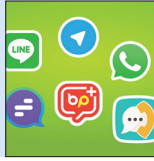




Tehran, Beijing seeking nuclear cooperation **2**



Iranian alternatives for Telegram in close-up **10**



Ashkan Dejagah dreams big with Iran **15**



Swedish illustrator Marit Törnqvist joins Iranian artists for Tehran showcase **16**

Hamid Hesam named Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year



See page 16

Rouhani, Putin: Attack on Syria might trigger chaos

POLITICS desk **TEHRAN** – Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Sunday discussed over the telephone the recent strikes on Syria by the U.S., Britain, and France, believing it can trigger a chaos in the world.

Rouhani said the strikes were intended to boost the morale of terrorists in Syria.

He said the attacks violated international law and if they go unanswered by international bodies, more of such chaos in the world will be conceivable.

“The attacks showed America is in direct contact with terrorists,” Rouhani stressed, adding, “This was their response when they realized the terrorists had lost a strategic region like Ghouta.” **→2**

Iranian military says Syria raid is open support for terrorists

POLITICS desk **TEHRAN** – The Iranian army has condemned a recent attack on Syria by a coalition of the U.S., UK, and France, stressing it was a sign that the Western trio is backing terrorists.

In the statement issued on Sunday, the Army underlined that the attack was planned and executed on the false accusation that the Syrian government had previously used chemical weapons against its nation.

“Over the past years it has been the

norm for America and a few Western countries to enter the stage to make up for the defeats suffered by terrorists,” the statement said.

“The evil trio of America, England, and France will succeed in nothing,” the Army stressed, adding the recent attack was a desperate move in the wake of the victories of the resistance front.

The Iranian army further stressed that regional countries should establish a constructive synergy to ward off the ill-intended schemes of outside powers. **→2**

Assad tells Russian lawmakers Western strikes were act of aggression

Syrian President Bashar Assad told a group of Russian lawmakers on Sunday that Western missile strikes on his country were an act of aggression.

The meeting followed missile strikes by the United States, France and Britain against Syrian government targets

over a suspected poison gas attack a week ago.

Russia, which is helping Assad fight militants and rebels opposed to his rule, immediately condemned the strikes and called for an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council. **→3**

Russia-West ‘alienation’ is worrying: German president

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on Sunday voiced alarm over the growing “alienation” between Russia and the West, stressing the need for dialogue as post-Cold War tensions peak.

Speaking to the Bild am Sonntag newspaper, Steinmeier said last month’s poisoning of a former Russian spy in England, which Britain and its allies blame on Moscow, was “a very serious incident”.

“But we should be at least as worried about the galloping alienation between Russia and the West, the consequences of which stretch far beyond this case,” the former foreign minister said.

Moscow vehemently denies involvement in the nerve agent poisoning of former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter, which triggered a wave of tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsions between Russia and Western countries.

A dispute over Western intervention in Syria has dramatically added to the tensions in recent days.

Defying Russian warnings, the United States, France and Britain carried out air strikes to punish the regime of President Bashar Assad, a close Moscow ally, for an alleged deadly chemical attack on the town of Douma.

Russia on Saturday failed to win the United Nations backing for a resolution that would have condemned the “aggression” against Syria, highlighting Moscow’s isolation on the international stage.

Steinmeier said while it was right to show Russia its actions have consequences, as demonstrated by the sanctions imposed over the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Ukraine, “we can’t abandon direct dialogue”.

He also cautioned against demonizing an entire nation.

“Independently of Putin, we can’t declare the whole of Russia, the country and its people, as our enemy,” he said, warning there was “too much at stake”.

On Syria, Steinmeier said there could be no improvement on the ground until the U.S. President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin engaged with each other in a constructive manner to try to negotiate a solution.

“Of course you can’t do it without the regional neighbors in the end, but everything begins with the U.S. and Russia,” he was quoted as saying.

“Putin and Trump owe it to the world to take the first step.”

(Source: AFP)

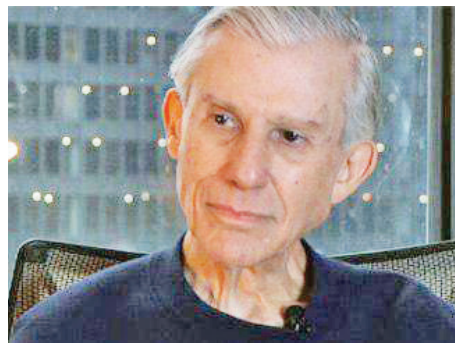
Attack on Syria violated international laws: Lendman

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN – U.S. columnist Stephen Lendman says that “Overnight U.S., UK and French aggression on Syria had nothing to do with the alleged Douma chemical weapons (CW) incident that didn’t happen – and has everything to do with America’s imperial project, along with punishing Syria and Russia for defeating its aims in the country.”

“The attack flagrantly violated international, U.S. constitutional and its statute laws,” Lendman told the Tehran Times recently.

Following is the complete text of the in-



interview with Stephen Lendman.
■ What did the U.S., England and France

strike Syria? Did the attack have any legal basis, or did the participating countries ignore the intentional law?

A: Overnight, U.S., UK and French aggression on Syria had nothing to do with the alleged Douma chemical weapons (CW) incident that didn’t happen -- everything to do with America’s imperial project, along with punishing Syria and Russia for defeating its aims in the country.

