



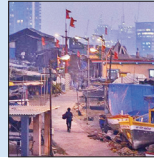
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#BigReturn Tel Aviv nightmare



Clashes erupt as Gazans gather for new mass protest

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EDITORIAL

By Mohammad Ghaderi
Tehran Times editor-in-chief
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Big mistake of EU against Washington

The EU is still confused! The U.S. government's actions in the field of foreign affairs and economics have not been accompanied by strong and strong reaction from the European Union. This has led the U.S. President Donald Trump to continue his efforts to isolate Europe in the international system more quickly. Since the beginning of the Trump presence in the White House, the movements of nationalist and extremist groups and opposition to the European Union have intensified. That same issue has put the EU in jeopardy. It is widely believed that the President of the United States supports the collapse of the European Union and the euro-zone. However, it seems that some European officials still do not understand the deterioration of the situation in this region!

The fact is that if the European Union does not take a decisive decision against the United States and its policies in the international system, it will have to see its fall in the international system and the return to the twentieth century in the near future.

During the World Economic Summit in Davos, the Chancellor of Germany and the President of France both gave a significant warning about the return of nationalism and populism to Europe. This warning has been sent in a time when Far-Right movements in Europe have been able to gain unbelievable power and even seek to conquer a majority of parliaments and form governments.

In her speech, Angela Merkel emphasized that the twentieth century's mistake shouldn't be repeated. By this, the German Chancellor meant the tendency of European countries to nationalism. Although the German Chancellor warning was serious and necessary, the warning seems to be a little late. Perhaps it would have been better if the warning was forwarded after the European Parliamentary elections in 2014, and subsequently, more practical and deterrent measures were designed. However, Merkel and other European leaders ignored the representation of over a hundred right-wing extremist in the European Parliament in 2014 and merely saw it as a kind of social excitement. **→7**

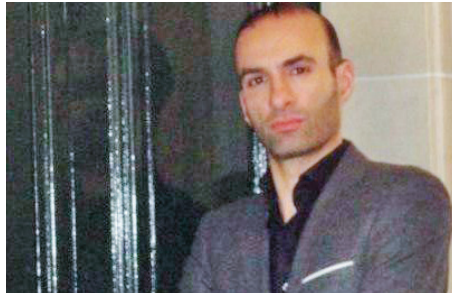
Very likely KSA will have to sign the additional protocol: Adib-Moghaddam

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, Chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute believes "it is very likely that Saudi Arabia will have to sign the additional protocol and forego nuclear enrichment on its own territory."

Professor in Global Thought and Comparative Philosophies and Chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute, also adds that "Saudi Arabia and the United States must be aware that any concession in terms of enrichment and reprocessing plutonium will strengthen Iran's hand in the future."

Here is the full text of the interview:



■ After few years, U.S. administration announced will nuclear agreement with Riyadh. Why U.S. convinced to restart negotiation for nuclear agreement?

A: When I was first interviewed by Tehran Times about the Presidency of Donald Trump I

tried to describe his approach as "transactional" and "tactical". The Trump administration follows capital flows and it does not have a strategic vision in world politics. The reinforcement of ties with Saudi Arabia including the nuclear agreement must be seen from this prism. There is no strategic agenda behind it; it is a business deal. For the United States, Saudi Arabia has been a reliable business partner for decades now. Even if Saudi Arabia under the leadership of Mohammad Bin Salman has acted largely independently from U.S. dictates, it still serves what the Trump administration considers to be America's national interests. The nuclear agreement is a natural outgrowth of this relationship which is cultivated around money, above anything else. Someone like Trump appreciates this capital-driven rationale. **→13**

No trade war likely: Prof. Larry Backer

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN — Commenting on recent the U.S. and China tit-for-tat tariff disputes, Prof. Larry Backer says that the deep structures of economic integration cannot be undone by a series of shocks with offers of renegotiation.

As the U.S. and China ratchet up a tit-for-tat tariff dispute, it has been said often in the last few weeks that no one wins a trade war.

The issue was discussed with Larry Backer, Professor of Law and International Affairs in Penn State University.

Following is the full text of the interview with him:

■ How will President Trump's decision to

boost tariffs impact U.S. domestic steel and aluminum producers?

A: My apologies, the answer to this question will be the longest of this interview precisely because the simplest questions may pose the subtlest problems. In contrast to many experts, and others, who might be eager to provide a simple and direct answer to this simple and direct question, I can only offer complexity and contingency. At the greatest level of generalization, it is not clear, even to experts and policymakers, whether the tariff boost will have a positive or negative effect. Steel and aluminum production are now part of integrated production chains only a portion of which concerns steel and aluminum production. The idea appears to be that the tariffs will protect U.S. based steel and

aluminum production by making the import of like products more expensive—and thus U.S. producers will substitute domestic production over foreign. That may well work for domestic production and consumption but may not work for domestic production for export—especially where other states match the tariff to equalize pricing (and reduce the foreign subsidy) that the tariff represents. And yet domestic production and consumption is an important element of U.S. macro-economic policy and may produce positive short-term effects in terms of domestic investment and employment.

Yet the tariff discussion must also be understood within a more complex context produced by the deep embedding within global production and ownership chains. **→7**



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Cormorants saved from certain death

Some 20 cormorants which were stranded in a wetland 30 kilometers from Tabas, eastern South Khorasan province, were saved by rangers on Thursday.

Unfortunately, one of the birds was dead and the rest of them couldn't fly to save themselves.

However, the rangers found the birds, transferred them to a fresh water dam in Tabas and freed them.



ARTICLE

By Setareh Behrooz
Tehran Times journalist

Telegram, time to 'left'?

Telegram, the familiar blue icon on cellphones of most Iranians, is being turned into a challenge on the national level.

Last week, President Hassan Rouhani announced the development of domestic messaging applications, saying it is intended to end monopoly in social media.

"Domestic messaging applications and software should not be developed to restrict access (to cyberspace), but should be developed to end monopoly in messaging apps," Rouhani said during a meeting with his ministers, provincial governors and heads of executive bodies.

It is a source of honor to develop "Iranian messaging apps" which are "safe and cheap" and meet the people's needs.

■ **New Year, new application**

The cyberspace in Iran will be managed according to principles of National Information Network during the current Iranian calendar year, which started on March 21, Abolhassan Firouzabadi, the secretary of the Supreme Council of Cyberspace announced in an interview with the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) on Tuesday.

The Supreme Council of Cyberspace defines the National Information Network as "a Network based on the Internet Protocol with switches and routers and data centers which allows for data requests to avoid being routed outside of the country and provides secure and private intranet networks."

According to the principles, management, security and financial affairs in cyberspace should be nationalized.

Telegram is a mere messaging application, which is not dominant in any country other than Iran, Firouzabadi said.

Telegram, with 40 million subscribers in Iran, is on top list of messaging applications in the country. Hundreds of people and companies in Iran use the app for their marketing and sales, he noted.

According to its website, Telegram has over 200 million users worldwide.

"We have already shared many of our properties in this system," he lamented.

"We have learned that the application started a presale for its cryptocurrency, which turns its characteristics into an economic platform," he explained. **→10**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Dialogue with Israel is treason: cleric

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami said on Friday that resistance is the only way to deal with the Zionist regime, emphasizing that dialogue with the occupying regime is a treason against the Palestinian cause.

Addressing worshippers in Tehran, Ayatollah Khatami condemned the Zionist regime's atrocities against Palestinian protestors, calling on Muslim nations to decisively oppose the regime's crimes, IRIB news reported.

"Silence in the face of such crimes is an example of blatant treason against Quran," he said, criticizing Arab countries' inaction with regard to the Zionist regime's atrocities.



Milking continues unabated, Zarif says of U.S.-Saudi partnership

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Milking continues unabated, Foreign Minister Mohammad-Javad Zarif said on Wednesday, pointing to Washington's exploitation of Saudi petrodollars.

"Milking" continues unabated. Confirmed today: President Trump demands additional \$4B from Daesh financiers to keep uninvited U.S. troops in Syria. Anything to reverse successes against extremists and undermine Syrian national unity," Zarif tweeted.

In another tweet, the foreign minister posted a photo of President Rouhani and his Russian and Turkish counterparts, saying, "Crucial summit today with Turkey and Russia. Joint renewal of commitment to sovereignty, independence, unity, territorial integrity and non-sectarian character of Syria."



General: No one's permission needed to boost our defense

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, the former commander of the Iranian Navy, said on Friday that the Islamic Republic does not need any country's "permission" to strengthen its defense capability.

Speaking before worshippers in Tehran, Sayyari said, "We will provide what's necessary for the country's security and in this regard we will seek no one's permission."

"Today, with domestic capabilities and by the grace of God and efforts of the youths, state-of-the-art equipment is produced in the country," he added, according to Tasnim.

The general further said the Islamic Republic will boost its deterrence power "until no one dares to think about" attacking Iran.



'S-300 deal a turning point in Iran-Russia relations'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian ambassador to Moscow said on Thursday that the delivery of S-300 missile system to Iran was a turning point in military and defense interactions between Iran and Russia.

Mehdi Sanaei also said the two countries have not discussed sale of S-400 missile system to Iran by Moscow, Mehr reported.

The ambassador also described the nuclear deal as a diplomatic victory for the Islamic Republic of Iran, Russia and the larger international community.

"The Russian Federation played a big role in brokering and implementing the JCPOA and the Russians' principle-driven stance in supporting the agreement as an international treaty is appreciable," he added.



Baghdad will never forget Tehran's help against Daesh: Masoum

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iraqi President Fouad Masoum said on Thursday that his country will never forget the valuable helps of Iran to Iraq in the fight against terrorist groups, especially Daesh.

Talking to reporters after a meeting with Iran's Ambassador to Iraq Iraj Masjedi, Masoum said, "We will never forget the Iranian assistance and will also back Iran's supportive stances regarding our country."

Describing Iran-Iraq ties as historic, he said that currently bilateral ties are at excellent level, IRNA reported.

During the meeting the two sides discussed avenues for promoting bilateral relations.



The nuclear deal was designed to be too big to fail: Haley

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley slammed the Iran nuclear deal on Thursday night by saying it was "designed to be too big to fail."

Giving a lecture on "Confronting Today's Global Governance Challenges" to an audience at Duke University, she said the United States is entering a new era of leadership in dealing with Iran, The Washington Free Beacon reported.

She said the architects of the nuclear deal argued that going to war was the only alternative to accepting the bad deal they negotiated.

Saddam, Bush fell into 'illusion of power' trap, hope 'MbS' will escape: defense minister



Saudi Arabia's young leader has like many leaders before him fallen into the trap of the illusion of power, the Iranian defense minister told RT.

RT caught up with General Amir Hatami during his visit to Moscow, where he headed the Iranian delegation to an international security conference. In an exclusive interview, he chided Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (aka MbS).

The Saudi leader recently wasted no chance to criticize Iran. Among other things, the crown prince said that the two nations may go to war in a decade.

"Those words have been said by a man who has little experience in state affairs," the Iranian official told RT. "Once he claimed he could resolve the situation in Yemen in just one week. Yemen is a poor country with little military strength. The war in Yemen is now in its fourth year, and it has become a quagmire for Saudi Arabia."

Hatami said Mohammad bin Salman's statements should be measured against his achievements, which were not particularly spectacular in Yemen.

The Saudi crown prince, Hatami believes, has fallen into the trap of "an illusion of power," like many other leaders in the past who relied on military strength to achieve their goals.

"Hitler acted under an illusion of power, believing himself to be strong. So did Saddam Hussein [when he attacked Iran in 1980]. When the Americans attacked Iraq, they too

had this delusion of power and strength. They thought they would occupy Iraq, appoint a new ruler and that would be it. But in all important issues they have failed miserably and plunged the country into the deepest hell," the general said.

Hatami added that he hopes in time the future Saudi king will become more experienced and learn how to avoid this trap.

■ **'Trump simply made true face of imperialism obvious'**

Hatami criticized another vocal critic of Iran, John Bolton, who was recently picked by Donald Trump to be his national security adviser.

NAM should resolutely pursue disarmament priorities, says Zarif

The Non-Aligned Movement should resolutely pursue its disarmament priorities through existing mechanisms, including the UN High-Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Thursday.

Zarif made the remarks in a speech to the NAM conference titled "Promoting International Peace and Security for Sustainable Development" in Baku, Azerbaijan.

"In the field of disarmament, the growing contempt of the U.S. government for international obligations and its plans to spend \$1.2 trillion to modernize and build new nuclear weapons will lead to a new nuclear arms race. Our Movement should resolutely pursue its disarmament priorities

through existing mechanisms, including the UN High-Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament," noted the minister.

Zarif also called on the 120-member NAM to promote multilateralism.

"NAM must continue to be at the forefront of promoting multilateral decision-making, resisting the rising unilateralism. This is of great importance if NAM wishes to pursue its aim of creating a fair and equitable world order and global democratic governance," he said.

"We need to strengthen our neighborhoods through an inclusive paradigm of respecting the interests of each other and rejecting the outdated paradigm of hegemony and exclusion that only creates tension and leads to destructive arms

Moscow, Beijing oppose revision of JCPOA: Lavrov

Moscow and Beijing oppose attempts to revise the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - the official name for the nuclear deal - as it may undermine long-standing global efforts in this area, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said following talks in Moscow with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on Thursday.

According to the top Russian diplomat, the focus of the talks was on the implementation of the JCPOA.

tation of the JCPOA.

"Attempts to revise this agreement run contrary to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, which fully approved the deal," Lavrov stressed. "Attempts to revise it may undermine long-standing global efforts in this area."

The JCPOA, signed in Vienna in the summer of 2015, involves Iran, Russia, the United States, China, the United Kingdom,

France, Germany and the European Union.

Under the nuclear deal Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. The multilateral agreement signed when Barack Obama was the president of the United States.

On October 13, 2017, incumbent U.S. President Donald Trump announced a new strategy towards Iran, stipulating that Washington would seek to make changes to the JCPOA

in order to curb Iran's regional policy.

Trump refused to certify the agreement on January 13. He said that Washington would withdraw from the JCPOA unless what he termed "the deal's disastrous flaws" were fixed. Trump noted that he was "waiving the application of certain nuclear sanctions, but only in order to secure our European allies' agreement to fix the terrible flaws of the Iran nuclear deal."

(Source: OANA News)

Iran has been victim of chemical weapons and global silence, envoy says

Alireza Jahangiri, Iran's representative at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, has said that Iran has not only been the main victim of chemical weapons, but also a victim of global silence.

"Last but not least, while naming some member states as the victims of chemical weapons, my delegation is deeply disappointed to face some statements in which the deletion of the name of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the main victim of contemporary use of chemical weapons, has deliberately or inadvertently occurred," he said during a speech at the 57th meeting of the OPCW executive council in Vienna.

Following is full text of his speech published by IRNA: The Islamic Republic of Iran condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, any time, and under any circumstances and those responsible for such act as well as their supporters must

be held accountable.

We do believe that this Organization is empowered to deal with any allegations of use of chemical weapons through a robust verification regime. In this connection, both Articles IX and XIV request the Member States to consider any matter through the existing mechanism in the Convention. Therefore, we are of the view that the defined procedure in the Convention could apply to the "Salisbury Incident" too. The Islamic Republic of Iran as an active State Party to the Convention believes that politicization of any issue in the context of the CWC is not in favor of States Parties and endangers the credibility of the OPCW. There is no doubt that the fact will emerge in future and the ambiguity will fade away.

It is highly expected that the States Parties in any suspicious case which deserves to be considered by the OPCW, present their concrete documents to assist the Organization on its

work in making the case clear. It is obvious that following of this approach will certainly help us to avoid prejudgment and accusation towards other States Parties.

I would like to add my voice to other delegations who have associated themselves with the draft decision presented by delegation of the People's Republic of China and Russian Federation.

Last but not least, while naming some member states as the victims of chemical weapons, my delegation is deeply disappointed to face some statements in which the deletion of the name of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the main victim of contemporary use of chemical weapons, has deliberately or inadvertently occurred. Twenty-one years after the entry into force of the Convention, I should regretfully say that the Islamic republic of Iran has not only been the main victim of the use of chemical weapons, but also the victim of world silence.

Zarif says relations with Nakhchivan growing

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Friday that Iran's relations with Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan autonomous republic are growing.

Zarif made the remarks during a meeting with Vasif Talibov, the chairman of the Supreme Assembly of Nakhchivan.

The Iranian foreign minister pointed to the mid-December visit to Tehran by Talibov, saying that Iran and Nakhchivan have always been looking to strengthen ties in various spheres.

Upon his arrival in Nakhchivan, Zarif said there have always been good relations in the areas culture and economy between the two sides and expressed hope that ties would be expanded.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has stood beside the people of Nakhchivan in difficult times and has good relations with the Nakhchivan autonomous republic and the people of this region, and I hope this visit



would help expansion of relations," the foreign minister explained.

Zarif was in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Wednesday to attend the ministerial conference of the Non-Aligned Movement.

He left Azerbaijan for Nakhchivan on Friday. The visit was made at the invitation from the officials of the autonomous republic.

Bin Salman's ambition becoming 'incurable disease': Iran

1 → "Such disgrace will lead to an ominous end for those who are responsible for this historic backwardness and will be remembered as a great humiliation for Saudi Arabia," he noted.

He is making any "ridiculous" and "shameful" remarks to gain the support of the U.S. and the Zionist regime

and is paying billions of dollars from Saudi people's national wealth to the United States, Qassemi said of Bin Salman.

The power-seeking newcomer has closed his eyes on the historic realities and the crimes of the child-killer and occupier Zionist regime for seven decades, he added.

Iran will cause a surprise if U.S. scraps nuclear deal: Salehi

1 → According to the agreement, Iran scaled back its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

Since the JCPOA went into force in January 2016, the International Atomic Energy Agency has issued ten reports each time confirming Tehran's complete compliance with the multilateral agreement.

"The enemies must know that if the JCPOA is overturned... a special situation will be created... and they will give the violators of the agreement a special surprise," Salehi said during a meeting with the staff of his organization.

He added, "We have never been seeking such a situation. We have been seeking our interests and national sovereignty determinedly, but we will act in another way if the U.S. exits the deal and the Europeans and other major powers" do not withstand it.



Elsewhere, Salehi, a nuclear physicist, said Trump is a "businessman" who tries to achieve his objectives through taking "unpredictable decisions".

He also predicted that Iran will face serious challenges in future months, calling for boosting "national unity" and avoiding issues that may cause division.

The spokesman further said that Bin Salman, in a blatant treason against Palestinians' aspirations, has recognized the illegitimate regime of Israel.

The Saudi prince, Qassemi added, does not understand the oppression against Palestinians and does not differentiate friend and foe.

Israel, Saudi Arabia have common enemy, areas of cooperation: Bin Salman

‘U.S. ties bin Salman’s kingship to normalization

A dissident Saudi prince has revealed a series of “conditions” set by the U.S. and Israel for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to secure their help in ascending to the throne at home, among them the normalization of Riyadh’s ties with the regime in Tel Aviv.

Khalid bin Farhan Al Saud, who fled Saudi Arabia in 2007, made the remarks to the pan-Arab al-Hewar television channel in Germany, where he has obtained political asylum, Lebanon’s al-Ahd news network reported on Thursday.

Besides normalizing ties with Israel, the kingdom would have to guarantee security for Israeli vessels travelling through the Straits of Tiran between the Gulf of Aqaba from the Red Sea proper if bin Salman seeks to become a monarch, he added.

Israeli vessels are allowed to freely traverse across the waters under the 1979 Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty, which Riyadh ostensibly does not recognize. Moreover, Israel would have to be given a role in the so-called Neom project.

A brainchild of bin Salman, the project envisages the creation of a transnational city and economic zone in the Tabuk region in northwestern Saudi Arabia, which lies close to the border with Jordan and Egypt.

Last but not least, Saudi Arabia is required to support a “peace” plan, under which Palestinians would be denied their right to the holy occupied city of Jerusalem al-Quds.

Saudi Arabia has been the main sponsor of the Arab Peace Initiative, which envisions a so-called two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The kingdom does not officially recognize Israel, but the two sides have widely been reported to have cooperated for years behind the scenes.

In June 2017, bin Salman, 32, replaced his cousin, Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, as the first in line to the Saudi throne. Nayef is



reportedly under house arrest.

The young prince then launched a self-promotion campaign meant to consolidate his grip to power, as part of which hundreds of royals and high-profile business man were arrested and tortured over “corruption” charges. Most of them were later released under hefty cash settlements with Riyadh.

Bin Slaman has also tried to portray himself as a “reformist” and advocate of women’s rights by introducing a string of economic and social changes.

Under bin Salman, Saudi Arabia’s de

facto leader, the kingdom has stepped up its overtures towards Israel.

Last week, the crown prince told the Atlantic during his tour of the U.S. that like Palestinians, Israelis had the “right” to have “their own homeland.”

The remarks were unprecedented from any Saudi official and mark a significant shift in Saudi Arabia’s long-held stance on the Palestinian cause and Israel’s occupation.

Bin Salman also told the TIME magazine that the regimes in Saudi Arabia and Israel had “a common enemy” and that they could

immediately normalize their relations once the Palestine issue was resolved. He was apparently referring to Iran.

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(Source: agencies)

UK opens permanent naval base in Bahrain

The UK has officially opened a permanent military base in the Persian Gulf country of Bahrain, making a military return to the region after a hiatus that lasted more than four decades.

The Duke of York, Prince Andrew, and Bahrain’s Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifah attended the opening ceremony of the UK Naval Support Facility in the tiny island’s Salman Port on Thursday.

The base is located off the coast of Saudi Arabia and has room for up to around 500 Royal Navy personnel, including sailors, soldiers and airmen.

“The aim of the Royal Navy being out here anyway is to enhance and ensure the maritime security in the region, and whether or not that’s law and order on the high seas, countering piracy, countering terrorism, making sure that the high seas are all safe for the free-flow of commerce, the free flow of trade to be able to take place,” UK Maritime Component Commander Commodore Steve Dainton said during the opening ceremony on Thursday.

The base allows the UK Royal Navy to carry out longer-

term deployments in the Persian Gulf and makes it easier to provide engineering and logistical support for British ships in the region.

British warships, specially the fleet of advanced Type 45 destroyers, have been struggling to stay afloat in the Persian Gulf’s warmer waters. Constant power failures has on many occasions forced the £1bn warships of this specific class to sail back to the UK and undergo repairs.

The base is also designed to house mine sweepers and aircraft carriers, but much to the surprise of military experts, it won’t be able to service the Royal Navy’s own flagship, the HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier, due to shallow waters.

Bahrain also plays host to the U.S. Navy’s 5th Fleet, which is currently based at the HMS Jufair base.

London first established the HMS Jufair in 1935. The U.S. military first leased space in the base in 1950 and then took control over the entire facility in 1971, following Bahrain’s independence from the British Empire.

The two countries unveiled the plan to reestablish the

British base in late 2014 and started construction nearly a year later.

The UK has helped Bahrain’s ruling Al Khalifah monarchy to put down pro-democracy demonstrations across the country over the past years.

Britain shows up after oil discovery

Meanwhile, Bahrain announced on Wednesday that it had discovered off-shore reservoirs of oil, estimated to contain at least 80 billion barrels of tight oil.

Tight oil is a form of light crude oil held in shale deep below the earth’s surface that is extracted with hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, using deep horizontal wells.

“Agreement has been reached with [American oilfield services company] Halliburton to commence drilling on two further appraisal wells in 2018, to further evaluate reservoir potential, optimize completions, and initiate long-term production,” Bahraini Oil Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Khalifa told a news conference in Manama.

