 2018 that considering the current situation, discussing water management and finding solutions is required more than ever.

If water scarcity is not resolved urgently, its impacts will soon bring heavier and irreparable damage to all sectors in the country, he stated, warning the harmful consequences caused by lack of proper planning would gradually affect the entire country.

"According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, agricultural water usage in Iran is 22 percent above the global average while water productivity [crop yield per cubic meter of water consumption] is one-third of world average", he said, adding, "In other words, the agricultural sector generates about 10 percent of the country's gross domestic product, but consuming 92 percent of the country's fresh water".

Construction industry embraces online technology to solve problems

Construction is a complex and highly competitive sector buffeted by external pressures that can threaten profit margins, overheads, and cashflow.

Those challenges have been amplified as economic uncertainty delays contracts; the possible end of free movement shrinks labour forces; and concerns around materials and funding aren't yet fully understood.

So, it is little wonder businesses in the supply chain are turning to technology to control those things they can.

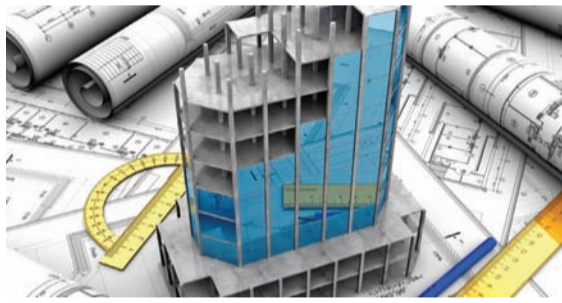
Has digital found a place in bricks and mortar as firms reinforce foundations during turbulent times?

Research from Cardiff University's Digital Maturity Survey for Wales 2018, indicates last year saw a seismic shift in the number of smaller construction businesses using some form of online technology to solve problems. Some for tighter supply chain management and quicker accreditation to meet regulations. Others to streamline processes using online project management and contract management systems. And a large number looked to stabilise cashflow with better accounting packages, or to win new contracts and attract new employees using digital marketing.

Can an industry associated with tradition learn from those who adopt modern technology?

Many of the benefits can be evidenced by companies that have taken advantage of the free training Superfast Business Wales provides. They include Intrado, which grew by 300% over three years and took on 6 new staff. Celtest, which unlocked 2,000 hours a year through efficiency savings. And, Hazelwood, which increased productivity by 20% and future-proofed its business against the changing demands of the industry. So, what can we learn from those companies who adopt modern technology despite being in an industry associated with more traditional methods?

"Online accounting manages cashflow and reduces admin and BIM allows us to plan projects effectively and win-over clients and the supply chain. We were able to grow by 300% and take on 6 new staff..." Darren Sparkes, Intrado Consulting Engineers



Like many others, the civil and structural engineering firm from Cardiff had an ambitious strategy for growth that relied on projects running quickly and smoothly. So, it decided to transform the way the company operates and embraced digital in 2015. It introduced Building Management software to offer clients digital visualisation models, real time project management updates, and better supply chain management. And, also adopted an online accountancy package to manage cash flow, reduce admin, and to plan projects effectively.

"We're not saying digital is the only reason we've made such great gains, but it has simplified our internal processes and given us an edge in a competitive industry," says Sparkes.

"Our online invoicing and electronic reporting save us 2000 hours a year, which gives us time to manage the greater number of enquires coming through our updated website or cheaper VoIP phone system..." Iwan Morgan, Celtest

Celtest saw similar results. The company produces thousands of reports for construction firms, civil engineers, and quarrying and aggregate companies to test for compliance with the required standards for materials. These include soil, concrete, asphalt and aggregate.

A year ago, the firm decided to literally shred the paper and move to digital wholesale. It took on a digital marketing strategy and upgraded its website to attract new customers. And moved to cloud technology so its technicians could relay information to the office in real time, allowing reports

to be completed in 24hrs instead of three or four days. Additionally, an online accounting package made sure that invoices kept the cashflow topped up, and a VoIP phone system saved further money.

"The move to digital meant working patterns changed for a lot of staff and that took a while to get used to. But now everyone is fully onboard, and the investment has already paid for itself," says Morgan.

"We moved to larger premises because we used a bespoke contract management system with mobile app to increase productivity by 20% and won new significant contracts with the help of an updated website..." Sharon Smith, Hazelwood.

Not every company uses digital in the same way. And Hazelwood Carpentry, which employs 29 people and works for some of the biggest building contractors across Wales and the South West of England, decided to go bespoke.

"The decision has allowed us to manage projects more efficiently by giving the team full transparency of costs and schedules across all live jobs in real time. On-site supervisors can log in remotely via an app on their phone and monitor what is being done in the office, so we minimise duplication. It's replaced around 15 different spreadsheets that were being completed by people in various parts of the business on pieces of paper, so it's huge," says Smith.

So, despite a digital mindset being in its nascent years for some in the construction industry others are reaping the benefits. And the good news is that 63% of smaller Welsh businesses in this sector have taken the first steps on their digital journey. Has the current uncertainty in this complex and highly competitive sector stirred a feeling that it makes sense to control the things businesses can? And is the sector ready to follow Intrado, Celtest, and Hazelwood in their approach to solving the challenges by turning them into opportunity gains through digital fitness? The findings in Cardiff University's research, and on the ground feedback from Superfast Business Wales, suggests confidence is growing and help is out there for businesses who want to adapt. (Source: businessnewswales.com)

Iran ranks 8th for top papers in AI

Half of the highly cited papers submitted by Iran have been conducted with the help of researchers from other countries, but only 0.74 percent of them are the result of collaborating with the industry sector.

The Islamic Azad University ranked at the 17th place among the top 20 institutions with the greatest output of top papers on AI, above Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Max Planck Society and the University of California, Berkeley.

Representation of collaborative papers in top 10 countries' top AI papers

Reference Value of International Papers	Percentage of Internationally Collaborative Papers (%)	Percentage of Industry Collaborative Papers (%)
Reference Value of International Papers	23.42	1.83
Reference Value of International Top Papers	42.64	3.7
China	53	2.55
United States	53.94	6.99
United Kingdom	76.38	6.03
Australia	81.82	3.59
Germany	80.65	7.83
Canada	72.5	4.75
France	76.9	8.17
Iran	50.18	0.74
Italy	75.98	3.94
Spain	71.66	5.67

Based on the latest data published by SCImago Journal & Country Rank (SJR), Iran took the first place among the Middle-Eastern countries for the highest number of citable documents in 2017.

In 2017, Iran with 54,388 documents, 51,614 citable documents and 28,813 citations in the international papers, ranked first among the Middle-Eastern countries which were assessed for their production of scientific documents.

In a period of 7 years, Iran managed to remain in the first place in the Middle-East region.

How is technology making digital marketing more exciting?

Technology has always enabled digital marketing in new and interesting ways — be it advertising, campaign management, or even features such as personalization and localization.

However, it seems as though marketers that love technology are in for a treat as blockchain and artificial intelligence (AI) are set to make a big impact on the industry.

Gartner, in a recent forecast, said that their study of the market shows that four technologies have the capability to transform how marketers run their technology ecosystems and, ultimately, deliver meaningful customer experiences.

"Marketers today must strike the right balance between delivering meaningful customer experiences that differentiate their brands and focusing on providing real value to the business," said Gartner's Marketing Practice VP Mike McGuire.



"Event-triggered and real-time marketing will have the biggest impact on marketing activities in the next five years. However, before marketers can realize the benefits of these technologies, they must first become proficient in predictive analytics and delivering personalized communications."

According to Gartner's analysts, AI for marketing is at its peak and they expect that the interest in the technology will not fade quickly as AI continues to be the buzzword used to describe a host of features to augment the functions performed by marketers — from automated content tagging to real-time personalization.

Over the next 20 years, the power that AI holds with marketers is forecasted to drive pervasive shifts across the marketing technology ecosystem, effectively transforming the marketing practice.

A Gartner 2018 survey revealed that 11 percent of marketing technology executives reported AI as their top choice as the technology that would have the most impact on their marketing efforts in the next five years.

Blockchain for advertising is another technology that Gartner's analysts see holding tremendous promise for marketers.

However, significant challenges with scalability, performance and adoption must be overcome before blockchain can alter the status quo.

According to Gartner's analysts, dozens of companies have launched experimental blockchain platforms for advertising, but none have been able to demonstrate ongoing viability.

Despite the skepticism, blockchain seems to be gaining momentum through support from organizations such as the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) and emerging innovations from technology companies such as IBM, Comcast, and Amazon, which are working with industry leaders on the buy and sell-side of media.

Disruptive challengers from outside the industry are also adding urgency, said Gartner.

In the future, technology is expected to make the field of digital marketing more vibrant — especially with new and emerging technologies challenging professionals to think outside the box to capture the attention of customers. (Source: techwireasia.com)

Innovation in technology is key for sustainability of farm businesses

Glasgow-based agri-entrepreneur Yanik Nyberg was looking for farm businesses to partner with last year on his project to cultivate degraded coastal land with seawater and high value crops.

After initial scepticism, he noticed a change among farmers after last summer's drought.

He said: "People had seen what happened and the thousands they had spent on irrigation so it became much easier for us to have a conversation about innovation and trying out a more profitable crop.

They were receptive to new approaches." The first farm he partnered with in Ayrshire leased out a one-hectare site to Nyberg and his company Seawater Solutions to grow Samphire in land which had previously been used for potatoes.

A first harvest of the crop is due at the end of August, which will be sold to small-scale retailers and the food service sector.

Across the North Sea and into mainland Europe, researchers at Wageningen University, the country's main agricultural research institution, are engaged in a different kind of innovation.