The attack flagrantly violated international, U.S. constitutional and its statute laws. But it doesn’t matter. Washington and its rogue allies do whatever they wish, rule of law principles discarded virtually always. **→7**

Trump and allies can’t accept defeat in Syria: expert

AMERICAN HERALD TRIBUNE – There has been a resurgence of the neo-orientalist discourse of “the axis of evil” coined and perpetuated by the Bush administration in 2002 by applying the stereotypes and clichés about the East. The Bush, Obama and Trump administrations have been using this as part of their ‘public diplomacy’, which they have exploited to intervene in the affairs of the so-called Middle East. Today, 15 years later, the US regime with Trump in office continues to use fabricated pretexts and false flag operations against some major players in the West Asian region, justifying US and its allies’ meddling.

15 years ago, when US President George Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair decided to invade Iraq under the claim that Iraq’s President Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of

mass destruction, the US and its allies declared with certainty they had proof and evidence of the WMD existence.

However, one simple example of the fabrication of evidence by this alliance is the Chilcot’s report, published in July 2016, which found that the former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein posed “no imminent threat” at the time of the invasion of his country in 2003, and that the war was fought on the basis of “flawed” intelligence. It found that the British cabinet’s decision to invade along with the US was made in circumstances that were “far from satisfactory”. Also, we must remember that it was the US and its allies that provided Iraq with chemical weapons during the 80s in its war against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The fake dossier of Iraq has been replaced with

fake intelligence on Syria today. The only difference is that in Syria, the US and its allies cannot accept the enormous defeats of its allies that consist of the terrorist groups that have been funded and supported by the US and its allies as well as ideologically fed by Saudi Arabia. This is not the first false accusation against the Syrian government; similar fabricated accusations were made in 2013 and 2017. Several reports based on field research were issued back then, providing facts that prove it could not have been the Syrian government behind the attack, such as reports by American historian and investigative journalist Gareth Porter, United Nations weapons inspector in Iraq Scott Ritter, Veteran prosecutor Carla Del Ponte, American investigative journalist and political writer Seymour Hersh, and MIT’s Theodore Postol. **→7**



© IRNA / Bahman Zareei

Kermanshahi people cherish local traditions

In an attempt to keep alive cherished traditions, people of the western province of Kermanshah held a festival on Saturday.

The event was held in Bistoun protected area concurrent with Eid al-Mab’ath – the anniversary of the day Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was chosen as God’s messenger.

Holding sports events, making local foods, and playing games were held on the joyous occasion. Moreover, handicrafts including kilim (flat tapestry-woven carpet or rug) and giveh (a comfortable, handwoven-top shoe) were on sale.

ARTICLE
By **Mehmoosh Aryanpour**
Manager partner of the Tehran office of Gide Loyrette Nouel

Dollars for...donuts: when the craze for FX simply gets out of control

The other week’s slide in the rial to a new record low, posted as 56,800 per dollar, according to the Financial Tribune last week, shows just how manic the market’s thirst for hard currency has become. But instead of following the herd and asking, “where can I get some dollars to hoard?”, the better questions to ask are instead:

1. What do Iranians wish to do with all the dollars they are buying?
2. Is the dollar a sensible financial asset to buy, when evaluated against a rubric of its function as:
 - a. Store of value
 - b. Medium of exchange
 - c. Unit of account
3. Is the dollar being valued accurately in the Iranian market?
4. Are there obvious fundamental reasons for the continued decline in the rial, or is it mostly psychological?

In response to the first question, the answer seems to be, “put them under the doshak”, since there’s not much else that can be done with them, at least not according to some authorities.

Why?

The U.S. dollar is not an accepted currency in the Islamic Republic of Iran and is also subject to a number of international restrictions against use in, or in relation to Iran, owing to the sanctions placed on Iran by the American Office of Foreign Assets Control (or “OFAC”). While OFAC has publicly stated that it does not control U.S. dollar bills, it has, in its revised guidance last published in December, 2016, avowed that it shall be considered as prohibited for any person, U.S. or non-U.S., to undertake, facilitate, or otherwise participate in, financial transfers concerning Iran which originate, transit through, or directly or indirectly involve the U.S. financial system.

That’s a very broad and blanket restriction, once you think about it. The U.S. financial system, at least as OFAC conceives of it, may not simply be limited to bank and non-bank institutions within the physical confines of the United States; in fact, taken expansively, **→4**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



MP: Tehran, Beijing seeking nuclear cooperation

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Tehran and Beijing have been in talks over the construction of small nuclear power plants in Iran by China, a top parliamentarian said on Sunday, Fars reported.

MP Mojtaba Zonnour, who heads the Majlis Nuclear Committee, said that the talks were held during the recent Iran-China conference on nuclear cooperation hosted by China at the presence of a number of Iranian legislators.

“The Chinese welcomed the proposal and it was decided that the issue be pursued at other (higher) levels,” Zonnour said, expressing the hope that Iran can use China’s nuclear expertise.



Quds Force set to report to parliament on Syria attack

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A top lawmaker said on Sunday that commanders of the IRGC Quds Force as well as officials with the Foreign Ministry were scheduled to report to the parliament on Sunday evening on the recent U.S.-led attacks on Syria.

Speaking to IRNA, Kamal Dehqani-Firouzabadi, the vice-chairman of the Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said members of the committee are set to review the Saturday attacks which were carried out by the U.S., UK and France.

Denouncing the raid, Dehqani-Firouzabadi said such acts will lead nowhere. “Everyone knows that the Americans did this to satisfy Saudi Arabia and the Zionist regime.”



Iran-China ties are ‘strategic’, says Velayati

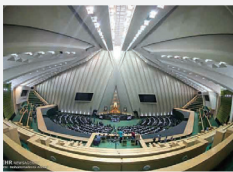
POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Senior politician Ali Akbar Velayati said on Sunday that Iran and China have “constructive” and “strategic” ties.

