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TEDPIX gains 11,504 points in a week

TEHRAN — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), has risen 11,504 points, or four percent, to 278,674 during the five working days of the past Iranian calendar week (Saturday to Wednesday), IRNA reported.

As previously announced, TEDPIX has risen 13,070 points, or 5.17 percent, to 266,127 at the end of the fifth Iranian

calendar month of Mordad (August 22). Some 64.126 billion securities worth 215.639 trillion rials (about \$5.134 billion) were traded through 6.444 million deals at TSE during the past month, indicating 8 percent and 21 percent drop in terms of the number and value of securities, respectively, while 16 percent fall in the number of trades compared to its previous month. **→4**

Pentagon chief says not after seizing Adrian Darya 1

TEHRAN — U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said on Thursday the Pentagon had no plan to seize the Iranian oil tanker Adrian Darya 1, which was seized off Gibraltar in July and released after a month despite U.S. pressures.

The vessel, formerly named Grace 1, was detained by British Royal Marine commandos off Gibraltar on July 4 on the pretext that it was suspected to be en route to Syria in violation of

European Union sanctions. Iran firmly rejects the claim. Gibraltar released the Iranian vessel on August 15 despite a last-minute legal bid by the United States to have it detained. "We do not talk about plans, but currently I have no plan right now sitting on my desk to do such a thing," Esper told reporters in London when asked if there was any plan to seize the ship, according to Reuters. **→3**

Britain rejects to take tough stance on Iran as Netanyahu meets Johnson

TEHRAN — Downing Street on Thursday appeared to reject Israeli calls for Britain to take a harder line against Iran, despite Tehran warning it will continue to reduce its commitment to the 2015 nuclear deal this weekend.

Boris Johnson met Benjamin Netanyahu in London as the Israeli prime minister continued his campaign to urge

European leaders to abandon the nuclear deal and impose fresh sanctions on Iran, according to The Telegraph. Netanyahu also acknowledged that U.S. President Donald Trump may meet Iran's President Hassan Rouhani at the United Nations this month but said America should keep up economic pressure even if the unprecedented talks take place. **→2**



ARTICLE

Martin Love
Political analyst from North Carolina

Trump and fellow gangsters look increasingly foolish

The maintenance of the notion that Iran's leadership must remain steadfast and patient, as it has been since Donald Trump dumped U.S. participation and support for the JCPOA and slammed Iran's people with draconian sanctions, has never been more imperative, because it is in fact, however tortuous, a winning strategy.

As said before, aside from the fact that the Trump Administration appears desperate to chalk up some kind of "win" in the Mideast and farther east, it continues to embarrass itself in world opinion while Iran curries increased favor incrementally simply because it has remained steady enough and rational enough despite all the sanctions and bad mouthing by the U.S. There mere concept that Iran is or has been an "aggressor" in the Mideast, that it has itself promoted "terror" willy nilly simply by standing firm with the important allies it has such as Syria especially, must be the biggest falsehood of this century so far. But the U.S. desperation is quite palpable.

For example, this week the world learned that Trump through his vapid spokesperson Brian Hook offered the captain of the Iranian oil tanker Adrian Darya some \$15 million and a life of perennial ease if he just sailed his tanker into U.S. hands. Apparently, when the captain, Akilesh Kumar, did nothing but sail closer to Syria (and turned off the ship's transponder) where its oil may eventually be offloaded to a smaller ship than can negotiate a Syrian port, he was also "sanctioned" by the U.S. Had this sailor, an Indian, done the bidding of the Trump gang, he'd likely never have lived long enough to enjoy his sudden wealth: such is the infamy of most anyone overseas who now supports U.S. diktat and bullying. The U.S. looks utterly childish resorting to blackmail with the attempted bribing of ship captains to try to get its claws on the Adrian Darya (or any other vessel transporting Iranian goods).

Some observers have lately questioned whether John Bolton will keep his job and may have been sidelined some by Trump (given the failures of sanctions so far to upend Iran's patient government. **→7**

Railway development highly dependent on private sector's involvement

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN — Expanded transportation via railway is today one of the major pillars of sustainable development for the countries; and it is why the governments usually allocate noticeable funds and resources to development of railway.

In Iran, development of railway has been a very significant plans of the governments in recent year.

The country's Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021) has envisaged that the railway will account for at least 30 percent of cargo transportation and 20 percent of passenger transportation in the country.

Such target requires at least 850 trillion rials (about \$20.238 billion) of investment.

The required investment and also the necessity of empowering domestic production have led the government to take the advantage of private sector's capabilities.

Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) has been witnessing private sector's high contribution to development of railway sector in different fields from building rails to manufacturing locomotives and wagons in the past few years.

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

And then in mid-June of this year, Mapna Group unveiled the first Iranian-made freight

locomotive on the sidelines of the 7th edition of the mentioned exhibition.

In early August, RAI Head Saeed Rasouli said that domestic manufacturers are set to supply over 1,000 locomotives and wagons and also 40,000 tons of rails to RAI by the end of the next Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2021).

He said: "After Mapna Group unveiled their first Iranian-made freight locomotive, RAI ordered the company to manufacture a series of freight and passenger wagons and locomotives, which their production will begin soon."

"Mapna will soon begin the manufacturing process and the wagons will gradually enter the country's rail fleet within the next two years," Rasouli said. **→4**

Cuba calls on the international community to prevent U.S. actions: Alexis Bandrich

TEHRAN — Ambassador of Cuba Mr. Alexis Bandrich Vega in the Anti-Imperialist Tribune convened by the Venezuelan Embassy in Iran, Within the framework of the No More Trump Campaign, called on the international community to prevent U.S actions against the integrity of peoples and stop the hostility, folly and irresponsibility of the current U.S. administration. The following is the full text of his remarks:

U.S. policy towards Cuba has led to the resurgence of the blockade, to the full application of the Helms Burton Act, to the closing of the Consulate in Havana, to the prohibition of travel and exchanges between Cubans and Americans, to the sabotage of Cuban international cooperation, to the siege of our commercial and financial operations, illegal activities of surveillance and persecution of tankers, and threats to shipping



companies, insurance companies and governments to prevent the arrival of fuel to the Island. It is

a genocidal plan to starve our people, provoke destabilization and regime change.

After 60 years, the blockade has caused us losses of 922 thousand 630 million dollars, being the main obstacle to the development of the Cuban economy and a violation of the human rights of our people. Qualifies as an act of genocide, violates the UN Charter and International Law. The idea of destroying Cuba has led and leads to US policy. down a tortuous road, full of lies, mistakes and failures. They have no choice but to lie. The lie is the fundamental resource of US foreign policy. Bolton is a pathological liar. He cannot hide his obsession with Cuba and Venezuela, even if it contravenes the politics of the Pdte. Trump, prevents foreign policy successes in the face of internal problems and threatens his re-election. **→6**



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'Hosseini infants' ceremony held nationwide

TEHRAN — Many mothers across the country gathered on Friday, holding their infants to mark 'Hosseini infants' ceremony in commemoration of Ali Asghar (AS), the six-month-old baby boy of Imam Hussein (AS), who was the youngest person martyred in the Battle of Karbala.

The ceremony was held in 2003 for the first time in Tehran, but since then mourners have been congregating every year on the first Friday of the mourning month of Muharram (this year falling on September 1-September 29) nationwide and also throughout the world in over 40 countries including Iraq, Pakistan, Bahrain, India, and Turkey. **→12**



ARTICLE

Quayyum Raja
East Asian analyst

The Muslims can't survive without unity!

What is the definition of survival? In my opinion, it is not just an ability to feed oneself or even enjoy life, but an ability to have a voice without which there is no respect and honor in the world. Whoever doesn't have a voice, have no say in the matters and decisions affecting their lives as it has been happening ever since the establishment of the United Nations driven by the undemocratic Security Council with a political hegemony.

If natural resources were enough to earn respect, then Saudi Arabia would have been most respected and successful country in the world, but it shows that without a meritocratic society, institutions and infrastructure of its own, a state is defenseless and dependant. Natural and human resources as well as sustained socio-cultural values and infrastructure are necessary to survive in the competing world.

The Muslims collectively have abundant natural and human resources as well as socio-cultural values, but they lack peace and progress due to the lack of a political voice and they lack a voice because of a lack of unity. The unity is lacking because of a lack of tolerance and understanding.

The understanding is lacking due to lack of communication between the Muslim countries. The communication is lacking due to harsh visa restrictions, which have been imposed because of mistrust and the mistrust has been caused by a long period of Western interference in the Muslim countries using them against each other.

The American led United Nations has not only failed to solve any of the Muslim problems, but in fact caused more problems. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria are the fresh examples. The political and economic relations between the Muslim countries do not last long because of American interference. An incomplete Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipe Line Agreement is a prime example.

On 30 January 2013, the Pakistan's federal government approved a deal with Iran for laying the Pakistan's segment of a pipeline.. On 27 February 2013, the construction of the Pakistani section was agreed. On 11 March 2013, inauguration of the construction works on the Pakistani section of the pipeline were inaugurated by president of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari and president of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. **→7**

Zarif notifies EU of third nuclear step

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In a letter to European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini on Thursday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif announced that as a third step Iran stops implementing all commitments related to nuclear research and development (R&D) under the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA.

"Today, the Iranian foreign minister sent a letter to Mogherini, announcing that the Islamic Republic of Iran stops all commitments in the area of research and development under the JCPOA because of consequences of the United States' withdrawal from the deal and the three European countries' failure to implement their commitments," Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said.

"In this letter, it has been said that this action is in line with Iran's rights under the JCPOA and within the paragraph 36 of it and is in response to violation of the JCPOA during the past 16 months."

Mousavi added, "Technical details of Iran's action will be announced to the International Atomic Energy Agency."

According to Mousavi, the final part of the letter said, "In order to show its good will, the Islamic Republic of Iran is prepared to continue negotiations at all levels with the parties remaining in the JCPOA, and return to the full implementation of the JCPOA in case the other parties implement all their JCPOA commitments."

Before announcing the third step, Iran increased its stockpile of enriched uranium beyond the 300 kilograms allowed under the JCPOA, and refined nuclear fuel to the purity level of 4.5 percent.

Iran took these steps one year after the Trump administration abandoned the JCPOA and imposed the harshest ever sanctions on Tehran.

President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that Iran will take the third step in reducing its commitments under the nuclear deal.

"Despite settling main part of differences with the Europeans, we have not reached a final agreement yet. So, Iran will take the third step of reducing its nuclear commitments," Rouhani told a cabinet meeting.

The details of the third step will be announced by Iran's Atomic Energy Organization on Saturday.

Rouhani said that the third step like the two previous ones is reversible if any agreement is reached.

"While taking the third step, we will continue to hold talks and if we reach an agreement, we will be open to negotiate," the president stated.

In a statement on May 8, Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) announced that its "strategic patience" is over as the remaining members of the JCPOA, especially the Europeans, have failed to honor their obligations and protect Iran from sanctions effect.

Under the JCPOA backed the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran was obliged to scale back nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

■ EU asks Iran to return to nuclear commitments

The European Union demanded Iran on Thursday to return to its commitments under the nuclear deal.

European Commission spokesman Carlos Ruiz de Gortejuela claimed in Brussels on Thursday that Iran's decision was "inconsistent" with the agreement, AFP reported.

"And in this context we urge Iran to reverse these steps and refrain from further measures that undermine the nuclear deal," de Gortejuela said.

UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office issued a statement on Thursday saying, "This third step away from its commitments under the nuclear deal is particularly disappointing at a time when we and our European and international partners are working hard to de-escalate tensions with Iran."

In a separate statement, French Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Agnes von der Muhll said that Iran "should refrain from taking concrete actions that will not comply with its commitments and may harm efforts to de-escalate tension".

Muhll said that they will discuss Iran's recent announcement with partners and the IAEA.

The remaining signatories to the agreement — Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China — claim to be trying to keep the deal alive.

The European powers have not shown strong will to counter U.S. sanctions on Iran.

Iran has said that a French offer of a \$15 billion credit line could bring it back to full compliance with the deal.

But a senior U.S. official on Wednesday ruled out any sanctions exemptions that would permit that credit in pre-purchase for Iran's oil.

"We can't make it any more clear that we are committed to this campaign of maximum pressure and we are not looking to grant any exceptions or waivers," said Brian Hook, the State Department's coordinator on Iran.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif responded by tweeting that the U.S. Treasury was "nothing more than a jail warden".

"Ask for reprieve, get thrown in solitary for the audacity," Zarif tweeted. "Ask again and you might end up in the gallows."

Britain rejects to take tough stance on Iran as Netanyahu meets Johnson

1 → "I can't tell you when or whether the talks will take place between President Trump and Rouhani," Netanyahu told reporters in London. "Today I think what is needed is more pressure and the leverage which will come from that pressure on the regime in Iran."

The meeting between Netanyahu and Johnson came as Iran said it would announce a third tranche of limiting its nuclear deal commitments this Saturday. The new steps would include bringing new nuclear centrifuges online and expanding atomic research.

Tehran has been gradually stepping up downscaling its commitments to the nuclear deal in an effort to pressure European states to find a way around U.S. sanctions on Iran.

There did not appear to be any shift in the UK's position and a Downing Street spokesman indicated Johnson would continue Theresa May's policy of siding with France and Germany in support of the nuclear deal, despite U.S. and Israeli pressure.

Emmanuel Macron, the French president, has been working on an initiative to encourage Iran to come back into compliance with the nuclear deal in return for a \$15bn line of bank credit.

Macron is also eager to engineer a meeting between Trump and Rouhani during this month's UN General Assembly summit. Trump said this week he was open to such a meeting, which would be the first face-to-face encounter between U.S. and Iranian leaders since Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution. "Anything's possible. They would like to be able to solve their problem," Trump said.

Iran has so far publicly rejected the idea of talks until the U.S. lifts sanctions. But Netanyahu's comments indicate Israel, an arch-enemy of Iran, is taking the possibility of a meeting seriously.

"I don't rule it out and I certainly don't decide for the president of the U.S. when to meet and who to meet with," Netanyahu said.

Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party, also on Thursday tweeted a call on the British government not to follow the policies of the U.S. and Israel in their anti-Iran campaign.

Iran, Indonesia weigh plans to boost ties

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Foreign ministers of Iran and Indonesia discussed the ways to promote political and economic cooperation between the two Muslim nations at a meeting in Jakarta.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif who has visited Jakarta in a tour of Asia held a meeting with his Indonesian counterpart Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi on Friday morning.

In the gathering, the two ministers expressed satisfaction with the level of political and parliamentary negotiations and economic cooperation between Iran and Indonesia, and stressed the need for the expansion of bilateral ties considering the two nations' capacities.

They also voiced support for closer political consultations about the Islamic world's major issues, Palestine in particular, and called for the continuation of interaction over the main regional issues within the framework of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the other international bodies.

In the meeting, Foreign Minister Zarif also expounded on Iran's principled policy towards the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in the current circumstances, and emphasized the necessity for the other parties to honor the deal and ensure the Iranian nation's economic interests under the JCPOA.

Zarif has visited Indonesia after a trip to Bangladesh, where he delivered a speech to the 3rd meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

This is the second round of the Iranian foreign minister's Asian tour. Zarif visited China, Japan and Malaysia last week.

A day earlier upon arriving in Jakarta, Zarif said the upcoming third phase of Iran's nuclear countermeasures has been so devised to be reversible, as is the case with its previous nuclear responses, if Europe meets its nuclear commitments towards Tehran.

"Should they act on their obligations, this



step, like the two previous steps, which have already been taken, could be reversed," Zarif said on Thursday at the airport in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, where he arrived as part of an Asian tour.

Iran's top diplomat added that "in the next several hours," he will be notifying the European Union foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, of the third step, as announced by President Hassan Rouhani earlier, adding that the third phase is a "very important" one.

Iran began the countermeasures in May on the anniversary of the United States withdrawal from its historic 2015 nuclear agreement with major world powers. The deal was signed in Vienna in 2015 between the Islamic Republic and the P5+1 group of states comprising the US, the UK, France, China, and Russia plus Germany.

The JCPOA lifted nuclear-related sanctions on Tehran in return for some restrictions on the country's nuclear energy program.

Iran set off the nuclear countermeasures to retaliate against the U.S. withdrawal and its subsequent re-imposition of sanctions, but also to prompt the deal's European sides to meet their commitments under the JCPOA to keep up their trade with Tehran despite Washington's bans.

The retaliation has already seen the Islamic Republic surpassing the 3.67-percent enrichment cap set by the deal on its uranium enrichment activities.

France has taken the lead in a European effort to keep the JCPOA alive by guaranteeing Tehran's business interests under the deal.

On Tuesday, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said the push had come

'Russia to make efforts to preserve nuclear deal'

By staff and agency

Russian State Duma's (lower house) Foreign Affairs Committee Leonid Slutsky said on Friday that Moscow will push ahead with efforts to preserve the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

"Russia has always been committed to the implementation of the JCPOA by all parties. For our part, we will push ahead with efforts to preserve the Iran deal at various levels, including the parliamentary one, and draft a working mechanism to salvage it," TASS quoted him as saying in a post on his Telegram channel.

He also said that Washington is trying to force Iran to abandon the nuclear deal and push the European Union towards reimposing sanctions.

"The United States is pursuing an obvious objective: to force Iran to abandon the nuclear deal altogether and therefore push

Europeans towards restoring the anti-Iran package of restrictive measures under U.S. control. The White House hopes to achieve a regime change in Tehran by reimposing the U.S. and EU sanctions, strengthening Iran's political isolation and whipping up tensions in the Persian Gulf region in general," he said.

He also said that Washington's willingness to hold talks with Iran should not be taken seriously.

"Unlike North Korea, Iran has neither nuclear weapons nor missiles capable of reaching U.S. territory. So, the only direct dialogue with Tehran that Washington could foster is unconditional surrender [under the U.S. scenario]," he said.

Commenting on Iran's action in reducing commitments under the JCPOA, Slutsky said that was "a response to new U.S. anti-Iran sanctions and the EU's inability to launch the

promised financial mechanism to bypass them and compensate for losses from Washington's policy to reduce Iranian oil exports to zero."

On Thursday, President Hassan Rouhani said Iran is taking the third step of reducing its commitments under the nuclear deal. According to Rouhani, the new step removes limits on nuclear research and development (R&D).

The details of the third step will be announced in a press conference by nuclear spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi on Saturday, September 7.

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

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

to focus on a possible guaranteed credit line for Tehran in exchange for oil.

He, however, noted, "There is still lots to work out, it's still very fragile."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Zarif said if, for cooperating with Iran, Europe is awaiting the permission of a country that has left the JCPOA to pile up pressure on Iran, "They should be sure that such permission will not be granted."

He told Europe that by cooperating with Iran, the continent will not be giving Tehran any concessions or done it any favors. "You are [just] supposed to fulfill your commitments," he stated.

"[Implementation of] these commitments does not hinge either on the United States or its permission," Zarif asserted.

Performing the contractual duties, he noted, does not even entail ratification of any new laws by Europe, but it's simply committing to laws, which are already in place, and realization of the desired ensuing results.

"Europeans have flouted their commitments, which have nothing to do with the U.S.," he concluded.

On Wednesday, President Rouhani said the country and Europe were unlikely to reach an agreement on ways to save the JCPOA by Thursday, and that Tehran would go ahead with its plan to announce the third step in scaling back its commitments under the accord.

"It is unlikely that we will reach a final agreement with Europe today or tomorrow; therefore, we will take the third step. We will release the details of the third step today or tomorrow and act accordingly," Rouhani told a cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

The president described the third phase of Iran's commitment reductions as "highly important in nature," emphasizing that this would be the "most significant step that we take" and would "have extraordinary effects."

Zarif says U.S. economic terrorism targets civilians

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that the United States economic terrorism against countries including Iran, Cuba, Russia, China and Syria targets civilians.

"#US #EconomicTerrorism against Cuba, China, Russia, Syria, Iran &... deliberately target civilians, trying to achieve illegitimate political objectives through intimidation of innocent people. US rouge behavior now includes piracy, bribery & blackmail

We salute Cuba & stand w/it," he tweeted

on Thursday.

His tweet came as Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla said in a twitter message that U.S. acts against Iran affect the Iranian people.

"#US sanctions against Iran's maritime entities are another violation of International Law. #US coercive measures preventing the movement of Iranian oil affect the brother peoples of #Iran and #Syria and threaten #Peace in that volatile region," Rodriguez tweeted.

Iran has repeatedly said that the U.S. sanctions against Iran are examples of economic

terrorism.

In another tweet on Wednesday, Zarif described the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control as "jail warden" and said the only way to mitigate U.S. Economic terrorism is to decide to finally "free yourself from the hangman's noose".

"#OFAC is nothing more than a JAIL WARDEN:

Ask for reprieve (waiver), get thrown in solitary for the audacity. Ask again and you might end up in the gallows.

The only way to mitigate US #Economic-Terrorism (sanctions) is to decide to finally

Europe is failing: journalist

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — As all eyes are fixed on Europe's diplomatic efforts to salvage the Iran nuclear deal, a senior journalist gave an exclusive interview to Euronews.

Hossein Shariatmadari is the editor-in-chief of Keyhan, one of the most conservative newspapers in Iran.

Speaking to Euronews in an interview published on Thursday, Shariatmadari accused the Europeans of not fulfilling their commitments to Iran under the nuclear deal, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"The Europeans say we stay in the JCPOA but it means they must fulfil their commitments. However, they apply all U.S. sanctions to us and they are not fulfilling their commitments under the JCPOA. How can they say that they remain in the deal?" he asked.

More specifically, Shariatmadari slammed INSTEX, the EU's central mechanism to keep trade with Iran flowing despite U.S. sanctions.

The INSTEX plan is an initiative by France, Britain and Germany to launch a barter-based trade conduit with Iran. If it goes ahead, it would initially deal only in products such as pharmaceuticals and foods, which are not subject to U.S. sanctions.

Iranian officials have repeatedly said INSTEX must

include oil sales or provide substantial credit facilities for it to be beneficial.

■ Accepting INSTEX would be 'madness'

"INSTEX means oil against food and medicine. They did it with Saddam, who had failed and lost everything. Now, we are the main power in the region and they want to apply this to us?" Shariatmadari gasped.

"Europe committed to buy our oil but they are not doing that," he continued.

"According to INSTEX, we need to sell our oil to non-European countries and send money to Europe, then you need to buy just from Europe - food and medicine from Europe - and Europeans pay the companies which supply our food and medicine."

"Accepting this is madness," Shariatmadari said.

■ Trump and Macron's views 'the same'

Asked about French President Emmanuel Macron's current efforts to save the JCPOA, he said his views were very much aligned with those of U.S. President Donald Trump.

"He himself has made it very clear that they follow the same view," he said.

The Iranian journalist dismissed the possibility of Iran's leaders meeting with Trump, which was raised during the G7 summit in Biarritz last month.



"Since Mr. Trump withdrew from JCPOA, he has invited Iran at least eleven times to talk. But there is no reason for us to negotiate with Trump," Shariatmadari said.

Britain, France and Germany, parties to a 2015 nuclear deal with Iran along with the United States, China and Russia, are determined to show they can compensate for last year's U.S. withdrawal and salvage trade promised to Iran under the accord.

Macron has led those efforts and is trying to clinch a 15 billion dollar credit line that would offset tough U.S. sanctions that have strangled Iran's oil exports, but that requires getting some backing from Washington.

Trump's dream is to talk to an Iranian official for minutes: IRGC chief

Salami says Iran is the “slaughterhouse of the U.S. economic terrorism”

SOCIAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Hossein Salami has lauded the Islamic Republic's success in foiling the enemy's plots over the past 40 years, saying Iran has become the “slaughterhouse of the enemy's economic terrorism.”

In an address to a gathering of IRGC personnel in Iran's southern port city of Bushehr on Friday, Major General Salami also warned against the U.S. plot for direct talks with Iran, stressing that the Islamic Republic won't fall into such trap.