Driven by the Netherlands' ageing farmer population and chronic labour shortages, researchers are developing a range of new machines to take over manual tasks on-farm. Close to commercialisation is Sweeper, a sweet pepper harvester. Its robotic arm can move up and down a greenhouse, using cameras and sensors to spot and pick ripened peppers.

Not only can it distinguish colour, it can also recognise ripe peppers hidden behind leaves. The robot was able to harvest a pepper in 15 seconds in tests last year and is expected to be on sale for Dutch farmers within the next three to four years.

While humans can, at present, pick peppers more quickly, the robots are able to work non-stop and overnight. And progress will not stop there.



The challenge now is to make robots as smart, or nearly as smart as humans, said food and farming robotics specialist Janneke de Kramer, from Wageningen University.

"Humans can detect a lot of things you need to put into the AI part of the robot to recognise from the pixels it sees. For example, which crop is ripe and the way to pick them, the different diseases or bugs, and how you can distinguish between crops and weeds," she said.

For any farm business considering how to innovate, be it new ventures, equipment or practices, there will be risks. But every business needs to be open to opportunities, said NFU science and regulatory affairs adviser Helen Ferrier.

"That could mean considering new crops or machinery. But looking ahead, much of the new technological innovations available to farm businesses are likely to be data-driven ones around measurement and precision," said Ms Ferrier.

For arable businesses that means precision-application of inputs and combining field mapping and ATV arial images to understand what you should be doing and when on farm. While for livestock farms, it means greater

use of sensors, recording of feeding and outputs, and virtual feeding to control animals' use of land and feed and enhance decision-making.

Much of this innovation is already happening in bigger farm businesses and 'will defuse in time,' said Ms Ferrier.

"The biggest barrier is around understanding the possibilities enough to go and investigate and work out if it is something you can do. With any new technology the early adopters are inevitably taking a risk," she said.

For Dumfries and Galloway dairy farmer Colin Ferguson, that risk was installing an automatic dipping and flushing system, improving hygiene and reducing cross-contamination in the parlour.

"It is expensive, but it has reduced both our cell count and rates of mastitis by 50%. It will pay back in terms of milk loss and treatment costs within five years.

And it's also taken away the pressure on us on antibiotic use under our milk contract," he said. "If you had asked my father 20 years ago, would he have predicted what the farm would look like today?"

We never thought we'd have GPS on our tractors. In another 20 years, maybe the man in the parlour will be the past." (Source: www.fginsight.com)

Fars province sets high-temperature record in past month

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — While almost all Iranian provinces experienced temperature rise over the Iranian calendar month of Mordad (July 23-August 22), Fars province set the record high as the country's hottest place, the director of the national center for drought and crisis management, affiliated to Meteorological Organization, has said.

The highest temperature recorded in the country over the last month was in Lamerd county, located in Fars province, amounting to 51.6°C. ISNA quoted Sadeq Ziaei as saying on Monday. This is while the coolest city of the country was Urmia, located in



West Azarbaijan province, with a temperature of 4.2°C, he added.

He went on to state that in the second month of summer, province of Yazd experienced the highest temperature variation, being warmer by 2.5°C compared to the long term average.

Meanwhile, province of Khorasan Razavi experienced 2.4°C temperature rise which set the record high for the highest temperature variation after Yazd province, he explained.

Pointing out that some provinces across the country experienced the highest temperature drop compared to their long-term mean, he noted that provinces of Golestan, Gilan, Alborz and Mazandaran, experiencing a temperature drop of 0.9°C, 0.3°C, 0.1°C and 0.1°C, respectively, were among those with lowest temperature variation.

Ziaei said that during last month, the coolest weather in Tehran was recorded in Firouzkooh county, amounting to 7.5°C, however, while the warmest city was Varamin with a temperature of 43.9°C.

Iran short of rain by 1.6 mm last month

Elsewhere in his remarks Ziaei noted that in the second month of summer, Iran has received 1.8 millimeters (mm) of rainfall while the long-term averages are 3.4 mm; However, last year during the same period, 1.4 mm of precipitation reported nationwide.

Mazandaran, Gilan and Golestan provinces with 22 mm, 18 mm and 10 mm, respectively, ranked the first three provinces in terms of highest precipitation last month, he said.

Noshahr city in Mazandaran province also hit the record high of precipitation over the past 24 hours; as the city received 86 mm of rain in a day, he added.

Moreover, Tehran rainfall over the last month hit 0.6 mm, which was reported 1.7 mm in the previous year and 4.2 mm in the long run. Therefore, it demonstrates that the capital is short of rain compared to the same period last year, as well as the long term average, he concluded.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Macedonian Rebels Surrender Weapons

(August 29, 2001)

The Secretary-General of NATO arrives in Macedonia to observe progress in NATO's operation to collect weapons from ethnic Albanian rebels. This report from Jackie Rowland.

Ethnic Albanian fighters lined up to hand in their weapons on the second day of NATO's operation. British, French and Dutch soldiers had set up a temporary collection center in a private house behind rebel lines in the north-west of the country. Most of the weapons surrendered were assault rifles, but there were also a few heavier weapons.

NATO officials said the operation went smoothly, but they didn't expect to match the yield of the first day when they received more than four hundred guns, mortars and landmines. The Macedonians are following the process closely. Many of them suspect the rebels are holding back a lot of guns including their best equipment.

The NATO Secretary-General, Lord Robertson, flies to Macedonia on Wednesday to observe day three of the operation. He'll be lobbying Macedonian political leaders to make sure they stand by their side of the bargain. The Macedonian parliament has promised to give greater rights to the Albanian community once the rebels have surrendered their arms. But with ongoing arguments about the size of the rebel arsenal, constitutional reform cannot be taken for granted.

Words

hand in: give (to someone in authority), surrender
behind rebel lines: inside territory held by the rebels. Rebels are people who are fighting against their own country's army in order to change the political system

assault rifles: a rifle used for fighting, not for sport
match the yield of the first day: equal the number [of weapons] surrendered on the first day

mortars: short cannons which fire missiles high into the air and for short distances

landmine: an explosive mine laid on or just under the surface of the ground

lobbying: trying to persuade

stand by their side of the bargain: keep to what they have agreed. If you stand by an earlier agreement, you do not change it

arms: weapons

arsenal: a store of weapons, all the weapons or military equipment which a group has

constitutional reform: the means by which changes are made to the way that the UK is governed, it can include devolution, reform to the House of Lords and etc.

cannot be taken for granted: if you take something for granted, you assume that it is certain to happen, without questioning it

(Source: BBC)



Without earth no birth!

New plan replaces banned exploitation of endangered Hyrcanian Forest

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — A new plan on sustainable management of Hyrcanian Forest and natural resources has been prepared; through which exploitation of the endangered forest will re-continue in line with sustainability, deputy director for the Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization has announced.

The new plan will substitute for the "breathing plan" which banned any wood exploitation in the endangered forest, ISNA quoted Mohammad-Ali Fakhari as saying on Monday.

In January 2017 in line with the laws regulating all aspects of policy making and project managements with regard to environmental factors Majlis [Iranian parliament] has prohibited any exploitation of endangered forest by the fourth year of implementing the sixth five-year national development plan (2016-2021).

With 157 MPs voting for the bill, exploitation of forests for commercial and industrial purposes will be brought to a halt by 2020. By that time all exploitation contracts will be expired and none will be renewed.

All exploitation projects will be banned with the exception of broken branches, fallen or damaged trees which can be only authorized by the Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization.

Under the plan, wood logging will re-continue but only in the reforested areas; not on those natural ones, Fakhari noted.

The plan will go into effect by the next two years, he further highlighted.

It consists of two phases, first is basic scientific studies which investigates the ecological, social and economic potential of the natural resource, and then land use changes



with no environmental consequences will determined, he explained.

He went on to add that finally, through the second phase, a comprehensive action plan is prepared.

In the sustainable management of Hyrcanian Forest plan, all the capacities of the natural resources and the watershed are used, not merely logging, he said, adding, the previous plan managed all the northern forests using a common approach, but the new plan is in accordance with the ecological, economic and social potential of each region of the northern forests.

Unfortunately, in the past, there was a multi-management system that could some-

how be interpreted as mismanagement, but the alternative plan will propose an annual action plan for each watershed, he added.

The forest must be managed in a way that preserves its natural shape and ensures ecosystem stability, he stated.

Referring to logging according to the new plan, he said that the purpose of the plan is not producing wood, but it is to improve forest health; so that logging is allowed if the region's ecosystem can bear wood harvest; while only in reforested areas.

Broken branches, fallen or damaged trees due to increasing wildfire risk are also included in exploitation, Fakhari noted.

Pointing to the forests infected with pests

and diseases or prone to wildfire, Fakhari said that all of these areas will be identified and different plans will be drawn up to overcome the issue.

He concluded that the sustainable management of Hyrcanian Forest plan is to elicit cooperation of local communities for forest management.

Yousefali Embrahimpour, commander of the protection unit of natural resources and watershed management department of West Azarbaijan province said in February that the law banning exploitation of endangered forests in northern part of the country has led to illegal smuggling of logs; the lack of forest forces, not enforcing laws and low fines were the other factors led to illegal timber smuggling.

Over the past decade generally some 10 tons of smuggled log have been seized, but the number have grown 15-fold this year, he added.

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

According to UNESCO, the forest contains the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation. It also contains superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.

Berlin zoo celebrates rare birth of panda twins

Berlin zoo has said its resident panda Meng Meng has delivered twins, the first time one of the endangered animals has given birth in the country.

"Meng Meng became a mom – twice! We are so happy, we are speechless," the zoo tweeted on Monday, posting a video of Meng Meng guiding one of her pink cubs to feed.