Velayati made the remarks during a meeting with a member of China’s Foreign Policy Advisory Committee in Tehran, IRNA reported.

He also said that Iran-China relations are growing.

Velayati added a Chinese delegation will visit Iran’s Chabahar Port.

Regarding China’s position on the recent U.S.-led attack on Syria, Velayati told reporters that China like Iran opposes any acts against international law.



MPs condemn trilateral airstrike against Syria

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — In a joint statement, 239 Iranian lawmakers condemned the attack on Syria by the U.S., UK and France, saying the new plots of Western countries will end in failure.

The statement was read out at the end of the open meeting of parliament on Sunday, Mehr reported.

The Americans, who have backed terrorists in a proxy war against Syria, failed to change the Syrian political system, the MPs said.

They fanned the flames of war again at a time when the Syrian crisis was to settle politically, the statement added.



Parliament ratifies extradition treaty with Sri Lanka

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian lawmakers on Sunday ratified a bill concerning an extradition treaty between Iran and Sri Lanka, IRNA reported.

The bill secured 153 yes votes, 11 no votes, and seven abstentions.

Under the terms of the bill, the permit for exchange of documents was also issued.

The parliament has put the bill on its agenda due to the forthcoming visit of Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani to Sri Lanka.

Rouhani, Putin: Attack on Syria might trigger chaos



1 → For his part, Putin said further Western missile strikes on Syria would lead to chaos in international relations, Russian news agencies cited the Kremlin as saying.

“Vladimir Putin, in particular, stressed that if such actions in violation of the UN Charter continue, then it will inevitably lead to chaos in international relations,” RIA news agency quoted the Kremlin as saying in a statement.

The two leaders agreed that the strikes had damaged the chances of achieving a political resolution in Syria.

Zarif to UK: No country has right to take obstinate action against others

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told his British counterpart Boris Johnson on Sunday that “no country has the right to obstinately take punitive actions against others outside international regulations.”

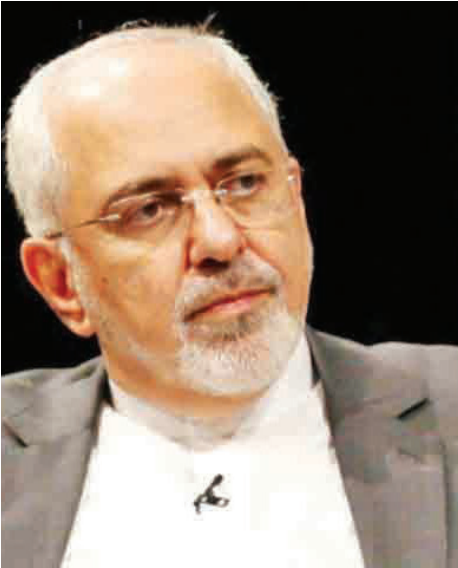
The strong criticism against attack on Syria by Zarif came after British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson telephoned him to explain about Britain’s participation in the U.S.-led attack on Syria.

Zarif called attack on Syria by the U.S., Britain and France “obstinate”, “illegal” and “unilateral”.

The U.S., Britain and France jointly carried out attacks on Syria on Saturday. The attack took place one week after a suspected chemical weapons attack in the Syrian town of Douma near Damascus. Western countries claimed the Syrian government was responsible for the attack. Syria rejected by the claim.

Zarif condemned the Western countries’ double standards in regard to use of chemical weapons by pointing to support to Saddam Hussein by France, the U.S. and Britain during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War when the Iraqi dictator gassed Iranians.

Zarif said Iran is strongly against use of



Zarif says launching attacks on Syria before the investigation into chemical weapons attack by international organizations is “questionable”.

Iranian parliament condemns attack on Syria



POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani on Sunday condemned the U.S.-led attack on Syria, saying it runs contrary to international law.

The U.S., UK and France launched missiles at Syria in the early hours of Saturday morning. The attack took place one week after a suspected chemical weapons attack in the Syrian town of Douma near Damascus. The Western countries claimed the Syrian government was responsible for the attack, a claim which was rejected by the Syrian government.

“The first question that comes to mind is that what was the motive behind this illegal action? The three Western countries claimed that the Syrian government used chemical weapons that helped remove the terrorists from suburb of Damascus. Syria and Russia rejected the claim,” Larijani said at a session of the parliament.

He added, “The international bodies were supposed to investigate the issue. So, why such an aggressive action was taken

in haste? So, their excuse is not justified.”

The senior lawmaker said the motive behind the attack was victories by the Syrian forces against Jaish al-Islam militants.

“It was for many years that the suburb of Damascus had been turned into a den of the terrorists... however, recent actions by the Syrian army and popular forces cleansed this region and the supporters of the terrorists could not believe this could happen in a short period of time,” Larijani remarked.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry also issued a statement on Saturday strongly condemning the attacks. It said the act is contrary to international law and a violation of Syria’s national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

More than 100 missiles were fired from ships and manned aircraft.

Russia’s Defense Ministry said on Saturday that the majority of missiles fired during the overnight attack on Syria by U.S., British and French forces were intercepted by Syrian air defense systems, TASS news agency reported.

Iranian military says Syria raid is open support for terrorists

1 → In a similar statement the night before, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps also condemned the recent Western attack on Syria.

The IRGC said that the attack will only boost the Syrian nation’s resolve in fight against terrorism.

The joint strikes were a “flagrant and undeniable crime” by the three countries and proved “their disgraceful failure in supporting Takfiri terrorists” and saving them, it added, according to Press TV.

The IRGC said the seven-year experience of war in Syria and full resistance of the country’s army, government and people against “an all-out proxy war [waged] by the [global] arrogance and Zionism and Takfiri terrorists” showed that the resilient Syrian nation, backed by strategic allies of Damascus, would not stop moving in this path until achieving a full victory.”

