

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Ground Force has turned a 122mm homegrown rocket into a guided weapon by increasing its accuracy, a commander said. Director of the Research and Self-Sufficiency Jihad Organization of the IRGC Ground Force General Ali Koohestani said the ‘Arash’ 122mm rocket has become a weapon with pinpoint accuracy following the recent tests. The Arash 122mm rockets can now hit the targets with an accuracy of 7 meters, he said, adding the weapon would be mass produced for delivery to the Defense Ministry.

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The number of coronavirus positive cases who have recovered from the viral disease in Iran has surpassed 215,000, the Health Ministry said Friday. Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari put the death toll from the coronavirus in Iran at 12,447, saying the disease has taken the lives of 142 patients over the past 24 hours. The number of people tested positive for COVID-19 infection in Iran has risen to 252,720 following the detection of 2,262 new cases since Thursday noon, the spokeswoman added.

Viewpoint

Upgrading of Iran-Syria Defence Ties Ensures Regional Stability

Fall Festivals Merge As One to Counter Pandemic

Iran Futsal Remains Best Asian Team

UK Apologizes to Saudi Arabia for Imposing Sanctions

Top U.S. General: Confederate Leaders ‘Traitors’

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley on Thursday condemned Confederate leaders as traitors and said he supports a review of Army bases named after those who fought against the Union, a viewpoint that puts him at odds with the commander in chief.

Pressed by Rep. Anthony Brown about the 10 Army installations named for Confederate leaders, Milley told the House Armed Services Committee that the military needs “to take a hard look at the symbology” of the Civil War — such as base names, display of the Confederate battle flag and statues — as well as improve in other areas such as “the substance of promotions.”

“The American Civil War ... was an act of treason at the time against the Union, against the Stars and Stripes, against the U.S. Constitution — and those officers turned their backs on their oath,” Milley said. “Now, some have a different view of that. Some think it’s heritage. Others think it’s hate.”

“The way we should do it matters as much as that we should do it. So we need to have, I’ve recommended, a commission of folks to take a hard look at the bases, the statues, the names, all of this stuff, to see if we can have a rational, mature discussion.”

President Donald Trump has threatened to veto any defense policy legislation that changes the names of the bases, and earlier tweeted that the discussion is off the table for his administration.

“The United States of America trained and deployed our HEROES on these Hallowed Grounds, and won two World Wars,” he tweeted. “Therefore, my Administration will not even consider the renaming of these Magnificent and Fabled Military Installations.”

Still, members of both parties in both houses of Congress have backed legislation in the authorization bill to rename the bases. A pair of military appropriations bills in the House also attempt to tie funding to renaming the bases.

Brown also pushed Defense Secretary Mark Esper about plans for a military-wide ban on the Confederate flag. The Marine Corps has already banned the flag’s display and the Navy has announced it’s formulating a similar order.

A draft plan for a department-wide ban has been circulating among Pentagon brass, according to multiple reports this week. Esper told Brown that he has “a process underway” to examine “substantive and symbolic” issues.

The House version of the National Defense Authorization Act includes a provision, authored by Brown, to ban the display of the Confederate flag on Defense Department property.

partment property.

Milley made the comments at a House Armed Services Committee hearing, which had been called to discuss the Pentagon’s response to nationwide protests over racial injustice following the killing of Floyd while in U.S. police custody and the growing support for the Black Lives Matter movement.

The death of Floyd on May 25 was captured on video while a white police officer knelt on his neck for over eight minutes in Minneapolis.

Moreover, monuments honoring certain historical figures, most of them racism and slavery era icons, have been removed in the United States and around the world following Floyd’s death.

The U.S. National Guard has been deployed to protect Confederate monuments in some states across the country as anti-racism demonstrators have gone as far as taking up arms to make their voices heard.

A group of heavily armed protesters marched through Stone Mountain Park near Atlanta last Saturday, calling for removal of the giant Confederate rock carving at the site that civil rights activists consider a monument to racism.

The protesters all carried rifles, including military-type assault rifles, and some wore ammunition belts slung over their shoulders. African Americans appeared to account for the bulk of the marchers, but protesters of various races, men and women alike, were also among the group.

Enemies Incensed by Iran’s Pivot to East



Tugboats dock an oil tanker carrying crude oil imported from Iran at China’s Zhoushan port.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister Gholamreza Ansari on Friday promised to publish the details of a strategic partnership pact with China which he said would guarantee the future of Iran’s economy.

The Rouhani administration announced last week that it has approved the draft of the 25-Year Strategic Cooperation Plan but its details have to be published.

Ansari said it comes as no surprise to see Western countries expressing concern about Tehran’s strategic cooperation with Beijing, as they are terrified that Iran would

be linked to China’s global potentialities.

Some of the criticisms recently raised about the deal between Tehran and Beijing are “ridiculous”, he added.

Ansari referred to the U.S. State Department spokesperson’s comments about the deal, and said Washington feigns to sympathize with the Iranian nation while it has imposed the harshest sanctions ever against the country even at the time of the coronavirus outbreak.