Pandas are notoriously difficult to breed, making such births rare.

The panda delivered its first cub on Saturday evening. About an hour later, a second baby was born.

"Meng Meng and her two cubs coped well with the birth and are all in good health," the zoo's director, Andreas Knieriem, said.

At birth the pink cubs, with their fine white down and disproportionately long tails, bear little resemblance to the adult black and white bears.

Their sexes have not yet been determined, the zoo said. They weighed 136g and 186g.

On loan from China, Meng Meng and the male panda Jiao Qing arrived in Berlin in June 2017 to great fanfare.

In what is known as "panda diplomacy", China has dispatched its national treasure to about a dozen countries as a symbol of close relations.



The zoo pays \$15m in a 15-year contract to host them, with most of the money going towards a conservation and breeding research programme in China.

The cubs born in Berlin must be returned to China within four years after they have been weaned.

China has previously given three pandas to Germany but the last one, Bao Bao, died in Berlin in 2012 at the age of 34, having become one of the oldest male pandas in the world.

About 1,864 pandas remain in the wild in China, up from around 1,000 in the late 1970s, according to the environmental group WWF.

Just over 400 pandas live in zoos around the world, in conservation projects set up with Beijing.

(Source: The Guardian)

River Thames home to 138 baby seals, latest count finds

It has been a highway, a sewer and was declared biologically dead in the 1950s but the River Thames is now a nursery for 138 baby seals, according to the first comprehensive seal pup count.

Scientists from the Zoological Society of London analysed photographs taken from light aircraft to identify and count harbour seal pups, which rest on sandbanks and creeks in the Thames downstream from London during the summer, shortly after they are born.

"We were thrilled to count 138 pups born in a single season, said the conservation biologist Thea Cox. "The seals would not be able to pup here at all without a reliable food source, so this demonstrates that the Thames ecosystem is thriving and shows just how far we have come since the river was declared biologically dead in the 1950s."

The Thames is home to both grey seals and harbour seals, although only the latter breed there. The seals can feed on more than 120 species of fish in the Thames, including salmon, two species of shark, short-nouted seahorses and the European eel, which is critically endangered. Other marine mammals spotted in the Thames include porpoises, dolphins and "Benny" the beluga whale.



Anna Cucknell of ZSL said: "The restored 'Mother Thames' – as we call her – is an essential nursery habitat. Harbour seal pups can swim within hours of birth, which means they are well adapted to grow up in tidal estuaries, like the Thames. By the time the tide comes in they can swim away on it. Grey seals, on the other hand, take longer to be comfortable in the water, so breed elsewhere and come to the Thames later to feed."

ZSL has conducted Thames seal population estimates annually since 2013. The most recent results, from 2017, recorded 1,104 harbour seals and 2,406 grey seals across the estuary.

The surveys show that seal numbers are rising but it is not yet known if this is due to resident seals having pups or adults moving in from other areas.

(Source: The Guardian)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ج

97% of Iran affected by long-term drought: expert

Based on the data collected over the past decade approximately 97 percent of the country is affected by long-term drought, director of the national drought warning and monitoring center, Sadeq Ziaei, has said.

Some 12.7 percent of the country is hit by extremely severe drought, 53.6 percent of the country is affected by severe drought while 24.8 percent of the country is facing moderate drought and 5.9 percent of the country is withstanding mild drought, ISNA news agency quoted Ziaei as saying on Wednesday. He went on to say that extremely severe long-term drought has had negative effects on 14.2 percent of the country's total population, severe long-term drought has hit 47 percent of the country's population, 30.7 percent of the country's population is affected by moderate long-term drought and 5.1 percent of the population is stricken with mild drought.

۹۷ درصد مساحت ایران تحت تاثیر خشکسالی است

صادق ضیائی‌ان رئیس مرکز ملی خشکسالی و مدیریت بحران سازمان هواشناسی اعلام کرد: بررسی داده‌های ۱۰ ساله خشکسالی بیانگر آن است که ۹۷ درصد مساحت ایران تحت تاثیر خشکسالی بلندمدت است.

ضیائی‌ان در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا گفت: از این مقدار ۵۳.۶ درصد مساحت کشور با خشکسالی شدید، ۱۲.۷ درصد با خشکسالی بسیار شدید، ۲۴.۸ درصد مساحت با خشکسالی متوسط و ۵.۹ درصد مساحت با خشکسالی خفیف مواجه هستند.

وی ادامه داد: ۲ درصد جمعیت ایران با خشکسالی بسیار شدید بلندمدت است همچنین ۴۷ درصد جمعیت کشور با خشکسالی شدید، ۳۰.۷ درصد جمعیت با خشکسالی متوسط و ۵.۱ درصد جمعیت با خشکسالی خفیف دست و پنجه نرم می‌کنند.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"fore-"

■ **Meaning:** before, front

■ **For example:** Can dreams *foretell* the future?

PHRASAL VERB

Hack somebody off

■ **Meaning:** to annoy someone

■ **For example:** His attitude really hacks me off!

IDIOM

Bring something/nothing to the table

■ **Explanation:** if you participate in negotiations and bring nothing to the table, you have nothing of interest to offer the other side

■ **For example:** "We'll never reach an agreement if we don't all bring something to the table."

Syrian MP Discloses Erdogan's Abundant Compromises on Idlib in Russia Visit

TEHRAN (FNA) — A senior Syrian legislator said that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has in his recent visit to Russia made big compromises over Idlib.

Safwan al-Qorbi, the representative of Idlib province in the Syrian parliament, told the Arabic-language al-Watan newspaper on Monday that Erdogan is in a bottleneck politically on the situation of Idlib province.

He underlined Russia's role in harnessing Turkey's uncontrollable performance in Idlib, and said the Turkish convoys were attacked in the countryside of Idlib and the residents of these regions blame the terrorist groups and Ankara for their dire conditions.

Al-Qorbi referred to Erdogan's recent visit to Moscow, and said, "Certainly, the Turkish president has made big compromises and it was a hasty meeting to decrease the fire of the Syrian army attacks. They thought that taking back certain regions in Idlib needs one month in practice but the Syrian army liberated it within days."

Hence, Turkey came to develop the panic that if it doesn't make major compromises, Idlib would soon be captured altogether by the Syrian army, he added.

Relevant reports said on Sunday that Ankara had promised Moscow to dissolve Tahrir al-Sham al-Hay'at (the Levant Liberation Board or the Al-Nusra Front) terrorist



group in Northern Syria to return to the earlier-agreed Sochi agreement.

al-Watan newspaper quoted sources close to the National Liberation Front and Tahrir al-Sham as saying that Erdogan has in a recent meeting with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin vowed to dissolve Tahrir al-Sham and other affiliated terrorist groups, including Horras al-Din and Ansar al-Touhid, within 8 days.

They said that the ceasefire declared by the Syrian army on Saturday was also in line with the agreement, adding that one of the conditions demanded by Syria was its army's control over a vast area of Hama-Idlib international road.

The sources underlined possible opposition of Tahrir al-Sham to Turkey's agreement with Russia, saying that based on the agreement, in case of Ankara's inability to

implement its promises, the Russian and Syrian armies will resume their military operations towards the towns of Ma'arat al-No'man and Saraqib on Hama-Idlib international road.

The Syrian Army on Saturday agreed to ceasefire in the demilitarized zone of Idlib after making massive advances in the Southern part of the province.

The Arabic-language SANA news agency quoted a battlefield source as saying that the Syrian Army has declared implementation of truce in the demilitarized zone while reiterating that it will respond to any violation of ceasefire by the terrorists.

After taking full control of al-Tamane'ah strategic town, the Syrian Army continued its advances in Southern Idlib and regained control of the towns of al-Khovein al-Kabir, al-Sakiat, Eastern and Western Farms of al-Tamane'ah, Tal Turki, Tal Sayyed Jafar and strategic Sayyed Ali Hilltop just one kilometer to the North of al-Tamane'ah that overlooks al-Azizieh-Tahtaya Road.

The battlefield sources also reported that the Syrian Army troops killed at least 37 Tahrir al-Sham al-Hay'at, Haras al-Din and Turkistani terrorists and destroyed several of their military vehicles and equipment.

Red Cross Says over 100 Killed in Saudi Strike on Yemen Prison

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — More than 100 people are believed to have been killed in an airstrike by Saudi warplanes on a detention center in Yemen, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Following the strikes by Saudi-led jets, the ICRC rushed to the scene in the city of Dhamar with medical teams and hundreds of body bags.

"The location that was hit has been visited by ICRC before," said Franz Rauchenstein, the committee's head of delegation for Yemen.

"It's a college building that has been empty and has been used as a detention facility for a while. What is most disturbing is that (the attack was) on a prison. To hit such a building is shocking and saddening — prisoners are protected by international law," he said, The Guardian reported.

Rauchenstein said more than 100 people were estimated to be dead and at least 40 survivors were being treated for their injuries in hospitals in the city, south of the capital, Sana'a.



ICRC teams collecting bodies were "working relentlessly to find survivors under the rubble", he said, but cautioned that the chances of finding any were very slim.

Footage obtained by AFP showed heavy damage to the building and several bodies lying in the rubble, as bulldozers worked to clear away huge piles of debris.

The Saudi-led coalition claimed in a statement on Sunday that its aerial assaults on Dhamar had targeted a military site belonging to the Houthi Ansarullah movement.

Saudi Arabia and its allies launched the war on Yemen in March 2015 in an attempt to reinstall the Riyadh-allied former regime and crush the Houthi Ansarullah movement -- objectives that have failed to materialize due to Yemenis' stiff resistance.