The criminals, aggressors and their regional supporters would achieve nothing, it pointed out.

In the early hours of Saturday, the three Western states launched a barrage of missile attacks against Syria in response to what they claim to be a chemical attack in Douma. Syria has rejected any role in the suspected gas attack.

Syrian air defenses, however, responded firmly, shooting down most of the missiles fired at the country.

The Russian military said on Saturday that the three countries had fired 103 cruise missiles, including Tomahawk missiles, at Syria but that Syrian air defense systems managed to intercept 71 of them.

■ **‘Illegal strike’**

The chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces also talked



Damascus sky lights up with missile fire as the U.S. launches an attack on Syria targeting different parts of the Syrian capital Damascus, Syria, early Saturday, April 14, 2018.

over the telephone with Syrian Defense Minister Ali Abdullah Ayyoub on Saturday evening, condemning the attack on Syria.

The aggressors would not make any gains from the “illegal and barbaric” strike, Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri told the Syrian minister.

The offensive will strengthen unity between the Syrian government and nation against enemies, Tasnim quoted Baqeri as saying.

The Iranian general also called the trilateral missile attack a result of the “definite defeat of terrorists” and the outstanding victories by the Syrian Army.

“The nation and the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran will continue to fight alongside the Syrian people and the Syrian Armed Forces against the criminal terrorists,”

Velayati says Iran will continue backing Syria



POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Ali Akbar Velayati, a top foreign policy adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, said on Sunday that Iran is standing beside Syria.

In a press conference after a meeting with a member of China’s Foreign Policy Advisory Committee, Velayati said, “The resistance front will be strengthened in future and Iran will continue supporting states member to this front more powerful than ever.”

He said that the U.S.-led attacks on Syria were in line with Washington’s policy to help terrorists.

“We condemn the U.S. actions in Syria. The Syrian government and people can defend their territorial integrity stronger than ever and this is the Islamic Republic of Iran’s position,” he said.

The U.S., UK and France fired about 100 missiles at Syria in the early hours of Saturday morning. The attack took place one week after a suspected chemical weapons attack in the Syrian town of

chemical weapons but launching attacks before investigation of the issue by international organizations is “questionable”.

The two attacks against Syria under the pretext of chemical attacks took place exactly when the Syrian army had the “upper hand” against terrorist and put them on the “verge of defeat”.

Zarif told Johnson that since the issue of Syria’s chemical weapons disarmament was raised in 2013 “we announced that the armed terrorist groups had chemical weapons but it went unnoticed”.

In a phone conversation with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad on Saturday, President Hassan Rouhani said that the U.S. and its European allies are responsible for consequences of attacks on Syria.

He described the U.S.-led attacks as a “practical action” to boost terrorism in the region.

“While the terrorists face defeats in Syria, this action by the three countries means support for the defeated terrorist groups,” Rouhani pointed out.

Noting that no foreign country can decide about the future of Syria, Rouhani said that it is the Syrians who should decide about their country.

Douma near Damascus. The attackers claimed the Syrian government was responsible for the attack. However, the government rejected the claim.

Velayati said that the claim of chemical weapons use in Syria is a “lie”. “The U.S. and its allies carried out attacks before the result of investigations into use of chemical weapons was announced, because they knew that the results would prove their claims wrong,” he added.

On Saturday, Ayatollah Khamenei strongly denounced the airstrikes as a “crime”, saying the leaders of the three countries are “criminals”.

Also in a phone conversation with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad on Saturday, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said that Tehran will stand beside the Syrian government and people.

“This aggression was not just against the Syrian territory but against the stability of the entire region,” he noted.

Major Baqeri added.

Also on Saturday evening, Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami said that the missile attack on Syria was another clear example of the U.S. criminal approach against the oppressed nations in the region.

In a telephone conversation with his Syrian counterpart Ayyoub, the Iranian defense minister said the criminal act by Washington, Paris and London was a breach of international law and human principles.

He added that the global arrogance led by the U.S. has for many years interfered in the internal affairs of Muslim countries.

Supporters of terrorists, including some Western and regional countries, carry out such criminal acts any time they see their plots failed, Hatami noted.

The countries that launched the attack should know that their missiles could never dent the resolve of the Syrian government and the resistance movement to “protect the country’s people and restore stability and security to Syria.”

The Iranian defense minister once again reiterated the Islamic Republic’s support for the Syrian government in the fight against terrorists.

The Syrian defense minister, for his part, said close relations between Tehran and Damascus show solidarity between the two nations in the battle against terrorists and their sponsors.

Ayyoub emphasized that such criminal acts would have no impact on Syria’s resolve to fight terrorists until their complete elimination.

‘U.S., Israel, Saudi have set up anti-Iran alliance’

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A former Iranian diplomat believes that the election of Donald Trump as the president of the United States has paved the way for Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the U.S. to form an anti-Iran alliance.

In an interview with alef.ir, Seyed Hossein Mousavian, who is currently a researcher at Princeton University, expounded on the purposes of the alliance.

“When Donald Trump assumed office, I warned that the U.S., Israel and Saudi Arabia

will form an alliance to counter Iran. I said that Tel Aviv would be in charge of planning, Riyadh would be in charge of financing and Washington would exert pressure on Iran to achieve the goals of the tripartite alliance,” Mousavian said, IRNA reported on Sunday.

“Presently, they have not only established the alliance but have also initiated a broad anti-Iran smear campaign. One of the strategies drawn up by Israel is aimed at spreading Iranophobia in the world. Saudi Arabia and the U.S. will contribute to it,” he remarked.