“Since Iran’s relations with China are serious, and that forms the

basis of economic and strategic cooperation between the two states in the 25-year document, it is quite normal for Western countries to be worried about such relations,” he noted.

Ansari said China is currently the only country in the world which is buying Iran’s oil officially.

“The policy of the U.S. and Britain—Anglo-Saxons in general—is to focus on pressuring Iran in a bid to keep it away from China and Russia,” he added.

Alaeddin Boroujerdi, the former chairman of the Iranian Parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, said the West is terrified that Iran’s growing capacities are connected to the huge global potentialities of China.

“This is why they have increased their efforts to undermine Iran-China relations following the announcement of talks between the two countries on a long-term deal,” he added.

The major agreement between Iran and China was announced in a joint statement during a visit to Tehran by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2016.

The cooperation roadmap consists of 20 articles, covering Tehran-Beijing ties in political, executive cooperation, human and cultural, judiciary, security and defense, and regional and international domains, according to the statement released back then.

In a post on his Twitter account on Tuesday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi wrote China is expected to emerge as the world’s leading economic power in the near future, while Iran will turn into the great power in the West Asia region.

The two sides will thus be able to “ensure common interests and resist the pressure of bullies through their complementary relations and independent from monarchical and hegemonic Western powers,” he said.

MP Abdollah Ganji, the former editor of the daily Javan, wrote on Twitter, “the critics have not read the text of the pact and that the reason they do not like it is that it has made U.S. sanctions ineffective”.

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Saudi Regime Allows Raunchy Photoshoot in Medina

MEDINA (Dispatches) -- A controversial photoshoot involving foreign supermodels was allowed by Saudi Arabia in the province of Medina raising questions about the inappropriateness of the entire exercise involving women dressed in tight-fitted, skimpy clothes.

The Middle East Monitor (MEMO) reported that the Saudi regime, controlled by Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, gave permission for Vogue Arabia to conduct the raunchy photoshoot of supermodels within the historical site of Al-Ula in the province of Medina.

In the photoshoot, named ‘24 hours in AlUla,’ the models were seen wearing tight dresses with thigh-slits while they posed and walked around the UNESCO World Heritage site, known as the world’s largest open air museum consisting of carved rock structures similar to Jordan’s Petra.

The Saudi royal family has long claimed to be the custodian of

Muslims’ holiest shrines. However, the site of the photoshoot is within the same province which includes Medina near Mecca – both the holiest places in the world to Muslims.

The controversial photoshoot is part of a series of “reforms” dismissed by activists as cosmetic, that the kingdom has been implementing in recent years in order to open up its economy to tourism normalize relations with the occupying regime of Israel.

On Thursday, a United Nations special rapporteur called on the member states of the UN Human Rights Council to pressure Saudi Arabia to free women activists, four months before the Arab kingdom is to hold the 2020 G20 Riyadh summit.

Agnes Callamard, the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, made the call during a speech to the council in Geneva.

The Saudi regime should release

“prisoners of conscience, women, human rights defenders that are currently in prison for demanding the right to drive,” she said.

Saudi authorities put at least a dozen prominent women’s activists behind bars in 2018 as the regime lifted a ban on women driving cars.

The activists were arrested as part of a broader plan of crackdown on dissent that extended to even clerics and intellectuals.

According to Reuters, several of the arrested women have said that they had gone through torture and been the victim of sexual assault in detention.

Saudi Clerics Condemn Insulting Cartoon

A group of Saudi Shia clerics on Thursday strongly condemned Riyadh-owned Asharq al-Awsat daily newspaper for insulting Iraq’s most prominent cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

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Turkey Converts Hagia Sophia Into Mosque

ISTANBUL (Middle East Eye) -- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan officially signed a decree to convert Istanbul’s Hagia Sophia from a museum into a mosque, following a court ruling on the ancient building earlier Friday.

A Turkish court unanimously ruled that a past cabinet decision that made the Byzantine-era building a museum is null and void, opening the way for the government to convert it into a mosque once again.

The verdict came after the representatives of an association sued the government earlier this year for converting the Hagia Sophia into a museum in the 1930s through a cabinet decision that was signed by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey.

Erdogan was to address the nation on the issue through a television broadcast on Friday evening.

In court, the Permanent Foundations and Service to Historical Ar-

tifacts and the Environment argued that the building was endowed as a mosque under Mehmed II, the conqueror of Istanbul who owned the property.

The Council of State’s 10th circle said in the judgment that the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II registered Hagia Sophia as an endowment that could be only used as a mosque.

“The property belongs to the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Foundation. The charter of the foundation presents the building as a mosque for the public use and it has been registered as a mosque in the land registry,” the judgment said.

“The state has the responsibility to ensure the use of the endowment as the donor wishes. The charters also make it impossible to utilize the building other than a mosque. Therefore the cabinet decision isn’t consistent with the rule of law and it is unanimously cancelled.”

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