(Source: Press TV)

China hopes North Korea leader’s summits with Trump, Moon will defuse tension

The Chinese government’s top diplomat hopes that planned summits between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and the presidents of South Korea and the United States will “take the fuse” out of the situation on the Korean peninsula.

After a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Moscow, China’s State Councillor Wang Yi said he hoped the summits would bring the issue of North Korea’s nuclear program back into the realm of dialogue and negotiations.

“We all welcome and support the apparent improvement in the situation on the peninsula and appreciate the efforts of all parties,” Wang, who is also China’s foreign minister, said on Thursday, in comments posted on his ministry’s website.

He hoped the three leaders would take the opportunity to completely defuse the situation, he added.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in and U.S. President Donald Trump have both agreed to meet Kim. Trump has traded barbs with the North Korean leader for much of his time in office as Pyongyang pursues development of nuclear weapons capable of hitting the United States.

North Korea was “suffocating” under international sanctions, Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said on Thursday, adding, “They need an out.”

Speaking at Duke University in North Carolina, Haley said, “When the president ends up speaking with Kim, the conversation has to be about denuclearizing. Not some of it, all of it. We don’t want an irresponsible actor to have nuclear weapons.”

She added, “But we’re going into this very cautiously, very much knowing that he’s looked at the Iran deal, he’s seen what he can get and he’s seen how he can push through loopholes, and we’re not going to



let that happen again.”

Last month, China said it won a pledge from Kim, who was on a surprise visit to Beijing for talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping, to denuclearize the Korean peninsula.

China and Russia are both permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, which has imposed sanctions on North Korea in a bid to force negotiations with Pyongyang.

Tension on the peninsula has eased following a flurry of diplomatic activity in the lead-up to February’s Winter Olympics held in South Korea.

North and South Korea have agreed to hold their first summit in more than a decade

on April 27, while Trump has said he would meet Kim by the end of May.

Trump has threatened to withdraw the United States from an accord between Tehran and six world powers, signed in 2015 before he took office, unless France, Britain and Germany help to agree a follow-up pact by that date. Trump does not like the deal’s limited duration, among other things.

■ Kim told Xi he wanted to resume six-party disarmament talks

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un told Chinese President Xi Jinping during talks in Beijing last week that he agreed to return to six-party talks on his nation’s nuclear program and missile tests, the Nikkei newspaper said

on Thursday.

Months of chill between Beijing and Pyongyang appeared to suddenly vanish during Kim’s secretive visit, with China saying that Kim had pledged his commitment to denuclearization.

Quoting multiple sources connected to China and North Korea, the Nikkei said that, according to documents issued after Kim and Xi met, Kim told Xi that he agreed to resuming the six-party talks, which were last held in 2009.

North Korea declared the on-again, off-again talks dead at the time, blaming U.S. aggression. The talks grouped the two Koreas, the United States, Russia, Japan and host China.

The sources said it was also possible that Kim could convey his willingness to resume the talks to U.S. President Donald Trump at a summit set to take place in May, but that it was far from clear if that meant the talks would actually resume.

Chinese officials were not immediately able to comment.

China has traditionally been secretive North Korea’s closest ally, though ties have been frayed by Kim’s pursuit of nuclear weapons and missiles and Beijing’s backing of tough U.N. sanctions in response.

North Korea has said in previous talks that it could consider giving up its nuclear arsenal if the United States removed its troops from South Korea and withdrew its so-called nuclear umbrella of deterrence from South Korea and Japan.

Some analysts have said Trump’s willingness to meet Kim handed North Korea a diplomatic win, as the United States had insisted for years that any such summit be preceded by North Korean steps to denuclearize.

(Source: Reuters)

U.S., allies set up more Syria posts, risking standoff with Turkey



The United States and allies Britain and France have been setting up new outposts in northeastern Syria, despite a lack of permission from Damascus to have military presence in sovereign Syrian territory.

Officials from a coalition of Arab and Kurdish militants operating in northeastern Syria said Friday that they had been witnessing increased activity by Western forces in the region, adding that military forces from the U.S., Britain, and France had been setting up new bases around the city of Manbij.

“The United States and France have increased the number of their military in Manbij,” said Helil Bozi, the commander of the so-called Military Council of Manbij of the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). He said British forces, too, had been deployed to the same territories.

Bozi, whose ragtag militant group has been allied to U.S. forces over the past years, said the increased presence was clearly a bid to counter a potential Turkish military offensive into Manbij, as Ankara has vowed to expand its operation from areas in the northwest of Syria, where it has been battling Kurdish militants, to the east.

“The U.S. has deployed its Special Forces units near the Sajur River, thereby setting a red line the crossing of which will be seen by the [US-led] coalition forces as an attack and will prompt retaliatory actions,” he said.

Bozi added that the increased presence proved that the US had no intention of leaving the Kurdish-dominated territories in northern Syria — as demanded by Turkey.

Other Kurdish official confirmed the increased military presence of coalition forces in the region, saying U.S., British, and French forces had also been deployed to Tell Abyad, Dayr al-Zawr, Raqqah, and Tabqa.

The increased deployment comes despite U.S. President Donald Trump’s earlier expression of his tendency to withdraw US forces from Syria “very soon.” He was reportedly later persuaded by his top aides to take back that stance.

Images of new U.S. bases in Manbij have confirmed earlier plans by the Pentagon to expand US presence in Syria.

U.S. military officials said, however, that the new deployments were not against Trump’s will for a pullout, saying they were necessary to adapt to the operational needs of the military on the ground.

The U.S. has reportedly more than 2,000 troops stationed in eastern Syria, in addition to several thousand others in the Arab country’s north.

Apart from the troops on the ground, the U.S. and a number of its allies have been bombarding what they say are ISIL (Daesh) positions inside Syria since September 2014, without any authorization from the Damascus government or the United Nations.

(Source: Press TV)

Students clash with Kashmir police in Srinagar

Violent clashes have erupted between protesting students and Indian police across the city of Srinagar in Indian-administered Kashmir.

Indian security forces fired tear gas at demonstrators as they were protesting against the recent killings of 20 people, including separatist fighters and civilians by government troops in south Kashmir’s Shopian district.

At least four civilians, 13 fighters and three Indian army soldiers were killed in clashes on Sunday in three villages of Shopian.

One fighter was also killed in a brief gun battle in Dalgam, a village in Anantnag district.

As schools and colleges reopened on Thursday after a complete shutdown across the region, students from Bemina Degree College, Amar Singh College and Women’s College in Srinagar took to the streets and started protesting outside their college premises.

Police used pellets, tear gas canisters and stun grenades to disperse the students, who were protesting by throwing stones at the security forces and raising anti-India slogans.

Injuries to the students have been reported at different colleges after the day-long clashes.

Meanwhile, the inspector general of police (IGP) Kashmir range told local news agency in Srinagar that two police officers were injured, but the overall situation remained under control.

After the April 1 killings, tensions have been high this week, with massive demonstrations in many parts of the region. More than three dozen people have been wounded.

Most of the fighters killed in Sunday’s clashes were locals and belonged to south Kashmir.

Kashmir’s separatist leaders had called for a two-day shutdown to protest the killings in the region, before extending the call to April 3.

All shops, schools and colleges remained closed this week, before government authorities announced the resumption of classes on Thursday.

Muslim-majority Kashmir is one of the most militarized regions on earth and has been divided between India and Pakistan since independence from Britain in 1947.

Both Pakistan and India claim the Himalayan territory in full and have fought three wars over the mountainous region.

Kashmiris demand that a referendum take place to let them decide their future.

Tens of thousands of people, mostly civilians, have died since 1990.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	97150.6
IFX	1106.74

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	48,770 rials
EUR	62,050 rials
GBP	70,500 rials
AED	13,300 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	63.31/b
Brent	68.10/b
OPEC Basket	64.48/b
Gold	\$1,326.50/oz
Silver	\$16.34/oz
Platinum	\$915.65/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

New Delhi set to present \$3-4b development plan for Iranian gas filed

1 → The new terms confine Indian companies to just production of gas and development of the field.

The two countries have been trying to narrow differences over Farzad B development rights since its discovery by Indian firms led by ONGC Videsh, the foreign investment arm of Oil and Natural Gas Corp, in 2008.

“As the negotiations are still ongoing, we would not like to comment at this stage,” ONGC Videsh said in response to a Reuter’s email seeking comments.

ICCIMA to host Iran-Russia business forum on Monday

ECONOMY d e s k TEHRAN— Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) will host Iran-Russia business forum in Tehran on Monday, the portal of ICCIMA announced.

A delegation of Russian traders and businessmen active in different areas including agriculture, transportation, oil and gas, solar energy, logistics, imports and exports, IT and mining industries will negotiate possible cooperation with the Iranian businessmen during the mentioned forum.

Indian state firms plan to nearly double Iranian oil imports: sources

NEW DELHI (Reuters) — Indian state refiners plan to almost double oil imports from Iran in 2018/19, drawn by incentives offered by Tehran, sources with knowledge of the matter said, potentially helping Iran increase its share in the world’s third-biggest oil importer.

Iran is pushing to retain its oil customers in Asia, offering better terms than other Middle Eastern suppliers including Saudi Arabia, even as the threat looms of potential further U.S. sanctions on the OPEC member.

Tehran recently deepened freight discount to firms in India, its second-biggest oil client after China, in return for higher volumes.

In the current fiscal year to March 2019, state refiners Indian Oil Corp, Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd, Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum plan to import 396,000 barrels per day (bpd) Iranian oil, according to two sources familiar with the plans who spoke on condition of anonymity.



Four other sources had knowledge of the import plans of some of the refiners.

Indian Oil Corp, Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals, Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum declined to comment.

All four refiners imported about 205,600 bpd Iranian oil in the previous fiscal year.

Iran, which used to be the second-biggest oil supplier to India before sanctions, has been gradually growing back its market share in New Delhi since the lifting of sanctions against the Islamic state in 2016, becoming the No. 3 supplier to India in 2016/17 after Saudi Arabia and Iraq, government data shows.

Official government data for 2017/18 is not yet available but information from sources showed Iran remained the third-biggest oil exporter to India during April 2017-February 2018, while Iraq replaced Saudi Arabia as top supplier.

State refiners, which account for two-thirds of India’s 5 million bpd refining capacity, last year curbed imports from Iran in protest at Tehran’s move to grant development rights for the giant Farzad B gas field to others.

But Indian oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan in February, after a meeting with his Iranian counterpart Bijan Zanganeh in New Delhi, said state-refiners will boost purchases in the current fiscal year as Iran sweetened terms.

Zanganeh had said Indian refiners - state-owned and private - will buy about 500,000 bpd of Iranian oil in 2018/19.

India’s overall purchase from Iran could cross 600,000 bpd, one of the sources said. “Terms offered by Iranians are better compared to other producers... Iranian crude suits us,” one of the sources said.

Annual petchem exports anticipated to hit \$14b

ENERGY d e s k TEHRAN — Iran’s export of petrochemical products is anticipated to reach \$14 billion in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21), according to National Petrochemical Company (NPC) Managing Director Seyed Reza Norouz-Zadeh.

The official also announced that through completing some petrochemical projects in this year, petrochemical production is expected to hit 47 million tons, of which

some 27 million tons will be exported, Shana news agency reported.

NPC managing director further said that 60 petrochemical projects with the nominal capacity of 65.4 million tons are currently underway throughout the country with \$42.8 billion of investment.

Iran is among the few countries which have all kinds of petrochemical feedstock.

The future of Iranian petrochemical industry is promising after the

Iran, Turkmenistan to form joint energy committee

ECONOMY d e s k TEHRAN — Iran and Turkmenistan’s energy ministers called for sustained cooperation between the two countries’ energy and water sectors and emphasized the establishment of a joint energy committee.

As reported by Iranian energy ministry’s portal, Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian had a meeting with his Turkmen counterpart Döwran Rejepow in Tehran on Thursday, during which the two sides discussed previous agreements and explored areas of mutual cooperation.

In the meeting, Ardakanian underlined water and energy fields as areas for expansion of mutual



Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian (R) met with his Turkmen counterpart Döwran Rejepow in Tehran on Thursday.

Sweden’s contribution to renewing Iran’s transport fleet to facilitate banking ties

ECONOMY d e s k TEHRAN — The governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) said Sweden’s cooperation with Iran in a mega project for renewing the country’s public transportation fleet will lead to expansion of the two sides’

banking ties.

Meeting with his Swedish counterpart in Tehran on Wednesday, Valiollah Seif said that the modernization of Iran’s transportation fleet will have the potential for €5 billion investment in the

next three years.

“If the project is funded by the Swedish side, in addition to the expansion of bilateral trade it could pave the way for expansion of banking relations as well,” he added.

Stefan Ingves for his part expressed satisfaction with the talks between the two countries’ banking officials saying, “I hope that these negotiations will ultimately lead to the strengthening of bilateral relations between the two countries’ banks.”

Iran, Zimbabwe to strengthen trade relations



Iranian Ambassador to Zimbabwe Ahmad Erfanian says trade relations between Zimbabwe and Iran are set to improve under new government led by President Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Speaking after meeting Acting President General Constantino Chiwenga at his Munhumutapa offices on Thursday, Ambassador Erfanian said the good political relations that exist between the two countries will help boost trade.

“We had a fruitful meeting with the honorable Vice President where we discussed several issues concerning the friendly relations of our countries which are growing continuously and moving from strength to strength.

“We believe that in the new dispensation a lot of new opportunities are going to open up in Zimbabwe. We want to use this opportunity to strengthen the bilateral relations between the two nations. I believe that in the new dispensation we should try to indulge the private sector. I think the private sector can play an important role in developing a better business environment,” he said.

Ambassador Erfanian said Iranian

companies which have been trying to grow cooperation in areas such as agri-related technologies, textiles, SMEs and ICTs have already begun seeking engagements with Zimbabwean companies.

“I would like to tell you that recently some Iranian companies showed their readiness to have cooperation with Zimbabwe counterparts. They started negotiations and we hope we will be able to achieve our goals in the relations between two countries especially trade,” he said.

The Iranian Ambassador said his country is ready to host the Joint Permanent Commission to promote trade between the two countries.

“As you are aware more than two years ago in 2015 we had the 8th session of the Joint Commission here in Zimbabwe and we would have the next session of the joint commission in Tehran and we are happy to welcome the Zimbabweans. We are ready to have the next commission, I think it will help promote the trade relations between the two countries,” said Ambassador Erfanian.

(Source: southerntimesafrica.com)

Trade dispute escalates as Trump threatens \$100b more in China tariffs

President Donald Trump on Thursday directed U.S. trade officials to identify tariffs on \$100 billion more Chinese imports, upping the ante in an already high-stakes trade confrontation between the world’s two largest economies.

The further tariffs were being considered “in light of China’s unfair retaliation” against earlier U.S. trade actions, which included a proposed \$50 billion of tariffs on Chinese goods, Trump said in a White House statement.

“This is what a trade war looks like, and what we have warned against from the start,” said National Retail Federation President and CEO Matthew Shay.

“We are on a dangerous downward spiral and American families will be on the losing end,” Shay added in a statement, urging Trump “to stop playing a game of chicken with the U.S. economy.”

Financial markets, roiled for days by the trade fight and Trump’s management of it, whipsawed again on the new threat. After a bullish regular trading day, U.S. equity futures sold off sharply in after-market-hours trading.

U.S. stock futures ESc1 slid 1 percent and

the dollar dipped against other major currencies. DXY, while Asian shares flitted in and out of positive territory. Chinese markets were closed for a holiday.

Doug Kass, who runs hedge fund Seabreeze Partners Management Inc, added: “Our president is going to make market volatility and economic uncertainty great again.”

In his statement, Trump said the U.S. Trade Representative had determined that China “has repeatedly engaged in practices to unfairly obtain America’s intellectual property.”

The tit-for-tat escalation of tariff announcements, which have stirred fears that trade unfolded surprisingly rapidly. They have stirred fears that the two countries will spiral into a trade war that will crush global growth.

Chinese state media slammed Trump’s threat of more trade action against China as “ridiculous”.

“This latest intimidation reflects the deep arrogance of some American elites in their attitude towards China,” the state-run Global Times said in an editorial.

On Tuesday, USTR proposed 25 percent



implementation of JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action which lifted sanction against Iran in January 2016), according to Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh.

Given that Iran ranks the first and fourth in the world in terms of gas and oil reserves, respectively, no country enjoys feedstock as much as Iran to develop its petrochemical industry, Zanganeh highlighted.

cooperation, saying that Tehran, Ashgabat had reached several agreements during President Rouhani’s visit to Turkmenistan and both sides are eager to see them through.

Heading a high-ranking delegation, President Rouhani visited Turkmenistan in late March.

“Resolving financial issues for re-launching, completing or construction of the three electricity transmission lines between the two countries were among the issues the two sides agreed on during the president’s visit”, Ardakanian said.

Rejepow for his part called for expansion of the two countries’ ties in water and energy areas.

India Ports Global orders 14 gantry cranes for Chabahar



India Ports Global Pvt Ltd has ordered 14 rubber-tyred gantry cranes, or RTGCs, for about \$18 million from Finnish crane-maker Cargotec OYJ for use at the Chabahar port in Iran.

“Cargotec emerged the lowest bidder and we have signed the contract,” Arun Kumar Gupta, Managing Director, India Ports Global, told BusinessLine.

India Ports Global, a 60:40 joint venture between Jawaharlal Port Trust and Deendayal Port Trust (previously Kandla Port Trust), was set up by the government to make strategic investments in ports overseas.

India Ports Global and Aria Banader Iranian Port signed a deal in May 2016 to equip and operate the container and multi-purpose terminals at Shahid Beheshti — Chabahar Port Phase-I with capital investment of \$85.21 million and annual revenue expenditure of \$22.95 million on a 10-year lease.

India Ports Global had earlier signed a \$29.8-million deal with Chinese port-crane-maker Shanghai Zhenhua Heavy Industries Co Ltd (ZPMC) for four rail mounted quay cranes (RMQCs).

“These two are the most critical equipment for the port. We wanted to first tackle those equipment whose lead time for delivery are the longest,” Gupta said.

The four rail-mounted quay cranes will be delivered in 16-18 months while the rubber-tyred gantry cranes will be supplied in 12-14 months.

IGPL has also floated bids for buying two mobile harbor cranes (MHC) of 140 tonnes and four MHC of 100 tonnes and 32 tractor trailers.

The Chabahar port project will be the first overseas venture for the Indian state-owned ports. Located in the Sistan-Baluchistan Province on Iran’s south-eastern coast (outside Persian Gulf), Chabahar port is of great strategic importance for development of regional maritime transit traffic to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

The first phase development of Chabahar port will have a container terminal with two berths of 640-metre quay length and a depth of 16 meters and a multi-purpose terminal with a quay length of 600 meters and draft of 14 meters. The port has a total back-up area of 70 hectares.

(Source: thehindubusinessline.com)

specifics.

White House officials have suggested throughout the week that talks with the Chinese could help resolve trade issues between the two countries. China ran a \$375 billion goods trade surplus with the United States in 2017. Trump has demanded that China cut the trade gap by \$100 billion.

A senior U.S. official who requested anonymity told Reuters no formal negotiating sessions had yet been set, but that the United States was willing to negotiate with China.

The U.S. tariffs are aimed at forcing changes to Chinese government policies designed to transfer U.S. intellectual property to Chinese companies and allow them to seize leadership in key high-technology industries of the future.

The USTR’s “Section 301” investigation authorizing the tariffs alleges China has systematically sought to misappropriate U.S. intellectual property through joint venture requirements that often cannot be negotiated without technology transfers, something China denies.

(Source: Reuters)

Russia says wider cooperation arrangement with OPEC could be indefinite

Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said that an arrangement under which Moscow cooperates with the OPEC oil group could become indefinite once a current deal to curb oil production expires in the end of the year.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other large oil producers led by Russia have agreed to curtail their combined output by around 1.8 million barrels per day until 2018-end in order smooth out bloated oil inventories.

Many market participants have worried about what will happen to the oil market once the deal runs its course.

“This could be an indefinite agreement,” Novak told reporters, referring to future co-operation with OPEC once the current deal expires.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told Reuters last month that Riyadh and Moscow were considering a deal to greatly extend a short-term alliance on oil curbs that began in January 2017 after a crash in crude prices.

Novak reiterated his proposal for the cre-



ation of a joint organization with OPEC to facilitate joint efforts on the global oil market.

“In essence, this could be some international organization, which could gather once

every half a year and discuss the situation on the oil market; both OPEC and non-OPEC countries,” Novak said.

He also said other large oil producers may also join the organization. He stopped short of saying that the United States may join the body.

U.S. oil production may surpass 11 million barrels per day in late 2018 because of the shale oil output boom, making the United States the country world’s top oil producer.

The rising oil production in the U.S., which weighed down oil prices, has been a worry for OPEC and Russia.

Novak said he expected the United States Secretary of Energy Rick Perry as well as his Saudi Arabian counterpart Khalid al-Falih to attend the annual Russian economic forum to be held in the city of St. Petersburg.

The next OPEC and non-OPEC ministerial meeting is set for June in Vienna.

Novak said that the meeting’s participants may discuss changes to the global output cut deal, such as tweaking oil production quotas.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil moves lower on Trump’s latest China trade threats

Oil prices fell on Friday after U.S. President Donald Trump’s threat of new tariffs on China reignited fears of a trade war between the world’s two biggest economies.

President Trump said on Thursday he had ordered U.S. trade officials to consider tariffs on \$100 billion more of imports from China, escalating tensions with Beijing.

Brent crude for June delivery was down 36 cents, or 0.53 percent, at \$67.97 per barrel at 0807 GMT.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude for May delivery was down 35 cents, or 0.55 percent, at 63.19 a barrel.

Both are headed for their biggest weekly fall since early March.

“It is obvious that this stand-off between the United States (and) China is quite serious and navigating these waters will be tricky for traders,” JBC said in a note.

“Any meaningful change to the perception regarding future trade issues will most likely trump the potential effects of short-term variations to oil fundamentals.”

But some oil market watchers do not

expect to see steep falls because of signs of tightening supplies.

“We view the oil market as the best sector in which to wait out the volatility,” analysts at ANZ bank said in a note. “Supply-side issues amid a backdrop of falling inventories should override any concern over weaker economic growth.”

The Energy Information Administration (EIA) reported a 4.6 million-barrel draw in U.S. crude inventories last week, compared with analysts’ expectations for an increase of 246,000 barrels, providing some support to prices.

Meanwhile, Asian oil traders were struggling to understand how Saudi Arabia derived its official selling prices for May after it unexpectedly raised the price for its flagship Arab Light crude sold to Asian refiners.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and some non-OPEC producers including Russia are committed to cutting output by around 1.8 million barrels per day through the end of 2018 in a bid to clear a global overhang and support prices.



Saudi Arabia has said production cuts could be extended in one form or another.

OPEC and its allies should keep the cuts to ensure healthy price levels as a way to boost investment in the industry and avoid

a supply and price shock in the long run, Qatar’s Energy Minister said.

Shanghai crude futures trading will resume on Monday after public holidays in China.

(Source: Reuters)

Saudi Arabia unexpectedly lifts key oil price for Asian buyers

Saudi Arabia unexpectedly raised the price of its key Arab Light crude in Asia in a move that was interpreted bullishly by futures traders.