Mousavian, who is a Middle East security and nuclear policy specialist, further said that the three countries seek to block economic and political cooperation between Iran and the international community, isolate the Islamic Republic and undermine its domestic economy.

These conspiracies would create conditions in Iran like those in Afghanistan and Libya, he said, adding that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman’s warning about a war between the two Persian Gulf countries

is based on such objective.

In other words, the former diplomat said, the U.S., Saudi Arabia and Israel are pursuing an anti-Iran psychological war, as part of which they try to sow seeds of despair and drive away foreign investors from Iran.

On Tehran’s relations with its Arab neighbors, Mousavian said Israel plays a major role in undermining relations between Iran and the Arab world. “Tel Aviv is managing Riyadh’s anti-Tehran policies,” he stressed.

Assad tells Russian lawmakers Western strikes were act of aggression

1 → “From the point of view of the president, this was aggression and we share this position,” Russia’s TASS news agency quoted lawmaker Sergei Zheleznyak as saying after the meeting with Assad in the Syrian capital Damascus.

The president was in a “good mood” and continuing his work in Damascus, agencies cited the lawmakers as saying, and praised the Soviet-era air defiance systems Syria used to help to repel the Western attacks.

“The tripartite aggression against Syria accompanied a campaign of disinformation,” Assad’s office quoted him as saying on Sunday. Moscow and Damascus are “waging one battle, not only against terrorism” but also to protect the sovereignty of states, he told the Russian officials.

Both countries have dismissed the reports of the alleged gas attack as bogus, accusing Washington of using it as a pretext for the strikes. A senior Russian military official said on Saturday that Syria’s air defenses, which mostly consist of systems made in the former Soviet Union, had intercepted 71 of the 105 American, British and French missiles.

“Yesterday we saw American aggression. And we were able to repel it with Soviet missiles from the 70s,” Russian lawmaker Dmitry Sablin quoted Assad as saying, TASS reported.

Sablin also said Assad accepted an invitation to visit the Siberian region of Khanty-Mansi in Russia. It was not clear when the visit would take place.

Russia said on Saturday it would consider supplying S-300 surface-to-air missile systems to Syria following the Western strikes, but this was not discussed at the meeting with Assad, agencies reported.



Assad also declined to comment on calls by the U.S. State Department to declare alleged Syrian stockpiles of chemical

weapons, Zheleznyak said.

(Source: Daily Star)

UN blacklists Myanmar military for abuse of Rohingya

A report by the United Nations has black-listed Myanmar’s military for carrying out widespread sexual violence as a strategy to terrorize the Rohingya Muslim population and to drive them out of the land they lived in western Myanmar.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres’ report is due to be presented to the UN Security Council on Monday, but an advance copy has been obtained by the Associated Press.

According to the AP, Guterres says in the report that Myanmar’s armed forces, known as the Tatmadaw, are “credibly suspected” of having used sexual assault, including rape, “in the course of military clearance operations in October 2016 and August 2017.”

The state-sponsored violence against the Rohingya began over allegations that some members of the persecuted minority had attacked military forces. A second alleged attack led to intensified violence. The government, in the meantime, claimed “clearance” operations were underway against “terrorists.”

Hundreds of thousands of the Muslims have fled to neighboring Bangladesh. Their villages, already burnt in the violence, have since been bulldozed to make room for Buddhist settlers shuttled from elsewhere in Myanmar to repopulate the area and make a possible return of the Muslims impossible.

International medical staff and others in Bangladesh have confirmed that many of the almost 700,000 Rohingya Muslims



who have fled the state-sponsored violence in Myanmar “bear the physical and psychological scars of brutal sexual assault,” the UN report says.

“The widespread threat and use of sexual violence was integral to this strategy, serving to humiliate, terrorize and collectively punish the Rohingya community, as a calculated tool to force them to flee their homelands and prevent their return,” Guterres said.

The UN chief says most victims were “politically and economically marginalized women and girls” concentrated in remote, rural areas and refugee camps with the least access to services for the displaced.

“Violence was visited upon women, including pregnant women, who are seen as custodians and propagators of ethnic identity, as well as on young children, who represent the future of the group,” Guterres says in the report. “This can be linked to an inflammatory narrative alleging that high fertility rates among the Rohingya represent an existential threat to the majority [Buddhist] population.”

The report is to be discussed during a Security Council meeting on preventing sexual violence in conflict on Monday.

The report came as Myanmar announced that the first family from the nearly 700,000 Rohingya refugees was repatriated from

Bangladesh to a camp in Rakhine. The UN, however, has warned that condition are not currently “conducive to a voluntary, dignified and sustainable return.”

Bangladesh and Myanmar signed an agreement late last year to repatriate some 750,000 Rohingya Muslim refugees who have crossed the border since August 25, 2017, to escape a brutal crackdown by the military. The repatriation was delayed due to a lack of preparation as well as protests staged by Rohingya refugees against the plan to send them back to Myanmar while conditions were not safe for their return.

Myanmar’s government troops have been committing killings, making arbitrary arrests, and carrying out arson attacks in Muslim villages in Rakhine over the last year and a half.

The UN stops short of officially designating the purge of Muslims from Myanmar as “genocide,” but it has reiterated that the crackdown, which has seen many people killed, lots of homes and villages torched, and women raped by the military and Buddhist mobs, is a textbook example of “ethnic cleansing.”

The Rohingya have lived in Myanmar for generations but are denied citizenship and are branded illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, which likewise denies them citizenship. The Myanmar state has consistently denied the widespread and documented accounts of violence against the Rohingya.