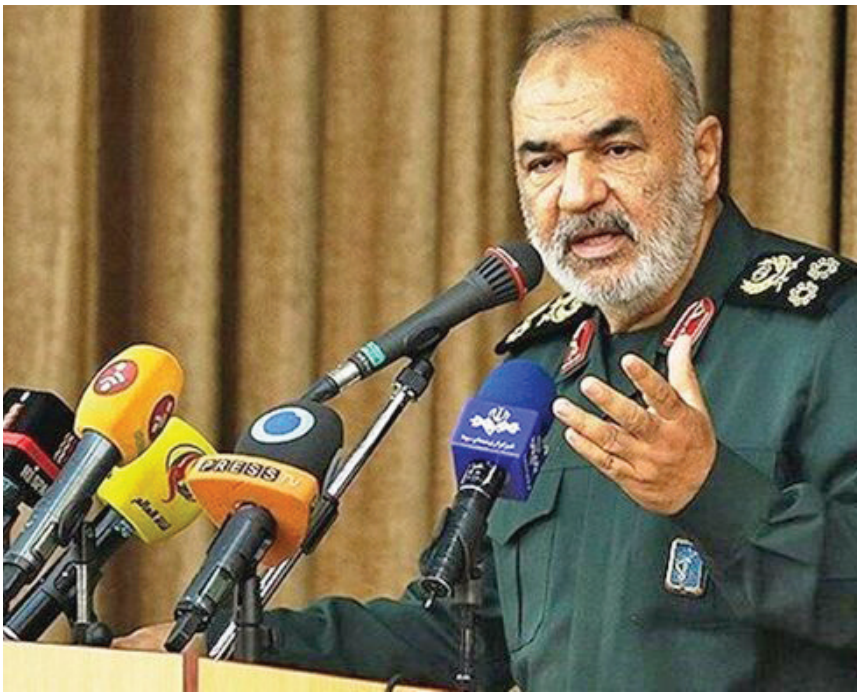
He said the U.S. government seeks to regain its lost honor through talks with the Iranian officials, Tasnim reported.

Highlighting Iran's awareness of the “enemy's dreams”, the general emphasized that none of the Iranians would enter talks with the U.S., because everybody knows that negotiation is part of a game that helps the enemy achieve its objectives.

“The U.S. president's dream is to hold talks with an Iranian official for a couple of minutes,” the general added.

In remarks on Thursday, Salami also said the enemies are aware of only a small part of Iran's defense power.

“Our enemies are aware of only a small part of the reality of our defensive power, but nevertheless they know that the military and security power of the Islamic Republic of Iran is impenetrable and invincible,”



Mehr quoted General Salami as saying.

He said while the enemies have seen Iran's military equipment and the determination of Iranian forces to defend the values of the Islamic Revolution, Iran's true

power will only be realized in the battlefield.

“The deterrence power of the Islamic Iran is built on the foundation of overcoming major enemies,” the top general said, adding, “With Allah's grace, we will

be more prepared than ever to defend the territorial borders, independence and the territorial integrity of our country through enhancing this [deterrence] power.”

Tensions started to build up between the U.S. and Iran after U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew Washington from the 2015 deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in May 2018, and imposed sanctions against Tehran in a bid to put maximum pressure on the Islamic Republic. Tehran has slammed the sanctions, which have affected the lives of thousands of Iranians, as “economic terrorism”.

On June 20, amid escalating tensions between the two sides, the IRGC Aerospace downed an American RQ-4 Global Hawk drone over the Strait of Hormuz after it violated Iranian airspace.

Despite the U.S. claims that the drone had been flying over international waters, Iran said it had retrieved sections of the drone in its own territorial waters where it was shot down.

The drone was shot by Iran's home-grown air defense missile system “Khoradad-3rd”.

In comments made a few hours after the incident, General Salami said the incident had a straightforward message that any foreign intrusion into Iranian territories would draw a crushing response.

Pentagon chief says not after seizing Adrian Darya 1

1 → It came after the U.S. Treasury Department warned that anyone around the world who helps fuel Iranian vessels blacklisted by Washington runs the risk of being designated as well.

The Treasury Department blacklisted Adrian Darya 1 on August 30.

Washington has warned that it would regard any assistance given to the ship as support for a terrorist group.

The Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, or OFAC, has said “the bunkering by non-U.S. persons of an Iranian vessel that has been identified as blocked property of an Iranian person ... and the making of related payments for these bunkering services — risk being designated themselves.”

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Thursday that OFAC was nothing more than a “jail warden”.

“OFAC is nothing more than a JAILWARDEN: Ask for reprieve (waiver), get thrown in solitary for the audacity. Ask again and you might end up in the gallows,” Zarif wrote on his Twitter account.

The recent developments outline how the Trump administration is applying so-called secondary sanctions, or sanctions on entities in third party countries, in regards to the Iranian tanker and any other Iranian vessels it blacklists.

The Trump administration last year pulled out of a 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and reimposed sanctions that were lifted under the deal and imposed new ones.



Iran continues Europe talks with pessimism: cleric

SOCIAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – Mohammad Javad Haj Ali Akbari, an interim Friday prayer leader in Tehran, has said Tehran will continue to hold talks with Europe with a pessimistic attitude.

“Our nation does not pay attention to the other side's empty and imaginary promises ... We are only after their practical measures and still hold talks with Europe but with sheer pessimism,” Haj Ali Akbari told worshippers.

In line with its policy to reduce commitment to the JCPOA in response to the sanctions, Iran announced on Thursday that it will remove limits on nuclear research, a move which the cleric said will be more fruitful than the previous two.

In May 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump abandoned the 2015 nuclear deal



with Iran, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). He then returned the previous sanctions and imposed new ones against Tehran.

On May 8, 2019, exactly one year after the U.S. withdrawal, Tehran began to take steps to reduce its commitments to the JCPOA at 60-day intervals, which were designed in order to give time to the European parties to the deal to meet Iran's demands.

The Trump administration, in spite of its hostile “maximum pressure” policy against Iran, has offered to directly negotiate with Tehran.

Back in June, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei categorically rejected the possibility of talks between Iran and the U.S., saying the U.S. president is not worthy of having a dialogue with.

Zarif says U.S. applying ‘outright blackmail’

Brian Hook offered captain multi-million dollar bribe in effort to seize Iranian tanker

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Wednesday accused the Trump administration of engaging in “outright blackmail” after the Financial Times reported a State Department official offered the captain of an Iran-owned oil tanker millions of dollars to divert the ship to a nation which would detain it on behalf of the United States.

According to FT, Brian Hook, head of the State Department's Iran Action Group, sent an email promising the captain of Iranian supertanker Grace 1 “several million dollars” to do the bidding of the Trump administration.

“This is Brian Hook... I work for Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and serve as the U.S. representative for Iran,” Hook wrote to Akhilesh Kumar, the Indian captain of the supertanker, according to emails viewed by FT.

“I am writing with good news,” Hook said, referring to the Trump administration's multi-million dollar offer.

Hook's email, according to FT, was sent 11 days after the Gibraltar Supreme Court last month ordered the release of Grace 1, which was detained by British forces in July on orders from the U.S.

The Trump administration alleged the tanker was carrying oil to Syria in violation of European Union sanctions. Iran denied that charge.

In a second email to Kumar that was viewed by FT, Hook warned the captain that refusing the U.S. cash—which several observers described as a “bribe”—would carry consequences.

“With this money you can have any life you wish and be well-off in old age,” Hook wrote. “If you choose not to take this easy path, life will be much harder for you.”

This is incredible. The U.S. complains loudly that Iran engages in “blackmail.” Yet Brian Hook is “directly” emailing tanker captains offering bribes to get them to bring their ships into US clutches. How embarrassing. https://t.co/IT2DKkyRSQ

— Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj (@yarbatman) September 4, 2019

Kumar ultimately did not reply, FT reported, and Hook notified Kumar that the Treasury Department had sanctioned him.

News of the State Department's efforts to seize the Iranian tanker comes following months of sky-high tensions between Iran and the United States. Fears of war between the two nations have been growing rapidly since President Donald Trump violated the Iran nuclear agreement last year.

As Common Dreams reported in June, Trump approved a strike on Iran following the downing of an unmanned American surveillance drone.

The president decided to call off the attack at the last minute.

In response to FT's story, Zarif, who was sanctioned by the Treasury Department in July, said the Trump administration's efforts to impose its will on Iran are beginning to fit a “pattern.”

“Having failed at piracy, the U.S. resorts to outright blackmail—deliver us Iran's oil and receive several million dollars or be sanctioned yourself,” tweeted Zarif. “Sounds very similar to the Oval Office invitation I received a few weeks back.”

FT reported that Hook's emails to Kumar were not “an isolated case.”

According to FT, Hook in recent weeks has reached out to “roughly a dozen captains” with similar messages.



“The U.S. complains loudly that Iran engages in ‘blackmail.’ Yet Brian Hook is directly emailing tanker captains offering bribes to get them to bring their ships into U.S. clutches.”

Bypassing law is red line: Judiciary chief

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi has vowed that circumventing law is a red line for the body under his leadership, calling on the authorities to be completely honest with the people, Mehr reported.

“We must be honest with the people, because these are the people who have supported the sacred system of the Islamic Republic of Iran in different periods,” Raisi said in Zanjan on Thursday.



He also pointed to land grabbing as one of the most important issues of the country, vowing firm measures to fight the issue.

The country's development must not happen outside the law, said Raisi, adding, “We strongly believe that development should happen under the law in order for us to prevent takeover of agricultural lands, and more importantly, of natural resources.”

Under the newly appointed Ebrahim Raisi, the Judiciary has launched a fresh attempt to combat corruption, which has so far seen the arrest of many individuals, including those working in the Judiciary.

“Officials of the Judiciary will not allow corruption to nest in any location within the system, and on the agenda must be finding the best way to recognize these [corrupt] individuals,” Raisi said in early August.

“Anywhere within the administrative, judicial, economic, cultural or political system that becomes infected with corruption, we will confront it,” he stated.

Malaysian embassy in Tehran marks Independence Day

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – The Malaysian embassy in Tehran on Wednesday celebrated national Independence Day in a ceremony attended by Iran's Information and Communications Technology Minister Mohammad-Javad Azari Jahromi.

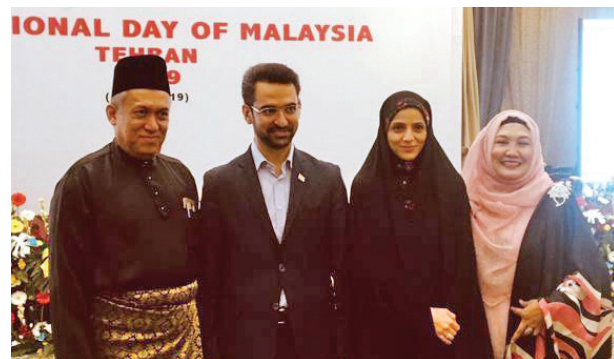
During the ceremony, Malaysian Ambassador Datuk Rustam Yahaya said links between the Malay world and Persia started hundreds of years ago.

“Malaysia was fortunate because of the wisdom of the national leadership at that time which secured independence through negotiations and not rebellion and bloodshed,” he said.

The followings is the transcript of his speech:

HE Azari Jahromi, Esteemed Members of Parliament, Senior Officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran, H.E Ambassadors and Head of Missions, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all of you, for joining me and the Malaysian community, in celebrating the 62nd anniversary of Malaysia's Independence Day.



Since independence, the Federation of Malaya, and later Malaysia, has witnessed many events and challenges especially being a diverse multi-ethnic, multicultural, multilingual and multi-religious society, with none having a majority. Nobody gave us any hope of surviving our independence, especially at the early stage, let alone to prosper. But prosper we did.

It was never an easy affair. The challenges were many and everything had to be done from scratch. Malaysia was fortunate because of the wisdom of the national leadership at that time which secured independence through negotiations and not rebellion and bloodshed.

With our persistent efforts, we have been able to develop our country while preserving our independence. Mostly, based on our willingness to compromise. Due to these continued challenges, we might not be able to achieve our vision of being a fully developed nation by 2020, but we will come very close to it.

On our relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, although we established diplomatic relations in late 60s, links between the Malay world and Persia started hundreds of years ago. Over 600 Persian words could be found in the Malay language, and still being used today. Our culture are also quite similar and to this date, several cultural events are being celebrated in Malaysia which I believed, originated from Iran.

Today, Malaysia and the Islamic Republic of Iran continue to cooperate in many areas of common interest under the United Nations, Organization of Islamic Countries, Non-Aligned Movement and the D-8.

Iran has also continued to be an important trade partner for Malaysia. During the previous round of sanctions period, bilateral trade continued to surpass a billion dollar. Although the current unfair and unjust unilateral sanctions imposed on Iran has been severe, opportunities are abound for bilateral trade to progress and Malaysia will continue to do its best to develop it even further.

With that, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, may I take this opportunity to wish all of you good health, happiness and prosperity especially to the leaders and the brotherly people of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	278,674
IFX	3770.65

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,319 rials
GBP	51,415 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$61.01/b
WTI	\$56.29/b
OPEC Basket	\$58.97/b
Gold	\$1,511.80/oz
Silver	\$18.41/oz
Platinum	\$942.55/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Household spending helps Spain to buck Eurozone growth trend

While other big Eurozone countries are on the edge of recession, the region's fourth-largest economy is enjoying a run of growth that has lasted years — buoyed most recently by household spending, Financial Times reported.

Spain has outperformed the Eurozone's average growth rate for half a decade but during the past 12 months the country's economy has changed tracks from the export-based model that brought it back from the depths of recession.

Growth is now underpinned by consumer demand, aided by pay increases that were instigated by the government. The switch has stoked controversy between those who see Spain as a model for others to follow and those who worry about pump-priming by the state.

Most forecasters expect gross domestic product to expand by more than 2 percent this year, compared with less than 0.5 percent for Germany and just over 1 percent for the single currency bloc as a whole

"The economy is doing quite well, compared to others in Europe in particular," said Erik Nielsen, chief economist at UniCredit bank, who welcomes the shift to domestic demand. "It's a real lesson for the Germans."

Consumption has in part been fuelled by the government's decision to raise the minimum wage by 22 percent this year — the biggest increase in four decades.



But some analysts query the sustainability of this performance at a time when the broader Eurozone economy is flagging and the country remains mired in political deadlock, facing its fourth general election in as many years.

"It is the consumer, domestic demand, that has been supporting growth," said an official at Spain's central bank. "The question is how long that can go on."

The country has lacked a strong government since December 2015. A fourth national poll is penciled in for November 10 if the caretaker Socialist administration of Pedro Sánchez cannot form an administration by September 23. There is no certainty that would produce a stable government where the previous three failed.

Meanwhile, there is little prospect of structural reform to address Spain's economic vulnerabilities, and the lingering political uncertainty could sap consumer confidence, say economists.

As Eurozone growth as a whole decelerates and international tensions such as the U.S.-China trade war hit sentiment across the globe, Spain's economy has begun to show signs of slowing.

Warning signs include a slump in the domestic car market. Domestic passenger car sales were down 31 percent in August on the same month a year ago; the fall across the first seven months of the year was 6.6 percent. Car exports are flat.

The sector — which, along with related industries, accounts for almost 10 percent of Spain's GDP and 9 percent of jobs — "is going through one of the most challenging moments in its history", said Noemi Navas, spokeswoman for the Spanish Association of Automobile and Truck Manufacturers.

Manuel de la Rocha, Sánchez's chief economic adviser, argues it is natural for the economy to slow a little after its dramatic rebound from a savage recession sparked by the global financial crisis. After several years in which Spain's growth was well above the EU average, "the current deceleration is perfectly normal, more so in the international context", he told the FT.

In the absence of productivity-bolstering reforms, growth is set to converge towards the country's trend rate — estimated at between 1.5 percent and 2 percent — he added.

According to many analysts, the recovery owes much to reforms carried out by the previous center-right government in the depths of the financial crisis.

In his first term in 2011-2015, then-prime minister Mariano Rajoy brought in labor reforms that curbed employment costs and cut a fiscal deficit that had reached 10 percent of GDP. With the help of an EU bailout that totaled more than €40bn, his administration also did much to clean up the financial sector.

Those steps paved the way for the export-led recovery that helped Spain record growth of 2 to 3 percent between 2015 and last year.

TEDPIX gains 11,504 points in a week

1 → Meanwhile, as announced by Fariba Akhavan, the deputy managing director of Central Securities Depository of Iran (CSDI), some 47,000 new trading codes were issued in Iran's stock market during the fifth month.

With the new codes issued, the total number of trading codes in the country's capital market reached 11.042 million, Akhavan said.

She also said that 92 codes have been issued for the foreign shareholders since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 21) and the total number of foreign shareholders' codes is 1,366 at the moment.

The first trading code was issued for a foreign shareholder in Iranian calendar year of 1373 (1994-95) to let it commence



its activity in Iranian capital market.

Presence of new shareholders in Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) rose 40 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1396 compared to its preceding year.

Based on the already released reports and data, Iran's exchange markets witnessed fruitful performances and results in the past Iranian calendar year 1397 (ended on March 20, 2019).

Applying new financial instruments in Iranian capital market was another achievements of the exchange markets during the past year, as TSE officially launched "futures" in mid-December 2018 for more risk management and IME launched "option" in early March 2019 in an approach to diversify financing methods for agricultural products.

TPO to hold 18th exhibition of Iranian products in Yerevan in late Sep.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's **d e s k** Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) will hold the 18th exhibition of Iranian products and conference on investment opportunities in Iran in the Armenian capital city of Yerevan from September 28 to 30, TPO portal reported. 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 August 31, the Armenian official told Donyaye Eqtasad 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.

In terms of bilateral trade, 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. Also, in a bid to expand their economic and trade ties, the two countries are 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.

Exports from Iran to Turkey stands at \$2.8b in 7 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The value of Iran's export to its neighbor Turkey stood at \$2.8 billion during the first seven months of 2019, ILNA reported citing a report released by Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA).

As reported, the figure shows a 38-percent fall from that of the same period of time in the previous year.

The country's imports from Turkey also fell seven percent to \$1.4 billion in the mentioned seven-month period year on year.

Senior officials from Iran and Turkey's economic sectors met on Tuesday as a committee to follow up on the preferential trade agreement reached between the two countries.

In the meeting, the acting head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), Hamid Zadboum, mentioned the two countries' great potentials for economic cooperation and called on the two sides to take necessary measures for increasing the two countries' trade turnover. "In the past five years, the volume of trade between Iran and Turkey has exceeded \$53 billion, and considering the determination of the two countries' presidents, the figure should increase to \$150 billion over the next five years,"



Zadboum said.

The official mentioned the preferential trade agreement between the two countries which has been operational since 2015 and said "We hope that with the support of the governments of the two countries, the agreement would continue in the best way for both sides and it would pave the way for further expansion of trade ties."

The Turkish side also expressed their country's willingness for expansion of relations with Iran in all areas especially in trade and called for creation of a positive atmosphere for the two sides' businessmen to know each other more and to interact effectively.

At the end of the meeting, it was also announced that the next Iran-Turkey Joint Economic Committee meeting is slated to be held during 17-18 September in Ankara.

Railway development highly dependent on private sector's involvement

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

And during a ceremony on Tuesday, some 213 new domestically-made locomotives and wagons were added to the railway fleet of the country.

While contributing to manufacturing of locomotives and wagons, private sector is also acting well in renovation projects.

As the passenger wing of RAI, Iranian Raja Railway Transport Company has signed deals with three domestic companies namely Wagon Pars Company, Novin Sanat Raja Company and Ehya Sanat Co. for renovating 124 passenger

wagons that are over 30 years old.

Raja has also signed a deal with Wagon Pars Company for manufacturing of 41 passenger wagons, of which 33 wagons have been handed to Raja.

All the mentioned measures signify the high involvement of private sector in the railway development, but as the country already lags behind its objective for the railway sector envisaged in the Sixth National Development Plan, more contribution of private sector is required both to investment making and to manufacturing.

And it is an issue that according to the experts of transportation sector requires Ministry of Transport and also RAI to review their policies and regulations for more presence of the private sector.



U.S., China agree to resume trade talks, markets jump



China and the United States on Thursday agreed to hold high-level talks in early October in Washington, cheering investors hoping for a trade war thaw as new U.S. tariffs on Chinese consumer goods chip away at global growth.

As per Reuters, the new talks were arranged during a phone call between Chinese Vice Premier Liu He, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, China's commerce ministry said in a statement.

They would be the first in-person, high-level discussions since a failed U.S.-China trade meeting at the end of July prompted U.S. President Donald Trump to proceed with fresh tariffs on virtually all remaining Chinese imports so far untouched by the trade war.

But there was no indication that the first round of these tariffs — a 15 percent duty on Chinese consumer goods imposed on Sept. 1 — would be rescinded or halt a planned Oct. 1 tariff increase on \$250 billion worth of goods already levied at 25 percent.

The U.S. Trade Representative's office did

not specify timing for the ministerial-level talks, saying only that these would take place "in the coming weeks."

"In advance of these discussions, deputy-level meetings will take place in mid-September to lay the groundwork for meaningful progress," USTR spokesman Jeff Emerson said in a statement.

Hu Xijin, editor of China's state-run Global Times newspaper, struck an upbeat tone on Twitter, saying, "Personally I think the U.S., worn out by the trade war, may no longer hope for crushing China's will. There's more possibility of a breakthrough between the two sides."

But William Reinsch, a former senior U.S. Commerce Department official, said the trade talks could drag well into 2020 since the two sides are still far apart on key issues, such as Washington's demand that Beijing codify its reforms into law.

"The president has to choose between accepting a weak agreement or continuing the war," said Reinsch, now at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"The trick is to make an agreement in September or October 2020, shortly before the presidential election, and it'll look like he's a hero," Reinsch said. "If he does that too soon, it has time to fall apart before the election. The Chinese aren't going to comply with it anyway," Reinsch added.

Since a breakdown in the talks in May, Washington and Beijing have failed to narrow their deep differences over U.S. demands for sweeping changes to China's practices on intellectual property protections, transfers of U.S. technology to Chinese companies, curbs to industrial subsidies and increased access to China's markets.

Markets rally

Nonetheless, U.S. stocks staged a strong rally on the potential cooling of trade tensions, with the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite .IXIC rising 1.75 percent and the broad S&P 500 .SPX closing 1.3 percent higher.

Asian and European shares also hit one-month highs.

Aiding the rally was positive U.S. economic data, including an estimate of private sector payrolls growth and an acceleration of U.S. services sector activity.

On Sunday, Washington began imposing 15 percent tariffs on an array of Chinese imports, mostly consumer products, while China began placing duties on U.S. crude oil. On Monday, China said it had lodged a complaint against the United States at the World Trade Organization. Washington plans to increase the tariff rate to 30 percent from 25 percent on \$250 billion worth of Chinese imports from Oct. 1.

The National Retail Federation said it was encouraged by confirmation of in-person trade talks, and urged Washington to end the trade war and work for a rollback of all tariffs.

"This trade war has gone on far too long,

and the harmful consequences for American business and consumers continues to grow," said the group, which bills itself as the world's largest retail trade association.

Really good call

China's commerce ministry said its trade team will consult with its U.S. counterpart in mid-September in preparation for negotiations in early October.

"Lead negotiators from both sides had a really good phone call this morning," China's commerce ministry spokesman Gao Feng said in a weekly briefing. "We'll strive to achieve substantial progress during the 13th Sino-U.S. high-level negotiations in early October."

Gao also said Beijing opposes any escalation in the trade war.

Analysts noted that investors remain nervous and markets could react with volatility on comments or actions from either side.

Trump was uncharacteristically quiet on China trade on Thursday, not tweeting about it and not taking questions from reporters at a White House event. His official Facebook page posted a link to a story on the talks along with the comment: "We are doing very well with China!"

On Tuesday, Trump had warned he would be tougher on Beijing in a second term if trade talks dragged on, compounding market fears that disputes between the United States and China could trigger a U.S. recession.

The U.S. president had lashed out frequently at Beijing over the past two months, frustrated by its failure to follow through on purchases of U.S. farm products that he said were agreed in his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in June.

China, for its part, has been stung by Washington's failure to make good on its promise to ease restrictions on Chinese tech giant Huawei Technologies Co Ltd.

Russia considering investment in Iran's oil industry: Novak

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** – Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak says Moscow is mulling over investment in Iran's oil industry, which is currently the target of U.S. sanctions aimed at driving the country's oil exports to zero.

As reported by IRNA, Novak made the remarks in the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok on Thursday.

Several senior officials from the Asian countries including India, Japan, Malaysia, and Mongolia attended the forum along with Russian officials including President Vladimir Putin.