Since the war began, there have been tens of thousands of civilian casualties. Millions of Yemenis now subsist beneath the poverty line and hundreds of thousands of children are suffering and dying from malnutrition.

The Western-backed military aggression, coupled with a naval blockade, has also destroyed Yemen's infrastructure and led to a massive humanitarian crisis.

'Hezbollah weakened Netanyahu's position'

Do you think Hezbollah's attack will affect the popularity of Netanyahu before the Israeli parliamentary elections?

Hezbollah's response certainly undermines Netanyahu's position in the upcoming election because he could not protect his troops. Netanyahu intended to show himself strong enough to protect Israel against Syria and Lebanon by carrying out aggression against Beirut and therefore, he must

be elected in the upcoming elections. The Hezbollah attacks weakened Netanyahu in Israel.

What is the impact of Seyed Hassan Nasrallah's threats and statements on the Zionist regime?

The attacks of Resistance killed and wounded the Zionists, and Netanyahu cannot ignore the reality. The results of Netanyahu's attacks on Lebanon and Syria were not in his favor.

Hezbollah declared and delivered on its threat. Hezbollah killed and wounded a number of Israeli troops in its recent attack, but Netanyahu failed to respond for a second time.

Can the recent clash between the Lebanese Resistance forces and the Zionists result in a major war?

This confrontation will not result in a wider war in the region because Israel avoided targeting residential areas when it bombed

southern Lebanon. It means that the Zionists were reluctant to kill civilians in order to prevent Hezbollah from responding, as well as escalating clashes.

Netanyahu announced at a news conference the end of the military operation despite the readiness of his army. So all the issues show that the confrontation is limited and will not result in a longer and wider battle between Lebanon and Israel in the region.

Thousands of Iraqi Izadis Still in ISIL's Captivity in Syria

TEHRAN (FNA) — A sum of 3,000 Izadis are still in custody of the ISIL terrorists in Syria, an Iraqi parliamentarian said.

The representative of Izadi in the Iraqi parliament told the Arabic-language al-Ma'aloumeh news website that the terrorists still have 3,000 abducted Izadi people in their captivity.

He underlined that all the abducted Iraqi Izadi people are still held by the ISIL (also known as ISIS or DAESH) in Syria.

The Izadi people of Iraq became target of crimes of ISIL terrorists in 2014.

Back in August 2014, Daesh terrorists overran the town of Sinjar, killing, raping, and enslaving large numbers of

Izadi Kurds.

The region was recaptured in November 2015, during an operation by Kurdish Peshmerga forces and Izadi fighters.

The Office of Kidnapped Affairs in the Northern Iraqi city of Dohuk said last year that around 3,500 Izadi Kurds were still being held captive by Daesh, adding that a large proportion of the abductees were women and children.

The Endowments and Religious Affairs Ministry of Kurdistan Regional Government announced last August that Daesh's genocide against Izadis had forced nearly 360,000 members of the minority to flee their hometowns, and another 90,000 to leave Iraq and take refuge in other countries.



Al-Jolani Collaborating with Washington to Prevent Dissolution of Tahrir Al-Sham

TEHRAN (FNA) — Ringleader of Tahrir al-Sham al-Hay'at (the Levant Liberation Board or the Al-Nusra Front) Abu Mohammed al-Jolani has collaborated with Washington in the recent air raids on affiliated terrorist groups in Idlib with the aim of defeating Turkey's efforts to dissolve Tahrir al-Sham in Northern Syria.

The Arabic-language al-Watan newspaper quoted sources affiliated to Tahrir al-Sham as saying on Monday that the recent US airstrikes against the terrorists' command centers between the towns of Kafraya and Ma'arat Misrin in Northern Idlib were carried out through the intel provided by al-Jolani to the US.

They added that he has given the Americans a list of the bases and weapons and equipment caches of Tahrir al-Sham and other affiliated groups, including Ansar al-Touhid and Horras al-Din which had under Turkey's pressure declared their defection from Tahrir al-Sham.

The sources said that Washington's military intervention in Idlib after the ceasefire

was declared and after the Russian-Turkish meeting in Moscow is aimed at making ineffective Ankara's efforts under the Sochi agreement.

Relevant reports said on Sunday that Ankara had promised Moscow to dissolve Tahrir al-Sham al-Hay'at terrorist group in Northern Syria to return to the earlier-agreed Sochi agreement.

al-Watan newspaper quoted sources close to the National Liberation Front and Tahrir al-Sham as saying that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has in a recent meeting with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin vowed to dissolve Tahrir al-Sham and other affiliated terrorist groups, including Horras al-Din and Ansar al-Touhid, within 8 days.

They said that the ceasefire declared by the Syrian army on Saturday was also in line with the agreement, adding that one of the conditions demanded by Syria was its army's control over a vast area of Hama-Idlib international road.

The sources underlined possible opposition of Tahrir al-Sham to Turkey's agree-



ment with Russia, saying that based on the agreement, in case of Ankara's inability to implement its promises, the Russian and Syrian armies will resume their military operations towards the towns of Ma'arat al-No'man and Saraqib on Hama-Idlib international road.

Johnson will throw No Deal Brexit rebels out of the Conservative Party within 48 hours

Downing Street cancelled Sunday's showdown talks with rebels after former Justice Secretary David Gauke said he would vote for the rebel bill to delay Brexit this week even if it meant losing the Tory whip.

His hardline stance was blamed for the PM's decision to cancel the meeting.

Mr Gauke said: "Sometimes there is a point where you have to judge between your own personal interests and the national interest and the national interest has to come first."

In another sign of the Government's hardball approach, Michael Gove refused to rule out the Government breaking the law to force through a No Deal Brexit on October 31.

The key Cabinet Minister in charge of No Deal planning left open the prospect of Mr Johnson ignoring fresh legislation requiring him to seek another Brexit extension.

Asked if the PM would obey such a law, Mr Gove told the Andrew Marr Show on Sunday: "Let's see what the legislation says."

His comments sparked fresh outrage from Remainers, with Labour's Brexit chief Sir Keir Starmer blasting: "For ministers not to confirm that this Government will accept and comply with legislation lawfully passed is breathtaking. The Prime Minister must make a statement on this straightaway. No Government is above the law."

Boris Johnson made the decision to effectively sack Tory MPs who rebel this week over Sunday lunch with Tory whips at his Chequers country estate.

They plotted the hardball tactics as they munched on spiced lamb served with potatoes and vegetables and a plum tart and custard dessert.

On Sunday night a senior source from the Whips' Office said: "There is a chance of a deal on October 17 only because Brussels realises the Prime Minister is totally committed to leaving on October 31. All MPs face a simple choice on Tuesday: to vote with the Government and preserve the chance of a deal or vote with Corbyn and destroy any chance of a deal."

Meanwhile The Sun can reveal that Philip Hammond is trying to rush through the process of being re-elected as a Tory MP before he gets kicked out for rebelling against a No Deal Brexit. All Tories must get formally re-nominated by their local party association in a process the MP alone can trigger.

Mr Hammond is sending his application in early because he wants to get on the front foot amid attempts by local members to de-select him.

He is expected to write to his association chiefs this week to ask to be re-nominated.

If they refuse, then it goes down to a vote of all local Tory members.

Mr Hammond confirmed to The Sun that he was beginning the reselection process.

He said: "Yes I will be doing that."

Russia voices regret over U.S. cruise missile test in violation of INF treaty

TEHRAN (MNA) — The recent test-firing of a ground-based cruise missile by the United States is "regrettable", said Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov on Tuesday.



He also added that the launch of the missile by the U.S. a day earlier showed that America had long been planning to abandon a bilateral nuclear treaty with Russia, according to Press TV.

The U.S. Defense Department announced on Monday that it had tested a cruise missile for the first time since Washington scrapped the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) earlier this year.

The missile blasted from a launcher on San Nicolas Island, a Navy test site off the coast of Los Angeles, California, and sped above the Pacific Ocean for more than 500 kilometers before striking its designated target, the Pentagon said in a statement.

"Data collected and lessons learned from this test will inform the Department of Defense's development of future intermediate-range capabilities," it added.

The test marks a new period for the American military following the August 2 demise of the INF agreement, which had been signed in December 1987 by the then-U.S. President Ronald Reagan and Soviet Union leader Mikhail Gorbachev, eliminating an entire class of nuclear-capable missiles.

The pact forced the rival superpowers to scrap more than 2,600 land-based missiles considered destabilizing to Europe due to their capability to launch a nuclear strike from anywhere without early warning.

It was not clear how the U.S. would proceed to employ the new weapon.

However, U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper has indicated that the chance for a deployment now exists in Asia as a deterrent.

"The Department of Defense will fully pursue the development of these ground-launched conventional missiles." Asked by reporters when such missiles would be deployed in Asia, Esper said he preferred them to be installed in "months."

Back on August 6, Russian President Putin had said that Moscow would be forced to start developing short and intermediate-range land-based nuclear missiles if the U.S. started doing so after the termination of an arms control treaty by the U.S..

He had also warned that Washington's endeavors to dismantle the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty can result in an unrestrained arms race.

Messi, Ronaldo, Van Dijk in FIFA The Best final 3

Liverpool defender Virgil van Dijk has been shortlisted for the 2019 FIFA Men's The Best award, alongside Juventus forward Cristiano Ronaldo and Barcelona's Lionel Messi.

The trio were also nominated for the UEFA Men's Player of the Year award, with Van Dijk coming out on top.

Two members of the United States' World Cup-winning side have been shortlisted for the FIFA Women's The Best award in Megan Rapinoe and Alex Morgan, with England's Lucy Bronze also in contention.