(Source: agencies)

China FM visits Japan for talks on N. Korea, regional issues

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Sunday began a visit to Japan described as a major step forward in improving frosty relations, as Tokyo tries to stay involved in a flurry of international diplomacy over North Korea.

Wang met his Japanese counterpart Taro Kono in talks expected to touch on economic relations, territorial disputes in the East China Sea and ways to push the North to give up its nuclear weapons.

“I would like to regard [Wang’s visit] as a major step forward in our efforts towards improving Japan-China relations,” Kono told Wang at the start of their meeting at the Iikura Guest House.

Wang said his visit was China’s answer to “positive” messages and policies by Japan.

“We are also faced with some complex and sensitive elements,” Wang said, a veteran Japan expert who is a former ambassador to Tokyo.

“But together with Japan’s efforts... we would like to bring China-Japan relations back on a path of sustainable and normal development.”

The world’s second and third largest economies have a fraught relationship, complicated by longstanding disputes over maritime claims and Japan’s wartime legacy.

But Tokyo is eager to get the relationship back on firmer



footing, especially as it fears being shut out of negotiations on North Korea’s nuclear program in which Beijing is likely to be a major player.

China demonstrated its significant influence over its exclusive ally when President Xi Jinping hosted Kim Jong-un and his wife in Beijing last month.

Japan hopes to expand its exchanges with China to stay involved as international efforts to engage with the North intensify. South Korean President Moon Jae-in and the United States President Donald Trump are preparing for

separate direct talks with Kim.

Kono, who visited Beijing in January, stressed that Japan and China share the same goal on North Korea.

“I hope Japan and China will further cooperate toward our shared goal of the irreversible, verifiable and complete denuclearization of North Korea,” he said.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who is due to meet Trump in Florida on Tuesday to discuss North Korea, will meet Wang on Monday.

The visit is also seen as paving the way for a possible trilateral summit next month involving Abe, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and South Korea’s Moon.

Tokyo hopes such a meeting will lead to a long-awaited exchange of state visits between Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping. The time is ripe for the two nations to improve relations to mark the 40th anniversary of their 1978 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, said both ministers.

“I would like us to build peaceful and friendly relations befitting the name of the treaty,” Kono said, adding that the two nations are “partners in cooperation” and share an understanding that they should not threaten each other.

Wang, who will be in Tokyo until Tuesday, will also take part in the fourth China-Japan High-level Economic Dialogue.

(Source: AFP)

Morocco to pull warplanes from Saudi regime-led coalition

Morocco is reportedly to pull its warplanes out of a House of Saud regime-led coalition, which has been pounding Yemen for more than three years now, citing a need for military buildup at home.

The coalition invaded the most impoverished nation among Arab states in March 2015 to put its Riyadh-allied former government back in the saddle. It has fallen short of the objective, while thousands have been killed and displaced as a result of the invasion.

The F16 aircraft are to be repatriated as the Army has been placed on high alert over heightened militancy in Western Sahara, the regional English-language The North Africa Post newspaper said, citing Internet outlets.

The Polisario Front militants aim to end Morocco’s presence in the Saharan region. They recently said they sought to set up a



“capital” in the region, prompting Rabat to caution it would respond with force.

The announcement violates a 1991 United

Nations-brokered truce between the militants and Moroccan forces. In line with the agreement, the final status of the disputed

territory is to be decided by a referendum, which has never gone underway.

Moroccan media have, meanwhile, been speculating about future airstrikes by the military to contain the militancy.

The news about the upcoming withdrawal of the warplanes from the coalition came as anti-war and rights groups around the world are urging the United States and its allies to stop their arms sales to the countries waging the war on Yemen.

Germany, Sweden, Norway, and Belgium have almost halted their weapons exports to the House of Saud regime over the invasion. The U.S., Britain, and France have, however, kept the arms flow, with Washington and London even beefing up their Saudi regime weapons deals since the onset of the warfare.

(Source: Press TV)

Egypt court upholds life sentence against Brotherhood leader

An Egyptian court upheld a life sentence against Mohamed Badie, the leader of the banned Muslim Brotherhood, over 2013 violence, judicial sources said.

The court of cassation, Egypt’s top court, rejected an appeal by Badie and others against verdicts issued against them last May in the case known in local media as “the Rabaa Operations Room” trial.

The case relates to a sit-in in Rabaa to support ousted President Mohamed Morsi who hailed from the Muslim Brotherhood. The sit-in, which began after the army ousted Morsi following mass protests against his rule, was forcibly dispersed by security forces, leaving hundreds dead.

Badie and two others were sentenced to life imprisonment in the case, 15 others were sentenced to five years while 21 people were acquitted, sources said.

The defendants were charged with leading an illegally founded organization, plotting to stir chaos and publishing false news among other crimes.

Authorities outlawed the Brotherhood after Morsi was ousted, and arrested thousands of its supporters. They also dissolved its Freedom and Justice Party, which Morsi led.

Decisions made by the court of cassation are final and cannot be appealed. Saturday’s life sentence is the third against Badie.

(Source: Reuters)

Former FBI head: Assumption Clinton would win a factor in email probe

Former United States FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) Director James Comey said his assumption that Hillary Clinton would win the 2016 presidential election was a factor in opening an inquiry into her emails, according to part of an ABC interview.

The controversy involved Clinton’s use of a private email server for official correspondence when she was secretary of state under then-President Barack Obama, including for messages that were later determined to contain classified information.

Although the FBI ultimately decided not to refer Clinton’s case for prosecution, Democrats said Comey’s announcement damaged her with voters right before the election, and he faced complaints that his moves were politically motivated.