Oil- and gas-rich Russia would undertake such a plan with Iran "primarily for the development of the oil sector," Novak said.

Novak met in Moscow earlier this week with Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian.

Ardakanian was quoted afterward as saying that Russians were considering some \$10 billion in investment into Iran's oil sector.

Ardakanian and his Russian counterpart stressed accelerating the implementation of the two countries' joint projects in a meeting in Moscow on September 2.



The officials, who co-chair the two countries' Joint Economic Committee, also discussed the agreements reached during the 15th Iran-Russia Joint Economic Committee

meeting which was held in Tehran and Isfahan in mid-June.

Construction of a 1,400-megawatt thermal power plant in Hormozgan province

in southern Iran by Russian government's funding, and the project for electrification of the 495-km Garmsar-Inche Boroun railway that links the city of Garmsar, in north of the Iranian capital Tehran, with the Iranian city of Inche-Boroun, on the border with Turkmenistan, were among the joint projects that were discussed during the meeting.

In the meeting, Novak expressed satisfaction with the completion of Iran's internal legal processes for joining the Eurasian Economic Union, saying "According to the agreements, the free trade agreement between Iran and Eurasia [Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)] is due to go operational on October 26."

The statements come amid a tightening of U.S. pressure on Tehran through trade and economic sanctions reimposed after Donald Trump withdrew the United States last year from a three-year-old nuclear between Iran and world powers.

Iran this week announced it was taking a "third step" to scale back its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal, whose signatories include Russia and China, in addition to France, the United Kingdom, and Germany.

IOOC saves €300m in operation costs annually: CEO

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** – Managing Director of the Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) said his company has been saving 300 million euros in its annual expenses since 2016 through structural modifications and regulations, Shana reported.

According to IOOC, Hamid Bovard said the savings were made in various sectors like drilling, technical services, barges, etc. "In the past two years, we have seriously cut costs in various sectors including the costs of barges by 35 percent, and technical services by 40 percent," he said.

Bovard said that IOOC had undergone structural modifications and regulations over the period, which had led to savings in the company's expenses.

As an example, the company has launched a CMMS (Computerized Maintenance Management System) which has been a valuable step in this regard, he added.

The official further added that the company would launch a

number of major projects by March 2020 including installation of S1 Platform of the Salman offshore field and Platforms of 7 and 8 of Hendijan Field.

According to Bovard, inauguration of Qeshm Power Plant is also on IOOC's agenda during the current calendar year.

Back in May, the official voiced his company's readiness for establishing joint ventures with private manufacturers.

"Given the fact that the reservoirs operated by IOOC were mostly in their second half of their lifespan, new research projects needed to be carried out to separate oil from water in the produced oil," Bovard said on the sidelines of a visit to a knowledge-based private company called Fan Nirou Co.

IOOC is one of the world's largest offshore oil producing companies, with over a half century of experience.

The main operation area of Iranian Offshore Oil Company is the Persian Gulf where four other oil producing countries are located in the other side.



Oil steadies, set for weekly gain amid hopes for end to U.S.-China trade war

Oil prices were steady on Friday, with crude benchmarks poised for multi-week gains amid a sharp drawdown in U.S. crude inventories, while trade tensions eased after Washington and Beijing agreed to hold high-level talks next month.

Brent crude was up 6 cents at \$61.01 a barrel by 0339 GMT, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was up 5 cents at \$56.35 a barrel, Reuters reported.

Both contracts spent the Asian trading session ticking either slightly higher or lower. Brent is set to mark its fourth weekly gain, while U.S. crude is headed for a second weekly rise.

Beijing and Washington on Thursday



agreed to hold high-level talks in early October in Washington, cheering investors hoping for an end to the trade war between the world's two biggest economies that has

brought tit-for-tat tariff hikes, chipping away at economic growth.

The prolonged dispute had a dampening effect on oil prices, although they have risen over the year, helped by production cuts led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, including Russia, to drain inventories.

"Upside potential for crude oil futures will remain limited, however, as strong U.S. production and demand-side concerns cap bullish gains for the current term," said Benjamin Lu, commodities analyst at Phillip Futures in Singapore.

He also cited "subdued economic momentum, global trade uncertainties and rising

market risks" for reasons to expect that U.S. crude would be range-bound between \$55 and \$60, over the third quarter.

U.S. crude and product inventories fell last week, with crude drawing down for a third consecutive week despite a jump in imports, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) said.

Crude stocks dropped 4.8 million barrels, nearly double analysts' expectations, to 423 million barrels, their lowest since October 2018.

Oil prices on Thursday soared more than 2% after the EIA report, although they gradually trimmed gains as investors are not entirely convinced that the Sino-U.S. trade talks will yield results.

OPEC is struggling to prove it can still arrest oil price declines in the age of Trump, RBC's Croft says

OPEC is under intensifying pressure to show it still has the power to reverse a slide in oil prices, according to RBC Capital Market's Helima Croft, CNBC reported.

The Middle East-dominated producer group has struggled to shore up crude futures this year, amid a deteriorating outlook for global growth and a protracted trade dispute between the U.S. and China.

It has once again raised questions about whether OPEC really wields that much influence over world crude markets, particularly at a time when oil traders are constantly on alert for the next tweet from President Donald Trump.

"It may prove easier to clean up the physical market than to overcome skepticism about the ultimate efficacy of its strategy in the age of Trump," Helima Croft, global head of commodity strategy, said in a research note.

"OPEC's burden is to show that it still has the appropriate tools to arrest price declines driven in no small part by White House policy."

■ OPEC vs. US

Supply restraints and involuntary losses in Iran and Venezuela has seen OPEC's share of the global oil market sink to its lowest level in years.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has more than doubled oil production in the last decade to become the world's largest oil producer.

To be sure, the U.S. shale industry has expanded at such a rapid rate that it threatens to overwhelm OPEC-led efforts to mitigate demand concerns, swamping the global oil market with supply.

Earlier this year, the head of EMEA oil and gas research



at J.P. Morgan told CNBC that a gradual fall in oil prices over the coming years could prompt OPEC to reclaim some of its market share from the U.S.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at around \$60.77 Thursday morning, up around 0.1%, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) stood at \$56.27, little changed from the previous session.

Brent futures have tumbled more than 20% from a peak reached in April, with WTI down over 17% over the same period.

"The fact is that sentiment is gripped by the weak macro environment and demand-side concerns rule the market," Stephen Brennock, oil analyst at PVM Oil Associates, said in a research note published Wednesday.

"Accordingly, Brent will do well to stay anchored around \$60 (a barrel) in the coming weeks," Brennock said.

■ A fresh dose of price angst

OPEC and allied non-OPEC partners, sometimes referred to as OPEC+, are scheduled to meet in Abu Dhabi next week to review their progress in stabilizing world oil markets.

The meeting is likely to provide crucial clues about how far some of OPEC's most powerful players are willing to go to get prices on a firmer footing. The full coalition will then gather again in Vienna at the end of the year to decide whether any further action is required for 2020.

"OPEC will reaffirm its commitment to rebalancing the market and getting prices on a firmer footing," analysts at RBC Capital Markets said.

"Beyond simply continuing to constrain output, we think the challenge for OPEC will be to demonstrate it still has the ability to alter oil's directional dynamics in a market that is consumed with trade war concerns and is bracing for the next tweet from President Trump."

OPEC+ is expected to reaffirm its commitment to rebalancing the market at its September 12 meeting, with OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia poised to double down on its "whatever it takes" message.

Alongside Russia and other allied producers, OPEC agreed to reduce output by 1.2 million barrels a day at the beginning of 2019. That deal replaced a previous round of production cuts that began in January 2017. "Looking further ahead, a fresh dose of price angst is looming with a supply imbalance expected to resurface at the start of next year," PVM Oil Associates' Brennock said.

Global renewables investment to triple this decade: U.N.

Global investment in new capacity for renewable energy is on course to reach \$2.6 trillion by the end of this decade, more than triple the amount of the previous decade, a report commissioned by the U.N. Environment Program says.

According to Reuters, the figure excludes large hydropower projects and is equivalent to 1.2 terawatts (TW) of new renewable energy capacity this decade. That's more than today's entire U.S. electricity generation units and half of the 2.4 TW of total power capacity installed over the same period.

The increase stems from a fall in interest rates in major economies and a slump in costs, with the "levelized" cost of solar photovoltaics down 81 percent, onshore wind down 46 percent and offshore wind down 44 percent this decade.

The levelized figure is the cost of generating a megawatt hour of electricity; the upfront capital and development cost; the cost of equity and debt finance and operating and maintenance fees.

The biggest investing country during the decade is set to be China, which committed \$758 billion between 2010 and mid-2019. Over the same period, Europe invested \$698 billion and the United States spent \$356 billion, the report said.

Solar power has attracted the most investment this decade at \$1.3 trillion.

By the end of this year, there will be more solar capacity installed this decade - 638 gigawatts (GW) - than any other power generation technology.

"While this demonstrates huge and lasting progress, the pace must increase.

Renewables are now firmly embedded in the power generation sector but only represent 26.3 percent of total electricity produced - 12.9 percent if we exclude large hydro," the report said.

"Fossil fuel subsidies, which run into the hundreds of billions of dollars each year, are slowing progress," it added.

Around 529 GW of new coal plants have been added this decade, 487 GW of new wind capacity and 438 GW of new gas-fired power generation.

Although more new capacity was added for solar than coal or gas, it does not directly translate into new power generation because solar is intermittent and dependent on sunlight.

Despite the growth of renewables, global power sector emissions are likely to have risen by at least 10 percent by the end of this decade.

The report comes ahead of a United Nations climate summit this month, at which Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is calling for countries to give concrete and more ambitious plans to curb global warming.

Mexico moves to launch world's largest oil hedge program: sources

Mexico has made the first moves to launch its annual \$1 billion oil hedging program by asking banks for quotes, sources familiar with the deal said, while buying in financial oil options contracts for 2020 has risen in recent days, consistent with the giant trade.

A Wall Street source and a Mexican congressional source familiar with the program, both of whom declined to be identified because of the sensitive nature of the deal, told Reuters on Wednesday that banks have been submitting offers for the hedge and that Mexico had requested these quotes.

For more than a decade, Mexico's government has paid for a hedge in a bid to guarantee its revenues for the coming year from oil exports by state oil company Pemex. The series of highly anticipated oil trades is seen as the world's top sovereign derivatives trade.

Mexico's 2019 sales were hedged last year at an average price of \$55 per barrel in a deal worth \$1.23 billion on put options. Pemex separately hedges its own sales, resuming the practice in 2017 for the first time in 11 years.

The Mexican finance ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Negotiations are notoriously secretive and limited to few participants as both sides attempt to secure the best terms in a highly competitive deal for banks.

It is unclear when Wall Street banks started to submit bids to Mexico.

Reuters reported last week that Mexico was close to executing the hedging program after several sources familiar with the program said that talks between Wall Street banks and the finance ministry had intensified recently.

"They are in the final stages of the hedge," the Mexican source said of the negotiations, ahead of the country presenting its 2020 budget on Sunday.

DIPLOMATIC CAR FOR SALE

Type	Hyundai Sante Fe (Full Option)
Model	2010
Colour	Black
Price	Highest bid

➤ Interested buyers may inspect the vehicle by appointment on Telephone No. **66941388-90** and may submit offer price in writing in a sealed envelope addressed to the Embassy of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Tehran before 1100 hrs, Wednesday 18th September 2019.

➤ The bidders can participate in opening of bids at 1100 hrs in Cultural Hall of the Embassy.

➤ Interested buyers may collect bidding documents/ proforma from Embassy reception for further details.

Exxon agrees \$4 billion sale of Norway oil and gas assets

Exxon Mobil has agreed to sell its Norwegian oil and gas assets for up to \$4 billion, ending its production in a country where it started operations more than a century ago, three sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

U.S. oil major Exxon said in June it was looking to sell its Norwegian upstream portfolio, which comprises minority stakes in more than 20 fields, operated by local producer Equinor and Anglo-Dutch oil major Royal Dutch Shell.

Norwegian daily Dagens Naeringsliv reported after the Reuters report that the buyer was Var Energi, citing anonymous sources. The deal was due to be announced at the end of September, it added.

An Exxon spokeswoman said: "As a matter of practice, we don't comment on commercial

discussions."

Var declined to comment.

Shares in Exxon, the world's biggest publicly traded oil company, rose 1.7 percent to a session high in New York after Reuters reported a sale had been agreed.

The Irving, Texas-based company has held talks in recent weeks with a number of interested parties including Oslo-listed companies Equinor, Aker BP, and DNO, Stockholm-listed Lundin Petroleum as well as Var Energi, backed by Italy's Eni, and private equity firm Hitech Vision, industry sources said.

Equinor, Lundin and DNO were not immediately available to comment.

The three sources told Reuters that Exxon had closed the sale process in recent days with

one buyer after agreeing on the terms of a sale.

Exxon hired investment bank Jefferies to run the sale process, banking sources told Reuters last month.

Jefferies declined to comment.

In 2017, Exxon's net production from fields off Norway was around 170,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day, according to its website.

The sale, if approved by regulators and completed, comes after Exxon focused in recent years on growing its onshore U.S. shale production, particularly in the Permian basin, as well as developing huge oil discoveries in Guyana. Oslo-based consultancy Rystad Energy said in a note in June that as of Jan 1, 2019, Exxon held 530 million barrels of oil equivalent on the Norwegian Continental Shelf.

"The profile is mature and declining, but nevertheless sizeable in terms of current production. A portfolio generating high cash flow and with limited tax balances, given the Norwegian fiscal regime with 90% nominal tax relief on investment, will be highly attractive for any E&P company without sufficient revenue," Rystad analyst Simon Sjothun said.

Exxon is also considering selling its assets in the British North Sea after more than 50 years, industry sources told Reuters last month.

Biden maneuvers in Texas and Wisconsin

By Saeed Sobhani

TEHRAN — Former US Vice President Joe Biden has good standing in public and state polls. This has led to concern for US President Donald Trump. On the other hand, polls show that Biden has been able to challenge Trump in two key states, Wisconsin and Texas.

Former Vice President Joe Biden leads President Donald Trump in a hypothetical head-to-head matchup in Wisconsin, according to a Marquette University Law School poll released on Wednesday.

Biden is up over Trump by 51% to 42% among registered voters in Wisconsin. The President also trails Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, who tops Trump 48% to 44%, just barely outside the margin of error.

Trump is tied against Sens. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts (45% each) and Kamala Harris of California (44% each).

Numbers this far out from a general election are hard to read, and could change between now and November 2020. They should be thought of as a snapshot in time rather than a predictor of the future.

Among the Democratic candidates, Biden leads the pack with 28% of registered Democrats, Democratic-leaning independents and independents who don't lean toward either party saying he was their first choice, followed by 20% for Sanders and 17% for Warren. Sanders beat out former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in the 2016 Wisconsin Democratic primary, 57% to 43%.

South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg received 6% support in the poll, followed by Harris at 3% and businessman Andrew Yang with 2%. All other candidates received 1% or less in the poll. More than 1 in 10 voters (13%) said they didn't know who their first choices for the Democratic nominee were.

Biden is by far the most favorable candidate: 70% of the Democratic sample had a positive opinion of him, followed by 63% for Sanders, 53% for Warren, 37% for Buttigieg and 35% for Harris.

"Large portion of WI Dem voters don't have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of prez candidates yet, other than Biden and Sanders," Charles Franklin, director of the MU Law poll, said in a tweet.

Just slightly more approve of the job Trump is doing than plan to vote for him in 2020 at this point. Trump receives a higher approval rating in Wisconsin than he does nationally: 45% approve of the job he's doing as President and 53% disapprove -- relatively unchanged since April (46% approved, 52% disapproved). His favorable was just slightly lower: 42% favorable, 53% unfavorable. The Marquette University Law School poll was conducted by phone from August 25 through 29 among a random sample of 800 registered voters with a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.9 percentage points. The survey includes a sample of 444 registered Democrats, independents who lean Democratic and pure independents, with a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 5.3 percentage points.

Texas Poll: Biden leads 2020 Democrats by 6 points Also The hill reported that Former Vice President Joe Biden leads the Democratic presidential primary field by 6 points in Texas, according to a new poll.

Twenty-four percent of Lone Star State Democratic primary voters said they would choose Biden, based on the Texas Lyceum survey released Thursday. He's trailed by former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke, whom 18 percent of voters picked as their top candidate. O'Rourke's support is much higher in his home state than nationally, based on polls. A RealClearPolitics average of national polls shows O'Rourke at 2.1 percent support, far behind the top-tier candidates.

The new Texas poll found Sens. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) neck and neck for the third and fourth place spots, at 15 and 13 percent, respectively. Texas-born Julián Castro, a former Housing and Urban Development secretary, is tied at 4 percent with Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.). South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg and Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) are tied at 3 percent, based on the poll. All other candidates polled at 2 percent or less. The question regarding the 2020 field surveyed 358 voters who said they would vote in the Democratic primary between Aug. 16 and 25. The margin of error is plus or minus 5.18 percentage points. President Trump won Texas in 2016, but Democrats are looking to seize on the state, which recent elections have shown to be growing more purple. In 2018, O'Rourke narrowly lost a Senate election to Sen. Ted Cruz (R). Texas is one of 15 states to hold its primary on March 3, Super Tuesday. Poll shows Biden beating Trump in Texas

Also Politico reported that A new polls spells danger for President Donald Trump's reelection chances in one of the unlikeliest of places: Texas. The Quinnipiac University poll shows that Joe Biden would top Trump by four points — 48 percent to 44 percent — in a general election matchup there, an outcome the ruby red state hasn't seen in four decades. But even while Biden is the only Democratic presidential candidate to beat Trump in a head-to-head matchup in Texas, the poll signals trouble for the president there in that it found five other candidates within the poll's margin of error, including home-state politicians Beto O'Rourke and Julián Castro.

Perhaps surprisingly, the next strongest candidate in the state was Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who the poll found losing to the president by only 1 point, 46 percent to 45 percent. Next was South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg, whose rising star landed him within 2 points of Trump in a head-to-head matchup. The race for 2020 starts now. Stay in the know. Follow our presidential election coverage.

By signing up you agree to receive email newsletters or alerts from POLITICO. You can unsubscribe at any time. But among Democratic and Democratic-leaning voters, the poll found that Biden continues to hold a commanding lead in the primary field, with 30 percent of voters backing Biden, followed by 16 percent for O'Rourke, 15 percent for Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and 11 percent for Warren. Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) and Castro were far behind with 4 percent each, followed by Buttigieg with 3 percent. No other Democrat topped 2 percent in the poll. But as the president continues to struggle in the Rust Belt states that handed him the White House in 2016 — in part due to Biden's popularity with working-class voters — his campaign has begun to seek out alternate paths to a second term, including plans to compete in blue states like New Mexico, Nevada and New Hampshire.

O'Rourke has previously caught flak for his insistence than Texas and its 38 Electoral College votes could be in play in next year's election, but Biden's strong performance in the GOP stronghold will bolster his argument that he is the most electable 2020 Democrat.

Though O'Rourke, who has faltered in more recent national and early state polling, jumps up to second place in the Texas poll, Democratic voters there would much rather see him ditch his White House bid to challenge GOP Sen. John Cornyn, by a nearly 2-1 margin. And though the former Texas congressman put up a fight in his 2018 run to unseat Sen. Ted Cruz, earning him early presidential front-runner chatter, he has faltered in more recent national and early-state polling. While he jumps up to second place in the Texas poll, Democratic voters there would much rather see O'Rourke ditch his White House bid to challenge GOP Sen. John Cornyn by a nearly 2-1 margin. The Quinnipiac poll surveyed 1,159 Texas voters from May 29 to June 4, and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.4 percentage points. Among 407 Democrats and Democratic-leaning voters, the margin of error is plus or minus 5.8 percentage points.

Consequences of Israeli attacks on Iran-Backed forces in Iraq

By Fatemeh Sayyahi

IFP — Mourners hold a banner with Arabic that reads, "Masses of the Popular Mobilization Forces chant death to America, death to Israel" during the funeral procession of Abu Ali al-Dabi, a fighter of the Popular Mobilization Forces, who was killed in a drone attack, in Baghdad, Iraq, August 26, 2019. / Photo by AP

Political commentator Fatemeh Sayyahi has weighed in on the consequences of attacks by the US and Israel on bases of the Iran-backed Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq.

It was January 19 when a rather strong blast rocked one of the bases of the 52nd Brigade of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF).

That was the beginning of serial attacks on PMF positions.

Afterwards, the former Ashraf camp and the Sayyid of Martyrs Battalions, or Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS), in Baghdad's Dora were targeted.

And recently, an explosion hit an arms depot belonging to one of the groups affiliated with the PMF. The depot lies near Balad base 64 kilometres from Baghdad.

Then, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu implicitly claimed responsibility for the attacks on PMF bases. He also stressed the need for such attacks to continue. Netanyahu's comments made Iraqi officials, especially PMF commanders, break the silence and release more information on the attacks.

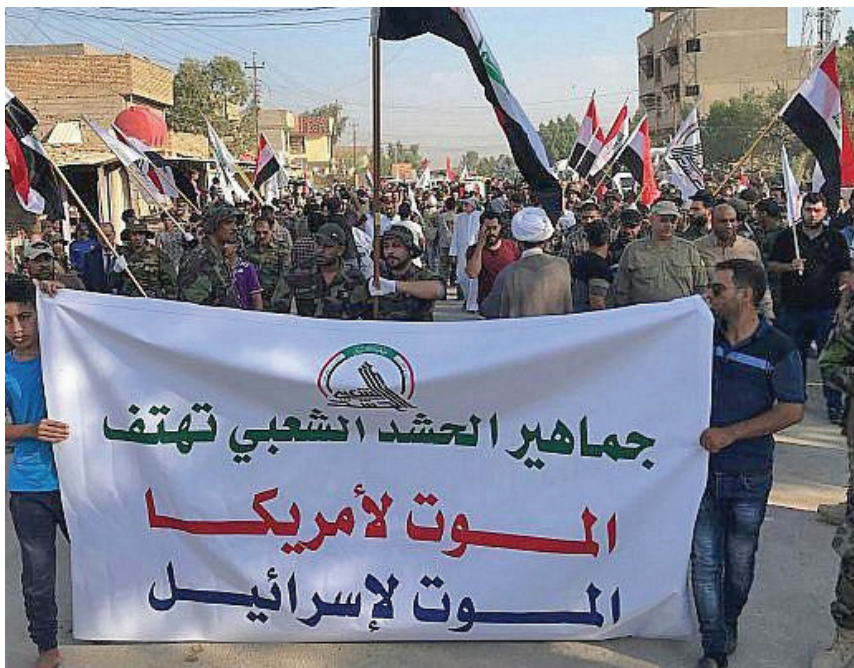
Deputy PMF Commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in a statement blamed the United States for the recent blasts at the PMF's ammunition depots. He stressed that Washington seeks to violate Iraq's sovereignty and attack PMF forces.

He said he has precise and confirmed intelligence suggesting the Americans have brought four unmanned aerial vehicles into Iraq this year via the Azerbaijan Republic in order to work on the trend of conducting flights against Iraqi military bases.

He also referred to other information, including maps and audio files, saying US drones have recently been gathering information on PMF bases rather than chasing ISIS terrorists, and have collected data on the PMF's divisions as well as arms and ammunition depots.

Iraqi National Security Advisor and PMF chief Falih al-Fayyadh announced in a statement the following day that al-Muhandis' comments did not reflect the PMF's official stance, but he did not reject those comments, either.

It seems the PMF's official stance will be announced by Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi's office after his probe is complete. It goes without saying that



a delay in the announcement of the details of the attacks and making plans to adopt deterrent moves will only result in an increase in threats against the PMF.

The Iraqi Army and people's security is closely intertwined with that of their popular forces, and the continuation of attacks on PMF bases will be a serious threat against different areas across Iraq.

Conducting assaults against the positions of popular mobilization forces, who are now legally part of Iraq's Armed Forces, amounts to targeting Iraq's territorial integrity, sovereignty and security.

One of the reasons that prompt Iraqi authorities to drag their feet on unveiling the hidden dimensions of raids on PMF bases is Baghdad's weakness in dealing with parties involved in the attacks.

This precaution and patience has its root in Iraq's weakness in political and military domains.