The state-run Saudi Arabian Oil Co., or Saudi Aramco as it’s better known, raised its official selling price for the grade by 10 cents a barrel, lifting the differential to \$1.20 a barrel above a Middle East benchmark for May loadings, according to in an emailed price list on Thursday. Refiners and traders had anticipated a 60-cent-a barrel decrease, according to a survey last week.

Other Saudi Arabian prices moves were more mixed. Thirteen out of 21 compiled by Bloomberg were increased, 7 were cut and the other was unchanged.

The other grades that Saudi Arabia sells to Asia -- Super Light, Extra Light, Medium and Heavy -- were lowered relative to their Oman/Dubai benchmark by between 20 cents and 50 cents a barrel compared with April.

All but one U.S. price was cut relative to Argus Sour Crude Index, the exception being Extra Light, which was lifted by 20 cents a barrel to \$3.10. The others -- Light, Medium and Heavy -- were all lowered by 10 cents a barrel.

Sale prices were raised across the board for customers in the Mediterranean, and mostly increased for buyers in North West Europe.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Pakistan resumes fuel oil imports after four-month halt

Pakistan State Oil (PSO) this week issued its first fuel oil import tender for the year after suspending purchases at the end of 2017 ahead of an expected pickup in demand during summer.

PSO, Pakistan’s main oil importer, in December halted imports of fuel oil amid an abrupt drop in domestic demand as the South Asian country turned to liquefied natural gas (LNG) to fuel its power sector.

The state-owned oil company issued a tender notice inviting bids for the supply of an unspecified amount of high-sulfur and low-sulfur fuel oil for delivery over May 25-June 10 and June 11-June 30. Traders said the tender document was released this week.

The resumption in PSO’s fuel oil imports is expected to strengthen the regional market and restrict exports of the fuel from the Middle East, where most of Pakistan’s fuel oil is supplied from, three trading sources said.

“Pakistan’s power generation typically doubles during summer from winter levels and they will need fuel oil-generated power to make up for the increase,” said Nevy Nah, oil products analyst at Energy Aspects in Singapore.

But technical issues at some of Pakistan’s newest gas-fired power plants could also be feeding the country’s renewed appetite for fuel oil.

(Source: Reuters)

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‘Democracy’ still matters

By Jan-Werner Müller

On Sunday, Hungary’s right-wing Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, is up for re-election, possibly on track to his fourth term in office. Mr. Orban has spent the past several years weakening his country’s democratic checks and balances; he has attacked independent civil society, and he has brought the media under the control of oligarchs close to his government. While doing so, he has advertised his approach as a distinctive form of democracy, one fit to meet the challenges of the 21st century. It is, he says, “illiberal democracy.”

Plenty of critics have adopted this term as a description not just of Hungary, but of redesigned political systems in countries as different as Poland and Turkey. Yet “illiberal democracy” fails to capture what is wrong with these regimes. It also gives leaders like Mr. Orban a major rhetorical advantage: He is still left with the designation “democrat,” even as it is democracy itself — and



Viktor Orban

not just liberalism — that is under attack in his country.

In the mid-1990s, observers started to notice that something was going wrong after the great wave of democratization that had started to roll across the globe in the 1980s. Elections were duly held, but their winners proceeded to oppress minorities or attack independent judges and journalists in the name of the “people.” Fareed Zakaria, the influential foreign affairs commentator, was among the first to draw a fundamental distinction between liberalism and democracy: the former referred to the rule of law, the latter to the rule of the majority. Leaders with majority backing were creating “illiberal democracies,” in which neither political losers nor unpopular minorities could feel safe.

This picture is misleading when applied to today’s populists like Mr. Orban. In Hungary, it is not just the rule of law that has been under threat. Rights essential for democracy itself — especially rights to free speech, free assembly and free association — have been systematically attacked.

Media pluralism disappears

As media pluralism disappears, citizens cannot get critical information to make up their minds about their government’s record. Unless one wants to say that a democracy remains a democracy as long as the government does not stuff the ballot boxes on Election Day, it is crucial to insist that democracy itself is being damaged.

Unless this point is understood, Mr. Orban will continue the perfidious game he likes to play with international critics in particular: He does not mind being called “illiberal”; he relishes it. For liberalism is supposedly just a matter of subjective value choices: Liberals, he and his defenders will say, simply do not like his conservative family policies, his defense of strong nation-states inside the European Union and, most of all, his complete rejection of immigration. Of course, one can legitimately disagree about these issues in a democracy.

But by focusing all attention on them, Mr. Orban has remade what should be a debate about democratic institutions into yet another culture war. (This is a strategy Trumpists are also discovering.) Once the conflict has been declared a matter of subjective values, it becomes easy to accuse the liberals of being the real illiberals. Even though they are supposed to be the defenders of diversity, they cannot tolerate an ethnic nationalist like Mr. Orban, who seeks to deviate from a supposed Western mainstream of multiculturalism.

A number of observers are even willing to concede that “il-liberal democracy” might be a somewhat legitimate reaction to undemocratic liberalism. The European Union appears as an obvious instance of a liberal technocracy against which the “will of the people” needs to be asserted. But the European Union prescribes neither a uniform legislative stance on controversial questions like same-sex marriage nor a single model of democracy. Its members just have to be democratic enough.

When European Union leaders have criticized Hungary and, more recently, Poland, those countries’ governments have countered that they are defending national sovereignty against liberal diktats from Brussels. The Union has played into their hands by suggesting that it is only concerned about the liberal rule of law. The European Union thus gives the impression that democracy will always be taken care of by the nation-state; and the technocratic liberal repair crew from Brussels only makes a call in a European capital, if there is a malfunction with the rule of law (hence the undermining of political rights and independent institutions appears like a technical glitch, not as the conscious authoritarian project it actually is.)

Notion of illiberal democracy

The notion of “illiberal democracy” has also made it easier for European elites to claim that the people themselves have unfortunately turned out to be illiberal and brought these authoritarian governments on themselves. Eastern Europeans, we are often told, are culturally different — code for thinking that they lag behind Western liberal enlightenment. But the citizens who brought Mr. Orban and the current Polish government to power actually did exactly what democratic theory would have counseled them to do: In two-party systems, they threw out the one major party that had a poor record and instead voted for politicians who, in both cases, presented themselves as moderate mainstream conservatives. The latter never revealed — or won an electoral mandate for — their real agenda, of perpetuating themselves in power by attacking the institutions that underpin democracy.

Is all this just a matter of words? Thinkers like George Orwell and Hannah Arendt never tired of warning that the political catastrophes of the 20th century began with euphemisms and imprecise language. A democracy can have illiberal policies, but it cannot do without basic political liberties and protections. We are doing Mr. Orban a great favor by accepting him as any kind of democrat. The designation “democracy” still remains the most coveted political prize around the world. In what can only be called an unforced error, we are giving that prize to leaders who not only devalue it, but are also busy destroying the thing itself.

This election is probably the last before Hungary shifts from what is already a deeply damaged democracy to what political scientists would call a full-blown electoral autocracy. Elections would still be held in the future, but a real turnover of power would be impossible. Thus the weekend’s ballot is also a test as to whether there can be an autocracy inside the European Union, a self-declared club of democracies.

(Source: The NYT)

Strongmen are weaker than they look

Authoritarians are on the rise around the world, but history shows they’re mostly helpless

When Muammar al-Qaddafi came in from the cold in the mid-2000s, the “mad dog” of the Middle East embarked upon top-down reforms that were friendly to international markets, investors, the United States, and Europe. Although he became the subject of sympathetic profiles in major Western media outlets, those articles almost never emphasized the fact that the new Qaddafi continued to rule Libya as the old one did — with violence. His legacy is not “Dubai on the Mediterranean” but the chaos and bloodshed that has overwhelmed Libyans since his fall.

At a level of abstraction, Qaddafi’s story is fairly typical of many Middle Eastern leaders who were prematurely labeled as reformers. Why then is there a new romance — both within the Arab world and the West — with the strongman? This is particularly true of Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, whose press clippings by now are the gold standard to which every global leader must surely aspire.

Strongmen are back in favor these days. Part of this has to do with U.S. President Donald Trump and his clear disposition toward the tough guys of the world, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Philippines’ Rodrigo Duterte, and Egyptian leader Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. But this is not a policy choice that can be attributed solely to the idiosyncrasies of the 45th president. Setting aside that Western officials rarely, if ever, have a choice over who rules other countries, they seem to have faith in the idea that authoritarians deliver stability. It is particularly odd because the strongman, benevolent or otherwise, does not have a good track record.

In the 1950s and the 1960s, Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser, Algeria’s Houari Boumediene, and Syria’s Hafez al-Assad came to power promising development, social reform, and national empowerment. The big states they built prevailed over time, but they only worked for short periods, if at all. When the revolutionary ardor faded and modest economic growth trailed off, force filled the breach. The successors to these revolutionary leaders made half-hearted efforts to mobilize their publics with new or refashioned ideological appeals. Yet there was nothing heroic about building a “state of institutions” — which didn’t happen anyway — and connecting the struggle for Algeria’s liberation or Egypt’s crossing of the Suez Canal in 1973 to the exigency of economic development was a stretch. Rather, Mubarak, Bendjedid, and later Bashar al-Assad in Syria presided over increasingly illegitimate and directionless status quos in which states could only muster little capacity to do anything other than coerce their citizens.

This is not just an Arab problem, though. President Hugo Chávez launched the Bolivarian Revolution, setting in motion a process



Crown Prince and Defense Minister of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud

Strongmen are back in favor these days. Part of this has to do with U.S. President Donald Trump and his clear disposition toward the tough guys of the world.

that his boorish successor, Nicolás Maduro, will complete: the failure of Venezuela. Even the principles and ideas upon which Mustafa Kemal Atatürk reoriented Ottoman society and forged of the Republic of Turkey — which seems like the most successful effort at top-down reform of the 20th century — have lost their appeal to millions of Turks.

There are, of course, outliers. The governments of Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar have strong track records of development, security, and global prestige. They claim legitimacy because nondemocratic, but also mostly nonrapacious, governments have created wealth and with it superior infrastructure, longer and healthier lives, and opportunities for their citizens. Of course, these governments are not always as benevolent as they would like people to believe, but there is no denying Singaporean, Emirati, and Qatari success. These accomplishments are, however, specific to these places with small populations, unique locations, vast wealth, and particularly charismatic leaders. In other settings, strongman states have more often than not become predatory.

In large, complex societies, reform requires a degree of consensus and some devolution of authority, neither of which your typical

strongman — even a reformist-minded one — can countenance. The result is the instability of authoritarian politics and the pathologies they produce including violence, corruption, and radicalization. This seems self-evident, yet the United States and Europe have, in a variety of ways, not just accommodated themselves to the idea of a strongman but promoted it. Even though Sisi has not been received with the same warmth as the Saudi crown prince, his use of brute force to kill terrorists and push economic change has won him praise in the places where it counts, while his efforts to clear the field of opponents and critics has been met with only perfunctory protests. This is not all that different from the way the United States and the West approached Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who kept the Suez Canal open, maintained peace with Israel, and kept his boot on the throat of the Islamists. Sisi has gone a step further, however. He has challenged Egypt’s religious establishment to counter the discourse of extremism, which it has either too readily accommodated or lacked the strength to combat. This, in particular, has won the Egyptian strongman plaudits in Europe and the United States among policymakers, elected officials, and even some editorial boards.

The inside story of how Israel built nuclear weapons

Although Israel doesn’t officially acknowledge it, it is well understood that the country possesses a nuclear weapon arsenal (although the exact number of warheads are in dispute). It is similarly well understood that the United States opposed Israel’s nuclear weapons program during the John F. Kennedy and, to a lesser extent, Lyndon B. Johnson administrations. One part of the history that is less well known is that much of the funding for Israel’s nuclear weapons program came from private Americans in an effort that was spearheaded by, Abraham Feinberg, a prominent American who served as an unofficial advisor to both President Kennedy and President Johnson.

Israel’s interest in nuclear weapons basically dates back to the founding of Israel in 1948. The country’s founding leader, David Ben-Gurion, was haunted both by the Holocaust and the unremitting hostility Israel faced from its much larger Arab neighbors. Ben-Gurion viewed nuclear weapons as a last resort option for ensuring the survival of Israel in case its enemies ever used their much larger populations and economies to build conventionally superior militaries.

The problem Ben-Gurion and his closest advisors faced was that their young, poor, and relatively unsophisticated country didn’t possess the necessary technological and material resources to support an indigenous nuclear weapons program. Israel’s best hope of acquiring nuclear weapons came from finding a foreign patron. Fortunately for Israel, contemporary circumstances created conditions for it to obtain this support.

Specifically, during the mid-1950s France’s control over Algeria — which it considered part of France and not just another colony — was increasingly contested by a domestic insurgency that was receiving substantial support from the Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser. Paris responded by eliciting Israel’s help in providing intelligence on the Algerian situation in return for French conventional weaponry.

The opportunity to transform this into nuclear cooperation presented itself in 1956 when Paris asked Israel to provide France and Britain with a pretext to intervene militarily in what became the Suez Canal crisis.

Ben-Gurion had major reservations about involving Israel in the scheme. These were overcome when France agreed to provide Israel with a small research reactor similar to the EL-3 reactor France had built at Saclay. Of course, the Suez invasion quickly went awry with both the United States and Soviet Union threatening Israel, France and Britain in different ways to get them to withdraw. France was unable to protect Israel from the superpowers’ threats. Before agreeing to withdraw, however, Israel demanded that



Paris sweeten the nuclear cooperation. France agreed to provide Israel with a much larger plutonium-producing reactor at Dimona, natural uranium to fuel the reactor, and a reprocessing plant — basically everything Israel would need to use the plant to produce plutonium for a bomb except for heavy water.

Building a nuclear bomb

This was a major coup — no country before or since has provided another country with such an extensive amount of the technology required to build a nuclear bomb. Still, it was only half the battle. Ben-Gurion still had to come up with the funds necessary to pay for the nuclear deal for France. How much the Dimona nuclear facilities cost to build is not known, but Israel likely paid France at least \$80 million to \$100 million in 1960 dollars. That was a massive amount of money for Israel at the time. Furthermore, Ben-Gurion worried that if he diverted defense funds for the nuclear project he invite opposition from the military, which was struggling to field a conventional army that could defeat Israel’s Arab enemies.

Instead, the Israeli prime minister decided to create a private fund to finance the deal with France. As documented by Michael Karpin in his excellent history of Israel’s nuclear program, The Bomb in the Basement, Ben-Gurion directed his staff simply to “call Abe,” referring to Abe Feinberg. Feinberg was a prominent New York businessman, philanthropist and Jewish American leader with close ties to the Democratic Party. Before America’s entry into World War II, Feinberg had raised money to help European Jews emigrate to Palestine. After the war ended, he — like Ben-Gurion — went to Europe to view the Holocaust concentration camps. He also helped smuggle Holocaust survivors into Palestine at a time when the British had created blockades to pre-

vent illegal Jewish immigration. During this time, he forged lasting bonds with many of the men who would later become senior leaders of Israel. Upon returning back to the United States, he helped lobby President Harry Truman to recognize Israel once it declared its independence. In return, Feinberg helped raise money for Truman’s reelection campaign.

■ **Raising funds for Dimona deal**

Thus, it was natural that in October 1958 Ben-Gurion would turn to Feinberg to help raise the funds necessary for the Dimona deal. In fact, this wasn’t the first time Ben-Gurion would turn to American Jewish leaders to raise money for Israel’s causes. Foreseeing there would soon be a war of independence, Ben-Gurion went to New York in 1945 to raise funds to purchase armaments for the Jews in Palestine. This mission was a success. According to Karpin: “In the secret papers of the state-in-the-making the seventeen American millionaires were given the code name ‘the Sonneborn Institute,’ after their host. In the coming years, its members would contribute millions of dollars to buy munitions, machinery, hospital equipment and medicines, and ships to carry refugees” to Palestine.

Feinberg was one of the seventeen millionaires that comprised the Sonneborn Institute. In 1958, Feinberg turned to many of the same members of the Sonneborn Institute, as well as many other Jewish leaders in North America and Europe, in order to raise the money for the Dimona nuclear project after Ben-Gurion’s appeal in 1958. He was widely successful: again, according to Karpin, the “secret fund-raising campaign began at the end of 1958, and continued for two years. Some twenty-five millionaires contributed a total of about \$40 million dollars.”

How important was Feinberg’s mission to the success of the Israeli nuclear project? According to Karpin: If Ben-Gurion had not been sure that Feinberg could raise the millions needed for the project from world Jewry, it is doubtful that he would have undertaken the deal with France. Israel of the 1950s and ’60s could never have paid for the advanced technology, erected the Dimona reactor, and built a nuclear deterrent out of its own resources.

This was not the end of Feinberg’s involvement in U.S.-Israeli relations, however. In fact, after the Democrats retook the White House in the 1960 election, Feinberg became an unofficial advisor to both JFK and LBJ. For instance, in 1961 Feinberg led the effort to persuade Ben-Gurion to allow American inspections of the Dimona reactor.

(Source: Foreign Policy)

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(Source: nationalinterest.org)

No trade war likely: Prof. Larry Backer

1 → The key here is that there is no identity between the location of production (in this case steel and aluminum production) and the nationality of ownership (that is, the “citizenship” of the apex enterprise that owns or controls the steel or aluminum production chain with respect to which production might be located in any number of states). It has been reported, for example, that some U.S. companies may be negatively affected because they are subsidiaries of foreign enterprises from which, for example they receive steel for finishing and then export. And the effect will have little to do with the nationality of the owners of steel production. Consider the irony of these tariffs if, as a result, foreign owned enterprises establish factories in the U.S. for steel production, boosting U.S. production while repatriating the profits of that enterprise back to the home states of parent company. That insight, in turn, produces some variations in the answer to the question you posed.

First, even if the tariffs have an effect (positive or negative), it is not clear that the extent of that effect will be large. Again, the issue of tariffs can only be viewed in a vacuum within the cloistered towers of those who find such detached analysis useful for purposes of advancing policy without relation to real world effects. Thus, the amplitude of the effect may be difficult to distill apart from the ecology within which tariffs may have both direct and indirect effects. This provides an opportunity to seek to distill effects using a variety of techniques all of which will be dependent of a set of assumptions and approaches that might well skew the results in ways that serve objectives. These effects, of course, are further complicated by the distinction between the effects on domestic production (an objective of the tariffs, of course) and the effects of the nationality of the benefits of this production. It is not clear how one deals with the situation where domestic production increases (and increases local economies) while the profits of that production are repatriated elsewhere.

Second, even if there is significant effect, it is not clear whether the effect will be generally felt or will affect different parts of the country, and different industrial sectors differently. To speak of the effects of the tariff boost generally produces an answer that aggregates effect. But aggregated effects only serve political interests, it does not reflect the reality within a large country like ours. It is much more likely that the effects will be felt differently, positively and negatively in different parts of the country and with respect to different industries and companies. Yet that might well have been the point—to ensure a targeted boost to economic activity within specific portions of the U.S. with the hope that this boost in activity will then have indirect effect over a broader area.

Third, the answer to the question must take into account the time horizons for change and the sectors with respect to which differing time horizons might matter. Thus, for example, to the extent that the tariff is meant to foster greater steel and aluminum production, that effect will take years to be felt in terms of actual significant increases in production. Also important here is the question whether that production can be sustained. Tariffs as subsidies may have an immediate effect on decisions to invest in production (and hire labor to aid in its production), but eventually the sector and the heightened production will have to be economically viable—especially since over the middle and long term global consumers and producers may adjust their activities to take the tariffs into account.

Fourth, on the other hand, the immediate effects of the tariffs have already been felt—not in the changes to the location of steel and aluminum production (inside or outside the U.S.), but in the reactions of financial markets, lenders, political leaders and the like. And perhaps that is the most telling part of tariff policy in the contemporary age—tariffs appear to have greater effects on global finance than on global production, on the allocation or distribution of the placement of portions of the production of commodities (in the long term), and on its value in mobilizing mass opinion to some political end or other. In that respect, tariffs may not pose the same problems that they produced a century ago in the European inter-War period. Globalization has substantially reduced the power of tariffs precisely because the borders necessary to make them effective have been substantially eroded—and it is unlikely that they will be reconstructed in the manner of 1920s thinking.

Fifth, the impact will vary from the short to the long term. Most people may be tempted to consider the question in light of immediate or short-term impact. Indeed, global analytics have tended to increasingly favor short term thinking and reaction rather than long term or strategic responses or adjustment. And the short-term impact—politically—will be significant. One sees that already as the “usual suspects” have already aligned themselves and their media outlets to amplify their support or opposition to the tariffs, and to begin to seek to mobilize mass opinion to some end or other. Yet it is the long term strategic adjustments that are far more important and most likely to be missed by a media and analytic culture with a short attention span.

■ How will it actually impact the aluminum and steel industries globally then?

A: There are two answers here. The direct answer is that impact will be a function of the way industry and states respond. Industry might be able to avoid the effects of the tariff by strategic shifting of the operations of their global production chains to minimize the effects of the tariffs—but such adjustments might take time. States, on the other hand, are less flexible. They will either support their own industries or risk losing them. If they do not reciprocate tariffs, they might be induced to apply enough support to their industries to wash out the price effects of tariffs. The indirect answer, however,



may be more important. The impact to states and enterprises will depend on the ability of both to mitigate the effects of tariffs through changes in the ownership of the producers of tariffed goods. Thus, for example, if Chinese enterprises own or can acquire (direct or indirectly) steel and aluminum production facilities in the U.S., the net effect of the tariff will be small. Over the long term, and in the absence of waivers from tariff, there may be a gradual shift of production—but not necessarily to the U.S. Instead the shift may move production to other states which have successfully negotiated tariff waivers.

■ You’ve mentioned some of the beneficiaries behind his decision are their other internal or external beneficiaries in addition to the companies in America, or is it just wholly these American companies who are going to benefit from this decision?

A: What is an American company today? The notion of national companies is now essentially obsolete in a context in which most economic activity is connected to global flows of production. Companies of a variety of nationalities are organized to manage and participate in global production (in steel and aluminum and other products). The economic enterprise that tends to manage or control the process of production and the role of other enterprises within that production process tends to be characterized as the representative or incarnation of a multinational enterprise, and to lend its nationality to that system of global production. But realistically, that represents an oversimplification of the realities of production. Thus, American apex companies may benefit from the tariffs. On the other hand, U.S. apex companies who have invested heavily in steel and aluminum production enterprises outside the U.S. may suffer. Conversely, a Russian or Chinese enterprise that owned steel or aluminum production facilities in the U.S. might profit significantly from the tariffs. Because of this quite large divide between the nationality of the place of production and the nationality of the ownership of production (up the production chain) it is difficult in many cases to point to a generalizable nationality for winners and losers. And that is the great insight of this effort—states can control generally the production of things within their territory and use their borders to exact a cost of entry (or exit). But that control of the consequences of production within or outside a state has absolutely nothing to say about the nationality of the beneficiaries of these policies. If all steel production abroad is owned by U.S. companies, then steel import tariffs would affect U.S. companies negatively because it adds costs to their global allocation of the elements of their production chains.

■ How much will this decision to increase tariffs affect countries like China, Japan and South Korea then?