“I don’t remember consciously thinking about that, but it must have been because I was operating in a world where Hillary Clinton was going to beat Donald Trump, and so I’m sure that it was a factor,” Comey said in an excerpt of an interview aired on Saturday.

“I don’t remember spelling it out, but it had to have been, that she’s going to be elected president and if I hide this from the American people, she’ll be illegitimate the moment she’s elected, the moment this comes out,” Comey added.

Comey, who was fired by Republican President Donald Trump last May, is doing a series of media interviews that coincide with the release next week of his book, “A Higher Loyalty: Truth, Lies and Leadership.”

(Source: Reuters)

Airport standoff escalates tensions between UAE, Somalia

Recent tensions have escalated between the United Arab Emirates and Somalia over Emirati relations with a breakaway Somali region, with a flight carrying Emirati military trainers held for hours at an airport in Somalia.

The standoff began on Saturday when Emirati military trainers on board a plane at Bosaso International Airport in Somalia’s semi-autonomous region of Puntland refused to allow checks of their suspiciously “heavy” baggage.

The refusal by the Emiratis resulted in hours of delay imposed by Somali authorities.

According to local reports, the Emiratis eventually agreed to allow airport security forces to check their baggage, and authorities then allowed the plane to depart.

It was not clear what the baggage contained.

The incident coincided with a similar one at Bosaso seaport, where a UAE-flagged ship was disallowed to dock at the port.

In a separate incident last week, the Somali federal government seized \$9.6 million dollars in sealed bags from a UAE Royal Jet at Mogadishu International Airport. The Emirati government condemned the state confiscation, calling the move “illegal.”

The Somali government, in response, complained that the UAE aimed to destabilize Somalia.

Relations between Somalia and the oil-rich Persian Gulf state have been deteriorating since the UAE began to operate a major port in Somalia’s breakaway territory of Somaliland.

UAE leaders have invited officials from the autonomous region, suggesting that the country is moving toward officially recognizing Somaliland’s self-declared independence.

The UAE is also building a military base in Somaliland which it can use to maintain its shipping interests in the Gulf of Aden.

Somaliland is located in the strategic Bab al-Mandeb area across from Yemen. Bab-el Mandeb Strait is one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes in the transit of oil and gas.

In order to impose full control over the strategic waterway, the UAE has been expanding its naval presence in the East African states of Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia.

The tiny Emirates has also been part of a Saudi-led coalition that has been waging a three-year military aggression against Yemen.

Somalia’s internationally-backed government is reportedly planning to file a legal complaint against the UAE for setting up a military base in the unrecognized breakaway Somaliland.

(Source: Press TV)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	95987.6
IFX	1065.87

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,210 rials
EUR	51,990 rials
GBP	59,650 rials
AED	11,490 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	67.39/b
Brent	72.58/b
OPEC Basket	68.73/b
Gold	\$1,364.60 /oz
Silver	\$16.68/oz
Platinum	\$934.85/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Gas supply to Chabahar power plant to start in late May

E N E R G Y **d e s k** **TEHRAN** – The first phase of the gas supply project to Chabahar power plant in southeastern Iran is due to be completed by May 22 in which 1 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas will be supplied to the plant on a daily basis.

The total project is defined in two phases and in the second phase 2 mcm of gas will be supplied to the plant in a day, Shana reported quoting National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC)’s gas distribution director Saeid Momeni.



Textile, garment exports up 15% in a year

E C O N O M Y **d e s k** **TEHRAN** – The value of textile and garment exports reached \$970 million in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), a 15 percent rise compared to the preceding year.

According to the Iranian Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade, Afghanistan, Iraq and Central Asian countries make up the main export markets for Iranian textile and clothing products, IRNA reported.

Iran has exported some \$805 million worth of the mentioned goods during last year’s first 10 months (March 21, 2017-January 20, 2018).

Trump misses opportunity to curb China’s growing global influence by skipping Summit of the Americas

The Summit of the Americas — a large gathering of leaders from countries in the region, including Mexico and Brazil — kicked off on Friday in Lima, Peru, with one glaring absence: President Donald Trump.

The White House said Tuesday that Trump — who was originally scheduled to attend the two-day summit — will stay in the U.S. to “oversee the American response to Syria” following an apparent chemical attack in the Middle Eastern country. Vice President Mike Pence attended in Trump’s place.

Trump’s absence marks the first time in the summit’s nearly 24-year history that a U.S. president did not attend. It is also a missed opportunity for Trump to try and curb China’s growing influence in America’s own backyard.

Chinese foreign direct investment in Latin America skyrocketed more than \$110 billion between 2003 and 2016, with most of that coming between 2012 and 2016, according to a report last year by Washington-based think tank Atlantic Council.

“There are political implications,” said Sean Miner, a fellow at the Atlantic Council. “There is an opening for China to expand its influence there. That’s in part due to the lack of attention from the U.S. The U.S. has recently been more focused on other world affairs.”

Miner said some of the money was invested in the region’s energy, technology and transportation sectors. He also noted that more than 80 percent of Chinese investments in Latin America come from state-run companies, signaling a more hands-on approach to Latin America by China.

“Chinese investments in Latin America are accelerating and will continue to accelerate in countries like Brazil, Argentina and Mexico,” Miner notes. “I think that’s good for Latin America economically, but not so good for U.S. companies in these countries because they’re seeing more competition.”

China is increasing its presence in Latin America while a potential trade war with the U.S. may take place in the near future.

Last week, China announced fresh tariffs on 106 U.S. products while Trump asked United States Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to consider \$100 billion in additional tariffs against the Asian country.