On the one hand, this political weakness can be attributed to the enforcement, to the letter, of orders and the power of decisions by the prime minister.

Despite the recent order by Abdul Mahdi to bring the country's airspace under full control and cancel all permits of flight in the Iraqi skies, still we saw another attack against PMF positions, a similar attack from a single command centre inside Iraq.

On the other hand, a lack of state-of-the-art equipment and air defence systems have weakened the Iraqi military, so much so that it cannot monitor the violation of the country's airspace by Israeli drones and US military movements on Iraqi soil.

Under such circumstances, it is clear that the US, with its 15 bases, is well able to have control over Iraq's day-to-day affairs and achieve its objectives one after the other.

If we regard a weak air defence system with a limited ability to spot and hit targets as one of the major military weaknesses of Iraq, we should not forget that the challenges Baghdad is facing with regards to purchasing these systems have added to the problem.

Iraq is unable to buy Russian-made air defence systems because Moscow itself along with the United States as the Israeli regime's allies is not willing to sell the systems to Baghdad.

Even if the Abdul Mahdi government wants to purchase systems such as S-300 and S-400 from another country, it will face pressure and threats by Washington. The US reaction may even be stronger than the sanctions Washington slapped on its NATO ally Turkey over the purchase of the air defence systems.

Iraq is also unlikely to import air defence systems via Iran due to Tehran's strategic considerations, the high risk of transfer, the threat of Washington's confrontations and even opposition from inside Iraq.

In any case, PMF forces should reciprocate and show its deterrent power in order to stop threats against its bases. Now that the US and the Israeli regime's joint strategy is to deal a blow to Iran's proxy troops, more attacks should be expected in Lebanon, Syria and Yemen.

Under such circumstances, only

the "threat against threat" strategy will work.

So, the PMF's future moves may be planned based on the decisions made within the organization independently from the Iraqi government's official reactions.

The reason is that the Iraqi government does not favour confrontation with American troops and fears the consequences of threatening the interests of the United States in Iraq.

However, the PMF's calculations are different and it is expected to go into action independently.

Due to distance and the fact that PMF forces lack the necessary resources to launch similar air raids against the Israeli regime, they will focus on ground operations.

If they adopt such an approach, they will be able to use the territories of the resistance front, especially the Syrian soil, to deal a direct blow.

Israeli embassies in Iraq's neighbouring countries can also be struck as indirect Israeli targets.

As for Iran's backing or lack of backing for the PMF's reciprocal measures, it should be noted that operations against PMF forces has been to harm Tehran's interests and trigger objections over Iraq's cooperation with Iran.

It goes without saying that Iran will move to counter such conspiracies and call for support for the PMF. Nevertheless, one should wait and see how and at what level this support will be.

Head of the Iraqi State of Law Alliance Nuri Maleki warned Israel that if Tel Aviv's attacks continue, Iraq will turn into a battlefield where more than one country, including Iran, will be involved.

This warning can be analyzed in two ways.

On the one hand, the remarks can be evaluated as being aimed at preparing the Iraqi public opinion for possible cooperation between Tehran and Baghdad on Iraqi soil.

On the other hand, since these attacks were the first Israeli threats against Iraq following Operation Opera in 1981 where Iraq's nuclear installations were targeted in a bid to threaten Iran's interests, the remark by Maleki could be seen as a hint to bring responsibility upon Iran toward the situation in Iraq and suggesting that Iran is expected to get involved in the current crisis.

Of course, a more logical decision would be to take the necessary reciprocal actions without Iran getting directly involved as Iran's engagement may lead to a standoff between the government and part of Iraqi people.

Cuba calls on the international community to prevent U.S. actions: Alexis Bandrich

1 → Pompeo is ignorant of the history and principles of the Cuban Revolution. Constantly lies, with cynicism and demagoguery about Cuba.

He has come to propose to negotiate a reconciliation in exchange for us abandoning the course chosen by our people, for us to betray friends and deny 60 years of dignity.

No threat will make us change.

The submission of the US Department of State to the Bolton - Miami anti-Cuban mafia connection damages its politics and tradition. Nor will it help Pompeo in its aspirations to the Senate or the US Presidency.

Cuba will know how to maintain and expand ties with millions of people from the most diverse sectors and regions in the US, who believe in a respectful and constructive relationship between the two countries, and favor the end of the blockade on the Island. Cuba has not renounced its willingness to build a civilized relationship with the United States, provided that our deep differences are respected. Any proposal that, apart from respect for peers, does not interest us.

USA It tries to sabotage Cuban medical cooperation, of recognized international prestige, an example of solidarity and humanity.

He has allocated USD 3 million to persecute Cuba for helping to save lives in the world. Fallacies, lies, villainy and imperial arrogance that do not understand human values. Cuba is distinguished by cooperation with other peoples.

Cuba does not give what is left over but shares what little it has. Today 33 thousand Cuban professionals work in 85 countries, in health, education, sports and construction.

Cuba maintains a policy of zero tolerance to Trafficking in Persons and exemplary performance against this scourge, given its social achievements, citizen security and equal opportunities.

USA It increasingly threatens international stability with acts against peace and security, economic imbalances, unilateral coercive measures, climate change, interference in the internal affairs of other States, racist and discriminatory migration policy.

They alarm the exorbitant amounts invested every year in the war industry and the modernization of nuclear arsenals, instead of promoting peace, combating hunger and poverty, implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals.



USA It promotes war and death.

They have more than 250 thousand soldiers, in 800 bases, in more than 177 countries. Cuba promotes life and health in 56 years of medical cooperation. More than 400 thousand Cuban collaborators have worked in more than 164 countries.

The counteroffensive of Yankee imperialism and the oligarchy, together with the hawks that have appropriated their foreign policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean, threaten our geographical space declared as a Zone of Peace.

The international community is challenged to face the aggressive and arrogant conduct of the United States, the arbitrary imposition of unilateral coercive measures and punitive tariffs on sovereign states, their disrespect for International Law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Venezuela is surrounded, robbed and assaulted with the approval or the complicit silence of powerful nations, and what is worse, with the shameful complicity of Latin American governments, shaping the most dramatic scenario of the cruelty of the empire's policies.

Cuba strongly rejects the brutal cruelty of the

US government Against the Venezuelan people. As Fidel said: "We will continue to defend the ideas for which we have fought for a lifetime, together with the poor, the sick without doctors or medicines, (...) the hungry, the oppressed and the exploited of the entire Earth that constitute the vast majority of Humanity We were born in a free country that our parents bequeathed us, and first the Island will sink into the sea before we consent to being slaves of anyone."

Cuba calls on the international community to prevent US actions against the integrity of our peoples and stop the hostility, folly and irresponsibility of the current US administration.

Cuba has ratified its inescapable commitment to multilateralism and efforts to move towards a democratic, fair and equitable international order that responds to the demand for peace and sustainable development of all peoples.

A peace with respect, a peace with rights, a peace with independence and a peace with security for all the peoples of the world, that is the peace for which we all must fight!

Thank you.

Global elite seeking to convert human society into subservient nations: U.S. Author

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – An American author and political analyst said the Trump administration is awash with “dual US-Israeli citizens” and its foreign policy is run by European and Israeli elites to convert human society into subservient nations. “Trump’s administration is awash with dual US/Israeli citizens and it’s crystal clear that powerful elements in Israel and their founding families based in Europe are his main puppeteers. US foreign policy is orchestrated by powerful European financial elites through almost direct Israeli intervention in US affairs,” Walt Peretto told Tasnim.

He added, “Their long-term goals are to merge all nations and convert human society into a drastically depopulated, RFID chipped, mind-controlled subclass subservient to an omnipotent ruling class where all challenges to their power become impossible.”

Walt Peretto is an American writer, researcher, analyst, and sociopolitical psychologist. He is a regular contributor to various media outlets and he writes for several online news magazines. He is also working on a book that will introduce the groundwork for sociopolitical psychology which is the study of the behaviors behind social systems and their interactions.

The full text of the interview is as follows: ■ According to a recent article published by the Washington Post, “Long-term trends show that China is catching up to the United States on just about every conceivable capability metric. Short-term trends show the European Union is a more potent regulatory power and the United States has become more isolated on questions of, say, aviation regulation”. At the same time, serious international relations scholars have argued that US hegemonic power is nearing its end. What are your thoughts on this?

A: There is a perception around the world that the United States is essentially a rogue state when it comes to environmental regulations, tolerance of Israeli aggression in its occupied territories and close neighbors, and its willingness to unilaterally use its military might around the world. When it comes to the environment, the typical cycle goes like this – if a Republican is president, you will get an administration that is business first and burdensome environmental regulations will be lax – if a Democrat is elected, there will be more emphasis on regulations and measures to combat climate change. This dichotomy upholds the left/right political psychological divide and feeds ‘participatory’ political debate---keeping the public in the notion that their opinions matters. In reality, sane environmental actions that government and private citizens could take to reverse environmental degradation like ending the dumping of plastics and other waste products in the oceans, are ignored, while placing a heavy emphasis on climate change.

The reason for this emphasis on the theory of climate change, to the detriment of tangible environmental damage, is well-documented in UN Agenda 21. This document, signed by about 178 nations in 1992, calls for the implementation of initiatives that would place incredible power in the hands of governments to sharply restrict the free-flow of people, mass confiscation of private land and moving populations into high rise ‘smart’ cities filled with advanced surveillance technologies that would essentially end



the concept of privacy.

This madness is being sold under the guise of ‘sustainable development.’ It is also being sold at the local level instead of by federal decrees. They want this movement to be viewed as an endless patchwork of local initiatives and grassroots environmental actions. The real deal behind these initiatives has to do with a psychopathic class of individuals who are pathologically obsessed with complete domination and control of all the world’s material wealth and human resources. They covet a sharply depopulation mind-controlled population living in strategically designed surveillance cities where elites and their enforcers and dark psychologists can easily manage a mind-controlled service class that will benefit the elite.

Agenda 21 is behind many of these unknowing environmental groups and educational programs. Many children in Western nations are being fed with notions that if we do not act on climate change now...within a dozen years or so environmental damage with be irreversible and the children of today will not have a future to look forward to. This is outright systemic child abuse! There is no definitive evidence that human activity is warming the planet to the extent that polar ice will melt in a few years and all low-lying coastal cities will be inundated. These notions have also given social-engineers the green light to spray the atmosphere with endless streams of aluminum, strontium, and barium, in the name of reversing global warming when in fact it has more to do with introducing chemicals into the environment that will accelerate the depopulation efforts so coveted by the pathological classes.

On a federal level, it is the United States with its current stance on deregulation that is somewhat of a snag on the global ‘sustainable development’ movement. But again, implementation of Agenda 21 is currently on the local level, waiting for a future Democratic administration to sign it into law federally. It’s not that Trump is anti-globalization, he will do whatever his backers command, but this perception of a growing divide between the US and its allies helps to feed Trump’s constituency who still believe he is an “America First” and anti-globalist president. The left in America largely despises Trump---so he must maintain solid support from the right who believe he is more for individual freedoms and “making America great again.” By dis-

tancing himself from the consensus of other nations, Trump’s constituency reinforces their notion that their president is America first when his actions imply his controllers are global government first.

■ North Korea continues to test misiles and Trump insists that Washington has good ties with Pyongyang. What is behind approach?

A: Compare Trump’s relationship with Kim Jong-un with Trump’s stance regarding the rest of America’s perceived enemies. The differences tell a story of the priorities of Trump’s globalist backers who mentored his ascendancy to US president. I have reason to believe that Trump’s handlers see North Korea as a living breathing laboratory for their social engineers to study and compare notes. North Korea engages in an anachronistic form of human livestock management based on direct threat and coercion under the premise of a rewriting of Marxist/Leninist ideology called Juche. This country is arguably the most dystopic and miserable society on Earth today.

Yet Trump boasts that he has a good relationship with the North Korean leader. Meanwhile, Trump endlessly sings the praises of Israel, a nation that was the main catalyst behind the 9/11 attacks that killed almost 3,000 people on that day in Trump’s hometown of New York. Trump’s administration is awash with dual US/Israeli citizens and it’s crystal clear that powerful elements in Israel and their founding families based in Europe are his main puppeteers. US foreign policy is orchestrated by powerful European financial elites through almost direct Israeli intervention in US affairs.

Their long-term goals are to merge all nations and convert human society into a drastically depopulated, RFID chipped, mind-controlled subclass subservient to an omnipotent ruling class where all challenges to their power become impossible. They utilize ever advancing technologies in the areas of surveillance, biochemical manipulation, and mind-control to multi-generationally implement this global dystopia in the works. Yet, North Korea itself remains quite primitive in comparison and controls its people in more historical ways through fear, intimidation, and withholding many of the essentials for basic survival.

Rewards are often given to societal managers in exchange for absolute compliance. Higher ups are sometimes motivated with gifts of material items or relatively comfortable residences while the commoners who

fail to serve the state adequately enough are largely on their own in this harsh game of survival. Some call this a ‘gift economy.’ Many of the commoners end up in prison work camps and are exploited for many years often until the time of their deaths.

In sharp contrast, other US perceived enemies like Iran and Venezuela, are independent nations with a wealth of natural resources, unlike North Korea. Their societies are much more in tune with the world’s average to higher standards of living and they are not aggressors on the world stage. Yet Trump and his backers demonize these nations while North Korea gets a free pass. This is because countries like Iran, Venezuela, and Syria have not yet signed onto the one-world system coveted by the globalist psychopaths. Trump’s job as a globalist puppet is to take a bellicose public stance against these holdout nations while maintaining a soft tone with Kim Jong-Un and his nation’s low-tech social laboratory.

■ The US has decided to set up an interest national patrol mission to secure the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, calling on its allies to join it. A number of countries, including Germany, France, and Japan, have turned down Washington’s request. It seems that the divide between the US and its close allies is growing. What do you think?

A: Any military conflict between the US and its allies against Iran would immediately disturb shipping lanes in the Persian Gulf region. US (Israeli) foreign policy is attempting to gain the upper hand by coalition-building with its allies to form strategic advantages should a major conflict begin in these economically important waters. Aggression towards Iran is largely an Israeli initiative.

Israel has placed many dual US/Israeli citizens in Trump’s administration as ‘advisors’ and they control the US Congress through a pledge that all elected members must sign stating they will vote in favor of Israeli interests. Failing to sign this pledge to AIPAC results in the cutoff of essential funding for their political campaigns. Israeli agents also have a tight grip on the US mainstream news media and are very influential on other aspects of mainstream American society including entertainment.

Israel and its founding families also strongly influence America’s allies to various degrees---especially in terms of international banking and finance. But most of America’s allies retain more independence than the US and they are inclined to express this independence at times by openly distancing themselves from US foreign policy.

Another perception is that the US will express its aggression unilaterally if their allies do not comply. But the US always seems to get the UK quickly on board and to coalesce most allies if major conflicts are commenced. The American people are rarely behind such aggression short of a major event like the false flag self-inflicted 9/11 terrorist attacks.

It is the heavy Israeli influence in the US government and mainstream media that fuels most American aggression. In relative peacetime, many of America’s allies may take an independent stance with some issues like the Iran nuclear agreement which Trump has rejected. But in times of major conflict, many of America’s allies will provide some military support to aide US foreign adventures.

Trump and fellow gangsters look increasingly foolish

1 ➞ or even Venezuela’s). Also, pressures have been ramped up by the usual suspects (Natanyahu for example whose re-election as Israeli PM this month is not certain) to avoid any U.S. give and take with Iran while Trump has suggested that he meet with President Rouhani for some bilateral talks at an upcoming UN General Assembly meeting in New York later this month.

How crazy is that, given that the sanctions have lately been targeted against Iranian shipping networks with any ties to the IRGC? Does Trump really believe he can strike any kind of fresh deal with Iran without dropping the sanctions first? How delusional is he? The overture at any rate was made through French intermediaries, and meanwhile Iran has not released the British tanker Stena Impero. The “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran looks increasingly like some kind of bad joke where, even if Iran suffers, the U.S. loses in the more important court of world opinion. Bullies are insufferable given a basic human nature against them.

The longer view may be important to grasp, and so far this appears to be a view that Iranians may have encompassed and adopted to get through these difficult times. It rests on the realization that despite various iterations of governance or even dominant religious fealty – whether Achaemenid, Parthian, Seleucid, Zoroastrian, Sassanid, Islamic, Abbasid, Ilkhanate, Safavid, Qajar, Timurid or even Pahlavi right up to the current Islamic Republic now just 40 years old – Iran survives on the bedrock of a splendid creativity fostered by a basic culture that has withstood the test of millennia and foreign imperialism throughout recorded history.

Currently, of course, not just Iran but many other countries are having to deal with the aggressions of U.S. and Western and Zionist imperialism, which are as horrific as, say, anything the Romans tried to impose long ago. (Remember what happened to the greedy Roman Crassus at Carrhae in 53 BC!) Iran, however it manages to deal with American imperialism, will remain – despite ups and downs which it has managed for thousands of years – simply Iran, when the U.S. and its “allies” have finally exhausted themselves and been reduced to temporal blips because of greed and short-sighted governance.

This is a primary question: why can’t a U.S. government come along that reorients itself to an international posture of “live and let live” or “let’s all try to prosper together”? What good, really, has ever resulted from Western aggression, and especially towards a country like Iran that really does not pose any kind of existential threat to the U.S.? Maybe that’s ahead as the U.S. falters in coming years without a change of posture and thus a possible reclamation of some real leadership.

Maybe Bernie Sanders or Elizabeth Warren could become the President the U.S. needs, just as Jimmy Carter has long been a former U.S. President who has demonstrated courage and wisdom. But if there is not a wholesale change of mentality in the White House and in parts of Congress one can bet the U.S. is not going to be successful going forward because the world is fast reorienting itself to multi-polar expansions that include more cooperative efforts among great nations.

The Muslims can’t survive without unity!

1 ➞ According with Javad Owji, managing director of the National Iranian Gas Company, the pipeline in Pakistan was expected to be constructed in 22 months with the participation of Iran. The PPP Government of Pakistan failed to start work on gas pipe line and the successive Muslim League Government allayed any fear of external pressure to abandon the agreement with Iran, but later on 25-Feb-2014, Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources Pakistan, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi told the National Assembly that the project for the moment was off the table. He cited international sanctions as the issue.

Analysts said the Saudi government was also pressurizing Pakistan to leave the agreement. Saudi Arabia itself is an undemocratic state. Yet, it has started a pointless war with a poor neighbor Yemen on the incredible claim of support for democracy in Yemen. Saudi Arabia and UAE action against Qatar was also considered unfair by unbiased commentators. Pakistan is now said to be reconsidering resuming the gas Pipe Line project with Iran, but may be because of deteriorating relations with Saudi Arabia.

These are just a few facts of Muslim countries conflicts with each other due to external interference. In any event, the Muslim countries must realize that they have no future without unity. The sooner they start cooperation and stop confrontation, the better. This is exactly what the Muslim masses want them to do and this is the only way they can be able to solve political problems in the Muslim World and enjoy peace and prosperity.

U.S. Plan for deploying missiles to Asia A major mistake: American expert

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – A political analyst based in Washington deplored a recent call by US Defense Secretary Mark Esper to deploy ground-based missiles to Asia, describing the deployment as “a major mistake”.

“The US Defense Secretary’s call for deploying medium-range missiles in Asia is a major mistake, which Trump would be wise to cancel,” Michael O. Billington, a senior editor with the Executive Intelligence Review, said in an interview with the Tasnim News Agency.

Billington is an activist in the LaRouche Movement, Asia editor for the Executive Intelligence Review, and author of Reflections of an American Political Prisoner: the Repression and Promise of the LaRouche Movement. The following is the full text of the interview:

■ Some analysts and media reports suggest that the recent G-7 summit in Biarritz, France, ended in failure as deep divisions between the US under Donald Trump and its closest allies became more evident. For example, the US-Europe dispute over Trump’s trade war with China was not bridged even a bit in the summit. Do not you think these disputes indicate that the US allies are distancing themselves

from Trump and his shifting policies?

A: The EU is crumbling, as the financial system in the west is ready to explode. China was not the issue at the G7. While nothing was done to deal with the financial collapse, the focus of the fight was Russia. Trump and Macron agreed that Russia must be at the table if anything is to be done about anything. Italy agrees, and the German business community agrees, despite Merkel’s “lame duck” resistance. The neocons and neolibs in the US are getting hysterical since their Russia-gate hoax has been exposed as a British-run coup attempt. Russia’s response was, correctly, to agree that they should be at the table, but that also China and India should as well. This getting at LaRouche’s policy -- that the US, China, Russia, and India are the necessary minimum force to hold a new Bretton Woods, create a new financial system to replace the bankrupt City of London/Wall Street bubble with a creditary system to finance the required recovery -- the Belt and Road, the Moon-Mars mission, a crash fusion power development program, etc.

■ It seems that even Asian allies of the US have also distanced themselves

from the Trump administration. In the latest instance, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte declared in early August that his country would never allow the United States to deploy missile systems on its soil. Although there exists the Mutual Defense Treaty between the Philippines and the United States, Duterte said that he would bar the entry of foreign weapons, including nuclear arsenal in the country since this is considered a violation of the Philippine Constitution. What is your take on that? How do you assess the future of US relations with its Asian allies?

A: The Philippines is the key to US relations with Asia. Under Obama, Duterte denounced the US imperial effort to use the Philippines for a war with China. Under Trump, Duterte is friends with both the US and with China, and ASEAN is generally no longer falling for the British effort to make them “take sides,” but is working with both the US and with China. I believe Trump will find a solution to the trade issue with China at the right time. It would be best for Trump to join in the Belt and Road in cooperative investments, as Japan is doing with China in Thailand and elsewhere. ➞13

Second Announcement



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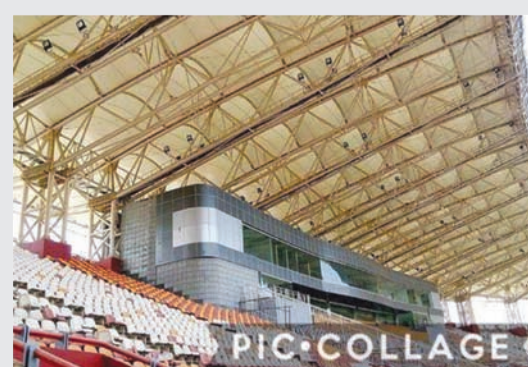
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European Mars rover ready for final test

The European Space Agency's ExoMars rover has arrived in France for final tests before being prepared for its mission next year.

Named Rosalind Franklin after the English chemist, the rover is designed to determine whether there has ever been life on Mars. It will also better understand the history of water on the red planet.

The rover took 18 months to build at the Airbus aerospace site in Stevenage, UK, and will now spend four months of testing at the company's site in Toulouse,

France, to make sure it will work in the harsh Martian conditions

Temperatures dropto -120C at night, and despite its insulation the rover's internal temperature will drop to -60C.

If all goes well, the rover will then be attached to the cruise-and-descent stage of the spacecraft and shipped to the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan for launch in July 2020.

Another team is working to verify the parachute system that will place the rover safely on Mars.



The UK is the second largest contributor to the ExoMars mission after Italy, and so won the right to build and name the rover. (Source: The Guardian)

New duck-billed dinosaur discovered in Japan



Paleontologists have unearthed the near complete skeleton of a new species of duck-billed dinosaur in northern Japan.

The 72-million-year-old remains were recovered from marine shelf deposits comprising the Upper Cretaceous Hakobuchi Formation, located near the town of Mukawa on the island of Hokkaido.

Researchers compared the specimen's 350 bones with those of 70 types of duck-billed dinosaurs, or hadrosaurids. They determined the specimen warranted a new genus and species classification, naming the dino Kamuysaurus japonicus.

The new species, described Thursday in the journal Scientific Reports, belongs to the Edmontosaurini clade and is closely related to members of the genera Kerberosaurus and Laiyangosaurus. The dinosaur lived during the Late Cretaceous Period, which lasted from 100.5 to 66 million years ago.

Scientists determined the specimen's cranial bone notch is positioned lower than its relatives. The ascending portion of the dinosaur's jaw is also shorter than other duck-billed dinosaurs. Unlike its relatives, the species featured a short row of neural spines that point forward.

Kamuysaurus japonicus stretched nearly 30 feet in length as an adult and weighed between four and five tons.