A: There are two questions here. The first deals with reciprocal tariffs. This is a simple one—if the U.S. raises tariffs on aluminum and steel, then other countries would seek to do the same on U.S. steel and aluminum. Yet the impact on the U.S. may be negligible if it is a net importer of these products. And thus, more effective may be what I might call retaliatory tariffs. Thus, if the U.S. imposes tariffs on steel and aluminum that affects national industries elsewhere, those states might impose duties on U.S. agricultural products or some other product in a sector where U.S. exports are large. But in a global economy that might only produce short term pain, as those in control of production chains can, at some cost, realign their trade routes in ways that might soften the blows of tariffs. And again, where one thinks only of short term effect, one misses the essential element of a more benign long-term effect within a global context in which capital and investment still moves fairly freely. And, indeed, rather than approach the imposition of tariffs with retaliatory tariffs, China, Japan and Korea would be better off buying U.S. steel manufacturers, increasing production of un-tariffed steel and then exporting that commodity for finishing in their own home states.

■ How likely is the European Union to retaliate by imposing

tariffs on U.S. products?

A: This is an excellent question. While the initial emotional response, one fanned by the global media, might have tilted toward retaliatory tariffs on vulnerable U.S. products, that course may not be followed once tempers are calmed. The principle reason for this is that the Trump Administration has made it clear that it would entertain bilateral negotiations on waivers of tariffs. This is not a small matter. Indeed, one can see in this Tariff imposition-negotiated waiver approach an essential feature of the Trump Administration’s movement away from its old approach of globalized system building multilateralism to the new America First Initiative. Thus, consider the dynamics of the tariff imposition in context. The United States has commenced building its own trade network in a manner that links up with the U.S. enterprise’s management or control of certain production chains. That requires a reorienting of trade relations from a multilateral form without a center to an aggregated bilateral form with the U.S. at the center. To effect this reorientation of the foundations of trade the U.S. must first re-center its position in global trade networks (not all of them but those of vital interest or with respect to which there is an ambition). To that end, certain shocks are necessary. These include withdrawal from multilateral agreements (including Paris and TPP) and the disruption of old free trade alignments. But mere withdrawal does not produce re-centering—the offer to renegotiate the terms of bilateral relations (and in the process restore relations or waive action) is the driving element of realignment. At the end of the process, if carried out systematically and with a clear long term vision, the U.S. might well produce a trading system that looks substantially the same as the Chinese One Belt One Road Initiative. If that is the case, then the future of global trade is not manifested in tariffs, but through these tariff and other shocks, a new global trade system, built around control of production chains, will emerge in which most roads lead either to Washington, or to Beijing.

■ Will Mr. Trump’s acts result in a trade war between the U.S. and world’s other economic powers? What can be the consequences of such possible war for world?

A: No trade war is likely. The deep structures of economic integration cannot be undone by a series of shocks with offers of renegotiation. And trade war does not seem to be the intent (though one must disregard certain of the President’s tweets to acquire assurance on that point). And America First Initiative is not the same as the isolationist policies adopted from near the end of the 1920s—it is rather the reverse, the effort to encourage muscular expansion but now oriented from key home states, rather than by building a community of similarly situated actors all competing in the global markets for engagement with portions of emerging production chains. And indeed, while the ineptitude of national leaders might, through comedies of errors and personal vanity, move key states toward trade wars, the result would not further state power. Trade wars are particularly dangerous in contemporary politics precisely because they would produce two types of instability. First, trade wars would produce instability among the lower reaches of production chains. Those states would suffer substantial impacts in employment that would lead to political unrest, and more likely substantial migration that would then destabilize neighbors and eventually the apex states to which migration will flow, particularly in the West. Second, trade wars would destabilize apex nations as well. The stability of the political orders in the United States and China depend in large part on the fulfillment of a promise of a baseline economic prosperity. Where that disappears then both states might well be subject to the vagaries of populism which, though it might not overthrow either’s system in a formal sense, would substantially corrupt them.

■ The U.S. and the Europeans cooperation after world war was based on trade, security and military regimes like NATO. Don’t you think possible trade war between the U.S. and

Europe can spill over other security and military fields, too?

A: I agree, of course, that a trade war would spill over to other vectors of state to state relations. But only suicidal states and mad leaders without substantial popular or institutional checks, could possibly move the U.S.-E.U. relationship dangerously in that direction. The U.S. and its European allies have had tiffs and have made grand gestures of disapproval against each other with some regularity since the 1960s. One need only remember the antics of Charles De Gaulle (quite effective both within Europe and in the effect on NATO relations). And in any case, the bad behavior of states on the periphery of the U.S.-E.U. “entente” may ensure the strength of the core alliance militarily and work against economic policy foolishness.

■ Rising of rightist in Europe is a threat to the future of the EU and from the other side this can result in more independent trade relation without the EU considerations. Considering this fact how do you see the future of EU?

A: Many people fear the ghosts of the past, and even more people believe that it is important to fight past battles over and over. But like the analogy with the trade wars of the 1920s, analogies with the rise of fascist movements in Europe in the 1930s may be misapplied in this case. Yes, indeed, the ultra-right movements have risen again after several generations of muscular suppression in Europe, and ridicule (effective) in the U.S. But that suppression, in part, might well have contributed to the re-emergence of the virus of right wing extremism in the face of a largely unchecked left wing extremism that has tended to be the darling of the political and intellectual sets in the U.S. and Europe since the great social rebellions of 1968. That cultural moment plays differently in Eastern Europe, of course, and produces a return to the comforts of authoritarian nationalism that can easily be characterized as either left or right to suit the agenda of the commentator. At some point balance must be restored, of course, or the E.U. will flounder. And that may be likely in the medium term. For the moment, however, the rise of rightists as against an unchecked culture of leftism may produce the sort of instability that marked the early Weimar Republic. But at its base, the E.U. is suffering a version of 2nd generation malaise. The rising elite never experienced the trauma that produced European solidarity in the face of a half century during which Europe virtually committed suicide. They do not know hunger, and fear, nor do they worry about the penetration of larger powers to undermine their own autonomy and independence (those are worries left for the detritus of empire). And thus, they can indulge the privilege of dismissing the institutional structures on which their own prosperity and security are based. To that end, indeed, it is not the rise of the right, but the effects of ennui, that may have a substantial deleterious effect on the solidity of the E.U.

■ The U.S. also recently imposed tariffs and other measures against the People’s Republic of China. Do you see the possibility of a trade war or more adversarial relations between the U.S. and China with respect to trade issues?

A: I would suggest that the recent and very quick tariff exchange between the United States and the People’s Republic of China illustrates the character of these tariff moves by the Trump Administration and the way that they have been received once governments finish producing the appropriate responses required for public consumption by their internal and external audiences. Consider what happened when in mid-March 2018 President Trump moved to levy tariffs on up to \$60 billion of Chinese imports, in addition to those imposed on solar panels, steel and aluminum. Initially, the Chinese reacted aggressively and publicly in the expected way, utilizing all of their networks to aid in that effort. The Chinese indicated an intention to levy tariffs on about \$3 billion of U.S. imports, including soybeans or aircraft, major trade goods. The effect was immediate—global financial markets fell dramatically over the course of a week. Yet, after the necessary public drama, one discovered that the tariffs imposed on both sides appeared to serve as an invitation for both the U.S. and China to begin to renegotiate their trade relations. The Americans sent a letter indicating the changes that they sought in the wake of the tariff impositions, with an emphasis on trade and intellectual property issues, including what for the U.S. amounted to coercive technology and know-how transfer rules. Premier Li Keqiang spoke publicly about the need for China and the United States to continue negotiations and reiterated pledges to better open their internal markets and perhaps to target purchases of specified U.S. goods. Negotiations continue. When news leaked of those steps, global markets responded appropriately. And thus one can begin to see the contours of the way in which tariffs have become an instrument rather than the objective of trade policy. The U.S. may now use tariffs as a critically important tool in the reframing of U.S. trade policy in the form of the “America First” Initiative. The object is not to destroy trade—the U.S. President and his advisors have been very clear about that (it is only that people have chosen not to listen)—but to reframe the basis of the global trading system from the forms that emerged after the 2nd World War to a new form whose characteristics will be shaped both by the Chinese One Belt One Road Initiative and its American counterpart, the “America First” Initiative. It was the Iranian leadership itself which almost a decade ago pointed to the end of the post-World War II era and its structures. Few paid attention at the time. That was a pity. For it seems that in retrospect they were correct and that the global community will continue to see manifestations of the new system emerge as the first order powers realign their visions, reach accommodations with each other and reorder the hierarchies of power and production for the first part of this century.

Big mistake of EU against Washington

1 → This social excitement has now become a «political demand» in the West. The dissatisfaction of European citizens with their governments has caused them to explicitly demand the return to the twentieth century and the time before the formation of the United Europe.

But it seems that one of the issues that European leaders have not understood is the role of the United States in the process of destroying the European Union. This role is so high that few have the power to deny it: from the U.S. economic war with

Europe to the direct support of the White House from nationalist groups in Europe. However, some European politicians still try to look at optimism about U.S. behaviors. Without doubt, this optimism will in the future lead to the destruction of the European Union.

Speaking at the Davos summit (2017), «Emanuel Macron» the French President warned of the victory of nationalists and extremists in Europe and said:

«In my country, if I do not make sense of this globalisation then in five, 10, 15 years



time it will be the nationalists, the extremes which win -- and this will be true of every country.»

The commonality of Merkel’s and Macron’s remarks is their concern about the return of European citizens to nationalism. As noted, this process has intensified in Europe. The extremist party of Freedom found way to the Austrian coalition government, and the increase in radical far-right votes in countries like France, Sweden and Germany, is a serious crisis in Europe. The recent warnings by the German Chancellor

and the French President should therefore be seriously analyzed and evaluated.

But the main question is whether the French President and German Chancellor are aware of their great mistakes in the United States and the Trump government? Do they still ignore the White House’s role in strengthening extremist groups in the European Union? What is certain is that it is possible for Merkel and Macron to realize their deep mistakes over the Trump government that there is no longer a way to save the European Union.

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یک شرکت بین المللی در شمال و شمال
غرب تهران جهت اجاره نیازمندیم

خانم دیبا: ۰۹۱۲۸۱۰۳۲۰۶

دفتر: ۲۸۱۴۱ - ۲۲۶۶۲۴۵۴

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Dental checkups may reveal more than you realize

“People think we’re only looking at teeth,” says Gigi Meinecke, DMD, spokesperson for the Academy of General Dentistry and a dentist in private practice in Potomac, MD. “But typically we’re looking at all of the soft tissues in the mouth.” This access can allow dentists to identify a number of surprising conditions—from diabetes to GERD—possibly before you or your doctor are aware of them. Here are the most common diseases your dentist might be able to detect.

■ Crohn’s disease
Up to 20 percent of patients with this inflammatory bowel disorder develop lesions in their mouth that may even precede abdominal symptoms such as cramps and diarrhea, according to a 2010 study from the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston. Dr. Meinecke says that she’s seen swollen lips and dime-sized ulcers on the inside of cheeks and lips—a white center with a red halo circling it. If she suspects Crohn disease, she’ll do X-rays to rule out gum disease and ask about medical history and medications. “If I can’t find a reasonable explanation for the symptoms, I’ll recommend they see their regular doctor,” she says.

■ Diabetes
Bleeding, receding, dry gums, dry mouth, and wiggly teeth are all typical oral symptoms of patients with diabetes, who are more likely to get gum disease, says Sam Morhaim, DDS, a periodontist in Great Neck, New York. However, many of these symptoms result from simple bad hygiene, so dentists may not assume it’s diabetes unless other risk factors are there, or you have these symptoms despite taking good care of your mouth. If your dentist suspects signs of diabetes, he’ll likely recommend a blood test at your primary care doctor’s office. Oral health and diabetes management are closely linked, Dr. Morhaim notes. Patients who take better care of their teeth and gums may have better blood sugar control; patients with better blood sugar control may have less severe cases of gum disease. If you’ve also got a mouthful of cavities from all the sweets you love, make sure you avoid these foods that dentists swear they never eat.

■ Oral cancer
Oral cancer is the sixth most-common cancer in America, with 30,000 new cases reported every year. Regular dental visits can help catch signs of it in its earliest stages, when survival rates are more than 80 percent. Oral cancer shows up as white and red lesions, usually on the tongue, the floor of the mouth, and the soft palate tissues in the back of the tongue, according to Delta Dental. Early on, the lesions are usually painless and tough for patients to spot themselves. Ask your dentist to perform an oral cancer screening during checkups. It’s particularly important if you have risk factors for the disease, including smoking, heavy alcohol use, and exposure to the HPV (the same virus that causes cervical cancer).

■ Anemia
If the lining of someone’s mouth is very pale—a light shade of pink—dentists might suspect anemia, a condition in which the body doesn’t have enough red blood cells circulating, says Dr. Meinecke. As well, the tongue can lose its typical bumpy texture and become smooth looking.

■ GERD (gastrointestinal reflux disease)
Stomach acid—with a pH that’s lower than vinegar—that regurgitates into the esophagus and mouth can dissolve tooth enamel and create erosive lesions near the back of the mouth. While many people with GERD recognize it by the uncomfortable heartburn symptoms, some patients only experience GERD while they sleep and may not know they have it. “It’s common for patients to say they’re having trouble sleeping and not know why they’re



Early signs of the autoimmune condition can appear in your mouth, especially in young people. Patients with jaw swelling, an achy jaw, or who can’t open their mouth too wide, may mean they suffer from early-onset rheumatoid arthritis.

waking in the middle of the night,” says Dr. Meinecke. She advises patients with GERD symptoms to consider proton-pump inhibitors like Nexium and Prevacid, which reduce acid production.

You certainly know when you’ve had a rough week at work, but the state of your mouth may indicate that stress is taking a more serious toll than you realize. Many people may grind their teeth—a condition known as bruxism—in response to stress, which can wear down and chip your pearly whites, notes WebMD. Swear you’re not a tooth grinder? Dr. Morhaim says most of his patients tend to do it at night while they’re sleeping. A customized night guard to wear while you sleep may help.

■ Osteoporosis
The bone disease is difficult to detect because it has no symptoms, which means most people don’t know they have it until they get a bone fracture or take a bone density test. However, an annual trip to the dentist’s office may be just what your bones need before it’s too late.

“Osteoporosis does not cause changes in the teeth, but it does cause changes in the bone that supports the teeth,” Alyson Hope Koslow, DDS, a clinical assistant professor of restorative dentistry at the University of Illinois Chicago told Everyday Health.

“This may show up as a receding gum line and loose teeth.” And bone loss in the mouth typically means there are signs of bone loss elsewhere in the body. These are the 10 things dentists always do to prevent their own teeth from rotting out of their mouth!

■ Dementia
Memory loss and confusion aren’t the only warning signs

of the early stages of dementia – poor oral hygiene is too! In fact, researchers from the University of California followed nearly 5,500 senior citizens for 18 years and found that those who brushed their teeth less than once a day were up to 65 percent more likely to develop dementia than those who brushed their teeth every day. The lead author of the study told Reuters Health that gum disease bacteria might make its way to the brain causing inflammation and brain damage.

■ Rheumatoid arthritis
Rheumatoid arthritis may cause joint pain and swelling, but early signs of the autoimmune condition can also appear in your mouth, especially in young people. Patients with jaw swelling, an achy jaw, or who can’t open their mouth too wide, may mean they suffer from early-onset rheumatoid arthritis.

■ Heart disease
Swollen, red, bleeding gums may be a telltale warning sign of heart disease. In fact, gum disease may put you at risk for both coronary artery disease and heart disease because the bacteria could travel to your heart and form blood clots or build up plaque in your arteries, which can be detrimental to your heart’s blood flow. “People with periodontitis [gum disease] often have risk factors that not only put their mouth at risk but their heart and blood vessels, too,” Ann Bolger, MD, William Watt Kerr Professor of Clinical Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco told the American Heart Association. “But whether one causes the other has not actually been shown.” If you often suffer from bleeding gums, try getting into one of these 11 habits your dentist wants you to start right now!

(Source: rd.com)

Coffee may come with a cancer warning label in California

By Jen Christensen

A preliminary decision from a California superior court judge in Los Angeles could affect thousands of coffee shops including Starbucks, 7-Eleven and even your local gas station.

The shops may have to put up a warning that tells customers there is a possible cancer risk linked to their morning jolt of java. The court said in a statement Wednesday that the companies “failed to meet their burden of proof on their Alternative Significant Risk Level affirmative defense” and ruled against them.

California keeps a list of chemicals it considers possible causes of cancer. One of them is acrylamide, which is created when coffee beans are roasted. The chemical stays in the coffee you drink in what the court called a “high amount.”

A lawsuit first filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court in 2010 by the nonprofit Council for Education and Research on Toxics targeted several companies that make or sell coffee. The suit asked for damages and a label to warn consumers.

“It’s not a final decision yet, but I do think this is big news, and I’m much relieved after eight years of work on this,” said attorney Raphael Metzger. “It’s a good day for public health.”

The initial court documents state that, under the California Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, also known as Proposition 65, businesses must give customers a “clear and reasonable warning” about the presence of high levels of this chemical, that is consider toxic and carcinogenic and can impact a drinker’s health -- and that these stores failed to do so.

The coffee companies argued in court that the level of acrylamide in coffee should be considered safe under the law and that the health benefits of coffee essentially outweigh the risk. The court did not agree.

At least 13 of the defendants had settled prior to this decision and agreed to give a



warning, including 7-Eleven, according to Metzger. The other coffee companies, including Starbucks, waited for a court decision.

“Coffee has been shown, over and over again, to be a healthy beverage. This lawsuit has made a mockery of Prop 65, has confused consumers, and does nothing to improve public health,” William Murray, president and CEO of the National Coffee Association, said in an emailed statement.

Coffee has been much studied over the years, and research has shown that it provides several health benefits, including lowering your risk of early death. It may reduce your risk of heart disease, multiple sclerosis, Type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer’s and even some cancers like melanoma and prostate cancer. However, a review by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, a branch of the World Health Organization, found that drinking very hot beverages was “probably carcinogenic to humans” due to burns to the esophagus; there was no relation to the chemical acrylamide.

The science on human exposure to acrylamide still needs “future studies,” according to a 2014 review of scientific research on the chemical’s relationship to a wide variety of

cancers in the Journal of Nutrition and Cancer.

In addition to coffee, acrylamide can be found in potatoes and baked goods like crackers, bread and cookies, breakfast cereal, canned black olives and prune juice, although its presence is not always labeled. It’s in some food packaging and is a component of tobacco smoke. According to the National Cancer Institute, people are exposed to “substantially more acrylamide from tobacco smoke than from food.”

In 2002, the International Agency for Research on Cancer classified acrylamide as a group 2A carcinogen for humans based on studies done in animals. Studies done on humans have found “no statistically significant association between dietary acrylamide intake and various cancers,” according to the 2014 research review.

A few additional studies have seen an increased risk for renal, ovarian and endometrial cancers; however, “the exposure assessment has been inadequate leading to potential misclassification or underestimation of exposure,” according to the 2014 research review.

Even the studies showing cancer links between acrylamide in rats and mice used

doses “1,000 to 100,000 times higher than the usual amounts, on a weight basis, that humans are exposed to through dietary sources,” the research review said.

Humans are also thought to absorb acrylamide at different rates and to metabolize it differently than rodents, earlier research showed.

The National Toxicology Program’s Report on Carcinogens considers acrylamide to be “reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen.”

The Food and Drug Administration website says it “is still in the information gathering stage” on the chemical, but it suggested ways for consumers to cut it out of their diet. The FDA also provided guidance to the industry intended to suggest a range of approaches companies could use to reduce acrylamide levels. The recommendations are only a guide and are “not required,” according to the website.

California added acrylamide to its carcinogen list in January 1990, and the state has successfully taken companies to court over it.

In 2008, the California attorney general settled lawsuits against Heinz, Frito-Lay, Kettle Foods and Lance Inc. when the companies agreed to reduce the levels of acrylamide found in potato chips and French fries.

In 2007, fast food restaurants in California posted acrylamide warnings about fries and paid court penalties and costs for not posting the warnings in prior years.

“We have a huge cancer epidemic in this country, and about a third of cancers are linked to diet,” Metzger said. “To the extent that we can get carcinogens out of the food supply, logically, we can reduce the cancer burden in this country. That’s what this is all about.”

Companies now have until April 10 to file objections to the proposed decision, Metzger said, and then there should be a final decision. A judge will then help decide what the penalties and remedy should be, if companies don’t settle before then.

(Source: CNN)

Mood disorders are common for people with autism

By Lisa Jo Rudy

The diagnostic criteria for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) do not include mood disorders such as anxiety, depression, or obsessive compulsive disorder. But many people with ASD are overwhelmed by these mood disorders, perhaps even more than by the symptoms of autism itself.

For example, according to the non-profit Autism Speaks: “Some studies have found that as many as 27 percent of those with autism also have symptoms of bipolar disorder.

By contrast, its prevalence in the general population is around 4 percent.”

Another article states, “Research suggests that autism shares a genetic basis with several major psychiatric disorders. These include attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia. Other research suggests that just over two-thirds of children with autism have been diagnosed with one or more psychiatric disorders. The most common include anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and ADHD.”

■ Are the statistics accurate?

While these numbers are staggering, they may not be quite accurate. That’s because so many of the signs of autism, such as a preference for solitude, unusually strong responses to sensory input, social communication challenges, and idiosyncratic speech patterns, make it very difficult to make an accurate diagnosis of a mood disorder. Yes, for example, people with autism may talk rapidly or talk to themselves, but is that an indication of a manic episode, or just a manifestation of autism?

It can also be difficult for an autistic person to express his or her emotions in a typical manner. For example, autistic people (even very high functioning people) are much more liable to have emotional outbursts than their typical peers. But does that mean they are actually experiencing more intense negative emotions?

The answer isn’t always clear, making it hard to come up with a truly accurate estimate of the incidence of mood disorders among people on the spectrum.

■ Possible causes of mood disorders

Assuming that there really is a high level of mood disorder among autistic people, one reasonable explanation might be that the life experiences of people with autism lead to depression and anxiety. People with autism cope every day with sensory overloads, social rejection, teasing, bullying, and a whole host of other issues which are, by anyone’s estimation, depressing and anxiety producing.

And indeed, experts Dr. Tony Attwood and Dr. Judy Reaven agree that Asperger syndrome (also called high functioning autism) can create a more stressful life, leading to mood disorders.

But there may be more to it.

According to Dr. Attwood, one of the world’s experts on Asperger syndrome, perception and regulation of emotions really is a central element of AS. In addition, he says, “We now have neurophysiological evidence that the amygdala [a part of the brain] is different, and it’s involved with regulation of emotions... [In Asperger syndrome] genetics and physiology come together; 2 of 3 teens with AS have a secondary mood disorder such as anxiety, depression, and/or anger.”

Dr. Judith Reaven of the University of Colorado at Denver Health Sciences Center confirms that children with autism spectrum disorders, in general, are at high risk for developing anxiety disorders. “Clinicians and researchers believe that we are looking at not just cases of increased stress, but true anxiety symptoms and disorders in this population,” she says. “This is a new field without a lot of good data yet, but there is evidence to suggest that these anxiety symptoms and disorders are not just related to having autism or just because the individuals with autism spectrum disorders are vulnerable to bullying, teasing, etc., but these symptoms develop much in the same way anxiety develops in the general population — as a result of environmental, biological factors.

We believe this to be true because some of the anxiety symptoms we see are very clear examples of specific fears and phobias, or classic OCD symptoms, or generalized anxiety symptoms, that we feel can’t be explained by increased stress alone.”

(Source: verywell.com)

The secret to being a decisive person

By Susie Moore

A couple of months ago, I felt blocked. I felt like I couldn’t make a business decision, and my indecision was keeping me stuck, frustrated, and irritated with myself. So I spoke with my tapping coach (if you haven’t tried EFT yet, it’s amazing). He asked about the options I had, my feelings about each potential outcome, and then... he asked the magical question that changed everything: “What is the advantage of staying blocked, Susie?”