USWNT manager Jill Ellis is up against England's Phil Neville and Netherlands' Sarina Wiegman for the Women's coach award.

The Men's coach award is dominated by the Premier League with Manchester City's Pep Guardiola, Liverpool's Jurgen Klopp and Tottenham's Mauricio Pochettino making the final three.

Liverpool's Alisson, Manchester City's Ederson and Barcelona's Marc-Andre ter Stegen have been nominated for the Men's Best Goalkeeper award, with Sweden's Hedvig Lindahl, Chile's Christiane Endler and Netherlands' Sari van Veenendaal in contention for the Women's award.

Messi was also on the shortlist for FIFA's Puskas award for the best goal of 2019 alongside Daniel Zsori and Juanfer Quintero.

FIFA's The Best award has been around since 2016 and is a renovation of the FIFA World Player of the Year honour, which had merged with the Ballon d'Or from 2010 to 2015.

Ronaldo claimed the first two Men's The Best awards in 2016 and 2017, but his former Real Madrid teammate Luka Modric is the holder after he helped Los Blancos win a third successive Champions League and he later reached the World Cup final with Croatia.

Van Dijk helped Liverpool win the Champions League in 2019, while Ronaldo and Messi won the league titles in Italy and Spain respectively.

Messi, who was twice a runner-up to Ronaldo for this award, won the European Golden Shoe with 36 goals in La Liga last season.

(Source: Soccernet)

Mike Bryan fined \$10,000 for gun gesture at US Open

American doubles player Mike Bryan was fined \$10,000 by the US Open on Sunday for his using racquet to make a shooting gesture at a line judge.

Bryan, playing alongside twin brother Bob, held his racquet upside down and pointed it towards the official after successfully challenging an incorrect call.

Chair umpire Mariana Alves issued a code violation against Mike Bryan for unsportsmanlike conduct.

The Bryan brothers, winners of 16 Grand Slam doubles titles as a team, went on to win the second-round match 4-6, 7-5, 6-3 against Roberto Carballes Baena of Spain and Argentina's Federico Delbonis.

It is the highest fine received by a male player so far at this year's tournament.

"I apologize for any offense I may have caused. We won the point and the gesture was meant to be playful," Bryan said in a statement cited by the New York Times.

"But given the recent news and political climate I understand how my gesture could be viewed as insensitive. I promise that I will never do anything like this again."

Seven people were killed in Texas on Saturday in the latest of several mass shootings to occur in the United States this year.

(Source: AFP)

International break leaves Zidane with just 12 players

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane is facing a conundrum ahead of his side's next LaLiga Santander match at home to Levante, due to multiple players being busy on international duty and others facing injury.

Los Blancos will host Paco Lopez's team in two weeks' time, where they are tasked with returning to winning ways after their 2-2 draw against Villarreal.

As he prepares for that match, Zidane is missing 14 players and their focus will now be switched from club to country.

Just 12 players will remain with Zidane, although five of them are injured.

That means only Alvaro Odriozola, Nacho, Marcelo, Ferland Mendy, Karim Benzema, Mariano and Lucas Vazquez will be reporting to Valdebebas over the next week.

(Source: Marca)

'Is it worth it?' Ricciardo reflected after Hubert death

Daniel Ricciardo says he considered pulling out of the Belgian Grand Prix after the death on Saturday of Formula 2 racer Anthoine Hubert.

It was the first death at a Grand Prix weekend since Ayrton Senna and Roland Ratzenberger were killed at the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix.

Jules Bianchi died in July 2015 from injuries he sustained at the 2014 Japanese Grand Prix.

Australian Ricciardo, who was a friend of Bianchi and raced on that day at Suzuka, admitted he had to ask himself if he really wanted to compete given what was going through his head.

"You question, is it really worth it?" said the Renault driver after finishing 14th on Sunday.

"At the end of the day, it is a simple question but a pretty honest one as well.

"It's our job and it's our profession and it's our life, but also it's still just racing cars around in circles."

He added that the sight of Hubert's family at the minute's silence held at the circuit on Sunday morning had given him strength.

"I could not imagine being in their position, I felt they were a lot stronger than any of us."

Belgian authorities opened a manslaughter inquiry on Monday into the circumstances around Hubert's fatal accident as the sport's ruling body said improved safety standards and research into better protection for drivers would never stop.

(Source: France 24)

Djokovic says 'life goes on' as injury wrecks US Open defense

Top-ranked defending champion Novak Djokovic said "life goes on" after a shoulder injury forced him to quit Sunday's clash with Stan Wawrinka in the last 16 of the US Open.

Wawrinka, the 23rd seed and 2016 champion, led Djokovic 6-4, 7-5, 2-1 when the Serb quit with a nagging left shoulder problem that had troubled him since the start of the tournament.

"The pain was constant for weeks now. Some days higher, some days with less intensity and obviously taking different stuff to kill the pain instantly," Djokovic said.

"Sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn't. You just know when you know, I guess, when you feel like you're not able to hit the shot anymore."

Djokovic refused to expand on the nature of his injury, which had caused him considerable pain during a second-round win over Juan Ignacio Londero.

"I retired and I told you it's left shoulder. I have nothing more to talk about," he said.

"I don't want to talk about my injuries. I said that in the past. I'm sticking to that."

Djokovic had claimed he felt "almost pain-free" following a straight-sets defeat of Denis Kudla in round three, but the problem resurfaced against Wawrinka in the first meeting between the pair since the final here three years ago.

The world number one received treatment before the start of the third set against



Wawrinka but soon threw in the towel, the sixth time he has retired at a Grand Slam tournament.

"It is frustrating. Very frustrating. Obviously not the first, not the last player to get injured and to withdraw from one of the biggest events in sport," he said. "But obviously I just came off the court, so of course it hurts."

"Obviously I'm in the midst of unfortunate situation, and I have to, you know, suffer the consequences of that. And as I said, I'm not the first nor the last one. Life goes on."

'Long road ahead'

But Djokovic, winner of four of the past five Slam events and 16 overall, remained bullish about his chances of eventually catching and surpassing long-time rival Roger Federer, who holds the men's record of 20 major titles.

"It's no secret that I have of course desire and a goal to reach the most Slams and reach Roger's record," Djokovic said.

"But at the same time, it's a long road ahead hopefully for me I hope I can play for many more years. I'm planning to. I don't see an end behind the corner at all.

"Now it's a matter of keeping my body and mind in shape and trying to still peak at these kind of events that are majors and that are the most significant in our sport."

It marked just the second time in the past decade Djokovic had pulled out of a Grand Slam match, having last retired during a 2017 Wimbledon quarter-final against Tomas Berdych with an elbow injury.

That setback prompted him to shut it down for the remainder of the season and led to questions about his future. His spectacular return to form 12 months later silenced those concerns, and he is hopeful of a swift recovery.

"This season is not yet over," he said, reflecting on a year in which he added another Australian Open and Wimbledon title to his collection.

"Obviously Grand Slam season is done for me. I mean, I won two Slams out of four and played semis in French. I had a really good Grand Slam season. I cannot complain, not at all.

"There is plenty of big tournaments ahead. Rankings-wise, plenty of points to defend for me and try to withhold that ranking of number one.

"I just hope I'll get a chance to be competing, because once I'm healthy I actually like my chances playing in Asia. And also indoor season, I play historically pretty well in those last couple months of the year."

(Source: AFP)

Rear gunner Vettel helps team mate Leclerc to victory



Four-times Formula One champion Sebastian Vettel found himself in the unfamiliar position of playing rear gunner to young Ferrari team mate Charles Leclerc in Sunday's Belgian Grand Prix.

The German, who started second alongside Leclerc, struggled from the outset to extract the race-leading speed of the 21-year-old, who went on to win ahead of Lewis Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas, was pulling out of his Ferrari.

Hoping to end a victory drought stretching to last year's Belgian race, any chances Vettel had vanished after Mercedes tricked Ferrari into pitting him early.

"For the team, yes, I'm happy," said Vettel, who finished fourth after making a second pitstop in the closing stages of the race.

"For myself I'm not happy. From the first stop onwards, it was clear we wouldn't be in the fight."

"So all I could do by then is serve the team." His hopes of victory dashed, Vettel switched to a supporting role to help his team mate clinch Ferrari's first win of the season.

Left out on fading tyres, Vettel had just enough to hold Hamilton up and allow Leclerc to win by less than a second.

In only his first season with Ferrari

and second in Formula One, Leclerc has increasingly had the measure of Vettel, who has looked a shadow of the driver that won four titles on the trot between 2010-13.

Aside from taking Ferrari's first win of the year, Leclerc has three pole positions to Vettel's one and has qualified ahead of the German for the last six races.

After his win on Sunday, he lies just 12 points behind the 32-year-old in the overall standings.

Used to being a team's undisputed number one, Vettel, leading after the pitstops at one stage, was even asked to make way for Leclerc.

"It is never an easy call. I have to say," said Ferrari team principal Mattia Binotto, explaining the decision.

"I think there were not many choices today."

"We had to anticipate Seb's pit to protect himself from the Mercedes otherwise Hamilton would have stopped and would have undercut."

"So they were on different strategies and early on we thought we were losing time and that would not be the best thing for the team on that occasion."

(Source: Mirror)

Racist abuse mars Lukaku's winning penalty for Inter



Inter Milan's Belgium international Romelu Lukaku was subjected to racist abuse as he scored a second-half penalty to earn his new side a 2-1 victory at Cagliari in Serie A on Sunday.

The former Manchester United striker appeared to be the target of monkey chants from the home crowd at the Sardegna Arena as he prepared to take the decisive spot kick.

Former Juventus forward Moise Kean was also on the receiving end of racist abuse by Cagliari fans at the same stadium last season.