The discovery offered scientists further proof of the diversity and adaptability of hadrosaurids, as few duck-billed dinosaurs have been found in marine deposits.

Though the skeleton was remarkably well-preserved, it wasn't totally complete. Some bones were missing, while others were damaged. The skull's frontal bone features a large articular facet that connects to the nasal bone, which suggests the dinosaur may have boasted a crest similar to those sported by Brachyophosaurus, a species found in North America.

An ancient land bridge would have enabled members of the Edmontosaurini clade to migrate back and forth between Asia and North America. In fact, the authors of the new study hypothesized that Kamuysaurus, Laiyangosaurus, and Kerberosaurus dinosaurs likely migrated from North America into Asia, dispersing and diversifying prior to the end of the Campanian, the fifth of six ages of the Late Cretaceous epoch.

(Source: UPI)

New whale species discovered in ocean off Japan



Japanese whalers have long known of the existence of a rare kind of beaked whale which has been spotted in the north Pacific Ocean, but it had not been officially recognized as a separate species, until now.

The whale, which is smaller and darker in color than the Baird's beaked whale, had eluded research teams for years.

But fresh examination of the remains from several specimens have revealed the whale is indeed a separate species and has been named the black Baird's beaked whale or Berardius minimus.

Beaked whales prefer deep ocean waters and have a long diving capacity, making them hard to see and their behavior is not well documented.

Describing the species for the first time in the journal Scientific Reports, the research team led by Professor Takashi Matsuishi of Hokkaido University, collected six stranded unidentified beaked whales along the coasts of the Okhotsk Sea.

"Just by looking at them, we could tell that they have a remarkably smaller body size, more spindle-shaped body, a shorter beak, and darker color compared to known Berardius species," said Tadasu Yamada of the National Museum of Nature and Science, who was also on the research team.

"There are still many things we don't know about B. minimus," said Professor Matsuishi.

"We still don't know what adult females look like, and there are still many questions related to species distribution, for example. We hope to continue expanding what we know about [the species]."

The research team said the external appearance of the whale is mostly known from a male individual found stranded on 10 November 2012 in Sarufutsu, Hokkaido.

Though there appears to be a significant color difference between the greayer Baird's beaked whale and the new species, the researchers said "the color difference mainly depends on the scar density and is not biologically fundamental".

They also noted the maximum body size recorded among the black species so far is 6.9 meters, compared to 10 meters among their better-known cousins.

Local Hokkaido whalers refer to some whales in the region as Karasu (crows).

It is still unclear whether the newly identified B minimus and Karasu are the same species or not, and the research team have suggested it is possible Karasu could be yet another different species of whale.

(Source: The Independent)

Study reveals 'radical' wrinkle in forming complex carbon molecules in space

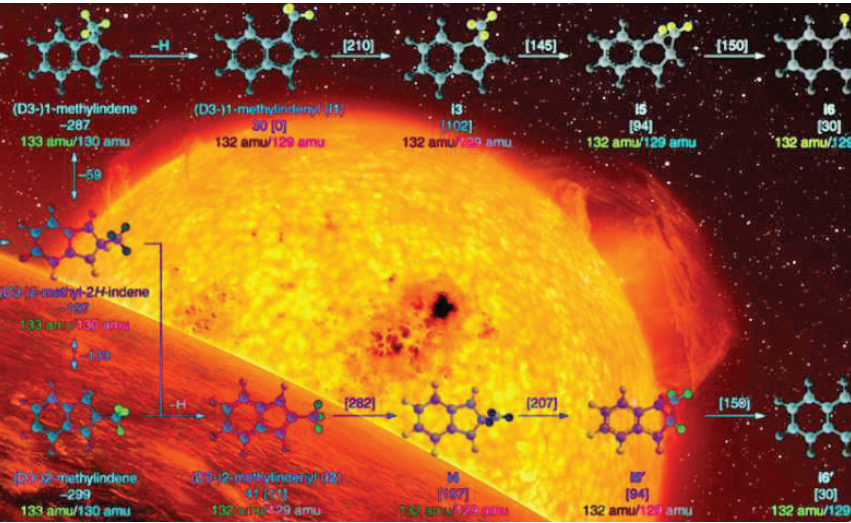
A team of scientists has discovered a new possible pathway toward forming carbon structures in space using a specialized chemical exploration technique at the Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (Berkeley Lab).

The team's research has now identified several avenues by which ringed molecules known as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, can form in space. The latest study is a part of an ongoing effort to retrace the chemical steps leading to the formation of complex carbon-containing molecules in deep space.

PAHs - which also occur on Earth in emissions and soot from the combustion of fossil fuels - could provide clues to the formation of life's chemistry in space as precursors to interstellar nanoparticles. They are estimated to account for about 20 percent of all carbon in our galaxy, and they have the chemical building blocks needed to form 2D and 3D carbon structures.

In the latest study, published in Nature Communications, researchers produced a chain of ringed, carbon-containing molecules by combining two highly reactive chemical species that are called free radicals because they contain unpaired electrons. The study ultimately showed how these chemical processes could lead to the development of carbon-containing graphene-type PAHs and 2D nanostructures. Graphene is a one-atom-thick layer of carbon atoms.

Importantly, the study showed a way to connect a five-sided (pentagon-shaped) molecular ring with a six-sided (hexagonal) molecular ring and to also convert five-sided molecular rings to six-



sided rings, which is a stepping stone to a broader range of large PAH molecules.

"This is something that people have tried to measure experimentally at high temperatures but have not done before," said Musahid Ahmed, a scientist in Berkeley Lab's Chemical Sciences Division. He led the chemical-mixing experiments at Berkeley Lab's Advanced Light Source (ALS) with Professor Ralf I. Kaiser at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. "We believe this is yet another pathway that can give rise to PAHs."

Professor Alexander M. Mebel at Florida International University assisted in the computational work for the study. Previous studies by the same research team have also identified a couple of other pathways for PAHs to develop in space. The studies suggest there could be multiple chemical routes for life's chemistry to take shape in space.

"It could be all the above, so that it isn't just one," Ahmed said. "I think that's what makes this interesting."

The experiments at Berkeley Lab's ALS - which produces X-rays and other types of light supporting many different types of simultaneous experiments - used a portable chemical reactor that combines chemicals and then jets them out to study what reactants formed in the heated reactor.

Researchers used a light beam tuned to a wavelength known as "vacuum ultraviolet" or VUV produced by the ALS, coupled with a detector (called a reflectron time-of-flight mass spectrometer), to identify the chemical compounds jetting out of the reactor at supersonic speeds.

The latest study combined the chemical radicals CH3 (aliphatic methyl radical) with C9H7 (aromatic 1-indenyl radical) at a temperature of about 2,105 Fahrenheit

degrees to ultimately produce molecules of a PAH known as naphthalene (C10H8) that is composed of two joined benzene rings.

The conditions required to produce naphthalene in space are present in the vicinity of carbon-rich stars, the study noted.

The reactants produced from two radicals, the study notes, had been theorized but hadn't been demonstrated before in a high-temperature environment because of experimental challenges.

"The radicals are short-lived - they react with themselves and react with anything else around them," Ahmed said. "The challenge is, 'How do you generate two radicals at the same time and in the same place, in an extremely hot environment?' We heated them up in the reactor, they collided and formed the compounds, and then we expelled them out of the reactor."

Kaiser said, "For several decades, radical-radical reactions have been speculated to form aromatic structures in combustion flames and in deep space, but there has not been much evidence to support this hypothesis." He added, "The present experiment clearly provides scientific evidence that reactions between radicals at elevated temperatures do form aromatic molecules such as naphthalene."

While the method used in this study sought to detail how specific types of chemical compounds form in space, the researchers noted that the methods used can also enlighten broader studies of chemical reactions involving radicals exposed to high temperatures, such as in the fields of materials chemistry and materials synthesis.

(source: eurekaalert.org)

Scientists behind first image of black hole awarded \$3m prize

An international collaboration that captured the first image of a black hole, a cosmic plughole from which nothing that enters can ever escape, has won the most lucrative prize in physics.

Hundreds of researchers on the Event Horizon Telescope (EHT) team will share the \$3m Breakthrough prize in fundamental physics for their image of the monster black hole at the heart of Messier 87, a galaxy 55m light years from Earth.

The remarkable shot of one of the most mysterious types of object in the universe required astronomers to coordinate observations from eight telescopes on four continents from Antarctica to Arizona to create an Earth-sized instrument sensitive enough to spot a bagel on the moon.

The picture's unveiling in April marked the moment that scientists saw what was once considered unseeable: the bottomless wells of gravity that Albert Einstein loathed even as his general theory of relativity predicted their existence.

"We've known for a long time that this was an amazing scientific result, an amazing result for astronomy, but to get the recognition on the world stage with a prize like this is vindication of all the hard work, all the sacrifice by the team," said Shep Doleman, the director of the EHT project at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. The 347 members of the team will each receive about \$8,600 (£7,000).

The prize is the latest in what has become an annual flurry of awards from the Breakthrough Foundation, an organization sponsored by Silicon Valley billionaires including the investor Yuri Milner and Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg. Last month, three theoretical physicists won the \$3m Special Breakthrough prize in fundamental physics for marrying Einstein's description of gravity with quantum mechanics in a speculative theory called supergravity.

In an announcement on Thursday, six other researchers were named as Breakthrough prize winners for their work in the life sciences and mathematics. Among them are David Julius at the University of California, San Francisco, who discovered mechanisms of pain sensation; and Alex Eskin at the University of Chicago who proved a mathematical proposition called the "magic wand theorem" with Maryam Mirzakhani, the first woman to win the prestigious Fields Medal, who died aged 40 in 2017.

The Messier 87 photograph gave scientists their first glimpse of the ring of dust and gas that hurtles at near the speed of light around a black hole before it plunges into the abyss. The ring encloses the round silhouette of the black hole's event horizon - the point of no return, after which the gravitational pull is so intense that not even light can escape.

"This is only the beginning," said Doleman. "We're launching into a new era of precision imaging of black holes."

The EHT team is working on an image of Sagittarius A*, the black hole at the center of our home galaxy, the Milky Way. Unlike Messier 87's supermassive black hole, which is 6.5bn times more massive than the sun, the black hole at the center of the Milky Way is a mere 4m times as massive. Matter and light lap the smaller black hole faster and its appearance in the sky changes minute by minute, making it a tougher beast to photograph.

The next major goal is to record video of black holes, a feat that may require the use of orbiting telescopes that capture rapid sequences of images. Footage of black holes will help scientists uncover how they consume what falls inside, how intense fields around them propel jets of subatomic particles into space, and how black holes can shine brighter than all the stars in their galaxy combined.

"Prizes like this acknowledge the deep, meaningful tradition of learning, of us wanting to understand our place in the cosmos," said Doleman. "It makes us stop for a moment, frankly. It gives us a moment to stop and appreciate that the universe is an amazing place."

(Source: The Guardian)

Swedish researchers unveil world's smallest accelerometer

Engineers in Sweden have developed the world's smallest accelerometer using graphene. The accelerometer could be used to create new wearable technologies for use in medicine, fitness and gaming.



"Based on the surveys and comparisons we have made, we can say that this is the smallest reported electromechanical accelerometer in the world," Xuge Fan, a researcher at the KTH Royal Institute of Technology, said in a news release.

"We can scale down components because of the material's atomic-scale thickness, and it has great electrical and mechanical properties," Fan said.

The researchers described the new nano-electromechanical system, or NEM, this week in the journal Nature Electronics.

To develop the tiny actuator, scientists needed to create an ultra-small, sensitive transducer. Researchers built the transducer by embedding double-layer graphene ribbons in silicon. The transducer utilizes graphene's conductive properties to convert energy from one type to another.

Graphene's benefits are well-documented. The atomically thin carbon sheets are exceptionally strong, flexible and conductive.

"We can scale down components because of the material's atomic-scale thickness, and it has great electrical and mechanical properties," Fan said. "We created a piezoresistive NEMS accelerometer that is dramatically smaller than any MEMS accelerometers available today, but retains the sensitivity these systems require."

The new technology could be used in mobile phones for navigation, mobile games and pedometers. The device could also inspire new types of monitoring systems for heart disease and motion-capture wearables. Scientists suggest the nano-scale transducer could also be used to create sensors and actuators for resonators, gyroscopes and microphones.

(Source: UPI)

Airline chiefs have no easy answers for flight-shaming critics

Airline bosses sought to defend their business against a rising tide of criticism over aircraft emissions as an upswell of activism threatens to overwhelm the industry before it can mount an effective response.

The heads of carriers including Emirates, JetBlue Airways Corp. and EasyJet Plc, speaking at the World Aviation Festival in London, warned that reducing carbon emissions would take years, if not decades, given the limitations of current technology and expansion of air travel to an ever-wider slice of the global population.

They also objected to punitive measures they maintain would be counter-productive or unintentionally hurt those who couldn't afford additional costs.

While carriers are taking action to cut carbon emissions and mitigate the impact of flying, significant advances such as electric or hybrid jets are decades away from commercial flight, Emirates President Tim Clark told the audience at a standing-room-only session Thursday.

"Let us not kid ourselves that the Holy Grail is going to come overnight," Clark said. "In the next couple of decades we might see some short-haul aircraft, but with long-haul it's much more difficult to do."

Activists from Extinction Rebellion targeted the event, handing out leaflets and leading small protests outside on Wednesday and Thursday. (Bloomberg is keynote host of the World Aviation Festival.) The demonstrators are part of the growing "Flight Shaming" movement that's already dented air travel in Scandinavia. Formulating a quick response is particularly challenging for airlines, which rely on long development cycles for aircraft that can stay in service for decades.

"Be careful about over-promising," Clark said, adding that he understands if customers ask airlines about their environmental priorities. "The automotive industry is well ahead, but then cars don't fly."

Airlines put out close to 1 billion tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year, and regulators around the world are considering levying taxes on carriers to reduce the number of people flying. Some people have begun to shun air travel for alternatives ranging from rail to videoconferencing, or just staying home. Swedish teen Greta Thunberg, who's inspired a global movement of so-called climate strikes, just crossed the Atlantic by sailboat to attend a United Nations climate summit in New York.

"Twenty years from now, I want to tell my kids and grandkids that I truly tried my best to change things," said Lola Perrin, a piano teacher and Extinction Rebellion volunteer, who said she stopped flying years ago. "We have a global problem and we all need to come together to solve it."

Alternatives to flying don't exist in the U.S., where there are no high-speed rail networks, JetBlue Chief Operating Officer Joanna Geraghty said in an interview. The low-cost carrier is switching to newer, more efficient Airbus A220 aircraft which consume 40% less fuel than the outgoing Embraer 190 jets, Geraghty said.

Geraghty also pushed back against criticism -- some of it coming from older carriers such as Deutsche Lufthansa AG -- that discounters are adding unnecessary flights with ultra-low costs. That perception has helped stoke moves to increase taxes on air fares or create minimums for prices.

"JetBlue's view is that air travel should not just be for the wealthy," Geraghty said on Bloomberg TV. "Air travel should be for anybody who wants to travel regardless of your economic level."

Higher taxes will also reduce the pool of funds to invest in modern technology required for cleaner airplanes, said EasyJet Chief Executive Officer Johan Lundgren. Still, he said, airlines recognize the need to act.

"There isn't one single technology that's going to solve this," he said. "We need to be putting pressure on the manufacturers and only then will we have credibility with consumers and politicians."

(Source: Bloomberg)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Joya de Ceren Archaeological Site

Joya de Ceren is an archaeological site located at the Canton Joya de Ceren, in the Department of La Libertad in El Salvador.

The property, which is a UNESCO World Heritage, has an extension of 3,200 ha. It contains the remains of a pre-hispanic



farming village that was covered by a volcanic eruption in the seventh century CE.

Around 500 CE, the central and western parts of the territory of the modern Republic of El Salvador were buried beneath thick layers of volcanic ash from the Ilopango volcano.

The area was abandoned until the ash layer had weathered into fertile soil and the Joya de Ceren settlement was founded. Not long afterwards, it was destroyed by the eruption of the Loma Caldera. The site was discovered during the construction of grain-storage silos in 1976, when a clay-built structure was exposed by a bulldozer. Excavations were resumed in 1989 and been continuing since that time.

The circumstances of the volcanic event led to the remarkable preservation of architecture and the artefacts of ancient inhabitants in their original positions of storage and use, forming a time capsule of unprecedented scientific value that can be appreciated in present times.

Underneath the layers of volcanic ash, the best preserved example of a pre-hispanic village in Mesoamerica can be found, with architectural remains, grouped into compounds that include civic, religious and household buildings. To date, a total of 18 structures have been identified and 10 have been completely or partially excavated.

(Source: UNESCO)

Millennia-old bas-relief found in western Iran

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — A bas-relief, estimated to date from over 3,000 years ago, has recently been discovered in Kermanshah province, western Iran.

A magnificent bas-relief carving, dating back to over 3,000 years ago, was discovered by a local a few days ago in a mountainous region, somewhere between Ezgeleh and Sarpol-e Zahab, provincial tourism chief Omid Qaderi said on Wednesday, ISNA reported.

"After the discovery was reported, a team of archeologists and heritage experts was dispatched to the place, which is on the face of a cliff adjacent to a river," the official noted.

"Surveys revealed that this treasured work belongs to Mesopotamian civilization and [the then] rulers of this region," Qaderi said.

The bas-relief highlights "strategic" importance of Ezgeleh and Sarpol-e Zahab in prehistoric times when the two served as a boundary between Mesopotamia and the Iranian plateau, the official explained.

"Information obtained from this prominent rock-carved relief shows that many wars were waged in the region at that time

when rulers left this valuable work to show their power."

Qaderi added that the newly-discovered relief is on a par with Anubanini reliefs, which are widely believed to be the oldest rock reliefs in the country.

Situated about twenty kilometers east of the border with Iraq, the four heavily damaged reliefs are associated with the Lullubi civilization due to depicting Lullubian kings as conquerors.

The kingdom of Lullubi, in the valley of the Diyala river, is mentioned several times in the cuneiform texts from ancient Iraq; the first references date to the third millennium BC (Naram-Sin's famous Victory Stela in the Louvre), while the most recent texts belong to the Neo-Assyrian age, according to Livius.org; a website on ancient history written and maintained since 1996 by the Dutch historian Jona Lendering.

Kermanshah is a cradle of civilization due to its antiquity and having Neolithic sites that have been yielded rich collections of stone tools and fossil bones.

Proximity to the Achaemenid and Sassanid bas-relief carvings of Bisotun and Taq-e-Bustan is amongst other tourist drawcards for the region.



A file photo depicts an Anubanini relief near Sarpol-e Zahab in western Iran

The bas-relief highlights "strategic" importance of Ezgeleh and Sarpol-e Zahab in prehistoric times when the two served as a boundary between Mesopotamia and the Iranian plateau.

UNWTO chief congratulates Mounesan on becoming tourism minister

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — United Nations World Tourism Organization Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili in a letter on Thursday congratulated Ali-Asghar Mounesan on becoming Iran's tourism minister.

In his message, Pololikashvili expressed pleasure over the establishment of Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism, describing Mounesan's appointment as the result of his indefatigable efforts when he was taking the helm of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, IRNA reported on Friday.

Last month, Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization was changed to a ministry, and

President Hassan Rouhani appointed Mounesan as the acting minister. On Tuesday, members of the parliament (Majlis) cast votes of confidence for him to take the helm of the ministry.

The UNWTO secretary general also hailed valuable decision of the Iranian government for the structural change as a sign of its special attitude toward cultural heritage.

Describing Iran as a valuable member of the organization, he hoped that bilateral ties will further improve following the change in Iran's cultural heritage structure.

Mounesan replaced Zahra Ahmadipour as the head of the CHHTO in August 2017.

Shahr-e Kord to host exhibit of tourism, handicrafts

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Tens of craftspeople and tour operators from all over the country are scheduled to partake in a major sales exhibition, which will be running from September 30 to October 4 in Shahr-e Kord, the capital city of western Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province.

A total of 150 stalls will be set up for the event, of which 120 will be dedicated to crafters and artisans, 20 to tourism associates, and the rest to presenting local souvenirs, CHTN reported.

Currently, 52 fields of handicrafts such as kilim carpets, traditional locks, and givoh shoes -- a traditional, lightweight footwear -- are practiced in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari prov-



South Sudan turns to tourism in bid to draw line under past unrest

Travel firms adopt wait-and-see approach as government seeks to entice visitors with safaris, Nile rafting and climbing trips.

When Carsten Lillelund Pedersen visited South Sudan in November he was almost turned back at the airport.

The immigration official had never seen a tourist visa before.

"They told me the country doesn't have tourists," said the Dane, 49, who travelled on a whim after visiting a friend in Uganda.

While South Sudan has six national parks, 13 game reserves and is rich in biodiversity and resources, safaris are not uppermost in the mind when thinking about the war-torn nation. Five years of fighting killed almost 400,000 people, displaced millions and plunged pockets of the country into famine. Government and opposition forces alike have been accused of committing human rights atrocities, including the use of rape as a weapon of war.

As the country slowly emerges from conflict, with a fragile peace deal signed last September, it is looking to diversify revenues instead of relying almost entirely on oil.

In February, for the first time since gaining independence in 2011, the ministry of wildlife and tourism hosted a three-day marketing workshop with the East African Community, a regional body comprised of six countries. South Sudan is working with Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, all of which have established

tourism industries to make it easier for people to travel across borders.

The government is banking on the country's geographical and cultural diversity -- it has 64 tribes -- as well as Nile rafting tours, mountain climbing and conservation tourism to entice visitors, said Joseph Oroti, director general for tourism. A total of 16 travel agencies operate within the country, and there are more than 180 hotels in the capital, Juba.

Not since the 1970s, when there was a lull between civil wars in Sudan, have tourists poured in. Less than 6% of the national budget is put towards the wildlife ministry, and last year no money was allocated towards tourism development. Visitors like Pedersen are rare.

Humanitarians working in the country are reluctant to invite guests to a place that's strictly censored by the National Security Service and notorious for being more dangerous for carrying a camera than a gun.

The government knows that, without investors, the industry will take decades to develop. Companies reluctant to do business in South Sudan are waiting to see what happens in November, when opposition leader Riek Machar is expected to return and once again serve as President Salva Kiir's deputy. When the two leaders last attempted to work together, it ended in failure as fighting broke out in Juba in July 2016. Machar fled the country on foot.

ITB Berlin 2020: eTravel World announces call for papers

At the next ITB Berlin, travel technology experts can look forward to first-class audiences again. The World's Leading Travel Trade Show is looking for papers on trendsetting digital solutions in tourism, to be held at the eTravel World from 4 to 7 March 2020. Candidates have time until 31 October 2019 to apply for one of the coveted speaker slots. As part of the ITB Berlin Convention and with over 10,000 visitors, the eTravel World represents one of the world's largest travel tech events.

ITB Berlin is inviting applicants to submit panel and lecture

topics which clearly reference best practices, field reports and lessons learned in digital marketing, eCommerce, data, social media, content as well as tech trends and innovations. Topics can also address the weak points of new technologies as well as current phenomena such as diversity in AI design and overtourism. How can self-teaching systems be improved? What steps can be taken to address the growing number of customers making mobile bookings and those using traditional channels? What intelligent solutions are there for mass tourism?

Following last year's successful debut of Technology, Tours & Activities (TTA), ITB Berlin 2020 is providing a big stage for this rapidly expanding market segment. Experts are invited to submit panel and lecture topics for the TTA Forum on Wednesday, 4 March 2020. These can dwell on case studies or niche areas such as events and festivals. Other topics can include a look ahead to the future of in-destination services against the backdrop of the growing trend towards mobile tour bookings, or marketing and distribution strategies.

(Source: Travel Daily News)

Google news is heavily biased, but it’s not rigged

Last year’s August, President Donald Trump tweeted that Google search results are “rigged” against him, and that Google is “suppressing voices of conservatives.” Is this true?

AllSides.com conducted an in-depth analysis of Google News on the day of Trump’s tweet. Our analysis shows Google News was heavily biased on that day, giving the Left 13 times more coverage than the Right and more than twice as much as the Center. But we saw no evidence Google News is intentionally rigged.

This should make everyone happy. Trump fans and conservatives can shout “Google is biased,” while anti-Trump folks and progressives can yell back “it’s not rigged.” Now that the shouting is over, let’s look at the hard data.