Whaaaat? I thought. Advantage of being blocked? There is none! Zip! Zero. Is he crazy? Man, I need a new coach.

Until... I thought about it. Really thought. After some contemplation, I knew it: Being blocked was a wonderful excuse not to take any action. Meaning that if I could not make a decision and act, I could not fail. My “block” was a defensive emotion to keep me safe. Even though inaction is never safe, really (my logical mind knows it’s a form of action too—often the worst kind), my subconscious knew the decision was a big one for me, so it put a block in my thinking.

... Being blocked was a wonderful excuse to not take any action. “I guess the upside would be that if I don’t make a choice, I can’t screw things up... at least in the short-term,” I said.

Now, as a coach myself, I have since used this question. Here are some ways it’s popped up:

■ What’s the advantage of not getting healthy?

Deeper answer: If I’m overweight and single, it means that’s why I’m single. It means there’s nothing more serious wrong with me.

What’s the advantage of comparing yourself with your college friends (and feeling competitive and distant from them)?

Deeper answer: If I keep them at arm’s length, they won’t see my flaws. I feel behind and sad and I don’t want them to really see me (it ain’t all pretty).

■ What’s the advantage of not asking for a raise?

Deeper answer: I don’t want to be rejected... and if I get the outcome I want, my husband might resent my new income. He’s already insecure, and I don’t want to rock the boat at home.

(Source: greatist.com)

Robotics marketing should be improved: VP

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN**— Robotics face marketing problems in the country and the situation should be improved, vice president for science and technology Sourena Sattari announced during the opening ceremony of RoboCup Iran Open 2018 on Tuesday.

The event is currently underway at Tehran Permanent International Fairground.

“We should pinpoint the problems with marketing in the field of technology in Iran so that we would be able to pave the way for emerging start-ups,” he said.



Two competitors fix their robots at RoboCup Iran Open 2018, which is currently underway in Tehran (IRNA/ Abdollah Heydari)

“The policies in the field of industry should be changed so that more robotic systems created by the young generation to be used in industry,” he added.

The development of robotic system would lead to the engagement of professional human resources, he explained.

■ IAU employ RoboCup winners

The Islamic Azad University (IAU) announced that winners of the 13th RoboCup Iran Open will be employed by the university. “The Islamic Azad University welcomes winners of the competition as its staff and support them to commercialize their invention,” IAU chancellor Farhad Rahbar announced during the opening ceremony.

“This decision is in line with this year’s slogan support for Iranian products,” he explained.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in his Noruz message termed the Iranian New Year, which began on March 21, for support for Iranian products.

Different kinds of robots, which participate in the competition, will be commercialized in the near future, Rahbar said.

He pointed to firefighting robot, robotic drones that cooperate to transport objects, mine detecting robot, home-help robot as some innovations, which will be supported for production.

A total of 478 teams are competing at the contest out of which 38 competitors are from 11 countries including China, U.S., Turkey, UK, Singapore and India.

According to the official website of the contest, the main categories of Iran Open 2018 are RoboCupSoccer, RoboCupRescue, RoboCup@Home, RoboCup@Work, RoboCup Junior and IranOpenDeminor.

RoboCup (Originally called as Robot World Cup Initiative) is an international research and education initiative. It is an attempt to foster AI and intelligent robotics research by providing a standard problem where wide range of technologies can be integrated and examined, as well as being used for integrated project-oriented education.

‘Luxury space hotel’ to launch in 2021

Well-heeled space tourists will have a new orbital destination four years from now, if one company’s plans come to fruition.

That startup, called Orion Span, aims to loft its “Aurora Station” in late 2021 and begin accommodating guests in 2022.

“We are launching the first-ever affordable luxury space hotel,” said Orion Span founder and CEO Frank Bungler, who unveiled the Aurora Station idea today (April 5) at the Space 2.0 Summit in San Jose, California. [In Pictures: Private Space Stations of the Future]

“There’s been innovation around the architecture to make it more modular and simpler to use and have more automation, so we don’t have to have EVAs [extravehicular activities] or spacewalks,” Bungler said of Aurora Station.

“The goal when we started the company was to create that innovation to make simplicity possible, and by making simplicity possible, we drive a tremendous amount of cost out of it,” he told Space.com. Orion Span is building Aurora Station itself, Bungler added. The company — some of whose key engineering players have helped design and operate the ISS — is manufacturing the hotel in Houston and developing the software required to run it in the Bay Area, he said.

Aurora Station will be about the size of a large private jet’s cabin. It’ll measure 43.5 feet long by 14.1 feet wide (13.3 by 4.3 meters) and feature a pressurized volume of 5,650 cubic feet (160 cubic m), Orion Span representatives said. For comparison, the ISS is 357 feet (109 m) long and has an internal pressurized volume of 32,333 cubic feet (916 cubic m).

The private outpost will orbit at an altitude of 200 miles (320 kilometers) — a bit lower than the ISS, which is about 250 miles (400 km) above Earth on average. Right now, it’s unclear how Aurora Station and its future occupants will get to orbit; Orion Span has yet to confirm any deals with launch providers, Bungler said.

Aurora Station will accommodate four paying guests and two crewmembers; these latter personnel will likely be former astronauts, Bungler said. Most of the guests will probably be private space tourists, at least initially, but Orion Span will be available to a variety of customers, including government space agencies, he added.

And the space hotel will get bigger over time, if everything goes according to plan. As demand grows, Orion Span will launch additional modules to link up with the original core outpost, Bungler said. “Our long-term vision is to sell actual space in those new modules,” he said. “We’re calling that a space condo. So, either for living or subleasing, that’s the future vision here — to create a long-term, sustainable human habitation in LEO [low Earth orbit].”

(Source: space.com)

Telegram, time to ‘left’?



May be the replacement of domestic messaging apps is a process not an action, which takes time but the result is more pleasant both for officials and people.

Information Technology and the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) were asked to support national messaging applications.

He said that technical and financial facilitation should be provided for national application to vie with the Telegram.

■ Iranian messaging applications

Up to now, five messaging applications have been approved by the National Center for Cyberspace, an organization established by the Supreme Cyberspace Council.

Soroosh, Gap, iGap, BisPhone Plus and Wispi are the applications, which are

supported by the center.

Domestic messaging applications eye officials for further support and to help them to convince subscribers to move to another application yet.

Maybe more reasons other than national interest and official decision are needed to make people interested in replacement of non-Iranian applications.

Maybe it is a process not an action, which takes time but the result is more pleasant both for officials and people.

■ Empathy, the key to use new application

Communication and Information Technology Minister Mohammad Javad Azari-Jahromi who is mostly known for his tweets do not have any recent comments on banning Telegram.

However he previously called Telegram as an application which is not a good choice for connecting people in other parts of the world as it is not used widely in other countries.

In his view, more empathy between people and officials is needed for using another application for messaging.

Hamideh Zarabadi, a parliamentarian, said on March 17 that access to Telegram will most probably become restricted in the current [Iranian calendar] year.

However she said this strategy will prove “ineffective” and said the government and the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology are expected to announce their stance in this respect transparently.

Facebook admits it discussed sharing user data for medical research project

acebook was in discussions with major medical institutions about sharing user and patient data for a research project, the social media company admitted on Thursday, after revelations in a news report.

The report, from CNBC, said the proposed plan included using a process to match data for individuals in both sets, which would be anonymized, to research how such information sharing could improve individual patient care.

These discussions, which included the American College of Cardiology (ACC) and Stanford University School of Medicine, were put on hold last month, according to a Facebook spokesperson.

“This work has not progressed past the planning phase,

and we have not received, shared, or analyzed anyone’s data,” the spokesperson said in a statement.

The disclosure comes as Facebook’s CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, and his company are under intense scrutiny after the Observer revealed that the personal data of millions of Americans — possibly as many as 87 million, at last count — had been harvested and improperly shared with the political data-mining firm Cambridge Analytica. Zuckerberg is scheduled to testify next week before members of Congress.

Medical institutions are held to a higher privacy standard than Facebook because of laws such as the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, or Hipaa, which makes it illegal for health care providers and insurers to

share patient data without their permission.

But it is not clear how the proposed research would have complied with this strict health privacy law.

Two people who heard Facebook’s pitch and one person familiar with it told CNBC that the proposed project would mesh data from health systems (such as diagnoses and prescribed medications) with data from Facebook (such as age, friends and likes). The idea would be to match what is known about a patient’s lifestyle with their medical needs to customize care.

The Guardian was not able to confirm these details, but Facebook and ACC said they had been in discussions about a research project involving similar data.

(Source: The Guardian)

Iran’s brain mapping lab, Vienna medical university ink MOU



TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The National Brain Mapping Laboratory (NBML) of Iran and the department of neurology of Vienna Medical University signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) last week.

According to the MOU, the research projects and scientific collaborations can be facilitated for the students and researchers of both countries to carry out under the terms of this collaboration.

Specifically, the MOU is in line with the defined project entitled “Working Memory Assessment in Temporal Lobe Epilepsy from Functional MRI in an Austrian Iranian Enterprise” that was

finalized and submitted to “IMPULSE Iran – Austria” for funding in October 2017, the NBML website announced.

As per the agreement, the training of researchers in both countries is possible.

NBML is established to facilitate the development and growth of neuroimaging and brain modulation fields, fulfillment of (at least a part of) research and technical requirements in these fields in the country and provide related knowledge-based and up-to-date services.

The exact date and place of signing MOU were not mentioned on NBML website.

‘Private sector could help enhance national space tech’



Head of the Iranian Space Agency Morteza Barari giving a speech in an undated photo

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Head of the Iranian Space Agency (ISA) Morteza Barari has said the private sector could help enhance space technology in the country.

The private sector would be a great help to improve space-based marketing, Barari announced in a press release on Wednesday.

Regarding emerging space economy and improving space-related applications, there is a great need for job creators and innovators in this realm, he added.

The private sector can be an operating company for satellite communications and invest in establishing and equipping space stations, he explained.

The Iranian Space Agency is a gov-

ernment organization. Iran became an orbital-launch-capable nation in 2009. The country is one of the 24 founding members of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, which was set up in 1958.

ISA aims policy making for the application of space technologies aiming peaceful uses of outer space, manufacturing, launching and use of the national research satellites, approving the space related state and private sector programs, promoting the partnership of the private and cooperative sectors in efficient uses of space, identifying guidelines concerning the regional and international cooperation in space issues.

New tech stops backup crashes



currently steering, and some even overlay colors on the image to visualize priority of objects in your path.

In the last handful of years, cars have begun offering 360-degree surround views from a series of cameras around the car that add context to the backing task. Still, if you don’t pay attention, they’re useless, which begs our final category.

Not a lot makes you feel stupider than backing into something. These kinds of collisions don’t account for a lot of injuries or deaths, but they are costly. Backup cameras will be required on all new cars in the US starting in May 2018, but there is a lot more tech to help when you are in reverse. It basically fits in three categories.

Rear park sensors are very familiar, dating back about 15 years now. Using ultrasound or radar, they give you a beep that gets more urgent as you close in on something. Some GM cars vibrate your seat as a warning, but the idea is the same.

More recently, those rear sensors have crept around the sides of cars to warn about things approaching from the side you can’t see when backing out of a driveway or crowded parking space. Depending on the situation they can be like eyes in the back of your head, or pretty much useless if you listen to the AAA.

The rear cam was the big bang in backup collision tech, so ostensibly compelling that it will be required on all new cars as of May 1, 2018. Most offer simple distance lines, many offer dynamic trajectory prediction lines that show what you’ll hit based on where you are

Drivers in cars with sensors and cameras still back into things, so the latest technology simply does their job for them. Reverse automatic braking is just like the forward automatic braking that carmakers will make virtually standard on new US cars by 2022. But today, rear automatic braking remains rare: The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety reports that only five percent of new 2018 cars offer it and less than one percent come with it standard. Still, it’s probably where all new cars are headed.

The IIHS and the Highway Loss Data Institute (HLDI) say all these backup technologies combined seem to have reduced reported backing collisions by nearly 80 percent.

That seems to be a marked improvement from a few years ago when NHTSA data showed that as backup camera availability in new cars went up 112 percent between 2008 and 2011, backup accident injuries only went down eight percent.

Further penetration of all these technologies into the 240 million US cars -- and not just the 17 million new cars sold each year -- will make the biggest difference.

(Source: cnet.com)

A vaccine for edible plants? A new plant protection method on the horizon

Novel technologies are being sought to replace the traditional pesticides used to protect plants, particularly edible plants such as cereals. A new collaborative project between the University of Helsinki and the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) is shedding light on the efficacy of environmentally friendly RNA-based vaccines that protect plants from diseases and pests.

Plant diseases and pests cause considerable crop losses and threaten global food security. The diseases and pests have traditionally been fought with chemical pesticides, which spread throughout our environment and may be hazardous to human health, beneficial organisms and the environment.

A “new approach to plant protection involves vaccinating plants against pathogens with double-stranded RNA molecules that can be sprayed directly on the leaves,” explains Dr. Minna Poranen of the Molecular and Integrative Biosciences Research Program at the University of Helsinki’s Faculty of Biological and Environmental Sciences.

■ **Innate defense mechanism**

The vaccine triggers a mechanism known as RNA interference, which is an innate defense mechanism of plants, animals and other eukaryotic organisms against pathogens. The vaccine can be targeted to the chosen pathogen by using RNA molecules which share sequence identity with the pest’s genes and prevents their expression.

This means that the double-stranded RNA



The diseases and pests have traditionally been fought with chemical pesticides, which spread throughout our environment and may be hazardous to human health, beneficial organisms and the environment.

molecules do not affect the expression of genes in the protected plant, but only target the plant disease or pest. RNA is also a common molecule in nature that degrades rapidly rather than building up in the environment.

The “challenge in developing RNA-based vaccines to protect plants has involved the production of RNA molecules. Double-stranded RNA molecules have been produced through chemical synthesis, both as drug molecules and for research purposes, but such production methods are inefficient and expensive for plant protection,” Poranen states.

■ **A new production method**

As part of the Academy of Finland’s Synthetic Biology Research Program, Poranen’s group has developed a new production method for double-stranded RNA molecules.

Together with researchers at the CNRS, the group has demonstrated the efficacy of RNA-based vaccines produced using the new method against plant virus infections.

The method utilizes the RNA amplification system of a bacteriophage, i.e. a bacteria-destroying virus, and the RNA production takes place in bacterial cells. This new method will enable the effective production of RNA-based vaccines and promote the development and adoption of RNA-based plant protection methods.

“It’s difficult to predict when the vaccine will be made available because no relevant legislation exists yet,” Poranen says.

(Source: eurekaalert.org)

Massive dinosaur footprints could shed light into a little-understood time period

Massive dinosaur footprints were discovered by researchers in Scotland.

The footprints, which belonged to a species of long-necked dinosaur called sauropods, were dated to 170 million years ago.

There are only a few confirmed fossils from that time period, so these finds may help scientists paint a better picture of life in that era.

Researchers identified huge dinosaur footprints in the tidal areas of Scotland’s remote Isle of Skye, and the finds could shed new light on a little-understood time period over a hundred million years ago.

The study was published in the Scottish Journal of Geology on Monday, part of a joint research effort between scientists at the University of Edinburgh, and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

■ **Jurassic period**

The researchers found over 50 footprints, created around 170 million years ago — the middle Jurassic period, from which only a few fossils have been found — by a species of long-necked dinosaur called sauropods.

The footprints were first spotted by a student in 2016 on Skye, the study’s co-author, Steve Brusatte told CNN.

“We regularly go there to hunt for dinosaur footprints and clues, when the tide went out we noticed them,” Brusatte told CNN.

After the first footprints were spotted, the researchers analyzed them using drones and field-based techniques to create a comprehensive map of the site.

■ **The largest footprint**

The researchers believe the largest footprint belonged to a

10-ton beast that may have been almost 50 feet long.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about the fossilized prints is that they were laid down side-by-side with theropod prints, which are predecessors of the Tyrannosaurus Rex. This indicates that the two species — one predator and one herbivore — could have coexisted peacefully when the Isle of Skye was much warmer.

“This new site records two different types of dinosaurs — long-necked cousins of Brontosaurus and sharp-toothed cousins of T. rex — hanging around a shallow lagoon, back when Scotland was much warmer and dinosaurs were beginning their march to global dominance,” Brusatte wrote on the University of Edinburgh’s website.

(Source: businessinsider.com)

Whales value culture and ancestral roots, like humans, scientists find



Scientific research is increasingly revealing that whales form highly complex societies that are comparable, in many ways, to our own.

Now, a new study of beluga whales conducted by an international team of researchers has demonstrated that the animals value culture, ancestral roots and family ties just as much as humans do.

The scientists found that related beluga whales — which are native to the Arctic and sub-Arctic waters — returned to the same summer and winter locations every year for the purposes of feeding, breeding, molting and raising their young, traveling thousands of miles in the process.

This behavior was passed down from generation to generation, likely from mother to calf, the researchers say.

■ **Whales’ complex vocalizations**

We know that beluga whales are highly sophisticated animals due to their complex vocalizations and group interactions. But whether or not they are capable of developing culture has been a long-running debate among scientists.

“In the context of this research, culture is knowledge or behavior shared within a group or society of animals (humans), which is acquired through some sort of social learning,” Greg O’Corry-Crowe, lead author of the study and research professor at Florida Atlantic University told Newsweek.

Beluga whales’ incredibly sophisticated series of vocal repertoires and acoustic

systems suggest that they are capable of forming very complex relationships and groups.

The prerequisites for culture were: “Some form of stable grouping patterns or society, the ability to learn and remember knowledge/behaviors from others in the group, and some adaptive value to both the transmitting of and the receiving of the knowledge/behavior,” O’Corry-Crowe said.

The “latter can come in the form of increased survival and reproductive success of each individual.

For their study, the scientists were particularly interested in finding out whether particular whales instinctively returned to where they were born or grew up or if this behavior was inherited. They decided to track close relatives over several years.

■ **Analyzed genetic samples**

To do this, the team analyzed genetic samples from more than 1,600 beluga whales. These samples were taken over three decades (1978 to 2010) from whales living in the Gulf of Alaska, the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Seas and the Sea of Okhotsk.

“We’ve been able to piece together a number of key aspects of beluga whale migration that established that closely related individuals were making the long trek back to the same discrete coastal areas year after year and generation after generation,” O’Corry-Crowe said.

(Source: Newsweek)

The most distant star ever seen, only 4.4b years after the Big Bang



In 1990, the Hubble Space Telescope was placed into Low Earth Orbit. Since then, Hubble has gone on to become the most well-known space observatory and has revealed some never-before-seen things about our Universe. Despite the subsequent deployment of several flagship telescopes — like the Kepler Space Telescope, the Chandra X-ray Observatory and the Spitzer Space Telescope — Hubble is still accomplishing some amazing feats.

For instance, a team of astronomers recently used Hubble to locate the most distant star ever discovered. This hot blue star, which was located in a galaxy cluster, existed just 4.4 billion years after the Big Bang.

The discovery of this star is expected to provide new insights into the formation and evolution of stars and galaxy clusters during the early Universe, as well as the nature of dark matter itself.

■ **The supernova explosion**

The discovery was made by an international team of scientists led by Patrick Kelly (of the University of Minnesota), Jose Diego (of the Instituto de Física de Cantabria in Spain) and Steven Rodney (of the University of South Carolina). Together, they observed the distant star in the galaxy cluster MACS J1149-2223 in April 2016 while studying the supernova explosion known as heic1525 (aka. Refsdal).

Using a technique known as gravitational microlensing, team relied on the total mass of the galaxy cluster itself to magnify the

light coming from the supernova.

However, while looking for this supernova, the team found an unexpected point source of light in the same galaxy. As Patrick Kelly explained in a recent Hubble press release:

“Like the Refsdal supernova explosion the light of this distant star got magnified, making it visible for Hubble. This star is at least 100 times farther away than the next individual star we can study, except for supernova explosions.”

■ **After the Bing Bang**

The light observed from this star — named Lensed Star 1 (LS1) — was emitted just 4.4 billion years after the Big Bang (when the Universe was just 30% of its current age).

The light was only detectable thanks to the microlensing effect caused by mass of the galaxy cluster and a compact object about three times the mass of our Sun within the galaxy itself. This allowed for the light coming from the star to be magnified by a factor of 2000.

“We were actually surprised to not have seen this second image in earlier observations, as also the galaxy the star is located in can be seen twice. We assume that the light from the second image has been deflected by another moving massive object for a long time — basically hiding the image from us. And only when the massive object moved out of the line of sight the second image of the star became visible.”

(Source: universetoday.com)

A whole salad grown in Antarctica, without any daylight or soil

If we’re ever going to make the long trip to Mars and then colonize the place, we’ll need a lot of food. If we can grow our own, even better.

In a step that’s getting us closer to off-world farming, scientists on Germany’s Neumayer Station III in Antarctica have just harvested a nice big crop of vegetables — a whole 3.6 kg (8 pounds) of salad greens, 18 cucumbers, and 70 radishes.

Even better, the crops, grown in a lab called EDEN-ISS, were produced without dirt, daylight, or pesticides, according to the team.

Instead, the researchers employed a reusable water cycle and a nutrient system, while optimizing LED lighting and carefully monitoring carbon dioxide in the room - based on a method known as hydroponics.

“After sowing the seeds in mid-February, I had to deal with some unexpected problems, such as minor system failures and the strongest storm in more than a year,” Paul Zabel, an engineer involved with the project, told dw.com.

This is only the start of the harvest, too. The German Aerospace Centre, which coordinates the project, told AP that by May the scientists are hoping to harvest a huge 4-5 kilograms (9-11 pounds) of vegetables a week.

“I am an engineer, so first I had to gain a basic understanding of the plants to recognize whether they are flourishing early on,” Zabel said back in 2016 — before the project got started.

This isn’t the first time researchers have attempted something like this, with the ISS growing space vegetables already back in 2015.

But this project is focused on producing a wider mix, such as radishes, salad greens, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers (capsicum) and even herbs.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Researchers say virus from the butt of bats kills 24,000 piglets

Scientists have isolated the source that is responsible for 26,000 piglets becoming sick and dying during the last couple of years in China. The source for the virus turned out to be another animal living the area, the horseshoe bat.

Researchers released a study in the journal Nature showing how coronavirus transmission could go from bats to domestic animals to humans. They found that China is one of the hot spots for the transmission of these viruses.

Newborn piglets began to get sick in October 2016 in Guangdong Province in China. At first, officials believe that the cause of the illnesses was porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDV). Piglets tested positive for the disease then around January 2017, they stopped testing positive for PEDV.

While looking for the cause of the disease, they inspected the PEDV and the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) that emerged in 2002 from Foshan, which was 60 miles away. Scientists found that the new virus was in the same family but was a completely different disease. This disease is called swine acute diarrhea syndrome (SADS).

They are all a type of coronavirus. These types of viruses can cause mild to moderate infections. Another virus in this family is Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). These viruses are easy to spread because they are airborne.

They were able to compare SADS to samples that were taken from bat caves the year before. Samples of the virus from bats came from their butts. These samples led to scientists determining that 9.8 percent of horseshoe bats had a similar virus.