The 26-year-old Lukaku sent goalkeeper Robin Olsen the wrong way with 20 minutes remaining to mark his second goal in as many games for his new club before turning to glare at the home fans responsible for the taunts.

"I think that in Italy we must improve a lot and be more educated and respectful towards those doing their job," Inter coach Antonio Conte told a news conference.

"In other countries you support the team, you don't insult the opposition like this. There must be the maximum respect."

"Today I was treated well and wasn't insulted, other times it hasn't happened

like that and it's not nice."

Lautaro Martinez had opened the scoring just before the half-hour only for the hosts to level through Joao Pedro soon after the break.

Inter lead Serie A after two rounds on six points along with Torino and champions Juventus, while Cagliari have yet to pick up a point.

The Milan club had got their season off to the perfect start with a 4-0 home win over promoted Lecce, but they struggled to find the same swagger against a Cagliari side featuring former Inter midfielder Radja Nainggolan.

"It was a different game to the win against Lecce, as I had warned everyone this would be tough," Conte added.

"Coming to Cagliari is never a walk in the park. Let it be known, I am very demanding and there is a lot we need to do in order to improve, but I also say we are glad to have won in a difficult arena."

Martinez headed the visitors in front after 27 minutes but his celebrations were cut short by a raised offside flag, although the goal was awarded after a lengthy Video Assistant Referee (VAR) review.

(Source: Reuters)

Wawrinka returns to top form two years after knee surgery

Three-time Grand Slam champion Stan Wawrinka is finally feeling great again two years after knee surgery, and that's about to become a major headache for his US Open rivals.

The 34-year-old Swiss advanced to the US Open quarter-finals on Sunday when world number one and defending champion Novak Djokovic retired with a left shoulder injury trailing Wawrinka 6-4, 7-5, 2-1.

"I was feeling good on the court," Wawrinka said. "I was playing well. The more the match was going, better I was playing, I was hitting really hard the ball. I was feeling great on the court."

"I'm super happy with the level. For sure it's very special to play the number one player in the world. Sorry he had to retire to finish the game like that."

"But for me, most important is the way I'm playing, the way I'm moving. Tonight I think was really high level."

It's the same level Wawrinka showed in beating Djokovic in the 2016 US Open final and 2015 French Open final. He also won the 2014 Australian Open over Rafael Nadal for his first Grand Slam crown.

Wawrinka underwent 2017 knee surgery and has spent two years recovering that form.

"I have been practicing now since many months," Wawrinka said. "I know how I feel in Grand Slam. I know how I get to my best level. Sometimes I struggle a little bit in



the first few rounds, but if I get the win, if I can pass those matches, I know my confidence gets better."

"I'm happy with the way I'm playing so far and hopefully I can keep going."

Wawrinka reached a Tuesday matchup against Russian fifth seed Daniil Medvedev, who made an obscene gesture in his third-round match to get the crowd booing him and revealed in the jeers again in his fourth-round win.

"I saw a lot of drama happening this year at the US Open, but it's a lot of fun also to watch for everybody," Wawrinka said.

"I understand how you can get (energy) from any atmos-

phere. That's why you play. I understand the enjoyment of that, not only in positive but also in negative. You always look for something, and that's going to be interesting."

'A great atmosphere'

Medvedev won his only match against Wawrinka in the 2017 first round at Wimbledon, just before Wawrinka's surgery. Last month, Medvedev won at Cincinnati and was runner-up at Montreal and Washington in the biggest US Open tune-up events.

"He has been playing amazing tennis, making final after final, winning Cincinnati," Wawrinka said. "It's going to be interesting match to play against him. I'm looking forward for it. It's going to be, for sure, a great level. I'm excited to play."

Wawrinka's potential semi-final foe is compatriot Roger Federer, a 20-time Grand Slam winner who owns a 23-3 career record over Wawrinka with seven wins in a row since Wawrinka's last win in the 2015 French Open quarter-finals.

But for now, Wawrinka is enjoying the US Open spotlight. "All I can think is about the atmosphere, about to be back in the night session," Wawrinka said. "Here it's always something special, always a great atmosphere, and I was really happy to be back."

(Source: Eurosport)

Iran lose to Tunisia at 2019 FIBA World Cup

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran failed to recover from disappointing opening loss against Puerto Rico at the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2019 and lost to Tunisia 79-67 in their second match on Monday.

Team Melli see their qualification chances getting trimmed since they are facing Spain in the last match of the round in Group C.

Tunisia will meet Puerto Rico in the match that will determine which team will advance.

Former Real Madrid player Salah Mejri led the winners with a huge double-double of 22 points and 15 rebounds.

Aaron Geramipour scored 18 with 8 boards for Iran, Haddadi finished with 13 on 5-of-12 shooting at the Guangzhou Gymnasium.

The tournament takes place in China and features 32 teams from around the globe.

After playing the other three teams in the group, the top two teams from each group will advance to the second round of the group phase. Teams will play two games each in the second group-phase round, and the top two teams from the four groups will advance to an eight-team, single-elimination tournament.

The 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup is the 18th tournament of the FIBA Basketball World Cup for men's national basketball teams.

The tournament will also act as qualification for the 2020 Summer Olympics, which will take the top two teams from each of the Americas and Europe, and the top team from each of Africa, Asia and Oceania, alongside the tournament's host China.



Iran Olympic president Salehi Amiri asks Saeid Mollaei to return to his home

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iranian Olympic Committee president Reza Salehi Amiri says that Saeid Mollaei can go back to Iran without any problems.

The International Judo Federation (IJF) said late Sunday that the Iranian judo athlete was ordered to withdraw from last week's competition by Iranian deputy sports minister Mohammadreza Davarzani.

The IJF said Mollaei was then called by Salehi Amiri to throw the match to avoid Israeli representative.

Salehi Amiri has written a letter to International Olympic

Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach and said IJF President Marius Vizer has threatened Mollaei from returning to Iran.

"Vizer tries to convince Mollaei to compete under a refugee flag at Tokyo 2020. Without a doubt, the IJF head has attempted to persuade Mollaei to request asylum in Germany and that's why our judoka failed to show his good performance in the world championship," Salehi Amiri writes.

"Saeid Mollaei can go back to Iran without any problems and we welcome him with open arms," he adds.

Opening win will set us up nicely, says Uzbekistan's Cuper

Uzbekistan coach Hector Cuper is hoping his side can kick off their FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023 Asian Qualifiers campaign with a win over Palestine on Thursday to set the tone for the Central Asian side's challenge.

Uzbekistan have established themselves among the upper echelon of Asian football but have yet to represent the Continent on the game's greatest stage and Cuper — who led Egypt to the FIFA World Cup in Russia in 2018 — is determined to make a strong start to their challenge later this week.

"It's always very important to start with three points, because a favorable result will lay the foundation for the next victories," the Argentinian told the-AFC.com. "Talking about Palestine, I should state that they are a really tough and aggressive opponent who will be trying to take advantage of playing in front of their fans."

"Moreover, playing on an artificial pitch is always unpleasant for players who are not accustomed to playing on this kind of surface conditions. But we are going to do everything possible in order to get

a good result."

Uzbekistan face Palestine in Group D, which also features five-time FIFA World Cup qualifiers Saudi Arabia as well as Singapore and Yemen, who meet in their opening game in Singapore on Thursday.

And while Cuper acknowledges the Saudis will go into the second round of qualifying as favorites to claim pole position in the group, he believes it is up to Herve Renard's side to prove themselves on the pitch.

"There is no team to be underestimated in our group," he said. "In theory, Saudi Arabia may seem to be the main contender to win the group as they were in the first pot during the draw, but now they need to prove it on the pitch also."

"Therefore, we need to treat all our opponents very seriously and to show our best to qualify for the next round of the Qualifiers. In my opinion, all the teams in our group have an equal chance to go to the next phase."

(Source: the-afc)

Head coaches set for battle of wills

From wily veterans to willing novices, the men charged with leading the 40 nations seeking to advance to the next phase of qualifying for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and the AFC Asian Cup China 2023 will be putting the finishing touches to the preparations as the countdown to kick off the second round of the Asian Qualifiers ticks ever louder.

The range in know-how between those taking part is vast, and no one brings more experience to the campaign than Marcello Lippi, the man who led Italy to their fourth world title in 2006 and who is charged with ending China PR's lengthy FIFA World Cup drought.

Lippi, of course, has been here before. The 71-year-old was appointed China coach in November 2016, two games into the final phase of qualifying for Russia 2018 and immediately sparked an upturn in the team's fortunes before narrowly missing out on qualification.

The former Juventus head coach will be looking to build on that showing as he leads his team through Group A, which also features a Syria side led by the experienced Fajr Ibrahim, Philippines who will be led by Goran Milojevic and Scott Cooper, the Maldives with Germany's Peter Segrt at the helm and a Guam team coached by Australian Karl Dodd.

At the other end of the spectrum from Lippi is Afghanistan's Anoush Dastgir. At just 29 years of age, he is the youngest coach to be working in the Asian Qualifiers, having replaced the well-travelled Otto Pfister midway through last year.

Dastgir faces a major challenge in an evenly matched Group E, where his team meet Felix Sanchez's AFC Asian Cup champions Qatar as well as an India side under new head coach Igor Stimac, Erwin Koeman's Oman and a Bangladesh side coached by Englishman Jamie Day.

In the space between the extremes of Lippi and Dastgir lies an abundance of coaching talent.

Bert van Marwijk returns for another qualifying campaign, almost a decade after leading his native Netherlands to the final of the FIFA World Cup in South Africa.