Google News Shows Strong Preference for Left Media

Of the 21 ways we measured the bias of Google News search results on August 28, all showed a preference for Left media outlets. The results were extreme. News media from the Left accounted for 66 percent of Google News results overall, while sources from the Right accounted for only 5 percent.

The credibility of all analysis like this comes down to what you consider Left, Center, or Right. Rather than rely on any one person’s personal opinion or a “scientific” algorithm that measures words that some researcher defined as left or right (a common method that is biased by the researcher), we let the people decide.

AllSides rates the media bias of hundreds of media outlets using a sophisticated bias rating system that includes blind surveys and more than 100,000 user ratings to reveal the average judgement of Americans.

Let’s dig deeper into the numbers. Our analysis looked at three things: the Google News homepage, results for Google News searches conducted on the five top news stories of the day, and news results for the word “Trump” alone.

Because the majority of traffic goes to the very first links displayed on Google,



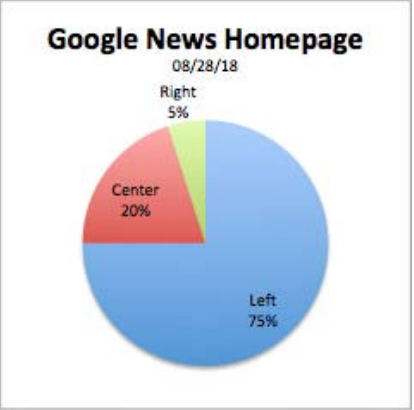
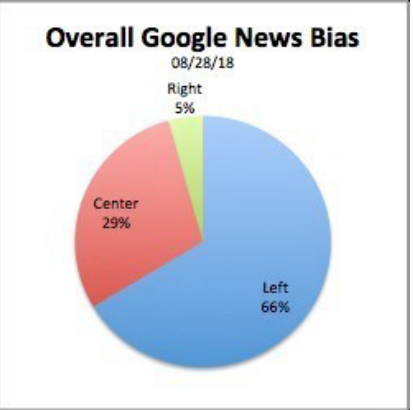
we first looked only at the top five results, then separately looked at the full first page of results.

Not a single headline on the Google News homepage “above the fold” included a Right media outlet. Four were from the Left, two were from the Center, zero were from the Right.

The top headlines and U.S. headlines on the homepage overall included 15 links from Left outlets, four from the Center, and just one from the Right. That means

75 percent of headlines on the Google News homepage were from Left-leaning outlets. Google News searches returned slightly more balanced results, perhaps because some of the news topics we searched (like “high consumer confidence”) were covered more by Right media outlets. We also searched for John McCain, NAFTA, and of course, “Trump.”

Results from Right media sources moved up to 9 percent, while Left results dropped to 62 percent – still a stunning contrast.



How Google News Can Be Heavily Biased, But Not Rigged

Google has been charged with bias before — such as censorship on YouTube. Biased Google News search results may be explained as an unintended consequence of the Google News search algorithm and the state of online news media overall.

In large part, the Google search algorithm determines relevance by popularity. It is a complex algorithm, but is heavily influenced by the traffic a page receives, the links going to that page, and click behavior.

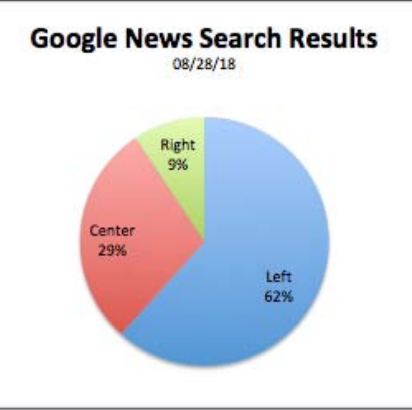
U.S. media contains far more news sources from the Left than the Right, and individual journalists are much more likely to have views on the Left of the average American. Online news consumers are younger and lean farther Left than the rest of the country. Adding all these factors, we have a perfect storm creating Google search engine bias.

Google may not be intentionally rigged as Trump claimed, but it is still biased and problematic.

Whether Google cares if its news is balanced, or if it should, is a question for another day.

For now, we know that if media consumers want to get the full story or access different perspectives and opinions, they better not rely solely on Google News.

(Source: washingtonexaminer.com)



Lessons from a century ago: “It’s dangerous to believe your own propaganda”

One hundred years ago, the U.S. government published documents that fueled the mounting Red Scare, helped justify the American military invasion of Russia and poisoned American-Russian relations for years to come.

Newspapers across the United States began to publish the fake papers on Sept. 15, 1918.

Unbeknownst to the government, the documents were forgeries. They were created by Russian political interests whose party affiliation remains obscure, but whose objectives were clear. The documents were part of a Russian disinformation campaign — a common propaganda tactic during World War I — to discredit the Bolsheviks, who had just seized power in Russia after leading a Marxist revolution.

The publication of the documents was a classic case of the American government accepting bogus information because it confirmed its preconceptions and justified actions it wished to take.

We are scholars who work at the intersection of media and politics. We believe the incident illustrates the base power of disinformation lies not in technology, which many blame for the rise of counterfeit information today, but in weakness in human nature. The desire to confirm their beliefs about the Bolsheviks led top U.S. leaders to ignore credible and persistent warnings of the documents’ inaccuracy and aggressively assert government authority to discredit those few who questioned them.

The Sisson documents

By 1918, World War I had raged on for nearly four years, and the Russians, who fought on the side of the U.S. and others against Germany, had experienced two recent revolutions.

The first revolution ousted the Czarist regime. The second, led by Bolshevik leaders Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, ousted the provisional government.

Despite the chaos, the U.S. and Allies desperately needed Russia to continue fighting. But the Bolsheviks were intent on taking an exhausted Russian military out of the war and promised to begin peace talks with Germany once in power.

The Committee on Public Information, which operated as an American propaganda ministry during the war, sent Edgar Sisson, a former muckraking journalist, to Petrograd in November 1917, before the Bolsheviks seized power. He was to use publicity tools, which included press releases, films and speeches, to urge Russians to remain in the war.

By the time he arrived, the Bolsheviks were in power. A month later, they began peace negotiations with Germany.

The peace talks played into widespread rumors in Russia and elsewhere that Lenin and Trotsky were paid German agents. Before its ouster, the Russian provisional government tried to use the rumors to discredit the Bolsheviks and hasten their demise. But the rumors had never been proven.

This all seemed to change, however, in February 1918. Raymond Robins, head of the American Red Cross Commission in Russia, gave Sisson confidential documents that implied Germans financed and directed the Bolsheviks. Sisson deemed the documents valid despite Robins’ doubts.

President Woodrow Wilson and the State Department encouraged Sisson to collect evidence that Lenin and his comrades were German pawns, which would support the administration’s anti-Bolshevik policies.



Woodrow Wilson (WikiMedia)

By the time he left Russia in March, Sisson had collected 68 documents, mostly with the help of a shadowy figure, Evgeni Petrovich Semenov. Semenov, a former secret service agent in the provisional government, told Sisson he lifted the papers from Bolshevik headquarters.

Documents make news in the U.S.

American press coverage of Sisson’s story was sensational. Most stories appeared on the front page and were published in installments during the week. They accepted the government view of Bolshevik treachery.

The government’s timing of the release was politically strategic. Wilson had by this time agreed to an Allied military intervention in Russia for the purpose of protecting stockpiles of Allied war material and ensuring the safe travel of anti-German forces through Siberia to the Eastern Front.

In August and September, U.S. troops were arriving in Russia. This move constituted a threat to the Bolshevik government and violated Wilson’s promise of self-determination.

But the fake documents legitimized intervention by suggesting that the Bolshevik stooges were not representative of the Russian people.

Compliant journalists

The documents presented a problem that often arises in national security reporting.

With little time or expertise to properly determine an account’s authenticity, journalists often rely solely on the government’s word. When a majority of the public is mentally prepared to accept the government’s account because it conforms to their preconceptions, the government can easily beat back doubts by calling doubters disloyal and un-American.

In a reasoned analysis of the documents published in a pamphlet by the Liberator, left-wing journalist John Reed showed they were probably forgeries and said they falsely justified military intervention in Russia.

George Creel, the head of the Committee on Public Information, sought to discredit Reed by labeling him the “center of the Bolshevik movement in this country.”

Mostly, though, Creel evoked government authority as the chief basis for accepting the validity of the documents when they were questioned. This was the case with the lone establishment newspaper that challenged the authenticity of the documents, the New York Evening Post.

In letters found at the National Archives, Creel said the

Post gave “aid and comfort to the enemies of the United States.” He expressed surprise that the New York Evening Post refused to accept evidence put forth by the government. And he told the paper’s owner that his editor had acted as an advocate of Lenin and Trotsky. He said the paper behaved as if it, too, had taken German money.

The New York Evening Post, he complained bitterly, was demanding “the Government should take the witness stand.”

The credulous acceptance of the documents by the press can be traced to the effectiveness of extensive wartime propaganda by the Committee on Public Information, which we have been studying for the past several years. One of the committee’s chief propaganda messages was widespread German spying and treachery in the United States and abroad.

It was an easy step, when nudged by the government, to believe the Germans enlisted godless Bolsheviks in their cause.

As the Literary Digest magazine observed, editors found “great satisfaction in adding legal proof to their moral certainty, and when the Government guarantees the authenticity of the documents proving that Lenin and Trotsky are German agents, it gives them an opportunity to speak their minds without hesitation and without reserve.”

Congress, too, was willing to endorse this view. The Democratic majority in the Senate used a special subcommittee to emphasize Bolshevik-German ties. They found witnesses who testified the Bolshevik movement was a branch of the German government.

Power in plausibility

George Kennan and other historians have concluded the Sisson documents are “unquestionable forgeries,” but this does not mean they were devoid of truth.

As with all effective disinformation, their power lay in their plausibility. The documents’ authors enhanced their forgeries with facts. Germans did help the Bolsheviks, funneling millions of Deutsche marks to them during the war.

But, as one diplomat noted, the Bolsheviks would have accepted money from anyone. More important, the Bolsheviks sought to foment a communist revolution in Germany as soon as they could.

For those who spread disinformation, then, it is often not a matter of being tricked into believing the information they have spread. Creel, Sisson and others recklessly ignored warnings the documents were false. They wanted to believe the conspiracy, so they did.

Today, we call this confirmation bias.

The United States’ path to war with Iraq in 2003 eerily recalled that element of the Sisson documents. To make the case for an invasion, the George W. Bush administration relied heavily on Ahmad Chalabi, an exiled Iraqi politician, and fellow Iraqi dissidents who wanted Saddam Hussein ousted.

Chalabi lined up a parade of Iraq defectors to provide compelling — and inaccurate — stories of Hussein’s terrorist connections and his stockpile of weapons of mass destruction. In addition to selling the invasion to the public, the campaign solidified the administration’s conviction that it was right to do what it wanted to do.

“It’s dangerous,” Chalabi was known to say from time to time, “if you believe your propaganda.”

(Source: theconversation.com)

How mainstream media gets Palestine wrong

Portrayal of Palestinians in Western mainstream media hasn’t changed much since the colonial era.

The photo of 16-year-old Fawzi al-Junaidi blindfolded, bruised and surrounded by a dozen Israeli soldiers went viral on social media. It was touted as the emblem of Israeli oppression.

But for Western mainstream media, it was difficult to accommodate this photo, amid all the talk about “anger”, “rage”, “violence”, and the regularly recycled imagery of burning tyres and young men with hidden faces hurling stones.

Fawzi’s arrest was presented as a singular case, an exception, and what happened to him after the photo was snapped did not interest mainstream media. There was little mention of the thousands of children currently imprisoned or the fact that they are the fifth generation of Palestinians living under a military occupation.

Likewise, while many foreign correspondents were saying that US President Donald Trump’s decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel had thrown “gasoline in the fire”, there was little mention of the fact that that same city has been systematically ethnically cleansed for the past 70 years.



In Western mainstream reporting, Palestinians yet again were presented as irrational “angry” actors, their oppression yet again denied the coverage it deserves.

Palestinians usually make it into mainstream coverage only when they are protesting or physically confronting Israeli aggression. Their outcry is referred to as an “escalation of violence” in the region. There is no “escalation of violence” when Israel steps up its night raids on Palestinian homes or settlers attack Palestinian farmers.

The mainstream media focus is always on Palestinian reaction and not on Israeli action and it insinuates that Palestinians are on the offence when in fact they are on the defence.

It is within the contours of this “defensive” discourse that Israel has built itself and that mainstream media reports from in the region. That is why, Palestinians “riot” and Israeli forces “disperse”, as Israeli government spokesmen are always quoted as saying. That is why, we see articles referring to the apartheid wall as a “separation wall” or correspondents reporting from Jerusalem never saying “occupied Jerusalem”, which it very much is according to international law.

The general media narrative will have you believe that Gilo, the Israeli settlement in East Jerusalem, and other illegal colonies in Palestine are simply “neighbourhoods” and that the West Bank is not occupied, but “contested” or “disputed”.

Palestinians with Israeli citizenship are simply “Israeli Arabs”. The West Bank is where Palestinians “seek to establish a state” rather than a territory that belongs to the indigenous Palestinians. Gaza is portrayed as its own sovereign entity rather than a besieged Palestinian city.

What was different about the latest media extravaganza on Palestine, however, was that the fraught relationship between mainstream media outlets and Trump pushed for the reporting angle to change. Trump’s attacks on major news organisations and the public fixation on his scandal-prone administration made media coverage of the latest assault on Palestinian rights a bit more critical, but not in the right direction.

Mainstream media presented Trump’s December 6 announcement as his latest blunder, further obscuring what was really going on. There was little mention of the daily struggle of Palestinians living under occupation or the history of land annexation and the Zionisation of Jerusalem.

Nor was there much discussion about the fact that Trump merely chose not to sign a waiver on a declaration that the US Congress had already made two decades ago. Nor was there any reflection on how the US has enabled and funded the Israeli colonial project in Palestine. Nor was there a reference to the fact that Israel built its entire state on the premise of another declaration made a hundred years ago by another man in power - Lord Arthur Balfour.

At the time when Balfour was occupying the post of British foreign secretary, the British colonial project had already produced a solid narrative presenting the Palestinian people as backward savages, justifying occupation and encouraging brutal colonial practices.

That narrative gave Balfour the confidence he needed to declare in 1917 a Jewish homeland in the region with complete disregard for the population that lived there. It also helped Zionists push the ideas that Jewish Zionists are “a people without land for a land without people” and that they are “making the desert bloom” - completely erasing the existence of a native population there.

When the Palestinians revolted in 1936 against the British Mandate and the Zionist movement, the image of the “angry” “irrational” Arab emerged. Lord William Peel, who headed the Palestine Royal Commission, was tasked with investigating the “unrest” and “disorder” in the region. The report which the commission produced barely mentioned British oppression, and much like today’s mainstream media reporting, focused on the Palestinian reaction to the presence of English soldiers and the expanding Zionist endeavour.

Today, as we are supposedly in the “post-colonial” age, settler colonialism is considered a thing of the past. Yet, colonial bias still dominates mainstream portrayal of Palestinians. In the past few decades, Israel has been quite successful in maintaining a grip on the general narrative and ensuring that the bias persists.

The Israeli authorities have meticulously pieced together the images of the “angry”, “violent” and “irrational” Arabs and the civilisation force that the Israeli state is. They have sold it to the world in an attempt to legitimise its violations of human rights.

Israel has also managed to mask the Palestinian question as a religious issue between Muslims/Arabs and Jews. This narrative aims to erase the Palestinian identity and portray the occupation as a religious conflict. It also makes it easier for Zionists to throw accusations of anti-Semitism at anyone that opposes and criticises Israeli colonialism.

And for decades now, the Palestinian question has been presented as a conflict between two equal sides. The context of colonisation, apartheid, illegal settlements, extrajudicial killings, home demolitions, arbitrary arrests and administrative detentions are mere footnotes in this general narrative. The word colonialism is avoided altogether because it conjures memories of the crimes of an era that Western powers would rather conveniently forget.

Nothing will change in Palestine until these colonial narratives are challenged and defeated in mainstream media. A critical mass of people around the world need to be made aware of what is really going on so that there is real and sustained pressure on governments to change their position on Palestine and stop supporting Israel’s colonial project.

Maintaining this media narrative is not only a form of complicity in Israeli oppression against Palestinians, but also helps sustain it.

(Source: Aljazeera.com)

241 unintentional crime prisoners released in Tehran

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21), 241 prisoners in Tehran who had committed unintentional crimes have been released, head of Tehran prisons organization Heshmatollah Hayatolghaib has stated.



Following the efforts made by Blood Money Organization, Tehran prisons organization, and benefactors, 241 prisoners who had committed involuntary crimes were freed, Mehr news agency quoted Hayatolghaib as saying on Tuesday.

Total debt of the prisoners was added up to about 650 billion rials (nearly \$15.5 million), however, some half of the sum was forgiven by the plaintiffs, and benefactors contributed about 69 billion rials (around \$1.6 million) to release these people, he explained.

He went on to add that eight women were among the prisoners. Currently, 1,289 unintentional crime prisoners are behind bars in Tehran, 598 of whom are subject to Blood Money Organization's support, he said.

He appreciated philanthropists who helped in this regard.

‘Hosseini infants’ ceremony held nationwide

1 → Mothers congregate in different cities nationwide bringing their babies dressed in special green and white clothes, which are said to resemble the clothing of Ali Asghar (AS).

Babies also wear a headband with the name of Ali Asghar (AS) written on it.



Mothers hold the babies up, mourning for the 6-month-old martyr.

The Battle of Karbala took place on Muharram 10, in the year 61 Hijri of the Islamic calendar (October 10, 680 AD) in Karbala, in present-day Iraq.

The battle was a military engagement in which a small party led by Imam Hussein (AS), grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), was massacred by an army sent by the Umayyad caliph Yazid. The battle helped secure the position of the Umayyad dynasty, but among Shia Muslims the 10th of Muharram (or also known as Ashura) became an annual holy day of public mourning.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Refugees go to Nauru

(September 5, 2001)

The Pacific island of Nauru has agreed to accept hundreds of asylum seekers who had tried to land in Australia. This report from Damien Grammaticas:

The island of Nauru lies just south of the equator, a **pin-prick** in the central Pacific Ocean: a more **hostile spot** to house the **boat-people** would be hard to find. Much of Nauru is a **barren waste-land**. The heat is **stifling**. For Nauru's president, Rene Harris, this was a simple deal. Nauru needs money. Australia is desperate to keep away its boat-people and needs someone to take them.

Australia will pay all the costs of housing the **asylum seekers**, and will help Nauru rebuild its **essential infra-structure**. There'll be new **generators** and fuel, reviews of **sanitation** and new access for Nauruans to health care in Australia. At the moment on the island, electricity is intermittent, water is in short supply, and there are occasional **typhoid outbreaks**, but making life difficult for the asylum seekers is Australia's intention.

■ **Words**
pin-prick: very small, on a map it would be the size of the hole made by a pin
hostile spot: difficult place, not a very suitable place to live
boat people: refugees whose only home is a boat
barren waste-land: place with poor earth, where very little can grow
stifling: it feels difficult to breathe
asylum seekers: people who have left their homeland for political reasons and want a new home in another country
essential infra-structure: basic structures and services e.g. roads, water and electricity
generators: machines which produce electricity
sanitation: keeping places healthy by providing clean water and removing human waste
typhoid outbreaks: sudden occurrences of a disease that produces fever and diarrhea and can cause death

(Source: BBC)



Parents guilty of child, forced marriages to face imprisonment

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Legislation in Iran considers imprisonment for those parents guilty of causing a forced or child marriage, secretary of the National Convention on the Rights of the Child has announced.

According to the Iranian civil code, the legal age of marriage in the country is 13 for girls and 15 for boys.

Although, attempts have been made to change this age to 18, which must be approved by the Majlis (the Iranian parliament); no results have yet been achieved.

Some MPs are discussing on the age of 15 but the majority are trying to approve the age of 18 as the minimum official age.

If a child under the current official marriage age decides to marry, the judiciaries should first issue a permit considering their emotional and intellectual growth, IRNA quoted Mahmoud Abbasi as saying on Wednesday.

“Children under 15 must play, educate and go to school at this age; we should not assign them heavy responsibilities of a house; this is an act of violence against the child,” he highlighted.

He went on to say that basically, religious authorities also consider the marriage of children under the proper age invalid, so it is by no means justified in an Islamic country to do so as some try to justify such actions.

Child marriage have nothing to do with religion, but is a cultural issue and must be pursued by judicial system, he noted, adding, however, child marriage is hap-



pening in some regions of the country.

To resolve the issue, cultural approaches are required, notably, holding training courses to make people aware of the consequences, he said.

He further called on all prosecutors across the country to take serious action in case of any child or forced marriage and punish the violators, and also called on the social workers to take steps toward promotion of marriage culture and proper marriage age.

He also expressed hope that the legisla-

tors would step in to take further measures to protect children's rights.

Over the past few days, a video went viral in social media showing a 9-year-old girl getting married to a 29-year-old man in Bahmai county, western Kohgiluyeh and Boyerahmad province. It has so far raised many reactions.

After the incident, the provincial supreme court of justice identified the couple and their families within 12 hours after the video released and declared the marriage as invalid.

\$360m earmarked for watershed, aquifer management plans

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Some 15 trillion rials (about \$360 million) has been allocated for implementing watershed and aquifer management projects in the current Iranian calendar year, which ends on March 20, 2020.

The budget will be funded through the National Development Fund, said Houshang Jazi, the director general of the watershed management and soil protection office at the Forest, Range, and Watershed Management Organization.

Last year, some \$200 million had been allocated for the projects, ISNA quoted Jazi as saying on Thursday.

Watershed management aims at the sustainable distribution of its resources and the process of creating and implementing plans, programs, and projects to sustain and



enhance watershed functions that affect the plant, animal, and human communities within the watershed boundary.

Features of watershed that agencies seek to manage include water supply, water quality, drainage, storm water runoff, water rights, and the overall planning and utilization of watersheds. Landowners, land use agencies, storm water management experts, environmental specialists, water use surveyors and communities all play an integral part in watershed management.

The vision of the aquifer management is to identify and map aquifers at the micro level, to quantify the available groundwater resources, and to propose plans appropriate to the scale of demand and aquifer characteristics, and institutional arrangements for participatory management.

Climate change has positive impact on most English birds, study finds

Climate change is having an overall positive impact on most English bird species, according to new research based on 50 years of “citizen science” surveys.

Some 13 species including corn buntings, goldcrests and long-tailed tits saw their populations increase by at least 10 per cent as a result of changing climatic conditions, according to the study by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and government conservation agency Natural England.

Warmer temperatures probably have a positive effect on resident species by improving survival rates over the winter, the researchers wrote in a paper published in the journal Bird Study.

“Populations of a range of resident

bird species are probably significantly greater than they would otherwise have been in the absence of climate change,” researchers wrote.

Overall climate change is affecting the populations of around one-third of English breeding birds. Of 68 species monitored between 1966 and 2015, 24 showed evidence that changes in their population were linked to temperature or rainfall. Nineteen out of 24 of those birds were being helped – as opposed to hindered – by climate change.

However, scientists warn that further warming could prove more disruptive.

Three species – cuckoos, little owls and reed warblers – saw numbers fall by at least 10 per cent as a result of climate change, the study found.

And some species which have seen long-term population declines over the period studied, but which prefer warmer conditions, such as farmland birds including the corn bunting and grey partridge, may have seen less significant falls than they would have done without climate change, the study suggests.

The data used in the study comes from the BTO, the government's Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the RSPB's breeding bird survey, whose fieldwork is conducted by volunteers.

This was compared with changes in the climate in terms of seasonal temperatures and rainfall.

James Pearce-Higgins, director of science at the BTO and the paper's lead

author, said: “Given the changeable British weather, it can be difficult for us to see the long-term impacts of climate change, but by monitoring bird populations we can track impacts upon the natural environment.

“Thanks to the efforts of our volunteer bird surveyors who have been counting birds in England for over 50 years, we can show that climate change is already affecting about one-third of breeding bird populations monitored.

“Whilst some of these impacts have resulted in population increases, as harsh winters which naturally limit the populations of some resident species have become less common through time, there are also species which appear to have declined too.”