(Source: Tech Times)

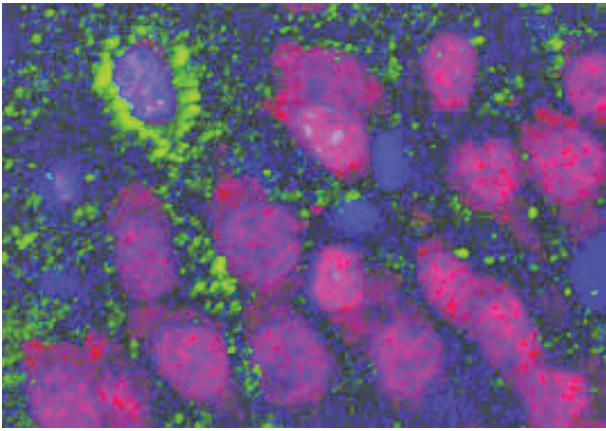
Scientists find very young cells in even very old brains

That’s a big deal. For decades, researchers believed that aging brains stop making new cells. But recent research has offered strong evidence to the contrary, and a new paper published on April 5 in the journal Cell Stem Cell tries to put the notion to bed entirely. Aging brains, the researchers showed, produce just as many new cells as younger brains do.

“When I went to medical school, they used to teach us that the brain stops making new cells,” said lead study author Dr. Maura Boldrini, a neurobiologist at Columbia University.

Studies in mice showed that even the older mice produced new nerve cells. And early studies in humans started to turn up similar results.

This study, though, is the first to thoroughly track the brain’s cell production over the course of a typical human lifetime.



Boldrini and her colleagues studied 28 brains that came from the corpses of healthy people ages 14 to 79. And these donated brains were unusual in this kind of research: The researchers knew a whole lot about them.

“Healthy” is, of course, a relative term. The brains were dead. But they didn’t show evidence of any major disorders. And they didn’t come from drug users.

They came from a library of donor brains assembled at Columbia that had all been preserved using the same methods and that had detailed medical histories attached to them.

Boldrini and her colleagues sliced the hippocampi, an area of the brain important for learning and memory, into slivers, and counted the number of newly formed cells — those that had yet to fully mature — under a microscope.

(Source: Live Science)

BMI sponsors 13th Intl. Iran Robocup Competitions

Bank Melli Iran (BMI) threw its heavyweight on 13th International Iran Robocup Competitions, the Public Relations Dept. reported.

Sponsoring youth and young talented in the country has been cited as the main aim behind the bank’s support of this round of

competition.

The 13th edition of International Robocup Competitions was held at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds in last month.

Like previous years, the bank has taken giant strides in backing this round of com-

petition vehemently.

It should be noted that more than 400 domestic and foreign teams from countries including Germany, Turkey, China, the Netherlands, Singapore, South Korea and India participated in this edition of competitions.

Supporting large and prestigious organizations such as Bank Melli Iran (BMI) from scientific competitions and programs in the country leads to the increased hope of young generation to the occupational future among youth and young adults.

Noruz, manifestation of culture of peace, friendship among societies



ARTICLE

By Seyed Amin Saneey Mehri

Regardless of the fact that Noruz (Iranian New Year falling on March 21) has its origins in the ancient Persia (Iran), nowadays it is respected and celebrated in many countries, and is considered as a symbol of peace and friendship.

Noruz marks the beginning of spring and is celebrated at the first day of the first month of the Iranian calendar, Farvardin.

Recently, 12 countries throughout the world have been selected as the keepers of heritage. Iran, accompanied by 11 other countries, including Iraq, India, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Turkey, have jointly registered Noruz in UNESCO World Heritage.

The first global Noruz festival was held in March 27, 2010 in Tehran. Today, a total of 300 million people around the world celebrate this occasion, which indicates that the geography of Noruz has gone beyond the boundaries of these 12 countries and is recognized in most Middle Eastern countries, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Indian subcontinent and the Balkans, and even the Iranian residing in the USA and Canada.

In Noruz, people wear new clothes, visit their relatives and friends, and forgive any past resentment or irritation. In this occasion –which is the greatest Iranian celebration – people exchange gifts as a sign of peace and friendship.

Another tradition of Noruz is the Haft-Sin table (an arrangement of seven symbolic items starting with ‘S’ in Persian). Traditionally a poem by Iranian poet Saadi had been written on tablecloth’s margin emphasizing that the table is provided for both friends and enemies (signifying peace and friendship).

In Haft-Sin table, seven items beginning by the letter ‘s’ in Persian are arranged, each associated with a special meaning: silver berry or Persian olive (in Persian ‘senjed’) as a symbol of thought-out action; apple (in Persian ‘sib’) as a symbol of health and love; wheat, barley, mung bean or lentil sprouts (in Persian ‘sabzeh’) as a symbol of liveliness; sweet paste made entirely from germinated wheat (in Persian ‘samanu’) as a symbol of patience and endurance; garlic (in Persian ‘seer’) as a symbol of contentment; vinegar (in Persian ‘serkeh’) as a symbol of sufferings and hard times of life (no committed and respondent human can live without concerns in life); and sumach (in Persian ‘somaq’), as a symbol of patience and toleration regarding opposing and different beliefs.

The book and mirror are also a part of many Haft-Sin tables. Some believe that it is better to put coin (a symbol of wealth) in the vicinity of water (a symbol of purity and light), so they put some coins in a bowl of water, and place it in front of a mirror as a symbol of wealth and abundance. Muslim Iranians, place the Holy Quran on their Haft-Sin table, as a sign of trust and resort to God at the first moments of the New Year.

By looking at Noruz ancient ceremonies, one can immediately find some obvious signs of the culture of peace and friendship, which had been celebrated by the ancient Iranians and the countries of Iranian plateau.

United Nations General Assembly Noruz Resolution was signed in February 23, 2010 (A/RES/64/253), according to which March 21 (the 1st day of the Iranian calendar month of Farvardin) is proclaimed as the “International Noruz Day”.

For a long time, the greatest political figures from around the world congratulate Noruz to Iranians, and this is an indicative of the influence that culture can have on the global community exchanges.

Regarding the effectiveness of culture on all the human beings living on Earth and on the creation of a peaceful world, Michelle Lebaron, author and researcher, says: “Every culture is like a member of the orchestra or a soloist, but it is through coordination and cohesion that they can play a wonderful music; therefore culture can create a great world.”

“Culture is the basic part of the conflict, as well as the resolution of it. Cultures are underground rivers, flowing in our lives and relationships to present this message: we must shape self-understanding, attitudes, prejudices, and ideas of ours as well as others,” she adds.

Noruz in Iran provides an opportunity for the Iranians to confirm their real policy – peaceful coexistence of all people around the world – by presenting the culture and traditions of this ancient celebration. In addition, Noruz can be a true reflection of the history and culture of this country, and can present a brighter picture of Iran to the global community.

Seyed Amin Saneey Mehri is the director of public relations in the Revival Fund for Cultural and Historic Sites affiliated to Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization of Iran.

LEARN ENGLISH

What If?

A: This is the **good life**! We have it good don’t you think?
B: Yeah of course! Although, don’t you ever **wonder** what “**could have been**”?

A: What do you mean?

B: Well, sometimes I think of how things could have **turned out** if I had done things a little differently.

A: For example?

B: Like for example, if I hadn’t studied **architecture**, I would have become an artist like I wanted to.

A: I see. Yeah **now that I think of it**, I wouldn’t have gotten married if I hadn’t moved to this town and met Sally.

B: You see! Everything happens for a reason! We wouldn’t even have met if I hadn’t been in that car **accident** ten years ago!

A: Well, I have no **regrets**!

■ Key vocabulary

good life: a happy and relaxed life

wonder: to think about

could have been: an alternative scenario

turn out: to end up like

architecture: the art and science of designing buildings

now that I think of it: used to express a realization

accident: a sudden event that is not planned

regret: to feel sad or sorry about something

■ Supplementary vocabulary

architect: a person who designs buildings

wreck: to ruin or destroy something (like a car)

remorse: a feeling of guilt

ponder: to think deeply about something

reminisce: to think fondly about the past

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Proper cloud seeding can yield economic benefits: expert

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Deploying proper techniques for cloud seeding can produce economic benefits for the country, an expert with the Meteorological Organization has said.

“Implementing standard and scientific techniques can create an opportunity for economic advancement while inappropriate and ineffective measures can result in abnormal precipitation patterns and even flood,” Tasnim news agency quoted Amin-Hossein Naqshineh as saying.

Cloud seeding, a form of weather modification, is a method to change the amount or even type of precipitation. Rainfall occurs when super cooled droplets of water – those that are still liquid but are at a temperature below the usual freezing point of zero centigrade – form ice crystals. Now too heavy to remain suspend in the air, these then fall, often melting on their way down to form rain.

Even in dry areas the air usually contains some water. This can be made to come together and form ice crystals by seeding the atmosphere with chemicals such as silver iodide or dry ice. They work to promote rainfall by inducing nucleation – what little water is in the air condenses around the newly introduced particles and crystallizes to form ice. The ‘seeds’ can be delivered by plane or simply by spraying from the ground.

“Cloud seeding is possible in the country and we have the necessary infrastructure as well as the scientific know-how needed to implement such projects,” Naqshineh suggested.

He further explained that by employing cloud seeding techniques precipitation amounts can be increased by 20 percent in some regions. However, he warned, “quite the reverse outcomes can occur in case we implement defective techniques.”

This can lead to less precipitation or extreme precipitation and floods, he added.

Many countries are now using cloud seeding to increase their precipitation amounts, this technique can be expensive



but in case it is implemented properly and work it can be highly advantageous, Naqshineh concluded.

■ How cloud seeding is viewed internationally

In an article titled “cloud seeding critics and converts” published in the How the Stuff Works website it is stated that internationally, Russia, Thailand, South Africa and Caribbean nations have all tried their hand at cloud seeding, and all with mixed results. Australian scientists conducted numerous experiments, discovering that static seeding didn’t appear to be effective over Australia’s plains but was very effective over Tasmania.

In 2003, the United States National Academy of Sciences declared that 30 years of studies had not produced «convincing» evidence that weather modification works. Nonetheless, the American Meteorological Society claims that some studies on cloud seeding show a 10 percent increase in rain volume.

Tehran may experience less clean air days this year: official

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — The air quality of Tehran may deteriorate in the current [Iranian calendar] year 1397 [March 2018–March 2019] and accordingly days with unhealthy air pollution may increase compared to the year before, said the director of Tehran’s Air Quality Control Company.



Normally, Tehran has just 15 days of clean air annually, most of which happen in the first calendar month of Farvardin (March 21–April 20), however unfortunately, Tehraners have just breathed clean air in one single day (Friday, March 23) till the date, ISNA quoted Vahid Hosseini as saying on Friday.

Typically, with the start of the Iranian New Year holidays, also known as Noruz (March 21–April 2), a large proportion of cars leave Tehran and most industrial and mine units in the province are shut down. This usually leads to having fine air quality during this period in the metropolitan but this year’s holidays was strikingly different.

One day with clean air, 7 days with good air and 5 days with unhealthy air for sensitive groups were recorded in this period which was “unprecedented” in the last decade, he highlighted.

He went on to say that the reason behind this rare air pollution was mainly the sand and dust storms which were fed by internal hotspots.

Also, the traffic in the first week of holidays was “above expectation” in Tehran and it too had a role in air pollution, he added.



Khorasan razavi
Water and Wastewater company

Call for identification of investors for Completion of a section of wastewater system in Torghabe through Buyback contract (Auction)

According to Article 37 of the sixth development plan, Article 2 of the law on establishment of water and wastewater companies approved in 1990 and article 27 of the Law for annexation of some articles to Water and the law on drafting part of the government’s financial regulations (2), the **Khorasan razavi** Wastewater company intends to concede the completion of a section of the wastewater collection and treatment system in **Torghabe** against the allocation of the determined volume of treated effluent for specific use for a limited and predetermined period through Buyback contract according to the following conditions to a qualified investor.

A- Brief description of the project:

- Subject: completion of a section of the wastewater system in **Torghabe**, including: **WWTP and sewer**
- Concessioner: The **Khorasan razavi** Water and Wastewater Company
- Construction period: **3** years
- Commercial operation period: Financial model to be submitted
- Treatment efficiency: **Surface water discharge**
- Population coverage: **110000 person**
- Project site: City **Torghabe** Province **Khorasan razavi**

B- General conditions for investment:

- The investor must be a real or legal entity in possession of acceptable management experience to ensure and allocate the required investment.

- Date, deadline and address to collect the qualification documents: Qualified investors may submit their letter of intent for investment in the plan and collect the qualification

documents from **07/04/2018** until the end of office hours on **18/04/2018** from: **mashhad-sadaf-vakil abad blvd- The Khorasan razavi Water and Wastewater Company- the technical support unit (TSU)**

- Address and deadline for submission of the required documents: The completed

evaluation forms should be submitted at 15.00 on **Tuesday** dated **08/05/2018** to: **The Khorasan razavi Water and Wastewater Company Secretariat**

- Following the review of the evaluation documents submitted by the interested parties, the qualified investors shall be invited for contract negotiations.

- The concessioner has the right to accept or reject the technical or financial proposals of the investors at any stage of the proceedings.

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'Netanyahu, Trump clash over early Syria withdrawal plan'

A recent telephone conversation between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Donald Trump grew tense over Trump's earlier expression of his tendency to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria "very soon," according to two U.S. officials.

Netanyahu and Trump discussed regional developments over the phone on Wednesday, according to the official account from the United States.

But two unidentified U.S. officials said later that Netanyahu had objected to Trump's remark that he would like U.S. forces out of Syria shortly, according to The Times of Israel.

There were no more details on the give-and-take between the Israeli prime minister and the U.S. president.

On March 29, Trump said the U.S. would "be coming out of Syria, like, very soon. Let the other people take care of it now."

The U.S. has reportedly more than 2,000 troops stationed in eastern Syria, in addition to several thousand others in the Arab country's north.

"We spent \$7 trillion in the Middle East. And you know what we have for it? Nothing," Trump said.

Other U.S. officials have since been attempting to walk back Trump's remarks, which had already been in contrast to the



mainstream U.S. position.

Just on Friday, the Pentagon sounded differently from Trump, saying the American military plans in Syria remained unchanged.

On April 3, Trump also signaled that countries that wanted the U.S. to remain in Syria would have to pay for that presence, singling out Saudi Arabia.

"Saudi Arabia is very interested in our

decision, and I said, 'Well, you want us to stay, maybe you're going to have to pay,'" he told reporters at the White House. "We do a lot of things in this country. We do [them] for a lot of reasons, but it's very costly for our country and it helps other countries a hell of a lot more than it helps us. So we're going to be making a decision."

The Israeli prime minister's objection to

Trump's stated Syria plan came despite reassurances by U.S. officials that Trump has changed his mind.

Apart from the troops on the ground, the U.S. and a number of its allies have been bombarding what they say are ISIL (Daesh) positions inside Syria since September 2014, without any authorization from the Damascus government or the United Nations.

After the Wednesday telephone conversation between Netanyahu and Trump, a White House statement said, "President Trump reiterated the commitment of the United States to Israel's security," and that "the two leaders agreed to continue their close coordination on countering Iran's malign influence and destabilizing activities."

Netanyahu later tweeted that he had "thanked President Trump for his commitment to Israel's security and America's support for Israel at the United Nations."

Neither of the official accounts referred to the tense moments of the conversation.

Unlike the U.S. and its allies, Iran and Russia have government-authorized advisory presence in Syria. Israel has attempted to portray Iranian advisory assistance to Damascus as an attempt at spreading its regional influence, which Iran has consistently denied.

(Source: Press TV)

Russia: UK 'will be sorry' over spy poisoning row



Russia has warned Britain that it is "playing with fire" by blaming Moscow for poisoning a former Russian spy and his daughter, as a war of words between the two countries escalates.

Vasily Nebenzia, Russia's ambassador to the UN, sounded the warning on Thursday at a UN Security Council meeting in New York, called by Russia to discuss the diplomatic fallout from the poisoning of the former double agent, Sergei Skripal, and his daughter Yulia.

Diplomatic tensions between the two countries have been on the rise after what the UK and its allies alleged was a nerve-agent attack by Russia on Sergei and Yulia Skripal in the southern English city of Salisbury last month.

"I don't even know what to say, it's some sort of theatre of the absurd, couldn't you come up with a better fake story?" Nebenzia told the Security Council.

"We have told our British colleagues that 'you're playing with fire and you'll be sorry.'"

■ British statements

Earlier Karen Pierce, UK's ambassador to the UN, told the Security Council that Britain's actions "stand up to any scrutiny" and pledged to keep the 15-member body updated on the inquiry.

"All we've done has been consistent with the chemical weapons convention," she said.

Pierce added: "We have nothing to hide ... but I do fear that Russia might have something to fear."

The UK refuses to allow Russia to join its investigation into the incident, but the British UN envoy, Pierce, said they had passed on a Russian request for consular access to Yulia Skripal and "we await her response".

Separately, Kelley Currie, deputy U.S. ambassador to the UN, told the Security Council: "We have stated previously and do so again today our firm belief that Russia is responsible for this chemical weapons attack on UK soil."

Thursday's session had been called by Russia, which is seeking to undermine Britain's case that Moscow was responsible for last month's attack in Salisbury.

"Novichok is not copyrighted by Russia in spite of the obviously Russian name," said Nebenzia in his address, adding that the U.S. and Britain had both developed the nerve agent.

Meanwhile, in a statement issued by London police on Thursday, Yulia said her health has improved rapidly, but her father remains in intensive care.

"I woke up over a week ago now and am glad to say my strength is growing daily," she said. "I am grateful for the interest in me and for the many messages of goodwill that I have received."

"I have many people to thank for my recovery and would especially like to mention the people of Salisbury that came to my aid when my father and I were incapacitated."

(Source: Al Jazeera)

U.S. approves \$1.3 bn worth of artillery sale to Saudi Arabia



The U.S. administration has given the green light to a \$1.3 billion sale of artillery to Saudi Arabia, ignoring reports that its weapons have greatly contributed to a high rate of civilian deaths amid Riyadh's war on Yemen.

President Donald Trump's administration told the Congress of the planned sale late on Thursday, according to the State Department.

The package of arms planned to be sold to the Saudis include about 180 Paladin howitzer artillery-firing vehicles, systems that look like a combination of a tank and a cannon and are capable of firing 155mm shells.

The Congress has now 30 days to stop the new U.S. arms sale to Saudi Arabia although it seems highly unlikely as the White House normally seeks the approval of key lawmakers before making such announcements.

This is a second major weapons deal between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia during a trip by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to the U.S. The young prince arrived in Washington two weeks ago and has already signed a deal that involved more than \$1 billion in missiles.

Saudi Arabia was the first country Trump visited after taking office last year. It was announced during his visit to Riyadh that Washington could sell \$110 billion in mili-

tary equipment to Saudi Arabia in a period of 10 years. The State Department said at the time that the deal could grow to \$350 billion over a decade.

The massive arms sales come despite repeated international calls on the U.S. to stop supporting the Saudis with modern weaponry, which the kingdom has, according to many reports, used in its devastating war on Yemen.

Around 14,000 civilians, many of them civilians, have been killed in over three years of Saudi military adventure in Yemen.

Washington has denied it is directly supplying the Saudis with weapons in the war but numerous reports have suggested that U.S. arms have played a part in massive civilian casualties.

This is while the U.S. military admitted last month that the U.S. Central Command does not track how Riyadh uses Washington-supplied planes and munitions.

A report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) revealed last month the U.S. has increased its arms sales by 25-percent over the past five years.

It also said some half of U.S. arms exports during that period have gone to the Middle East, and that Saudi Arabia registered a 225-percent rise in military purchases - almost all from the U.S. and Europe.

(Source: agencies)

Pakistan embassy shows solidarity with Kashmiris

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN — The embassy of Pakistan in Tehran hosted a ceremony on Friday to express unity with the Kashmiri people who have long been struggling for self-determination.

The meeting was attended by a host of people from the Pakistani community as well as Iranian scholars, clergymen, academia and media personnel.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Asif Durrani talked on the recent acts of violence against Kashmiri people committed by Indian forces.

The most current "brutal" use of force by the Indian forces has failed to stifle the indigenous struggle of the Kashmiri people who stand for their rights of self-determination, the ambassador said.

"The Indian Occupation Forces have perpetrated a reign



Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran Asif Durrani and others are addressing the Kashmir Solidarity Day Ceremony in Tehran on April 06, 2018

of terror and bloodshed, martyred more than 20, blinded youths by using pellet guns and injured scores of innocent

peaceful Kashmiris in different parts of Shopian and Anantnag districts during the last one week."

The Pakistani envoy urged the international community to press India to cease "the reign of terror" in Kashmir. He also called upon the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to fulfill their commitments towards the people of Jammu & Kashmir under the UN Security Council resolutions.

Other speeches were made during the event and a short documentary film on Kashmiri civilians whose rights were denied by Indian forces was also screened for the attendees.

Kashmir Solidarity Day is widely marked across Pakistan and by Kashmiri nationalists worldwide on February 5.

apparent bid to push away the smoke.

On the eve of the new rally, Avigdor Liberman, the Israeli minister for military affairs, threatened that the military would continue to fire at Gazans if they approached the fence.

AFP quoted 20-year-old Ahmed Abu Ghali saying that he "will be a martyr today" as he held up his shirt to show his still seeping wound from last week that required 40 stitches.

"I was wounded last Friday but escaped yesterday from hospital," he said.

Israel has warned that its open-fire rules remained unchanged for Friday's protests despite international outcry, including by UN chief Antonio Guterres who called for restraint.

"I particularly urge Israel to exercise extreme caution with the use of force in order to avoid casualties. Civilians must be able to exercise their right to demonstrate peace-

fully," he said in a statement.

Palestinians say protesters were shot while posing no threat to soldiers, and videos that have spread online have fueled their accusations.

Human Rights Watch has called the actions by the Israeli troops "calculated" and illegal. Guterres and the European Union have called for an independent investigation, which Israel has outright rejected.

In the Gaza Strip, almost 1.3 million of the small territory's two million inhabitants are refugees, demanding their right to return to their pre-1948 homes.

The protests are slated to continue until 15 May, which marks the 70th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba (Catastrophe), in which more than 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced by Israeli forces in 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

South Korean court jails former president Park for 24 years

A South Korean court jailed former President Park Geun-hye for 24 years on Friday over a scandal that exposed webs of corruption between political leaders and the country's conglomerates.

Park became South Korea's first democratically elected leader to be forced from office last year when the Constitutional Court ordered her out over a scandal that landed the heads of two conglomerates in jail.

The court also fined Park, the daughter of a former military dictator, 18 billion won (\$16.9 million) after finding her guilty of charges including bribery, abuse of power and coercion.

"The defendant abused her presidential power entrusted by the people, and as a result, brought massive chaos to the order of state affairs and led to the impeachment of the president, which was unprecedented," judge Kim Se-yoon said as he handed down the sentence.

Up to 1,000 Park supporters gathered outside the court, holding national flags and signs calling for an end to "political revenge" against her.

The court found Park guilty of colluding with her old friend, Choi Soon-sil, to receive about 7 billion won (\$6.56 million) each from Lotte Group, a retail giant, and Samsung, the world's biggest maker of smartphones and semiconductors, while demanding 8.9 billion won from SK, an energy conglomerate.

Most of the money was intended to bankroll non-profit foundations run by Choi's family and confidants, and to fund the education of Choi's horse-riding daughter, the court said.

Prosecutors sought a 30-year sentence and a 118.5 billion won (\$112 million) fine for Park.

Park, 66, who has been in jail since March 31 last year, has denied wrongdoing and was not present in court.