He takes charge of the United Arab Emirates as they seek to book a ticket for their first Finals since 1990 and take on Park Hang-seo's Vietnam, a Thai side led by Akira Nishino, who took Japan to the Round of 16 in Russia last year, as well as Simon McMenemy's Indonesia and Tan Cheng Hoe's Malaysia.

Paulo Bento will be sizing up a return to the FIFA World Cup, too, having led his native Portugal in Brazil in 2014 and he will feel well equipped as head coach of a talented Korea Republic side that takes on Liviu Ciobotariu's Lebanon, DPR Korea, Ante Mises's Turkmenistan and a Sri Lanka



side led by Nizam Pakeer Ali in Group H.

Korea Republic will be seeking a 10th consecutive appearance in the FIFA World Cup, having enjoyed a fairytale run to the semi-finals of the 2002 edition which they co-hosted with Japan.

Herve Renard, who tasted success with Zambia and Ivory Coast when he won the 2012 and 2015 African Cup of Nations, shifts his attention to Asia having taken the reins in Saudi Arabia and where he will lock horns with Uzbekistan's Hector Cuper.

The pair last faced off in the quarter-finals of the 2017 African Cup of Nations in Gabon, when Cuper's Egypt handed Renard's Morocco a 1-0 defeat to advance to the last four. The Frenchman will no doubt be looking to avenge that loss when their new teams meet in November and June next year.

Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan have been drawn in Group D and will also play Palestine, Yemen and Singapore.

Marc Wilmots, meanwhile, has been asked to fill Carlos Queiroz's enormous shoes as head coach of Islamic Republic of Iran, with the Belgian charged with maintaining a run that saw the country qualify for each of the last two FIFA World Cup Finals.

The Iranians will be favourites to progress from Group C, with Iraq as potential challengers while Bahrain have undergone a coaching change following the departure of Miroslav Soukup, who has been replaced by Helio Sousa.

Mixu Paatelainen will seek to shake things up with Hong

Kong and Keisuke Honda's learning curve as Cambodia coach — alongside Felix Dalmas — will no doubt continue to fascinate as the former Japan international increasingly shifts his focus to life on the sidelines.

Graham Arnold remains in charge for former AFC Asian Cup champions Australia after their quarter-final exit at the 2019 Continental championship and he will be looking to outwit Vital Borkelmans, who steered Jordan to victory over the Socceroos in the group phase in the UAE in January.

Belgian Borkelmans recently extended his contract with the Jordanians and he will be keen to ensure he builds on the fine work done earlier this year in Group B, where Australia and Jordan also meet a Kuwait side coached by Romeo Jozak, Louis Lancaster's Chinese Taipei and Nepal, now led by Sweden's Johan Kalin.

And finally, Hajime Moriyasu will attempt to extend Japan's run of consecutive FIFA World Cup qualifications to seven as he leads the Samurai Blue into Group F while also juggling the demands of coaching the country's team at next year's Tokyo Olympic Games.

He will butt heads with Aleksander Krestinin, the talented Russian coach who impressed with Kyrgyz Republic at the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019, a Turkmenistan side led by Usmon Toshev as well as German veteran Michael Weiss in Mongolia and ex-Lebanon coach Miodrag Radulovic, the current coach of Myanmar.

(Source: the-afc)

Iran's Hassan Taftian takes bronze at Bellinzona

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iranian athlete Hassan Taftian claimed a bronze medal at the men's 100m at the Galà dei Castelli in Bellinzona, Switzerland, on Sunday.

Reigning world champion Justin Gatlin won the event dipping under the 10 seconds barrier with 9.97 on the brand new track, edging out last year's Bellinzona winner Michael Rodgers, who finished second with 10.00.

Taftian claimed a bronze medal, clocking 10.16.

Galà dei Castelli has drawn top athletes from Switzerland and the rest of the world to Bellinzona every summer since 2011.

Iran taekwondo win title at World Martial Arts Masterships

M N A — Iranian taekwondo team won the team kyorugi event competition of 2019 Martial Arts Masterships in South Korea.

In the final bout, the Iranian team overpowered Russia 26-14 to obtain the title and also to secure 2020 Tokyo Olympics quota where team kyorugi will be held as a test event.

In the group stage, Iran defeated South Korea 28-11 and Chinese Taipei 23-16 to advance to the next round. The team gained a 16-13 victory over Morocco in the semifinal.

Chinese Taipei and Morocco claimed bronze medals of this category.

The Iranian team comprised of Amir Mohammad Bakhshi, Erfan Nazemi, Kimia Hemmati and Kimia Alizadeh.

The international martial arts competition kicked off in Chungju of North Chungcheong Province, about 150 kilometers southeast of Seoul, on Friday for an eight-day run, bringing together about 4,000 martial arts masters and officials from 100 countries worldwide, according to Yonhap News Agency.

Competitions is taking place in a total of 20 non-Western martial arts, including taekwondo, wushu, judo, kendo, muay thai, jujitsu and kickboxing. Dubbed the Martial Arts Olympics, the South Korean government-approved event is also sponsored by the Global Association of International Sports Federation (GAISF).

The Chungju masterships is the second competition held in the central South Korean province, after the first competition was hosted by Cheongju, the capital of the province, about 140 km south of Seoul, in August 2016.

Iranian students win Asian Futsal C'ships

M N A — Iranian students' national futsal team won the Asian Schools Championship in Thailand on Sunday.

East Azarbaijan student futsal team who attended Asian Schools Championship in Thailand as representative of Iran became champions by defeating the student team of Thailand.

The Iranian squad defeated Thailand and Indonesia in the group stage of the tournament and reached the semi-final.

They also defeated China in semi-final and beat Thailand 5-2 in their last encounter on Sunday morning and won the Asian Schools Championship.

The 2019 Asian Schools Championship started on August 26 and wrapped up on September 1, 2019.

Esteghlal club knew about my travel to Italy: Stramaccioni

P L D C — Esteghlal Coach Andrea Stramaccioni says the Iranian club were well informed about his travel to Italy.

Stramaccioni was going to fly back home during the Persian Gulf Pro League break for international duty but Iranian police held him and his three Italian staff members at the airport, claiming their three-month tourist visas had expired.

This was a surprise to Stramaccioni and his men, who have been working for Esteghlal since mid-June.

Esteghlal club announced that their Italian coach didn't want to leave Iran but Stramaccioni denied the club's claim.

"After Foolad match, I went to the airport with my assistants to spend a couple of days in Italy with our families after about two months of intense work. The club was perfectly informed of this, having also organized the transfer to the airport. Unfortunately, for bureaucratic and administrative reasons it was not possible to leave the country," the Italian coach said in an interview with ANSA.

Stramaccioni's job has been considered at risk after just one point from the opening two games.

Reza Ghoochannejhad reaches agreement with PEC Zwolle

T A S N I M — Iran forward Reza Ghoochannejhad has reached an agreement with Eredivisie side PEC Zwolle, De Stentor reported.

Gucci will return to the Netherlands after fourteen months. The 31-year-old Iranian switched from SC Heerenveen to APOEL Nicosia in the summer of 2018.

He then left the team to join Sydney FC on loan in the second half of the A-League season.

Gucci played 10 matches for the Australian team but scored just one goal.

Ghoochannejhad started his football career at SC Heerenveen in 2005 and has also played at Belgian teams Sint-Truiden and Standard Liege.

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Managing Director: Ali Asgari
Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com
Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450
Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The eye is the sentinel of the body, it looks ahead to prevent falling back.

Imam Ali (AS)

“Monster” comes to Iranian bookstores

TEHRAN— American writer Walter Dean Myers’ novel “Monster” has recently been published in Persian by Peydayesh Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Sheida Ranjbar, the 1999 young adult’s novel is about 16-year-old Steve Harmon, who has been charged with the murder of a drugstore owner in Harlem.

To occupy his mind while he is in prison waiting for the trial, Steve starts writing his life story and experiences in a screenplay form.

If Steve is found guilty, the judge might pronounce a sentence of anywhere from twenty years in prison to death. His attorney, Kathy O’Brien, believes that Steve is innocent, but also believes that he must portray himself as such and not give the jury any reason to believe he was involved in the crime. Because Steve is African-American, there is a fear that race may be a factor in how the jury responds to the case.

Meanwhile, the prosecutor, Sandra Petrocelli, begins calling her witnesses, one by one, in an attempt to show that Steve is guilty of murder.

“Monster” was nominated for the National Book Award for Young People’s Literature. It won the Michael L. Printz Award in 2000 and was named a Coretta Scott King Award Honoree the same year.

American filmmaker Anthony Mandler made a screen adaptation of the book in 2018, starring Jennifer Hudson, Kelvin Harrison Jr. and Jennifer Ehle.

Exhibition of posters on Ashura opens in Art Bureau

“The artists have made better and much varied works during the previous editions,” he added.

Fatemeh Hakimi, Ahmad Dindar, Pedram Farrokhnia, Reza Shabani, Simin Honarvar, Abbas Sadi, Mehdi Tamizi and Farhud Moqaddam are among the artists whose works will be placed on exhibit until September 21 at the Abolfazl Aali Gallery of the bureau located on Somayyeh St., off Hafez Ave.

Actress Valerie Harper of “Mary Tyler Moore Show” dies at 80

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Actress Valerie Harper, who won four Emmy awards playing budding feminist Rhoda Morgenstern on the classic 1970s TV series “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” and her own spinoff sitcom, died on Friday at the age of 80.

Harper died on Friday morning, her daughter Cristina Cacciotti said, declining to give further details. Harper’s husband, Tony Cacciotti, said in July that doctors advised that the actress, who was suffering from brain cancer, be placed in hospice care.