(Source: The Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → €

Precipitation forecast to reach above normal in next 3 months

The country is predicted to receive above normal rainfall over the next three months (February 20-May 21), head of the climatological research institute affiliated to Iran's Meteorological Organization (IMO) has said.

The whole country will meet normal and above normal rainfalls, the northern parts will receive above normal rainfall while southern provinces will receive normal to lower-than-normal rainfall, IRNA quoted Iman Babaeian as saying on Sunday. This month, northern and eastern provinces will receive rain above normal averages, while in the first month of spring precipitation will be at normal amounts across the country, he noted, adding, during the second month of spring rainfall will reach its peak.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“hemi-”

■ **Meaning:** half

■ **For example:** Damage to the corresponding part of the right **hemisphere** had no effect on speech.

PHRASAL VERB

Hear from

■ **Meaning:** to receive news or information from someone:

■ **For example:** Police want to hear from anyone who has any information.

IDIOM

Build bridges

■ **Explanation:** help opposing groups to cooperate and understand each other better

■ **For example:** A mediator is trying to build bridges between the local community and the owners of the new plant.

بارش‌های کشور در سه ماه پیش رو بیش از نرمال است

رئیس پژوهشکده اقلیم‌شناسی سازمان هواشناسی گفت: پیش‌بینی‌ها نشان می‌دهد میزان بارش در کشور در سه ماهه پیش رو (اسفند ۹۷، فروردین و اردیبهشت ۹۸) در حد نرمال و متمایل به بیش از نرمال خواهد بود.

ایمان باباییان روز یکشنبه در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: مجموع بارش‌ها در سطح کشور نرمال و متمایل به بیشتر از نرمال است اما در نیمه شمالی، بیشتر از نرمال و در نیمه جنوبی در محدوده نرمال تا کمتر از نرمال خواهد بود.

وی اظهار داشت: بارش‌ها در اسفندماه ۹۷ در نیمه شمالی و شرقی بیشتر از نرمال است، در فروردین ماه ۹۸ نیز بارش‌ها در محدوده نرمال و برای اردیبهشت بیشتر از نرمال پیش‌بینی شده است.

Lebanon will defend itself against Israeli aggression: Aoun

TEHRAN— Lebanon will respond to and defend itself against any Israeli aggression on its sovereignty and security, President Michel Aoun told a U.N. official Friday.

Aoun told United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jan Kubis that the recent Israeli aggression on Beirut's southern suburbs, where a drone exploded and another crashed last month, was a violation of the "rules of engagement." He said it also violated U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel.

According to Daily Star, Kubis also visited Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, who stressed that Israel is the only party that should be asked about violations of Resolution 1701, which the country commits regularly.

Meanwhile, The leader of the Lebanese Hezbollah movement has warned Israel against any future attacks on Lebanon saying that in case of such attack all Israeli forces will be at risk.

Sayed Hassan Nasrallah made the remarks in a televised speech on Monday, saying that Sunday's operation by Hezbollah fighters in which an armored Israeli vehicle was hit, was meant to send the message to Israel that "if you attack, then all your border



and forces will be at risk."

Hezbollah's Sunday attack came in response to an Israeli air raid last week that killed two of its fighters in Syria, as well as an Israeli drone attack on southern Beirut, which saw the deployed aircraft crashing into the movement's media offices.

According to the Lebanese resistance

movement, the missiles launched from Lebanon destroyed an armored personnel carrier in Avivim, killing or wounding those inside it. The Israeli military, however, alleged the attack did not lead to any casualties while adding that it had fired 100 shells into Lebanon in return.

"We thank god [for this victory]," he said,

and also expressed gratitude towards the group's fighters and commanders, who spent eight consecutive days carrying out the operation.

Nasrallah added that the through the latest operation against the Israeli forces, the resistance group broke the "biggest red line" by targeting forces across the border and inside the occupied territories.

Observers say the Israeli drone incursions into Lebanon, which coincided with the regime's similar acts of aggression against Iraq and Syria, were a stunt ordered by Netanyahu to provoke retaliation from the targeted countries, thus upping the Israeli premier's chances of victory in the upcoming elections by portraying Israel in a vulnerable light.

The Hezbollah chief also repeated his earlier warning that the group would be targeting Israeli drones potentially transgressing into the country's airspace.

The retaliatory strike also served to avenge Hezbollah on the death of two of its members at the hands of Israel in Syria, where the group carries out counterterrorism operations at Damascus' request, Nasrallah concluded.

Sudan forms first cabinet since removal of al-Bashir

TEHRAN — Sudan's prime minister has announced the formation of the first government since the military removed longtime ruler Omar al-Bashir in April after widespread street protests.

Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok announced the names of 18 ministers in the new Cabinet and said he would name two more at a later stage.

The members include Sudan's first woman foreign minister and a former World Bank economist.

"A new stage in Sudan's history starts today," Hamdok said at a news conference in the capital, Khartoum. "We are seeking an end to the war and [want to] achieve sustainable peace."

He said the cabinet would "immediately" go to work on the top challenges facing the transitional administration, which include overhauling the ailing economy and achieving peace with armed groups.

Securing peace would sharply reduce military spending, which takes up as much as 80 percent of the state budget, Hamdok said.

"If we could put an end to this [military spending], it

would go to health and education," he said.

■ Four women in cabinet

The government was formed as part of a three-year power-sharing deal signed last month between the military, civilian parties and protest groups.

The body was supposed to have been announced late last month but internal negotiations within the pro-democracy movement delayed its formation.

The new government is a key step in transition away from nearly 30 years under al-Bashir's rule, when Sudan was afflicted by internal conflicts, international isolation and deep economic problems.

However, the months since al-Bashir's fall have been marked by tension between the powerful security forces and civilian groups that are pushing for democracy, reform and justice for those killed during crackdowns on protests.

The cabinet includes four women, among them Asmaa Abdallah, who will be the country's first female foreign minister.

It also includes Ibrahim Elbadawi, a former World Bank



economist who will serve as finance minister, and Madani Abbas Madani, a leader of the civilian coalition that negotiated the transition deal with the military, as a minister of industry and trade.

According to al Jazeera, General Jamal Omar, a member of the Transitional Military Council that took over from al-Bashir, was appointed as defense minister.

Pakistan vows 'fullest possible response' to India over Kashmir

TEHRAN— Pakistan will make the fullest possible response to India's actions in disputed Kashmir and the global community would be responsible for any "catastrophic" aftermath, Imran Khan, the prime minister of the Muslim-majority nation, said on Friday.

The rhetoric on the annual Defense Day remembrance of Pakistan's fighters in a 1965 war with India underscores rising tension between the nuclear-armed foes after New Delhi last month revoked the autonomy of its part of disputed Kashmir.

"I have informed the world that Pakistan

does not want war, but at the same time, Pakistan cannot remain oblivious to the challenges posed to its security and integrity," Khan said in a statement on the website of state-run Radio Pakistan.

"We are prepared to give the enemy the fullest possible response. Failing, the world community will be responsible for the catastrophic aftermath," he added.

This week Khan had said war between the South Asian neighbors was a risk, but Pakistan would not act first.

Khan has led a vigorous international

diplomatic campaign seeking the support of the United States, former colonial power Britain and others to press India over the Himalayan region, but his Hindu-majority neighbor has ruled out outside involvement.

Pakistan will never abandon Kashmir, army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa told a defense function in the city of Rawalpindi.

"We are ready to give sacrifice for our Kashmiri brothers, will fulfill our duty till last bullet, last soldiers and last breath," he said in a televised speech. "And we are prepared to go till any extent."

India flooded the Kashmir valley with troops, restricted movements and cut off communication as Prime Minister Narendra Modi withdrew special rights for Kashmir on Aug. 5.

Indian-controlled Kashmir lost its right to frame its own laws and non-residents were allowed to buy property there in changes the government said would drive development and pull the region into line with the rest of the nation.

According to Reuters, the neighbors have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir.

U.S. reaches out to Houthis to end war as Saudi struggles

TEHRAN — The United States says it has reached out to the Houthi Ansarullah movement to work out a way to the ongoing conflict in Yemen, where the Houthis have managed to push back against a deadly military aggression by Saudi Arabia and its regional allies for over four years.

David Schenker, the Assistant U.S. Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, confirmed to reporters on Thursday that Washington had contacted the Houthis for the first time since the beginning of the Saudi-led war in March 2015.

"We are narrowly focused on trying to end the war in Yemen," Schenker said during a visit to the Prince Sultan Air Base near the Saudi city of al-Kharj, near Riyadh, the kingdom's capital.

"We are also having talks to the extent possible with the Houthis to try and find a mutually acceptable negotiated solution to the conflict," he added.

The negotiations provides a direct channel between the Houthis and the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump, who has remained a steadfast supporter of the Riyadh regime throughout its aggression against the impoverished southern neighbor.

Washington's attempt to end the conflict comes as the Houthis, who Saudi commanders confidently said would



be defeated in a matter of weeks, have not only defended their country but orchestrated a series of missile and drone attacks against various targets deep inside Saudi territories.

Schenker stopped short of providing more details on the nature of the talks to end the war, which has claimed more than 91,000 lives, according to data by the U.S.-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED).

■ 'Victory for Houthis'

Senior Houthi official Hamid Assem told AFP that while he could not confirm or deny Schenker's remarks, the fact that Washington was asking the Houthis for help was a major victory for the Ansarullah movement.

"That the United States says they are talking to us is a great victory for us and proves that we are right," he said.

The announcement by Shecker comes weeks after the Wall Street Journal reported that Washington was preparing for direct talks with the Houthis through a team that would be led by Christopher Henzel, who became the Trump administration's first ambassador to Yemen in April, Press TV reported.

A State Department official said Thursday that "the U.S. ambassador to Yemen and other U.S. diplomats talk to all Yemenis to further U.S. objectives in the country".

The last time U.S. officials engaged with the Houthis, former President Barack Obama was still in office. During the talks in June 2015, Washington tried to convince Houthis to attend UN-sponsored peace talks in Geneva. Those talks and the following rounds of peace negotiations have failed to end the war.

Four candidates running to lead UN nuclear watchdog

TEHRAN — Four candidates from three continents are in the running to lead the UN's nuclear watchdog, which is tasked with monitoring implementation of the faltering Iran nuclear deal.

Slovakia on Thursday put forward Marta Ziakova as the latest candidate for the position of director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is searching for a new chief following the death of Yukiya Amano in July.

The Slovakian foreign ministry pointed to 63-year-old Ziakova's "extensive expertise in nuclear issues".

She is currently head of the Slovak Nuclear Regulatory Authority and has also served in

several diplomatic roles at the IAEA itself.

"In line with the efforts of late DG (director general) Amano who championed gender balance at the agency, we also think it's high time for a woman to lead the organisation," the ministry said in a statement.

Romanian diplomat Cornel Feruta, who was made acting director general after Amano's death, has also put himself forward, a diplomatic source confirmed to AFP.

The Argentinian ambassador to the IAEA, Rafael Grossi, declared his candidacy early on in the race.

On Wednesday, Lassina Zerbo, 55, the executive secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CT-

BTO) -- also based in Vienna -- announced he was also in the running.

Zerbo, of Burkina Faso, told AFP that "my country asked me to stand" and that he was supported by other African nations.

Feruta, 43, who worked as a journalist before entering Romania's diplomatic service in 1998, was one of Amano's closest collaborators and had been serving as the agency's chief coordinator.

Nominations formally close on Thursday evening but diplomats say no other names are expected to be put forward.

One diplomatic source in Vienna told AFP that "a multiplicity of candidates may favour Grossi, as he has been the longest in

the race, has strong support from important countries, and his country is working very hard to promote him".

The procedure of appointing a new director general would ordinarily take around a year but a meeting of the IAEA's board of governors held after Amano's death agreed to an accelerated timetable which should see a new head appointed in October.

The IAEA is tasked with monitoring Iran's nuclear activities to ensure they abide by the terms of the 2015 deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which has veered towards the brink of collapse since the U.S. dramatically withdrew in May 2018.

U.S. Plan for deploying missiles to Asia A major mistake: American expert

➔ The US Defense Secretary's call for deploying medium-range missiles in Asia is a major mistake, which Trump would be wise to cancel.

■ The Trump administration has walked away from various international agreements, ranging from the Iran nuclear deal to the Paris Agreement on climate change mitigation. In early August, the US formally withdrew from the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with Russia which was signed by the former Soviet Union and the United States back in 1987. What is your assessment of Trump's policy on international agreements? Are the US moves to renege on its international promises aimed at boosting its global hegemony, which has recently declined very fast?

A: Most of the "international arrangements" were neo-colonial traps for the developing sector. The WTO is simply an enforcer of colonial looting; the trade deals (TPP, NAFTA) were Wall Street looting mechanisms to enforce austerity both abroad and at home. The Paris Agreement is an imperial, genocidal policy for stopping industrial development and reducing the population on the basis of a scientific fraud, that which falsely claims that carbon has an impact on the climate -- the only purpose of this hoax is to preserve the bankrupt western financial system for a bit longer by diverting credit into bailing out banks, rather than productive investments. A new paradigm of sovereign nations working together for development, for space travel, and for classical cultural advancement is required, as proposed by the Schiller Institute, as the only means of escaping the current threat of a new Dark Age.

Zimbabwe ex-President Robert Mugabe dies aged 95

TEHRAN — Former Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe has died at the age of 95, President Emmerson Mnangagwa said.

"It is with the utmost sadness that I announce the passing on of Zimbabwe's founding father and former President, Cde Robert Mugabe," Mnangagwa posted on Twitter early on Friday.

"Mugabe was an icon of liberation, a pan-Africanist who dedicated his life to the emancipation and empowerment of his people. His contribution to the history of our nation and continent will never be forgotten.

"May his soul rest in eternal peace," he added.

President Mnangagwa cut short his trip to South Africa where he was attending the World Economic Forum on Africa and is heading back to Zimbabwe, according to state media.

Mugabe was hospitalised in Singapore for months for an undisclosed ailment, Mnangagwa had confirmed earlier this year.

Officials often said he was being treated for a cataract, denying frequent private media reports that he had prostate cancer.

No further details were immediately available about the circumstances of his death or where he died.

Mugabe was forced to step down by the military in November 2017 following nationwide mass protests.

The former political prisoner-turned-guerrilla leader swept to power in the 1980 elections after a growing rebellion and economic sanctions forced the white minority colonial government to the negotiating table.

Born on February 21, 1924, into a Catholic family at Kutama Mission northwest of Harare, Mugabe was described as a loner and a studious child, known to carry a book even while tending cattle in the bush.

After his carpenter father left the family when he was 10, the young Mugabe concentrated on his studies, qualifying as a schoolteacher at the age of 17.

Al Jazeera's correspondent Haru Mutasa, reporting from Johannesburg, South Africa, said many credit Mugabe with the country's high literacy rate.

NATO troops among a dozen killed in Taliban blast

TEHRAN — A Taliban suicide car bombing in the Afghan capital killed at least 10 Afghan civilians, a U.S. service member and a Romanian soldier in the second such attack this week after a preliminary U.S.-Taliban peace deal was announced.

The blast took place on Thursday in Shash Darak, a heavily fortified area adjacent to the Green Zone and home to several important complexes, including the National Directorate of Security (NDS), the Afghan intelligence service, and the U.S. embassy.

According to Al Jazeera, at least 10 civilians were killed and 42 people wounded in the attack that was claimed by the Taliban, which has been holding peace talks with the United States in Doha, Qatar, interior ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi said.

Hours later, the Taliban set off a car bomb outside an Afghan military base in a neighboring province, killing four civilians.

"Peace with a group that is still killing innocent people is meaningless," Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said in a statement.

Merkel in Beijing says Hong Kong freedoms must be 'guaranteed'

TEHRAN— German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Friday the rights and freedoms of people in Hong Kong "must be guaranteed" after meeting with Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang in Beijing, her spokesperson said.

In a tweet, spokesperson Steffen Seibert quoted Merkel as saying: "The rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong must be guaranteed. Solutions can only be found in dialogue; do everything possible to prevent violence," Reuters reported.

Polish climber Dzienski pips lift in man vs. machine race

It may not match the feeling of winning a world championship but Polish climber Marcin Dzienski's feat of racing and defeating an elevator up 23 meters will certainly have given him a lift.

The 2016 world champion who is regarded by many as one of the top speed climbers, took 12.12 seconds to achieve the feat as part of a Red Bull event in Warsaw.

Few would have given Dzienski a fighting chance in the man-versus-machine battle up six floors, but the 26-year-old defied all expectations to climb up a specially designed wall and pip the elevator in a close contest.

Dzienski, who honed his skills as a youngster scaling apple trees in his grandfather's orchard, is raising awareness about sport climbing which will make its Olympic debut next year.

The combined event in Tokyo will see athletes' ranking across the three disciplines of speed, bouldering and lead climbing merged to give a cumulative score.

(Source: Reuters)

Court frees famous Russian soccer players jailed for attacks

A Russian court on Friday ordered the release on parole of two famous Russian soccer players jailed for their involvement in a pair of violent attacks last year, Russian news agencies reported on Friday.

Alexander Kokorin and Pavel Mamayev, who both played in Russia's top league and used to play for their country, apologized after being caught on CCTV last year taking part in two violent assaults in Moscow.

The two players were present at both incidents after celebrating a decade of friendship in a Moscow strip club where they said they had been drinking beer.

In May, Kokorin was sentenced to 18 months in jail, while Mamayev was ordered to serve 17 months after months of hearings that were widely covered by Russian state media.

Some Kremlin critics said their harsh treatment and public shaming after an outcry was used to divert attention from bigger problems in the country, including an unpopular measure to increase the pension age.

The Moscow court ordered them to be freed on parole on Sept. 17, Russian news agencies cited their lawyer as saying.

(Source: Eurosport)

Ramos booked for glasses celeb; 'ref apologized'

Spain captain Sergio Ramos was booked for his "glasses" goal celebration that was meant to be dedicated to his nephew in a 2-1 win at Romania on Thursday.

The Real Madrid center-back scored Spain's opener in the 29th minute from the penalty spot before running to one of the TV cameras behind the goal to perform a glasses gesture by cupping his eyes with his fingers.

German referee Deniz Aytekin showed a yellow card to Ramos as he believed he was trying to provoke the crowd.

"It's been a misunderstanding," Ramos told Spanish TVE after the game. "It was for my nephew, who like me now has to wear glasses. I dedicated the goal to him in order to let him know that it's OK to wear glasses.



"It was a gesture meant for the cameras and not directed to the stands as the referee interpreted."

Aytekin later apologized to Ramos, according to the player. "I spoke to him [Aytekin] and explained," Ramos said. "He understood and apologized after. I know with so much noise, it's difficult to interpret a gesture but once he knew the reasons behind it, it was easier."

Spain coach Robert Moreno also spoke to Ramos, who converted his 10th penalty of 12 attempts for his country in Bucharest to help Spain clinch their fifth qualifying group stage victory and remain perfect in their Euro 2020 qualifying campaign.

Moreno said in a news conference: "Ramos explained to me that he made that gesture to the camera because his nephew has to wear glasses and he didn't intend to offend anyone."

(Source: Mirror)

Serbia speed towards Basketball World Cup quarters

Denver Nuggets All-Star Nikola Jokic pulled the strings as formidable Serbia closed on a quarter-final spot at the Basketball World Cup with a 90-47 demolition of Puerto Rico on Friday.

Jokic had 14 points and 10 rebounds, and made a sublime laser pass to cut open the Puerto Rico defence as Serbia began the second-round group phase much as they finished the first.

Sacramento Kings forward Nemanja Bjelica also impressed once more, drilling a leading 18 points.

World and Olympic silver medalists Serbia are in devastating form, comfortably winning all four matches in China and claiming the unofficial title of favourites from holders the United States.

The Serbians, who have not looked even remotely troubled so far, face their biggest test yet when they take on Olympic bronze medalists Spain on Sunday.

In other second-round action on Friday, Poland continued their surprise run by recovering from a first-quarter deficit to defeat Russia 79-74.

The loss left Russia on the brink of elimination.

(Source: Goal)

Record-chasing Serena to meet teen Andreescu in US Open final



Serena Williams will face Canadian teenager Bianca Andreescu for the US Open title as the American set herself up for another attempt to clinch a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam singles title.

Williams, who turns 38 this month, cruised into a 10th US Open final Thursday by brushing aside fifth seed Elina Svitolina 6-3, 6-1, earning her 101st win at the tournament to draw level with Chris Evert for the most in history.

Williams is seeking to match Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 major titles and will play 19-year-old Andreescu, who defeated Belinda Bencic 7-6 (7/3), 7-5, on Saturday in her bid for a record seventh US Open triumph.

"To be in yet another final, it seems honestly crazy. But I don't really expect too much less," said Williams, who is through to her 33rd major final.

"I've had so many chances to pass it (Court's record) and to have a lot more, but it's cool because I'm playing in an era with so many -- five eras with so many amazing players."

She won her first Grand Slam title at the 1999 US Open -- before Andreescu was even born -- but has lost her last three major finals since capturing the 2017 Australian Open crown while pregnant. She hasn't won the US Open since 2014.

Williams fought off six break points across her opening three service games before finding her rhythm to dispatch

Wimbledon semi-finalist Svitolina in 70 minutes, hitting 34 winners against just 20 unforced errors.

"I know how (Svitolina) can play, she's such a good player," Williams said. "Obviously two semis in a row is really hard to do and I just wanted to not get off to a slow start and I wanted to hang on in there."

Williams, who was beaten by Simona Halep in the Wimbledon final in July, returns to the championship match in New York a year on from her infamous meltdown

in a loss to Naomi Osaka overshadowed by controversy.

Svitolina, 24, was attempting to become just the second Ukrainian to play in a Grand Slam singles final after Andrei Medvedev, who lost in five sets to Andre Agassi at the 1999 French Open.

"On the important moments, she steps up, always steps up, always brings her best game," Svitolina said.

■ **'Surreal' moment**

Andreescu, who fell in US Open

qualifying the past two years, continued her meteoric rise on her main draw debut in New York to overcome former Swiss prodigy Bencic.

The 15th-seeded Canadian played catch-up for much of the opening set and saved a set point at 4-5 with a forehand winner, but she rattled off the first five points of the tie-break and sealed it when Bencic swatted a forehand long.

Bencic, the 13th seed, raced 5-2 ahead with a double break in the second set but Andreescu refused to buckle and reeled off the final five games to set up a rematch of last month's Toronto final against Williams, who retired from that clash with a back injury.

"It's just surreal. I really don't know what to say. It's a dream come true playing Serena in the finals of the US Open. It's crazy, it's crazy," Andreescu said.

"I think it's just all the hard work I've put in through the years. If someone told me a year ago I would be in the US Open final this year, I'd tell them they were crazy."

Andreescu is trying to become the first Canadian singles Grand Slam champion, and could be the fourth first-time major champion in five years to win the women's US Open title. "It was really just about some points that turned everything around. Also in the second set, I think I had so many break chances which I didn't use. But I think she played the best on them," Bencic said.

(Source: AFP)

Maradona to coach Argentine club Gimnasia y Esgrima



World Cup winner Diego Maradona has signed a deal with Argentine side Gimnasia y Esgrima, returning to coach in his homeland for the first time since 2010.

"Star of world football, Diego Armando Maradona, has signed his name and is the new coach of Gimnasia," the club said in a short statement on Thursday. "The deal runs until the end of the current season."

Maradona, who was an erratic and brilliant striker and is widely considered to be one of the greatest players of all time, most recently coached in Mexico, where he led second division side Dorados of Sinaloa to two unsuccessful playoff appearances.

His new team, from the city of La Plata just outside Buenos Aires, was formed in 1887 and claims to be the oldest professional football club in the Americas.

Known as El Lobo or The Wolf, they have won just one professional title, the Copa Centenario, in 1993.

They currently sit at the bottom of the first division table, with one point from five matches.

"Finally it's now official," Maradona wrote on Instagram. "I am very happy to

be the new coach of @gimnasia_oficial."

"I want to thank the president Gabriel Pellegrino for this opportunity and say to all the fans that we are going to work with our hearts and souls for The Wolf."

Maradona's return was eagerly expected and jubilant fans turned up at the club on Thursday to welcome him.