The judge said Park had shown "no sign of repentance" but had instead tried to shift the blame to Choi and her secretaries. "We cannot help but sternly hold her accountable," Kim said.

■ 'Heartbreaking'

Park apologized while in office for seeking help from Choi, who had no policy or political experience, but that was as close as she came to admitting any guilt.

Kang Chul-koo, one of Park's state-appointed lawyers, said he would discuss with her the possibility of an appeal.

"We tried our utmost but regret the result turned out very bad," Kang told reporters at the court.

"The truth will be revealed one day."

The sentence will be a bitter blow for Park, who returned to the presidential palace in 2012 as the country's first woman leader, more than three decades after she left it following the assassination of her father.

Her ouster from office last year led to a presidential election won by the liberal Moon Jae-in, whose conciliatory stand on North Korea has underpinned a significant warming of ties between the rival neighbors.

Moon's office said Park's fate was "heartbreaking" not only for herself but for the country, and added that history that was not remembered would be repeated.

"We will not forget today," the office said.

Park is the latest former leader of South Korea to run afoul of the law.

Two predecessors, Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo, were convicted in 1996 of mutiny, treason and corruption and sentenced to long prison terms but both received presidential pardons and were freed after a couple of years.

But Moon took office pledging to end the practice of pardoning public and corporate officials convicted of corruption.

■ Watershed?

Park's friend, Choi, was convicted and jailed for 20 years after a separate trial in February.

The chairman of the Lotte Group, the country's fifth-largest conglomerate, Shin Dong-bin, was jailed for two years and six months.

Samsung Group heir Jay Y. Lee was jailed for a similar term on charges of bribery and embezzlement but in a surprise decision in February, an appeals court freed him after a year in detention.

(Source: Reuters)

Very likely KSA will have to sign the additional protocol: Adib-Moghaddam



The Kingdom's desire in its nuclear pan are enriching uranium and reprocessing plutonium. Will U.S. accommodate the Riyadh in these issues?

A: It will be very difficult to accommodate Saudi Arabia on these requests, not least because of the global anti-proliferation regime. The UAE had to sign the additional protocol of the IAEA and forego domestic uranium enrichment and the reprocessing of spent fuel. In addition, the case of Iran has made it that much more difficult for other countries to be entirely autonomous in their nuclear energy infrastructure. Saudi Arabia and the United States must be aware that any concession in terms of enrichment and reprocessing plutonium will strengthen Iran's hand in the future. Even in the current dangerous international climate, hypocrites may become hostage to fortune.

■ Some argue that if U.S. do not cooperate with Saudi in its nuclear program, Russia and China may do it and this led to reducing American nuclear influence in the region. What is your opinion?

A: We are living in a multipolar world order. Undoubtedly, the United States is not the only game in town anymore. Russia and China have emerged as important focal points in this new international system. While it is unlikely that Saudi Arabia would rely on China and Russia for their nuclear supply, the emergence of these powers in West Asia and North Africa has given regional states more opportunities to bargain. The most important factor in world politics is the relative decline of U.S. power in the last decade.

■ Which model for Saudi's nuclear plan are likely, JCPOA or U.S. agreement with United Arab Emirates?

A: In the end, it is very likely that Saudi Arabia will have to sign the additional protocol and forego nuclear enrichment on its own territory. It is pivotal in this new age of nuclearisation of the region, that regional states forge a security architecture that emphasises cooperation. Foreign Minister Zarif made constructive suggestions in this regard. But as indicated in several previous interviews, Iran's ambassadorial infrastructure lacks the diplomatic stamina, effectiveness and perhaps even willingness to translate such important initiatives into viable policies. As opposed to countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar or even Israel, Iran lacks a global PR strategy.

By staff & agencies

Clashes have broken out between Palestinians and Israeli troops near Gaza's fence as large groups of protesters gather for what is expected to be the largest anti-occupation rally since last Friday, when the Israeli military shot and killed 20 unarmed demonstrators.

Agence France-Presse said one person appeared to have been shot east of Gaza City Friday but his condition was not immediately clear.

Hundreds of protesters gathered in locations near the fence east of Khan Yunis, in the south of the blockaded Palestinian enclave, and east of Gaza City, with their numbers expected to reach some 30,000 later on Friday.

The protests are part of a six-week rally dubbed the "Great March of Return" which

began last Friday. They turned violent when Israeli military forces used lethal force to disperse the protesters.

Earlier on Friday, another Palestinian died of gunshot wounds suffered last week, bringing the death toll from Israel's brutal crackdown to 20. Some 1,500 people were also injured.

Thousands of Palestinians have stayed in tent encampments near the fence over the past week.

On Friday, mounds of tires were set up which were to be lit on fire throughout the day in what Gazan protesters want to be a smokescreen from Israeli snipers.

Israel has deployed tanks, armored vehicles and special forces near the fence and given shoot-to-kill permission to its troops.

According to AFP, troops took up positions across a ridge on the other side of the fence and set up a giant fan about two meters high in an

Conor McGregor charged with three counts of assault after violent attack on rival’s bus

Conor McGregor has been charged with three counts of assault and one count of criminal mischief after his involvement in the violent attack on a rival’s bus following the UFC 223 media day. McGregor turned himself in to the NYPD after he was filmed throwing a ‘hand truck’ through the bus window at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn.

The ‘Notorious’ is due to appear in court in New York later on Friday. The 29-year-old presented himself at the 78th Precinct police station in Brooklyn on Thursday night and was taken into custody where he was subsequently charged.

The former lightweight champion is not an American citizen and thus could possibly be denied entry into the country again if convicted of the charges he’s accused of.

It is understood that McGregor and his entourage boarded a flight to New York after Khabib Nurmagomedov and the Russian’s team cornered Artem Lobov, a fighter and close friend of McGregor, in a hotel. McGregor and his group then sought out Nurmagomedov and found him on a bus among other competitors, before hurling objects at the windows, injuring two inside.

UFC president Dana White said: ‘Approximately 20 guys were apparently let in through the doors by the Mac Life guys, who were credentialed here. They opened the doors for them through an entrance, they stormed the building, got down to the loading docks where the fighters were getting on the buses and started to attack the buses, throwing trash cans and dollies and things like that,’ White continued. ‘Broke one of the windows and cut Michael Chiesa real bad. He cut his head and cut his face.’

As a direct result of McGregor and his team’s actions, three fights for Saturday’s UFC 223 have been called off.

Michael Chiesa suffered facial lacerations and the New York State Athletic Commission have withdrawn him from a scheduled bout against Anthony Pettis.

(Source: Daily Mail)

Man City’s style convinced De Bruyne to snub Bayern, PSG

Manchester City’s playing style convinced playmaker Kevin De Bruyne to snub top European teams and join the Premier League club, the 26-year-old said ahead of Saturday’s potential title-clinching derby against Manchester United.

The Belgium international, who joined City from Wolfsburg in 2015, has notched 11 goals and 20 assists across all competitions for the league leaders this season.

De Bruyne said Germany’s Bayern Munich and French side Paris St Germain were among the teams he turned down to move to City. “I had the option of going to Munich, PSG or staying in Wolfsburg. But I thought for me the probability of the type of football that I can play at City will suit me the best,” De Bruyne told BBC’s Premier League show.

The move has paid off with De Bruyne, who leads the league’s assist charts this campaign, on the verge of winning his third trophy at City in as many seasons. Manager Pep Guardiola’s side have lost just once this campaign and hold a 16-point lead over second-placed United and De Bruyne believes that clinching the league title against their bitter rivals would add to City’s joy. “It would help us if we win it against United. It’s maybe better for the future,” he added. “Fans will mock each other, that is the way it goes. So for them it’s the biggest thing.”

City are also competing in the Champions League quarter-finals, where they lost 3-0 at Liverpool in the first leg on Wednesday.

(Source: Mirror)

UEFA charges Barcelona with ‘throwing of objects’ in Champions League clash

Barcelona have been charged by UEFA after fans allegedly threw objects during their Champions League victory over Roma at Camp Nou. The Catalan giants have been sanctioned under Article 16 (2) of UEFA’s Disciplinary Regulations following Wednesday’s 4-1 win. A UEFA Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body will meet on May 31 to rule on the charges.

Barca took a commanding lead in the quarter-final tie thanks to own goals from Daniele De Rossi and Kostas Manolas, with Gerard Pique and Luis Suarez completing the win.

Ernesto Valverde’s side will travel to Rome for the second leg on Tuesday, Edin Dzeko’s away goal having given the Italian club the smallest glimmer of hope.

(Source: Four Four Two)

Heynckes keen to limit Bayern’s title celebrations

There will be no Bayern Munich celebrations should they secure the Bundesliga title with victory over Augsburg on Saturday, according to coach Jupp Heynckes.

Bayern make the short trip to the WWK Arena knowing a 23rd top-flight win of the season would see them become champions for a sixth campaign in a row.

Heynckes is focused on securing those three points, but he will not allow too many champagne corks to be popped, with matters such as the Champions League quarter-final second leg against Sevilla also at hand.

Bayern – who are also in the DFB-Pokal semi-finals – hold a 2-1 lead after the first game in Spain and Heynckes does not want his squad’s focus to slip by rejoicing in a title triumph.

«In 2013 we won the Champions League and people wanted to celebrate, but I cancelled all of that [to focus on the DFB-Pokal final],» said the 72-year-old.

«That is what we’ll do this time. If we win the championship can have a glass of champagne in the dressing room but that’s it. «On Sunday morning we have to train again, and on Monday we focus on the second leg versus Sevilla.

«We’ll find an opportunity to celebrate later and do it hard!»

(Source: Goal)

Man City vs. Man Utd: can Jose Mourinho ruin Pep Guardiola’s title party?

If ever Manchester City needed a home derby against United they need it right now. It’s the perfect opportunity to put Wednesday’s humiliating 3-0 defeat to Liverpool in the quarter-final of the Champions League behind them.

Everything about the trip to Anfield was upsetting. From the attack on their coach - for which Liverpool will have to answer to UEFA - to what happened in the most traumatic 45 minutes of City’s season.

The three goals they conceded may well have ended their Champions League dream for another season, but what better way to bounce back (and, who knows, fill the squad with the self-belief to overturn the deficit in Tuesday’s return leg) than beating United on this evening?

But that’s more to it than that. Beat United and City will be crowned league champions. Could there be any better feeling if you’re from the blue half of Manchester. It was pure joy when Sergio Aguero scored his last-gasp goal against QPR in May 2012 to snatch the title out of United’s hands but to actually be crowned champions by beating United would be a soothing balm to the wounded pride of every Sky Blue supporter.

But can City recover in under three days? Their back four of Kyle Walker, Vincent Kompany, Nicolas Otamendi and Aymeric Laporte was ripped apart by the Reds and that resulted in uncharacteristically flustered performances from Leroy Sané and David Silva.

But have United the ability to press and harry City the way Liverpool did? The Anfield side are City’s bogey team, the only team to



have beaten them in the league, and their victories have come in the same fashion, playing with blinding pace and pin-point precision. United knocked Arsenal off-balance at the Emirates in similar style in December, scoring twice in the first 11 minutes en route to a 3-1 win, and they’ll need another high-tempo start to exploit the doubts that will be lurking

in their neighbours head.

Despite the 16-point gap between the leaders and United, Jose Mourinho’s men are on course for their best league finish since Alex Ferguson’s last season in charge five years ago. They won’t win the title, of course, but they’ll want to kick City when they’re down and send them into next week’s second leg

against Liverpool feeling even more fearful than they are right now.

Mourinho has in the past been accused of ‘parking the bus’ at away matches but he surely knows that if United are to have any chance of victory they must attack, attack, attack at the Etihad.

(Source: The Week)

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger: We know it’s not over yet



Arsene Wenger insists Arsenal’s Europa League quarter-final with CSKA Moscow is far from over – despite a resounding 4-1 first-leg win.

First-half doubles from Aaron Ramsey and Alexandre Lacazette combined with a man-of-the-match performance from Mesut Ozil helped the Gunners build a healthy lead ahead of next week’s trip to Russia.

A disappointing season for the north London club hangs on this competition as it is their only chance of securing Champions League qualification and getting their hands on silverware.

But, despite their three-goal aggregate advantage, Wenger is not taking a semi-final spot for granted.

“We scored some great goals in the first half and at half-time the target was not to concede any more and, if possible, add another one,” said the Frenchman.

“We did the first part of the job in the second half but not the second part of the job.

“On the other hand, it will help us to focus completely in the second game and not think it’s job done, we know it’s not over.

“We have to go there with that right focus and try to win the game.”

After Ramsey’s opener, the Russian side briefly levelled through Aleksandr Golovin’s superb free-kick.

French striker Lacazette, making his first start since January, restored the hosts’ lead from the penalty spot and then completed the scoring following Ramsey’s sensational

back-heeled second.

Wenger felt CSKA proved to be tricky opponents and said it was a change for an away team to attack at the Emirates Stadium.

“They played in a very offensive style, we are not used to seeing that at the Emirates in the Premier League,” he added.

“Teams come here, they play in their half and they wait for us and they had a go at us and it was uncomfortable.

“It was a spectacular first half played at a high pace but as well an uncomfortable one for me because they looked dangerous.”

On a largely positive night for the Gunners, there was a sour point as playmaker Henrikh Mkhitaryan was forced off injured in the second half.

Wenger said he was unsure about the severity of the problem but confirmed the Armenian will miss Sunday’s Premier League game with Southampton.

“Mkhitaryan has a knee problem, we don’t know how bad it is,” said Wenger.

“We have to assess it but he will certainly be out for Sunday.”

CSKA manager Viktor Goncharenko admitted his side were outclassed in London but would not comment on whether they can turn the tie around in the second leg. “They outperformed us greatly but I’m not disappointed,” he said.

“Of course it’s a very bad result for us but we understood who is playing against us.”

(Source: Eurosport)

McLaren’s Fernando Alonso says the next two months ‘crucial’



Fernando Alonso says the next two months will be “crucial” for his McLaren team’s ambition to compete for podium positions this season.

The two-time world champion finished fifth in the Australian Grand Prix but McLaren are a long way from their ambition of matching Red Bull for pace.

Alonso said: “There is still a lot to improve to catch the top three teams [Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull].

“It’s quite a reasonable gap to close but it is up to us now.”

McLaren have switched to Renault engines, the same as Red Bull, this season after three years of poor performance and reliability with Honda, who now supply Toro Rosso.

Alonso said: “The next two months are crucial for us. If it is not a world championship fight, it will hopefully be some podium positions.

“It is probably the first time in the last three years it is up to us - the car has the potential.

“We had some ups and downs in [pre-season] testing and then in Australia it was the same thing and the qualifying was not smooth enough to show the potential. It was a good race, help from the safety car, but we take this fifth place and move on.

“It is up to the team to deliver the performance in the next four, five, six races.”

The Spaniard qualified 11th in Mel-

bourne, where the McLaren appeared to be about 0.8 seconds a lap slower than the Red Bull, for whom Max Verstappen and Daniel Ricciardo qualified fourth and fifth.

Alonso admitted that his fifth place in the opening race owed something to luck, after he gained several places thanks to the intervention of the virtual safety car, which also decided the lead battle between Mercedes’ Lewis Hamilton and Ferrari’s Sebastian Vettel.

Asked if he felt it was realistic to talk about fighting for the podium after starting the season so far from the pace, Alonso said: “Yes. We were two places from the podium in Australia. Anything can happen. If you are close to that position, sooner or later that opportunity will come.”

Meanwhile, Honda have already suffered their first reliability problem of the new season.

After retiring in the season-opener in Australia, Toro Rosso’s Pierre Gasly has had a new internal combustion engine, turbo and MGU-H - the part of the hybrid system that recovers energy from the turbo - fitted for Bahrain.

That means the Frenchman is already on the second of his three permitted examples of each part for the entire season. If a driver uses more than three examples of any of the six designated parts of the engine, he suffers a grid penalty.

(Source: BBC)

Boris Becker: ‘Germany is in a tennis boom’

Since August 2017, Boris Becker has been head of men’s tennis in Germany. With the Davis Cup quarterfinal battle with Spain on the horizon, Becker spoke to DW about the sport’s rise

■ Mr. Becker, do you think Germany will return to the peak of tennis, like in the 1980s, in the foreseeable future?

Boris Becker: We are currently in a tennis boom in Germany, thanks to success in both the men’s and women’s game. In Angie [Angelique] Kerber and Julia Görges we have two world-class players. We have a world-class player in Sascha [Alexander] Zverev. Why not? We are working hard towards having talented 18 and 19-year-olds. Of course we have to get past football. I don’t know if that’s possible, but there is enough space for other sports - tennis included.

■ What was it at the end of the 1980s that made Germany tennis so successful?

It was a combination of things that came together. We had a very good association, and a very good regional association, in that case the one in Baden, great coaches and a very familiar environment that gave me the opportunity to play tennis - and a slice of good fortune of course.

■ The peak was in 1989. You and Steffi Graf at Wimbledon. It caused an incredible boom in the sport.

Yes, perhaps it started with my Wimbledon win in 1985.



I was the trailblazer. Then Graf caught up and won her titles. Then on the same day, a Sunday in July, we both won Wimbledon. The Federal President was in the Royal Box. It was a special moment for German tennis.

■ Were you jealous that you didn’t win the Golden Slam [All four Grand Slams and the Olympic gold in the same year]?

I wasn’t good enough. It had nothing to do with jealousy. Graf did it in 1988. I was always happy just to win a Grand Slam in a year. She did it more consistently.

■ Why did you decide to take up this post at the Ger-

man tennis association seven months ago? What do you think is possible?

I think I have had success as a coach in recent years and the association got in touch a while ago about taking on this post. It [the job] didn’t really exist beforehand. There wasn’t a “Head of men’s tennis.” I said I was happy to do it, to be given the honor, the trust, the responsibility. The players responded really well, as did the coaches.

■ Have you got someone in mind, when the time comes to replace Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer or Novak Djokovic? Can you see a new generation of tennis players?

There’s one very good player in Germany and that’s [Alexander] Zverev. The Russians have a pair of very good players: Karen Khachanov and Andrey Rublev are excellent. Denis Shapovalov from Canada is also very good. There are some players, between 19 and 21 years old, who are knocking at the door. I think it’s only a matter of time before they overtake the older players. Nick Kyrgios is another player I like. He is just 22 years old. People forget how young he is. It’s an exciting group of players. Dominic Thiem is another who keeps drawing attention. There are four to six players in the world capable of everything. It’s only a matter of time until they’re number one, two and three in the world.

(Source: Deutsche Welle)

Iran lose to New Zealand in FIBA U16 Asia Championship

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran failed to qualify for the FIBA U17 Basketball World Cup in Argentina after losing to New Zealand 69-73 on Friday.

In the match held at the Foshan Lingnan Mingzhu Gymnasium, Amirhossein Yazarloo was Iran's top scorer with 22 points, and New Zealand's Tom Cowie scored 18 points.

Iran will play South Korea on Saturday in the competition's 5-8 classification.

"We deserved to lose because our players didn't to fulfil their responsibilities," Iran coach Nenad Trunic said after the match.

"Our boys didn't respect to our primary rules but I have to say they are the best U16 basketball players in Iran and will have a bright future," the Serbian coach added.

The 2018 FIBA U16 Asian Championship is the qualifying tournament for FIBA Asia at the 2018 FIBA U17 Basketball World Cup.

The tournament is being held in Foshan, China from 2 to 8 April 2018.

The top four teams will represent FIBA Asia at the 2018 FIBA U17 Basketball World Cup.

The FIBA Asia U16 Championship is an under-16 basketball championship in the International Basketball Federation's FIBA Asia zone.

The event started in 2009 and is held bi-annually. The top placed teams compete in the FIBA U17 Basketball World Cup, which started in 2010.



Australian Morton defends sprint gold at mentor's velodrome



GOLD COAST, Australia (Reuters) — Since the retirement of Anna Meares after the Games in Rio de Janeiro, Australia has longed for a successor to the hard-bitten coalminer's daughter who extracted gold, silver and bronze from four Olympic velodromes.

At the Commonwealth Games on Thursday, Stephanie Morton showed the wait may be over as she defended

her sprint title at the Brisbane venue named after the Australian great.

At Glasgow, Morton upset her mentor Meares for her first Commonwealth Games title.

On Friday, four years later, 34-year-old Meares hung the gold around Morton's neck after she obliterated New Zealand's Natasha Hansen in the final to win the nation's 100th cycling title at Commonwealth Games.

Hansen attempted mind games from behind in both sprints, thrusting and parrying to try to knock the Adelaide native off her perch.

But criminology student Morton, who wants to be a police officer after winding down her cycling, was impenetrable. She roared home in the second sprint to win by a yawning 1.286 seconds.

"Tonight was all adrenaline. The crowd was so loud, it was amazing," said the 27-year-old, who claimed the team sprint gold on Thursday's opening night.

"I have already done what I came to achieve so the rest is a bonus.

"It took me by complete surprise when I beat Anna Meares in Glasgow — and now to be in the Anna Meares Velodrome is very special."

In the thumping arena, sprint world champion Mat-

thew Glaetzer lifted the roof at the end of the night by defending his keirin title, capturing the host nation's fifth gold of the Games.

The 25-year-old South Australian held off Welshman Lewis Oliva in a furious bunched sprint, with Edward Dawkins taking bronze, a day after winning the team sprint gold for New Zealand.

Home fans shook the rafters throughout a steamy night at the venue, but pockets of Scottish fans also went berserk as the Archibald siblings pedaled off with a medal each.

Triple world champion Katie Archibald, who claimed the team pursuit gold at Rio, grabbed the evening's first gold by holding off Australian veteran Rebecca Wiasak in the individual event.

Archibald had earlier set a Games record of 3:24.119 in the preliminaries.

"The crowd was going mental. That can only be bad news, really, as I'd rather be chased than chase," said Archibald, the points bronze medalist at Glasgow.

"It feels good to have the two titles - Olympics and Commonwealth. It means a lot to me."

Her older brother John added to the family joy later by taking silver in the 4km pursuit, with England's Charlie Tanfield winning the gold in 4:15.952.

Team USA on lack of Iran in World Cup: 'It's disappointing'

The throng of media swarmed around Bill Zadic. The former Iowa wrestler-turned-United States head freestyle coach knew what questions were coming. He was prepared, but that did not make it any easier to answer.

Zadic, along with his wrestlers, expressed disappointment and frustration over the lack of Russia and Iran in this weekend's UWW Freestyle World Cup. The international dual meet, featuring some of the world's best wrestlers, will run April 7-8 at Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

"It's disappointing that they weren't able to make it to the event because they have great wrestling traditions," Zadic said. "Despite our difference in politics on the government side, our federations share a brotherhood and have a really positive relationships that I think both sides value.

"It'll be a great tournament, great event. We're super excited to be here in Iowa. We'll be ready, because we know the rest of the world is ready to come at us."

Back in January, eight countries were confirmed as participants in the Freestyle World Cup, which has been contested an-

nually since 1973. The countries originally confirmed were the top finishers at the previous year's world championships.

That meant the United States, the 2017 world team title winners, as well as Russia, the runners-up, along with Georgia, Azerbaijan, Japan, Cuba and Kazakhstan were all invited. Turkey also received an invitation after placing fourth, but withdrew and was replaced with Iran, winners of the last six World Cups.

Earlier this month, however, Iran informed USA Wrestling, the country's national governing body, that they would not be sending a team. Last Friday, USA Wrestling announced that Russia would also not attend after the team ran into visa problems.