Harper had revealed to People magazine in March 2013 she had leptomenigeal carcinomatosis - cancer cells in the membrane of her brain.

She made a surprising comeback after the 2013 diagnosis, which had given her only months to live. Just seven months later she competed on the “Dancing With the Stars” program and in 2015 made an appearance on the sitcom “2 Broke Girls.”

Harper, who also was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2009, stayed busy campaigning for cancer research and taking occasional acting and voice-over jobs as recently as earlier this year.

Harper was still relatively inexperienced as an actress in 1970 when she was cast on “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” - one of the most honored U.S. television shows of the 1970s - as Rhoda Morgenstern, the best friend and neighbor of Moore’s Mary Richards character in Minneapolis.

Rhoda was a Bronx-born career girl who was constantly trying to lose weight, find a boyfriend and dodge her meddling Jewish mother. She had a brassy Bohemian streak, as exemplified by her trademark headscarves, and a grasp of emerging feminist concepts but her self-deprecating wisecracks showed her vulnerabilities.

Bangladeshi troupe performs plays on Sadi in Dhaka

TEHRAN — The Bangladeshi theater troupe Chandrakala has performed its new production “Sheikh Sadi”, a play about the life story of Persian poet Sheikh Muslih od-Din Sadi Shirazi, at the National Theatre Hall of the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy in Dhaka.

Bangladeshi Minister of Cultural Affairs, K. M. Khalid, Iran’s acting cultural attaché, Mohammad-Mehdi Hosseini, and a number of cultural officials of the country attended the opening performance of the play held on last Thursday, Iran’s Islamic Culture and Relations Organization announced on Monday.

“Although Sadi is an international character, we are proud that his words and ideas are deeply ingrained in Bangladeshi society and his stories and poems are discussed in educational and religious centers,” Hosseini said before the performance.

“The troupe has held numerous rehearsals and sessions to give performances that Sadi deserves,” he added.

He pointed to the use of Sadi’s original poems by Bangladeshi people during their religious rituals and said, “This attitude shows the Bangladeshi people’s profound understanding of Sadi as a true mystic.”

He also expressed his hope that “Sheikh Sadi” will be highly regarded by theatergoers during its performances in Bangladesh.

On his part, Khalid also said that he feels proud that his country is organizing a performance on Sadi and added that the Persian poet has never been a stranger in his country as Bangladeshi people have always regarded his poems and stories in their daily life.

Chandrakala president Mamunur Rashid also gave a speech elaborating his



H. R. Anik plays the role of Persian poet Sheikh Muslih od-Din Sadi Shirazi in “Sheikh Sadi” the National Theatre Hall in Dhaka, Bangladesh on August 29, 2019.

troupe’s great efforts to prepare the play for performance.

He also announced his plan to stage the play in India and several other countries in the future.

H. R. Anik is the director of the play written by Apurba Kumar Kundu. Anik also plays the role of Sadi. Hamidur Rahman Pappu has collaborated in the production as a composer while Fazle Rabbi Sukarna

is the set designer of the group.

One of the greatest figures of classical Persian literature, Sadi is famous worldwide for his Bustan (The Orchard) and Gulistan (The Rose Garden).

Iran selects nominees for Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award

TEHRAN — Iran has announced its nominees for the 2020 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, a prestigious Swedish honor to promote children’s and youths’ literature in the world.

The nominees are celebrated writer Mohammadreza Shams and children’s literature expert and reading promoter Mehdi Hajvani.

The nominees have been selected by the Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Youth.

The decision was announced in a meeting held at the association by deputy director Mahmud Barabadi on Monday.

Shams is the writer of the acclaimed books “Wedding” and “Lazy Hero”. Also among his credits are “A Basket of Apple”, “Dream and the Boy”, “Legend of Sly Fox” and “Fox and Rooster”.

Hajvani is a writer and researcher. He is most famous for his reviews of children’s books. He is also the author of the children’s books “Mr. Ahmad” and “Late King, New King”.



This combination photo shows Iranian writers Mehdi Hajvani (L) and Mohammadreza Shams.

The Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award amounts to SEK 5 million (about €570,000), making it the world’s largest award for children’s and young adults’ literature.

The award was established in 2002 by the Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs to commemorate writer Astrid Lindgren and to promote children’s and youths’ literature from around the world.

The list of the candidates will be presented at the Frankfurt Book Fair in October 2019.

The Iranian literati Jamshid Khanian, Ali-Asghar Seyyedabadi, Farhad Hassanzadeh and Hushang Moradi Kermani were Iran’s nominees for the 2019 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.

Iran’s nominations for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award are selected every year by the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, the Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Youth, and the Children’s Book Council of Iran.

Iran to hold 4th Arbaeen Pilgrimage Intl. Theater Festival

TEHRAN — Iran’s Art Bureau announced on Monday it will organize the 4th edition of the Arbaeen Pilgrimage International Theater Festival during the large gathering of Shia Muslims in Iraq.

Several theater troupes from various countries will perform during the festival, Kurosh Zarei, the director of the bureau’s Center for Dramatic Arts said in a press

conference in Tehran.

The plays will be staged in Persian, Arabic, Urdu, English and Turkish for the pilgrims in different Iranian and Iraqi cities.

The festival will open in Iran with onstage and street performances and tazieh (Iranian passion play), and it will come to an end in Karbala on October 16.

Hundreds of thousands of Iranians

embark on a journey to the Iraqi city of Karbala to observe the holy day of Arbaeen at the holy shrines of Imam Hussein (AS), the third Imam of the Shia, and his brother, Hazrat Abbas (AS).

Arbaeen, which will be observed on October 19 this year, marks the end of the 40-day mourning period following the martyrdom of the Imam and his loyal companions on Ashura.



An Iranian troupe performs tazieh in an undated photo.

Joaquin Phoenix discusses preparing for role in “Joker”

VENICE, Italy (AP) — Joaquin Phoenix is having a hard time defining the Joker, but then again, he doesn’t really want to.

The actor spent eight months exploring how a struggling stand-up comedian named Arthur Fleck becomes Batman’s antagonist, the villain with a chilling laugh and a love of chaos. Preparing for the role involved losing quite a bit of weight, studying personality disorders and practicing the laugh over and over again.

“(It’s) very difficult to distill into a soundbite,” Phoenix said Saturday in advance of the world premiere of “Joker” at the Venice International Film Festival. The film is competing for the Golden Lion award at the prestigious festival before launching in theaters on Oct. 4.

The extreme weight loss — reportedly over 50 pounds — led to a kind of madness that helped him get ready for the role, as did a book breaking down the personality types of political assassins. But Phoenix wanted to create a criminal psychopath who wasn’t easy to categorize.

“I didn’t want a psychologist to be able to identify what kind of person he was,” he said. “(I) wanted there to remain a mystery about the character.”

And he was so nervous about getting the laugh right that he asked writer-director Todd Phillips to come to his place so he could “audition” a few, which apparently



Actor Joaquin Phoenix, left, greets director Todd Phillips at the photo call for the film “Joker” at the 76th edition of the Venice Film Festival in Venice, Italy, Saturday, Aug. 31, 2019. (AP/Joel C Ryan)

went on for an uncomfortable amount of time.

The character constantly evolved, even into the shoot. Composer Hildur Guðnadóttir’s haunting score — which she began writing off the script — became a key motivator during the process. Phillips often played snippets on set to help set the tone.

“We were discovering new aspects about his personality up to the very last day,” Phoenix said.

Sometimes the discoveries resulted in debates about whether or not to go back and reshoot.

On the long road to making “Joker” happen, that was par for the course. Phillips said in developing the script he and co-writer Scott Silver pushed each other every day to “come up with something totally insane.”

The movie itself is a massive departure from the current mode of DC Comics films from Warner Bros, like “Wonder Woman” and “Justice League.” It’s not bound by the comics or informed by past portrayals (“This joker’s goal was not to watch the world burn,” Phillips said) but strives to be something entirely new.

“It was a hard movie for us to get made and to convince DC and the studio,” Phillips said. “And in fairness the studio took a bold swing with the movie and let us do exactly what we wanted...there really were no rules and boundaries for it.”

Phillips describes it as a character study in the vein of the 1970s movies he grew up with, such as Martin Scorsese’s “Taxi Driver” and “The King of Comedy.”

Set in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with New York playing Gotham City, his R-rated “Joker” is bounded by gritty realism. It’s led to some early concerns about the violence that audiences can expect from the film.

Panama Papers revisited in Soderbergh’s star-studded “The Laundromat”

VENICE, Italy (Reuters) — A holiday tragedy sends Oscar winner Meryl Streep on a puzzling probe of ambiguous financial dealings in Steven Soderbergh’s “The Laundromat”, a drama based on the massive leak of offshore financial data known as the Panama Papers.

With a cast also including Gary Oldman, Antonio Banderas and Sharon Stone, the Netflix film, which premiered at the Venice

Film Festival on Sunday, seeks to explain the debacle via lessons from characters’ personal stories.

The so-called Panama Papers, consisting of millions of leaked documents from the Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca in April 2016, provoked a global scandal after revealing how the rich and powerful used offshore corporations to evade taxes.

Speaking directly to viewers, Oldman and Banderas portray lawyers Jurgen Mossack and Ramon Fonseca who try to give their side of the story.

In a similar manner to “The Big Short” about the 2007 financial crisis, the two quirkily explain the world of shell companies and offshore accounts to the audience, who are also taken on a journey of illicit dealings

as well as corruption via China, the United States, Mexico and the Caribbean.

“We’re living in a moment where the news cycle is racing and we are racing to keep up with current events and this is an entertaining, flash, funny way of telling a very, very dark black hearted joke, a joke that’s being played on all of us,” Streep told a news conference.