It marks a working return to his homeland for the first time in almost a decade, following a spell in charge of the national side between 2008 and 2010. He also had stints as club coach at Mandiyu and Racing in the 1990s.

The 58-year-old won the World Cup as a player with Argentina in 1986 but has had frequent hospital treatment over the years, often due to his extravagant lifestyle.

Maradona was taken into hospital in 2004 with severe heart and respiratory problems linked to cocaine use. He later underwent drug rehabilitation in Cuba

and Argentina before a stomach-stapling operation in 2005 helped him lose weight.

He resigned from the Dorados in June, citing the need for operations on his knee and shoulder.

(Source: Goal)

Madrid made me a scapegoat, it's not fair - Bale



Real Madrid forward Gareth Bale has said that he has been made a scapegoat after almost leaving the Spanish club this summer, and said that he believes treatment of him has not been "fair."

Bale, 30, was involved in a tense stand-off with Zinedine Zidane during pre-season, with the coach saying he was keen for Bale to leave, although a reported move to Chinese club Jiangsu Suning in July was scrapped.

"I wouldn't say I'm playing happy," Bale told Sky Sports ahead of Wales' European qualifier against Azerbaijan on Friday. "But when I am playing, I am professional and always giving all I can."

"I understand I was made more of a scapegoat than most, I take it with a pinch of salt even though maybe it's not all fully fair."

Sources told ESPN FC on Thursday that Zidane is delighted with Gareth Bale's change of attitude and could become a key player at Real.

Bale said he had taken the summer turmoil in his stride and has since ended a scoring drought going back to March with a brace in Real's 2-2

draw at Villarreal on Sunday.

"I'm sure there'll be plenty more turbulence... I suppose it's something you'll have to speak to Real about and it's between me and them."

"We'll have to come to some sort of conclusion."

Madrid teammates Marcelo and Thibaut Courtois gave interviews earlier in the summer and said that Bale does not speak much Spanish in the dressing room and is nicknamed "the golfer" by teammates.

When asked about the "golfer" moniker, Bale smiled and replied: "I am a golfer. Have you not seen the pictures? I spoke to him [Courtois] about it and he said it as a joke."

"People took it out of context but I'm very happy with the nickname, to be honest. It's a great one. Football is my No. 1 sport. I'm paid to do it and I always give my best."

"Golf is a hobby like anyone else would have a hobby. There is nothing wrong with having a round. People make a lot of it but a lot of footballers play it and it's one thing I really enjoy."

(Source: Soccernet)

Messi can leave Barca when he wants - Pique



Despite it being less than two years since Messi signed that contract, Josep Maria Bartomeu is already working on his next new contract, which could be his last with the club -- he will turn 33 next summer and will be 34 when his current terms expire in 2022, the year of the next World Cup in Qatar.

The Barca president told ESPN FC in April that he wants to keep Messi at the club "forever" and that he plans

Gerard Pique has said Lionel Messi has earned the right to leave Barcelona when he feels the moment is right after it emerged the forward could walk away for free next summer.

Messi has a contract at Camp Nou until 2021 but a report in El Pais on Thursday revealed there's a clause which allows him to leave at the end of each season if he so wishes. The Argentina international would just have to communicate his desire to move on before the end of May.

Carles Puyol, Xavi Hernandez and Andres Iniesta all signed similar deals with Barca in the final years of their time at the club, too.

Pique is aware of the existence of the clause but insists he is not worried about Messi quitting Barcelona any time soon.

"I already knew Messi is able to leave for free at the end of each season," the defender told Cadena Ser. "But we all know the commitment Leo has to Barca and it doesn't worry me at all. He's earned the right to be able to choose what he does with his future after everything he's given the club."

Messi agreed his existing terms in 2017, eventually signing the contract in November after Barcelona had announced an agreement was in place in June. The delay in getting him to sign almost saw him move into the last six months of his deal, when he would have been free to negotiate with other clubs.

to sit down with him and his representatives to discuss extending his deal.

Since signing his first professional contract in 2004, Messi has been handed eight renewals by the Catalan club, with his release clause rising to €700 million in the process.

That clause carries less weight with the revelation that Barcelona will not stand in Messi's way if he wants to leave, but sources have told ESPN FC that there's no panic about the possibility of him taking on a new challenge in the short-term.

Messi has always maintained that he would like to end his career "at home" in Barcelona, although he has also suggested he would be open to a stint at boyhood club Newell's Old Boys in his native Rosario before he finally hangs up his boots.

With 603 goals, Messi is the top scorer in Barcelona's history by a distance. He has also made 687 appearances for the club, a figure only bettered by Xavi (767).

He's yet to play for the Spanish champions this season, though, due to a calf injury. He's taking advantage of the current international break to do recovery work with the hope of returning to action next weekend against Valencia in La Liga.

His last competitive game was for Argentina against Chile in the Copa America at the beginning of July.

(Source: ESPN)

Iran beat Angola at FIBA World Cup classification

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran d e s k earned their first victory at the 2019 FIBA World Cup, beating Angola 71-62 at the Beijing Wukesong Sport Center on Friday.

Samad Nikkhah Bahrami shot the lights out with 5-of-6 shooting from the outside totaling 21 points to lead Iran to the win.

Carlos Morais had 17 points for Angola.

Classification 17-32 match-up between Iran and Angola was a highly physical defensive battle.

Iran will take on the Philippines on Sunday.

Group N of the 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup will be the classification stage of the 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup for four teams, bottom two teams from Group C and two from Group D. The results against the teams that also qualified are carried over. The teams will play against the teams from the group they have not faced before, for a total of two games per team, with all games played at Wukesong Arena, Beijing. After all of the games are played, the first placed team will be classified 17-20, the second placed team will be classified 21-24, the third placed team will be classified 25-28 and the fourth placed team will be classified 29-32.



Iran's Gholami wins gold at Judo Asian and Oceanian Championships

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Reza Gholami from Iran claimed a gold medal at the 2019 International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) Judo Asian and Oceanian Championships.

He defeated his opponent from Thailand in the men's up to 66kg final match.

More than 100 athletes will take to the mat for titles and the chance to improve their place in the world rankings on the road to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics.

The 2019 IBSA Judo Asian and Oceanian Championships

run from Sept. 6 to 8 and feature individual and team events.

Paralympic judo competition is governed by the International Judo Federation (IJF) rules with some modifications specified by the International Blind Sports Association (IBSA).

The major rule difference is that contests always start with the 2 competitors in a loose grip on each other's Judo suits (grip called «Kumikata») and if contact is broken, «matte»(Wait), or stop, is called and the competitors return to center and regrip.

Brazil legend Cafu's eldest son dies of heart attack



The son of Brazil legend Cafu has died aged only 30 while playing football.

According to reports in Brazil, Danilo Feliciano de Moraes suffered a heart attack on Wednesday during a game of football with his friends.

Reportedly, Danilo complained of feeling unwell within 10 minutes of the match starting, and he was rushed to Sao Paulo's Albert Einstein Hospital.

Paulo Sergio, a former team-mate and friend of Cafu's, later confirmed Danilo's passing.

Tributes were paid to Danilo, the eldest son of the 49-year-old former World Cup winner, including from his former clubs Sao Paulo and Palmeiras.

"Sao Paulo Futebol Clube deeply regrets the death of Danilo, son of Cafu," the former wrote on Twitter.

"The club sympathizes and wishes the tricolor idol, family and friends a lot of strength."

Palmeiras added: "The Palmeiras Sports Society mourns the death of Danilo, son of Cafu, and expresses

condolences to the world champion and his family."

Real Madrid also offered their condolences on Twitter.

"El Real Madrid C. F. expresses its deep regret at the passing of Danilo, the son of Brazilian football legend @officialcafu," the LaLiga club wrote.

"The club wishes to convey its condolences to Cafu and his family and shares in his grief in these difficult moments."

El Real Madrid C. F. expresses its deep regret at the passing of Danilo, the son of Brazilian football legend.

The club wishes to convey its condolences to Cafu and his family and shares in his grief in these difficult moments.

As well as Danilo, Cafu had two further children whom he posed with earlier this year for a picture shared on social media.

Cafu is widely regarded as one of the finest full-backs in football history, having won 20 honors at club level and a further five on the international stage — including two World Cups.

(Source: Football Talk)

Sanchez: Win the perfect boost for Qatar



Qatar coach Felix Sanchez believes his side has been given a major boost following Thursday's comfortable 6-0 victory against Afghanistan in Group E of the Asian Qualifiers for the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar and AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

A hat-trick from this year's AFC Asian Cup MVP and Golden boot winner Almoez Ali as well as goals from Hassan Al Haydos, Abdulkarim Hassan and Boualem Khoukhi at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium gave Asia's reigning champions a perfect start to their campaign.

"We achieved our target today which is to get a victory and the three points in the opening match of the Qualifiers," said Sanchez.

"The victory today was very important especially that it is our first match in the Qualifiers and it will give the team a big boost in the next matches."

"My players deserve to be congratulated following their impressive performance and their big determination to win the match right from the beginning as they showed the true image to be Asian champions," he added.

Qatar's next test will be against India on Tuesday, and while the West Asians

will be hoping to claim a second victory, Sanchez has declared that their opponents will not be easy to beat.

"It will be a totally different match," said Sanchez about India. "I think each match is different than the other but our aim is similar which is to win and get the three points."

Meanwhile, Afghanistan head coach Anoush Dastgir was disappointed with the defeat, but praised his players for their performance.

"We tried to have a good performance and return home with a positive result but our opponents were too strong," said Dastgir.

"Despite the big defeat, I'm proud with what the players showed today as they gave their best," he added.

"Our opponents were a strong team and they are the Asian champions," he said. "We can't compare our team to Qatar and I warned the players that the start of the match would be very critical."

"Hopefully we can learn from the mistakes before our next game against Bangladesh," he concluded.

(Source: the-afc)

Iran U19 to play friendly matches with Indonesia

Iran U19 football team has traveled to Jakarta to play two friendly matches with Indonesia.

The matches will be held as part of preparation for the November's AFC U19 Championship 2020 Qualifiers.

"We have made preparations for five days to play Iran. The 23 players we called were players who competed in the AFF Cup



in Vietnam, nothing has changed," Indonesian coach Fakhri Husaini said.

"We hope to get lessons from fighting Iran. Iran has recently won 2019 CAFA U-19 Championship and we know that they are a strong team," Fakhri said.

Iran will first meet Indonesia U-19 football team on Saturday. (Source: Antaranews)

Iranian athletes win bronze medal in judo kata in South Korea

IRNA — Iran's team of judo kata received the bronze medal of World Martial Arts Masterships in South Korea on Thursday.

The event started on Wednesday with participation of 166 athletes from 29 countries in Chungju, South Korea, and came to an end on Thursday.

Iran could receive the bronze medal of Kime no kata, a series of self-defense oriented katas in judo. Japan and France became the first and the second.

Iran became fourth in Judo kata of Kodokan. Japan, Spain and France came first through third.

Iranian boxers bound for 2019 World Boxing Championships

Tasnim — Iran boxing team will participate at the 2019 AIBA World Boxing Championship.

The 20th edition of the AIBA Men's World Championships will take place in the beautiful city of Ekaterinburg from September 9th to 21st.

It's the first time in the history of Russia that such important event will be organized in the country.

Competing for Iran will be Moslem Maghsoodi (63kg), Sajjad Kazemzadeh (69kg), Shahin Mousavi (75kg), Ehsan Rouzbahani (81kg), Mohammad Shourian (91kg) and Iman Ramazanpour (+91kg).

In total, around 450 athletes from 87 countries will compete in the most important event of their boxing career in 12 days of a competitive fights.

Omid Namzi named Iran U23 assistant coach

Persian Football - Omid Namazi has been named as Farhad Majidi's assistant in Iran U23 Football team.

The 52-year has most recently worked as coach at Danish club FC Helsingør.

He left Iranian club Zob Ahan in October 2018 and returned to USA and shortly after was named as United States U20 assistant coach.

His prior experience as a head coach includes the Chicago Red Stars, a women's soccer team as well as the New Jersey Ironmen, an indoor team that played at the Prudential Center in Newark. He was also Carlos Queiroz's assistant coach in Iran national football team.

Namazi, whose parents emigrated to the United States from Iran, will assist Majidi in 2020 AFC U23 Championship Thailand.

Mehdi Taremi misses Hong Kong match

PLDC — Iran forward Mehdi Taremi has been ruled out of the match against Hong Kong.

Iran will have to play Hong Kong on September 10 in the 2022 World Cup qualifier at the Hong Kong Stadium.



Taremi, who won three penalties for Rio Ave as his side secured 3-2 away win at Sporting Lisbon, missed the match against Hong Kong due to the knee injury.

Team Melli will travel to Hong Kong Wednesday night. Iran has been drawn in Group C along with Cambodia, Iraq, Hong Kong and Bahrain.

Hong Kong-Iran World Cup match gets Fifa go-ahead

Hong Kong's home game against Iran in the 2022 Fifa World Cup qualifiers will go ahead as scheduled on Tuesday.

The Iranian football association was reported to have requested the match be played at a neutral venue, citing safety concerns arising from the political unrest in the city.

However, the Iranian consulate general in Hong Kong posted a message on its social media account on Wednesday night, saying: "Let's enjoy the Football match: Iran vs. Hong Kong, Tuesday, September 10, 2019 Hong Kong Stadium". Pictures of the two teams have also been posted.

It is believed the Iran team have already arrived in preparation for the game at the 40,000-seat Hong Kong Stadium in So Kon Po.

The Asian zone group C match is the second qualifier for Hong Kong, coming five days after Thursday's opener against Cambodia in Phnom Penh on Thursday.

The Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran announced earlier this week that it had appealed for the match to be played on neutral ground and that

request was under review.

The Hong Kong Football Association sent an updated assessment report on Hong Kong's situation to the Asian Football Confederation on Tuesday and it is believed approval has been given by the regional governing body. A formal announcement is expected from the association later on Thursday.

The visitors, who rank number one in Asia, are the hot favorites to win the group, which also features Iraq and Bahrain.

Although Iran will be without one of their top players, Saman Ghoddos, for the Hong Kong match, they are still likely to open their account with a victory in the group after a bye in the opening round this week.

Sweden-born forward Ghoddos, who played for the Scandinavian country in friendlies before representing Iran at the 2018 World Cup finals, was suspended from all games by Fifa for four months over a questionable club transfer deal.

(Source: China Morning Post)

伊朗駐香港總領事館 - Consulate General of I.R. Iran in Hong Kong & Macao is at Wan Chai, Hong Kong · 灣仔, 香港.

Yesterday at 21:28 · Hong Kong ·

Let's Enjoy the Football Match:
Iran vs. Hong Kong

Tuesday, September 10, 2019
Hong Kong Stadium.

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Making haste in an impossible matter, and
delaying in a suitable opportunity are foolish.

Imam Ali (AS)

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES



Calligraphic paintings

■ A collection of calligraphic paintings by Samaneh Ebrahimpur is on display in an exhibition at Gooya Gallery. The exhibition will be running until September 21 at the gallery located at No. 89, Kharim Khan Ave.



Painting

■ An exhibition of paintings by Pegah Rajamand is underway at O Gallery. The exhibit named "Resident" will run until September 17 at the gallery located at 18 Shahin St., Sanai St.



■ Paintings by Rauf Fallah are currently on view in an exhibition at 14 Gallery. The exhibit titled "Tendency" will run until September 16 at the gallery located at 14 Khark St., off Enqelab Ave.



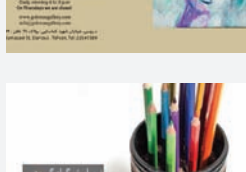
■ Sepideh Aqajani, Elham Jalali, Hamid Jokar, Mahsa Khanzadeh, Linda Mohammadi, Vahid Safari and four more artists are displaying their latest paintings in an exhibition at White Line Gallery.



The exhibit entitled "10 Sunny Days" runs until September 17 at the gallery located at 22 Parvin Alley, off Jame Jam St. off Vali-e Asr Ave.



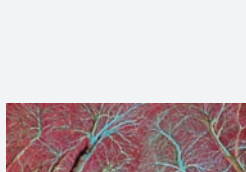
■ A collection of paintings by Reza Nikusamiei is currently on display in an exhibition at Golestan Gallery.



The exhibition will be running until September 11 at the gallery, which can be found at 42 Kamasai St. in the Darus neighborhood.



■ Idea Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by a large number of artists, including Sara Hassani, Neda Mehrjui, Behnaz Mehrmanchi, Atena Yusefi, Mohammad Qasemi, Nasser Farahani and Shahin Asadi.



The exhibit named "Dynamic Colors 6" will run until September 12 at the gallery located at 26, 18th St. off Sanai St., Karim Khan Ave.



■ Samaneh Vafai is showcasing her paintings in an exhibition at Etemad Negarestan Gallery.



The exhibition will continue until September 24 at the gallery that can be found at Negarestan Garden near Baharestan Square.



■ Paintings by Pantea Memarian, Fatemeh Hassani, Ali Rahimi, Mojdeh Alipour, Arezu Jabbari, Roya Mazruei and six other artists are on display in an exhibition at Negar Gallery.



Entitled "Subjective Perception", the exhibit will be running until September 16 at the gallery located at 33 Delaram Alley, Roshanai St. in the Qeitarieh neighborhood.

Multimedia

■ Sets of installation, sculptures and paintings by Shaqayeq Ahmadian are on display in an exhibition at Aran Gallery.

The exhibit named "I Will Find the Right Words and They Will Be Easy" runs until September 23 at the gallery located at 5 Lolagar St., Neauphle-le-Chateau St.

Photo

■ Silk Road Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of photos by Tahmineh Monzavi. The exhibit entitled "Cold Soil, Red Soil" runs until September 24 at the gallery located at 210 Vesal St., Keshavarz Blvd.

Rare tazieh scripts on display at Iranian Artists Forum

A R T TEHRAN — Copies of a collection of rare handwritten scripts of tazieh performances is currently on view in an exhibition at the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF).

The collection contains copies of 70 original scripts dating back to the Qajar period (1789–1925). The original scripts belong to the archives of the Iranian Theater Forum, the organizers announced on Thursday.

The collection has been accumulated by Reza Kuchakzadeh, a stage director and expert on dramatic arts.

IAF's galleries of Momayyez and Zemestan will host the exhibition until September 17.

The Iranian passion play tazieh was registered on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in November 2010.

Tazieh recounts religious events, historical and mythical stories and folk tales. Each performance has the four components of poetry, music, song and motion.

However, stories about the uprising of Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions against the oppressive Umayyad dynasty in 680 CE are more highly regarded by tazieh troupes and audiences.

Performers are always male, and female roles are played by men, most of whom are amateurs who gain their living through other means but perform for spiritual rewards.



A group performs a tazieh about Imam Hussein (AS) in the northern Iranian town of Ziabar on November 20, 2016. (Honaronline/Alireza Farahani)

Iran's "Son-Mother" competing in Toronto Intl. Film Festival



A scene from "Son-Mother", a film by Mahnaz Mohammadi.

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian documentarian Mahnaz Mohammadi's fiction-feature debut movie "Son-Mother" will have its world premiere at the 44th Toronto International Film Festival, which opened on Thursday.

The film is competing in the Discovery section that boasts of 37 films from emerging filmmakers who represent 35 countries.

The film is about a widow who works

tirelessly at a factory, failing due to the U.S. imposed sanctions, in the current era in Iran. She receives a marriage proposal that could mean financial security, but could also tear her family apart.

Starring Maryam Bubani, Raha Khodayari and Shiva Ordul, the film is a co-production between Iran and the Czech Republic.

The Toronto International Film Festival will run until September 15.



A scene from "Suddenly a Tree" by Safi Yazdani.

Iran Cultural Fairs Institute, Publishers Association of Russia ink MOU

C U L T U R E TEHRAN — A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between the Iran Cultural Fairs Institute (ICFI) and the Publishers Association of Russia to enhance bilateral cooperation.

The MOU was inked by ICFI director Qader Ashena and the chairman of the Publishers Association of Russia, Constantine Chernov, during a meeting at the

Moscow International Book Fair, the ICFI announced in a press release published on Friday.

Based on the MOU, the two sides agreed to begin joint cooperation on book publications and organizing book fairs.

Speaking at the meeting, Ashena introduced the Tehran International Book Fair, which is being held every year in May, and invited the Publishers Association

Venice association honors Anahid Abad, Homayun Ershadi



Iranian director Anahid Abad holds her Marco Polo Award in Venice on September 4, 2019.

A R T TEHRAN — The Venice-based Blue Knowledge Association honored Iranian-Armenian director Anahid Abad and Iranian actor Homayun Ershadi with the Marco Polo Awards for their lifetime achievements on Wednesday.

Abad is the director of acclaimed drama "Yeva", a co-production between Iran and Armenia.

Ershadi is best known for his role

in legendary Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami's film "Taste of Cherry", the winner of Palme d'Or at the 1997 Cannes Film Festival.

The Blue Knowledge Association honors international figures who stand out in the world of art, culture and health on the Marco Polo Project every year.

The project also aims at supporting cultural activities that try to make dialogue between the East and West.

Movies from Iran line up for Busan festival

A R T TEHRAN — Ten Iranian movies will go on screen in various sections of the 24th Busan International Film Festival in South Korea as the organizers announced the official lineup on Thursday.

Narges Abyar's "When the Moon was Full", a true love story of Jundallah terrorist group member Abdul-Hamid Rigi and Mona Zandi-Haghighi's "African Violet", about a woman who chooses to look after her sick former husband, will go on screen in A Window on Asian Cinema, a section dedicated to Asian filmmakers.

"Cinema Donkey" by Shahed Ahmadlu, about professional misconducts in Iranian cinema, and "Suddenly a Tree" by Safi Yazdani about a man who is freed from prison after many years and looks for his old love, will also be screened in this section.

The section will also premiere Tehran-based Afghan

brothers Jamshid and Navid Mahmudi's latest drama "7.5", a co-production between Afghanistan and Iran, about seven girls, who have never found love and are losing their control over their destinies through forced marriages.

"Among the Hills" by Mohammadreza Keivanfar and "Diapason" by Hamed Tehrani will compete in the New Currents section.

"Among the Hills" is about a young teacher, who needs to commute among the hills to get to his new school in a remote border town of Iran.

The Wide Angle section of the festival will screen "Dragon's Tail" by Saeid Keshavarz, "Narrow Red Line" by Farzad Khoshdast and "The Unseen" by Behzad Nalbandi.

The 24th Busan International Film Festival will be held from October 3 to 12.

Kazakhstan hosts 1st Forum of Asian Countries' Writers

By Mohammad Ahmadlou

The First Forum of Asian Countries' Writers was held in the capital city of Kazakhstan, Nur-Sultan from September 4 to 6.

The event was organized with the support of the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Kazakhstan Writers' Union. Amongst attendees were President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev as well as two Iranian writers: Hadi Saeidi and Kiasari and Seyed Javad Ahmadi.

The first day of the forum started with the plenary session of literature on Asian

countries and the global problems facing it. It was followed by a second episode which was an overview of modern Asian civilization literature.

The second day began with a workshop on the dimensions of literary dialogues in the Asian continent, followed by a mutual meeting between Asian writers for discussion and open dialogues.

On the third day, several memorandums of understanding were inked between writers. On the sidelines of the forum, Kiasari pointed to the initiative of forming a union for Asian writers and said Iranian writers will help to promote the union.

Ahmadi, the other Iranian writer expressed readiness to cooperate with Kazakhstan cultural centers, saying "We hope to play a specific role in the Asian cultural cooperation."

Kazakh poet Bauyrzhan Zhakyp said that it is necessary that writers follow the trends. "There is a need to develop the institute of literary agents. There are managers who accompany writers and be involved in his or her project from the idea stage until the bookshelves. These managers give advice and gather focus groups of readers," he said.

Mongolian writer and poet Mend-Ooyo Gombojav suggested creating a fund that

will support Asian writers. Addressing the participants of the First Forum of Asian Countries' Writers, he expressed hope that the anthology of Asian literary works will be translated into many languages.

According to organizers, the mission of the forum is to strengthen and develop literary and cultural ties between the Asian countries. It also aimed to demonstrate literature and spiritual values of the Asian countries and to exchange experience on the development of the literature.

The forum brought together 260 literary writers and poets from 44 Asian countries as well as 1,500 dignitaries from across the globe.