As such, Mongolia and India were invited as replacements. Although Team USA's wrestlers are disappointed that Russia and Iran aren't in the field, they maintain their excitement for the event.

"Absolutely, we want Russia and Iran to be here," said Jordan Burroughs, Team USA's starter at 74-kilograms and a five-time world and Olympic champion. "Iran

has won the last six World Cups in a row. Every year I've wrestled in the World Cup, and we've never won as a team, we've been beaten by Iran. We wanted those guys to be here. We wanted Russia to be here.

"But at the end of the day, we're the returning world champs. We are the world champions. At this point, we'd expect those guys to want to be here to knock us off."

Russia's absence came with a hint of drama. Early last week, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused the United States of "open and direct discrimination" and that they were being barred from competing in the World Cup. USA Wrestling said it hadn't received any information saying Russia wouldn't attend the competition, and maintained the expectation that they would.

After Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley inquired about the situation, his office was told that "due to the staffing reduction forced on the U.S. Mission in Russia ... there is very limited appointment availability for visa interviews at this time. In the current situation, the Embassy is not able to provide

expedited appointments for sporting events."

This isn't the first time a world power struggled in their journey to the World Cup. Just last year, after President Donald Trump signed an executive order limiting immigration from seven countries — which included Iran — Iran then banned Team USA from traveling to Kermanshah for the World Cup, held in February.

Two days later, Iran lifted the ban and the United States ultimately finished second to the host country.

"Last year, we had to work really hard to go to the World Cup when it was in Kermanshah, Iran," Zadic said. "We were able to make it. It's great when we can share those things and share competition on the mat together. Unfortunately, they weren't able to make it this year.

"The countries that are here brought a lot of quality athletes, and you share that same common bond with those countries and those competitors as well. We're looking for a great event and hosting a great competition for our fans."

(Source: Desmoinesregister)

2018 FIFA World Cup ticket design presented

With 69 days to go until the opening match of the 2018 FIFA World Cup™, FIFA has presented the 2018 FIFA World Cup ticket design.

All key match-related information, such as the fixture, stadium, date, kick-off and gate opening time, is printed on each ticket. Fans are reminded that gates will open three hours ahead of each game, with the exception of the opening match and the final, for which gates will open four hours prior to kick-off. Each ticket also has details on the category, information on how to find the assigned seat as well as a map indicating the stadium sector in which the seat is located. A list of prohibited items and an abridged version of the General Terms and Conditions for the Use of Tickets applicable to all ticket holders are printed on the rear of each ticket, which itself is a revocable licence granting access to the stadium.

■ Security features

The tickets feature key security elements including a barcode positioned on the right-hand side and a hologram next to the sector map.

Tickets will be personalised, meaning that the name of the ticket holder will be printed on it. Provided the persons entering the stadium have a valid ticket and their FAN ID and have been duly registered by the ticket purchaser at FIFA.com/tickets, access to the stadium will be granted.

Fans will undergo the following checks upon arrival at the stadium:

- * External stadium perimeter: fans will be requested to present their FAN IDs and tickets.
- * Entrance to the stadium: electronic ticket validation will be implemented through a radio-frequency identification (RFID) system, which will identify cancelled or counterfeit



tickets that will not give access to the respective match.

Tickets purchased during sales phases 1 and 2 will be delivered free of charge to fans in the weeks leading up to the tournament, with deliveries planned to start in April/May 2018. Tickets purchased during the Last-Minute Sales Phase will be available for collection from the FIFA Venue Ticketing Centres (FVTC), which are set to open on 18 April 2018.

■ FIFA.com/tickets – the only official source

Given the remarkable level of interest from all over the world, FIFA would like to remind all football fans that FIFA.com/tickets is the only official and legitimate website on which to buy 2018 FIFA World Cup tickets. Tickets obtained from any other source will be automatically cancelled once identified and will not entitle the ticket holder to access the stadium or to any refund or other compensation.

FIFA regards the illicit sale and distribution of tickets as a serious issue and in cooperation with local authorities,

including consumer protection agencies in numerous countries, strives to identify and curb unauthorised ticket sales. As a result, a number of unauthorised online ticket sale offers via websites and on social media in various countries have been removed in recent months.

By working in close cooperation with the Russian authorities, which have recently introduced specific legislation including various sanctions for illegal ticket operations in accordance with the Russian Code of Administrative Offences, FIFA strives to protect the integrity of the ticketing sales process.

Ticket applicants will be able to transfer guest tickets or resell tickets within their ticketing accounts from 18 April 2018. Transfer and resale requests will be considered in accordance with the Ticket Transfer and Resale Policy. Further details are available here.

■ FAN ID

At the request of the Russian authorities, all fans attending matches at the 2018 FIFA World Cup need to apply for a FAN ID – the official identity document issued to fans. Fans are encouraged to apply for this free document as soon as possible after they have received their ticket confirmation email.

A FAN ID and a valid ticket are required for fans to be able to enter the 2018 FIFA World Cup stadiums. Having a FAN ID gives fans additional benefits and services provided by the host country, such as visa-free entry to the Russian Federation, certain free inter-host city travel and free use of public transport on matchdays. For further details, please visit www.fan-id.ru.

FIFA does not assume any liability or responsibility concerning the application, issue and/or use of FAN IDs.

(Source: FIFA)

Winfried Schaefer contract talks still ongoing

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Esteghlal football club are still in contract extension talks with German coach Winfried Schaefer.

The former coach of the Jamaica national football team was appointed as the new head coach of Iranian professional football club Esteghlal in October until the end of the season, with the option of extension.

Schaefer started his coaching career with German association football club Borussia Monchengladbach II in 1982.

He then signed with Karlsruher SC, and led the team to the semi-final of the UEFA Cup in the 1993–94 season.

The German coach has also worked at VfB Stuttgart and Tennis Borussia Berlin.

Under guidance of Schaefer, Esteghlal compete for second place in Iran Professional League.

The Blues have also qualified for the AFC Champions League Round of 16 under tutelage of the German coach.



Iranian woman Mafinejad chosen as assistant referee at Asian Cup

TASNIM — Iranian woman Ensieh Khabbaz Mafinejad has been chosen as assistant referee for the match between Japan and Vietnam at AFC Women's Asian Cup.

The match will be held at the King Abdullah II Stadium on Saturday in Amman, Jordan.

Reigning champion Japan will take on Vietnam in the competition's Group B.

The match will be officiated by a referee from Myanmar. She will be assisted by Ensieh Khabbaz Mafinejad from Iran and Hiba Sadieh from Palestine.

Also, Mahsa Ghorbani from Iran is the match's fourth official.

Iranian TV censors AS Roma badge

Persian League — Iran's state-run Channel 3 TV blurred the AS Roma badge during their Champions League coverage Wednesday night.

The Giallorossi lost to Barcelona 4-1 at the Camp Nou last night, and it's while the Iranian viewers noticed the officials had decided to censor out "a female wolf's teats" on the club badge.

The club's logo pays homage to the ancient myth of Rome's twin founders Romulus and Remus being suckled by the Capitoline Wolf.

These reports have spread widely on social media in Iran.

Rooney: My overhead kick better than Ronaldo's

Wayne Rooney has said his famous bicycle kick goal against Manchester City was better than Cristiano Ronaldo's spectacular effort in Real Madrid's 3-0 Champions League win at Juventus.

Ronaldo produced a stunning strike at the Allianz Stadium on Tuesday, with his effort acclaimed by the home fans in Turin.

But Everton forward Rooney said his 2011 strike in a derby victory at Old Trafford -- with which Ronaldo's goal was quickly compared -- had been the better of the two.

The 32-year-old responded to Rio Ferdinand, a former United teammate of both his and Ronaldo's and now a television pundit, when he made the case for Ronaldo.

Ferdinand wrote on Twitter: "Don't be comparing Ronaldo's overhead kick to Rooney's vs Man City which came of his shin... Morning Wazza!!"

But Rooney, speaking in his role as an ambassador for the UEFA European Under-17 Championship, for which he conducted the draw on Thursday, said: "I texted Rio and I think it's actually a harder technique to do it off your shins. So I'll go with my own."

Speaking on BT Sport after the Juventus game, Ferdinand said of Ronaldo: "He turns up every time he is asked to deliver on the big stage -- he delivers. In his relentless pursuit of greatness, he produces an absolute moment of brilliance.

"This lit up this studio. Imagine what it did for people around the world to see one of the greatest, if not the greatest player on the planet, to produce a moment like this against Juventus, the magnitude of the game, the occasion."

Earlier this week, Zlatan Ibrahimovic -- who scored a spectacular long-range bicycle kick for Sweden against England -- praised Ronaldo as "a goal machine" but added: "He scored a beautiful goal, but he should try it from 40 meters and see if it goes in."

(Source: Soccermet)

Salah steps up fitness bid using oxygen chamber

Mohamed Salah posted a picture himself in an oxygen chamber on Thursday as he bids to overcome injury in time for Saturday's Merseyside derby against Everton and the Champions League quarterfinal second leg against Manchester City on Tuesday.

Salah had to come off early in the second half of the 3-0 first leg win over City at Anfield, with manager Jurgen Klopp saying the Egypt international had "felt sometimes something" in his leg.

Klopp added that he hoped Salah's injury was not serious but warned that he was a doubt for the derby at Goodison Park.

Oxygen chambers are widely used in sports for recovery purposes as they increase the supply of oxygen to injured areas and reduce swelling and pain.

The Daily Mail pictured Salah arriving at Spire Hospital in Liverpool on Thursday morning.

(Source: ESPN)

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Cannes to open with Asghar Farhadi’s “Everybody Knows”

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iranian director Asghar Farhadi’s drama “Everybody Knows” will open the 71st edition of the Cannes Film Festival at the Grand Theater Lumière in the Palais des Festivals on 8 May, the organizers announced on Thursday.



Cannes' official poster for Asghar Farhadi's “Everybody Knows”

“Everybody Knows” is Farhadi’s second film shot in outside of his homeland. In 2012, he directed “The Past” in French in Paris. “The Past” brought its star, Berenice Bejo, the Palme d’Or for best actress in 2013.

Farhadi’s Oscar-winning movie “The Salesman” won him the award for best screenplay for this movie at the 69th Cannes Film Festival in 2016. It also brought Shahab Hosseini the Palme d’Or for best actor.

Tehran Quran competition to host participants from 83 countries

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – Over 300 reciters and memorizers from 83 countries will be participating in the 35th International Quran Competition opening in Tehran on April 19.



The Quran reciters and memorizers will be attending in different categories including competitions for females, clerics, students, adults and visually-impaired individuals, the State Endowment and Charity Affairs Organization that is the organizer of the competition announced on Friday.

The clerics are coming from 44 different countries and will be competing in the recitation, memorization and interpretations sections.

The competition will be running until April 26.

“Are You Volleyball?” honored at Al-Nahj festival

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — “Are You Volleyball?”, a short film by Mohammad Bakhshi from Iran, has been named as third best film at the Al-Nahj International Film Festival, which is held annually by the Karbala satellite channels group in Iraq.



A poster for “Are You Volleyball?”

The award was handed to the film advisor Ahmad Shojaian, the Persian service of IRNA reported on Friday.

In addition, actors Fariba Kowsari and Kurosh Zarei won honorable mentions at the festival.

The film features a group of Arabian-spoken asylum seekers who arrive in an English spoken country border and can’t keep going. They conflict with border soldiers every day till a deaf-mute baby becomes a catalyst for better communication between two groups.

Over 90 films from different countries were competing in the festival, which ran from April 1 to 5.

“Beyond the Clouds” by Majid Majidi to open Fajr festival

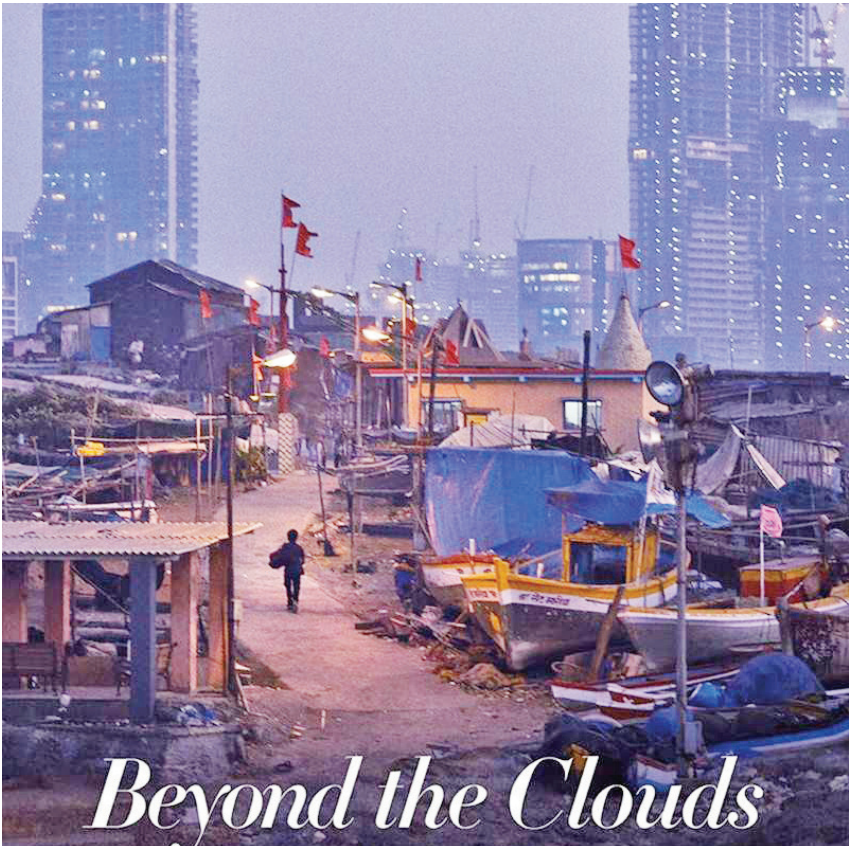
A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iranian director Majid Majidi’s drama “Beyond the Clouds” will open the 36th Fajr International Film Festival at Tehran’s Charsu Cineplex on April 19.

The film, which was filmed in India in 2017, revolves around the life of a young boy, Amir, and his sister, Tara, in Mumbai. When on the run from the cops, Amir finds his estranged sister, who in a bid to protect her brother lands in jail. Their entire lives are clouded by despair when, unexpectedly, the light shines on them from beyond the clouds.

Starring Ishaan Khattar, Malavika Mohanan and Sharada, the film had its Iranian premiere at Tehran’s Kurosh Cineplex on February 12.

“Night Accident” by Kyrgyz filmmaker Temirbek Birnazarov, “Ága” by Bulgarian director Milko Lazarov and “Grain” by Turkish filmmaker Semih Kaplanoglu will compete for the Crystal Simorgh at the event that will run until April 27.

The festival is scheduled to unveil the entire lineup of the official selection in the near future.



A poster for “Beyond the Clouds” by Majid Majidi

Fajr unveils lineup of shorts for Eastern Vista

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – The organizers of the 36th Fajr International Film Festival have announced the lineup of short movies for the Eastern Vista, a section dedicated to Asian filmmakers.

The lineup includes 12 films from China, Singapore, Japan, Turkey, Kuwait, Iraq and several other countries.

“All I Want” by Venika Mitra from India, “Muse” by Fatma Racha Shehadeh from Lebanon and “The Victim” by Muzaffer Mehmet Çaglar from Turkey, “Blue Fly Road” by Bassam Chekhes from Syria, “Lile” by Natia Nikolaishvili

from Georgia, and “Kombars” by Abdulaziz Alballam from Kuwait are among the films.

Also included are Chinese-French co-production “A Gentle Night” by Qiu Yang, Chinese-Singapore co-production “Echoing Clouds” by Ziwei Yao, and Singapore-Philippines co-production “Jodilerks Dela Cruz, Employee of the Month” by Carlo Francisco Manatad.

A number of short films from Iranian directors will also compete in this section of the festival, which will be held in Tehran from April 19 to 27.



Hitler’s portrait of a lover to go up for auction

BERLIN (Reuters) — An oil portrait believed to have been painted by Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler of a little-known former lover will go under the hammer next week with an asking price of 60,000 euros (\$74,000), a German auction house said on Thursday.

The 63 x 48 cm painting, signed A. Hitler, 1916, depicts Charlotte Lobjoie, a Frenchwoman whom Hitler met while serving in France during World War One, according to Werner Maser, a leading Hitler scholar who died in 2007.

“Portrait of a Girl” - a damaged work painted on hessian - was purchased by Flemish industrialists around 1967, auction house Weidler in Nuremberg said in a statement.

It said it had documents showing it had been exhibited at art galleries in Japan. The painting in what appears to be a rural setting depicts a young woman with a red scarf loosely on her head that casts a heavy shadow over her face, and holding a pitchfork.

She is wearing a light-colored shirt, open from the neck down, exposing part



The signature of former German dictator Adolf Hitler is seen on a painting of the old registry office in Munich, at Weidler auction house in Nuremberg November 18, 2014. (Reuters/Kai Pfaffenbach)

of her breasts.

Maser, who was referred to by Weidler in its statement, wrote several books about Hitler, providing insight into the mind of the Nazi leader through a close look at his drawings, letters and notes.

New York judge awards Nazi-looted artworks

NEW YORK (Reuters) — A New York judge on Thursday awarded title of two Nazi-looted drawings by noted Austrian painter Egon Schiele to a Holocaust victim’s heirs in what art experts viewed as a key test case of a U.S. law designed to ease the recovery of such stolen works.

Under the ruling, both works - “Woman in a Black Pinafore” and “Woman Hiding her Face” - are to be turned over to descendants of Franz Friedrich “Fritz” Grunbaum, an Austrian-Jewish entertainer and impresario who perished in the Dachau concentration camp in 1941. Grunbaum, a vocal critic of the Nazis, once owned some 450 artworks, including more than 80 by Schiele, an Expressionist protege of Gustav Klimt and a major figurative painter of the early 20th century in his own right. Grunbaum’s art collection was seized by the Nazi regime after he was arrested in 1938 and sent to Dachau, according to a synopsis of the case contained in Thursday’s summary judgment.

The two Schiele works in question turned up decades later, in a booth operated by a London-based dealer, Richard Nagy, at a 2015 art and design show in New York City, and the heirs filed suit seeking to recover the drawings.

Nagy’s lawyers asserted he had acquired legitimate title to the two drawings, stemming from a 1956 sale of some 50 Schiele works by Grunbaum’s sister-in-law to a gallery in Switzerland, and that the heirs’ rights to bring their claim had long since expired.

In his 17-page decision, however, Justice Charles Ramos of the state Supreme Court in Manhattan sided against Nagy, citing the Holocaust Expropriated Art Recovery (HEAR) Act.

That law, enacted by Congress in 2016, extended the federal statute of limitations for seeking restitution of Nazi-confiscated art to six years from the time of “actual discovery” of its identity and whereabouts.

Nagy’s lawyers argued the HEAR Act did not apply, a position the judge called “absurd,” saying the statute was “intended to apply to cases precisely like this one.”

The judge said there was no dispute the artworks at stake formerly belonged to Grunbaum and were forcibly taken by the Nazis during World War Two, a fact that put the onus on Nagy to establish a superior claim. Ramos said no such evidence was presented.

The judge also held that New York law “protects the rightful owner’s property where that property had been stolen, even if the property is in the possession of a good faith purchaser.”

Raymond Dowd, lawyer for the Grunbaum heirs - named in the case as Timothy Reif, David Frankel and Milos Vavra - hailed the decision as a landmark in bringing justice to Holocaust victims.

The ruling, he said, “brought us a step closer to recovering all of the culture that was stolen during the largest mass theft in history, which until now, has been overshadowed by history’s largest mass murder.”

Japanese anime film director Isao Takahata dies at 82

TOKYO (Reuters) — Japanese anime film director and writer Isao Takahata, co-founder of Japan’s Studio Ghibli, has died, the studio said on Friday. He was 82.

Takahata was most famous for “The Grave of the Fireflies”, an award-winning 1988 film about the suffering of a young brother and sister separated from their parents in World War Two. The film was based on Takahata’s experience as a nine-year-old boy, fleeing a U.S. air raid, barefoot and in pyjamas, amid piles of dead bodies in Okayama, western Japan, in 1945.

“The Tale of the Princess Kaguya”, his last film and made in 2013, was nominated for an Oscar for Best Animated Feature.

Takahata worked on a number of TV anime series with Studio Ghibli co-founder Hayao Miyazaki, tackling social issues, encompassing war and the environment.

He was made an Officer of the French Order of Arts and Letters in 2015.

“It’s very regrettable,” broadcaster



Isao Takahata, one of two best animated film nominees for the film “The Tale of Princess Kaguya”, arrives at the 87th Academy Awards in Hollywood, California February 22, 2015. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

NHK quoted Toshio Suzuki, of Studio Ghibli, as saying, “There were lots of things he wanted to do.”

Takahata died of lung cancer on Thursday, the studio said.

Saudi Arabia’s first new cinema in decades to open April 18

LOS ANGELES/RIYADH (Reuters) — Saudi Arabia’s first cinema in more than 35 years will open on April 18 in Riyadh, the capital, the authorities said on Wednesday after agreeing with AMC Entertainment Holdings (AMC.N) to open up to 40 theatres over the next five years.

Movie theatres will not be segregated by gender like most other public places in the deeply conservative Muslim kingdom, and the first screening will be Marvel’s superhero movie “Black Panther,” a source familiar with the matter told Reuters.

Saudi Arabia had some cinemas in the 1970s but its powerful clerics closed them, reflecting rising Islamist influence throughout the Arab region at the time.

In 2017, the government said it would lift the ban as part of ambitious economic and social reforms pushed by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. He is currently touring the United States seeking investments to help broaden the economy and lessen its dependence on oil.

Saudi Arabians are avid consumers of Western media and culture. Despite the cinema ban, Hollywood films and recent television series are widely watched at home and discussed.

AMC’s first cinema will be located in the King Abdullah Financial District in a building originally intended to be a symphony concert hall, AMC Chief Executive Adam Aron said in an interview. The main theater will have about 500 leather seats, orchestra and balcony levels and marble bathrooms, he said. Three more screens will be added by mid-summer.

“We think it’s going to be the prettiest movie theater in the world,” Aron said. “It’s a dramatic building.”

To serve a population of more than 32 million, most of whom are under the age of 30, Saudi Arabia wants to set up around 350 cinemas with over 2,500 screens by 2030, which it hopes will attract nearly \$1 billion in annual ticket sales.

“The restoration of cinemas will ... help boost the local economy by increasing household spending on entertainment while supporting job creation in the Kingdom,” Culture and Information Minister Awwad Alawwad said in a statement.

AMC is partnering with the Public Investment Fund (PIF), Saudi Arabia’s main sovereign wealth fund.

A handful of other theater operators are ready to build in Saudi Arabia if they win clearance, John Fithian, president of the U.S.-based National Association of Theatre Owners, told reporters.

Fithian said he met government officials in Riyadh in December to work out issues such as what type of material would be permitted on movie screens. He said he believes most Hollywood movies will be allowed, though some will require editing.

AMC’s Aron said he expects the same versions of films shown in Dubai or Kuwait will be suitable for Saudi Arabia. “Hollywood has long ago dealt with the sensitivities of the Middle East and have adjusted film product accordingly,” he said. “Major Hollywood studios are showing films all over the Middle East.”

Separately, Six Flags Entertainment (SIX.N) said it planned to develop a theme park in Riyadh with PIF. Cirque du Soleil will stage its first performance in the country on Sept. 23, according to a statement from the General Entertainment Authority.