The White House said Trump also instructed Lighthizer to consider trying to rejoin the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a multi-nation deal the U.S. quit after Trump took office. But skipping this weekend’s summit won’t help Trump mend relationships with some of the TPP’s Latin American members, especially Mexico.

(Source: CNBC)

Platforms of SP remaining phases to be completed by next March

E N E R G Y **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Building the platforms of the remaining phases of Iran’s South Pars gas field, except for phase 11, will be completed by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019), according to the managing director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing the field.

Mohammad Meshkinfam also said the platforms, which are for phases 13, 14, 22, 23 and 24, will be installed on their designated offshore spots by the end of current calendar year or early next year, Shana news agency reported on Sunday.

South Pars, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, is estimated to

Iran’s annual non-oil exports anticipated to hit \$55b by Mar. 2019

E C O N O M Y **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian deputy industry, mining and trade minister predicted that the country’s annual exports of non-oil products will reach \$55 billion in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2019), ISNA reported on Sunday.

According to Hassan Younes Sinaki, the figure will register \$8 billion annual increase from its previous \$47 billion.

As Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) reported in early April, the value of Iran’s non-oil exports reached \$46.931 billion in the past Iranian calendar year 1396 (ended on March 20), with 6.56 percent growth from \$44.42 billion in its preceding year.

Arab stocks advance as jitters over U.S. strike in Syria fade

Stocks across most Arab markets advanced on Sunday as the risk of a military show-down between the U.S. and Russia in Syria that would roil the region faded.

Saudi Arabia’s Tadawul index led the advance as all but one stock rose, and Dubai’s main equity gauge climbed the most since June. Shares in Abu Dhabi gained as much as 1.3 percent, sending

the benchmark index to the highest level on a closing basis since August 2015.

The U.S., U.K. and France attacked targeting military positions and research facilities linked to alleged chemical weapons in Syria over the weekend. While Russia, Iran and Lebanon’s Hezbollah group rallied around Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad’s government, they didn’t

threaten any retaliation. Saudi Arabia said it would take part in the U.S. coalition if asked.

Saudi Arabia’s stocks on Wednesday fell the most since October after U.S. President Donald Trump’s comments on Twitter suggested that strikes against Syria were imminent. On Sunday, the Tadawul All Share Index climbed 1.9

percent, the most since June.

Dubai’s DFM General Index added 1.8 percent, led by Emaar Properties PJSC’s 2.9 percent increase. Abu Dhabi’s ADX General Index rose 1. percent. Stocks Bahrain gained 0.1 percent, while gauges in Egypt and Qatar lost 0.2 percent and 0.3 percent, respectively.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Dollars for...donuts: when the craze for FX simply gets out of control

1 → the “U.S. financial system”, as the term may be understood by sanctions experts, includes the entire U.S. dollar payments system worldwide, which encompasses everything from exchange houses and stock bourses to money transfer platforms and electronic crossing networks which deal in or depend upon U.S. dollar flows.

Therefore, by the book (albeit the book of American sanctions regulators), dollars that have touched Iran are problematic.

In any case, even if some of the Iranians exchanging their rials for USD at nearly 60.000 per had intended to take those dollars and invest them outside of Iran, there are other reasons why the mad rush for the currency appears short-sighted:

Official statistics place the number of Iranian born individuals living in America at less than 500.000, with those of Iranian ancestry at 1-2 million. Even under the conservative assumption that each one of those 1-2 million individuals of Iranian ancestry has five or even 10 interdependent persons in Iran who might routinely visit and hence have a need to obtain dollars for travel purposes, gifts or expenses, the gross amount of dollars on an annual basis pales in comparison to the hard currency earnings of Iran as a whole.

Suppose, for instance, that the average individual of Iranian ancestry living in America receives 10.000 USD on annual basis in transfers from his relatives living in Iran, that would imply a net dollar demand by Iranians living in Iran of a median figure of 15bn USD per year.

When compared to 2,5mm bbl of oil exported every day, at a price of 60 per bbl, it represents just 100 days of oil-export earnings. Moreover, in the context of reported quarterly trade-balance figures of around 10bn USD, it is well within the scope of the economy to accommodate.

The dollar-fascination therefore seems to be a blend of investment mania, herd following, and the ever-present fear of missing out, rather than a question of a significant use case, at least in terms of the actual regulations. But if we consider that any currency, insofar as it is intended to function in that capacity, should at least present itself credibly according to a standard rubric as mentioned in our second question, the dollar does not distinguish itself.

Yes, it has been a sound store of value in recent times, as compared to the persistent depreciation in the rial, which has lost roughly half its value over the past few years, from around 30.000 to nearly 60.000 to date. However, by that metric, gold, which is readily available for purchase and investment, has done even better, as have other alternative currencies to the dollar, such as the Swiss franc or Euro.

Moreover, the dollar is not a particularly useful medium of exchange, at least in Iran. In order to convey its value to others, one can, essentially, only hand it over in person. Owing to the banking restrictions mentioned above, there are no dollar accounts within Iranian banks, and reconvert-ing dollars to rials simply to transfer money would defeat the purpose of having purchased dollars in the first place. Handling large amounts of physical currency runs the risk of loss, theft, or even basic miscounting, particularly at a time when the fever for dollars runs high. By comparison, there is a limited possibility to open and maintain euro denominated accounts within Iranian banks, which may allow the transfer of such consideration to others, and on that metric, the euro scores marginally better.

As a unit of account, again, for the Iranian domestic market, the dollar is without place. Go to buy your daily groceries, purchase a plane ticket, or shop at any emporium across the country, and you may find that there is limited acceptance for dollars, particularly at a time when the exchange rate is so volatile. Even for those merchants who wish to accept dollars, the actual rate to use when taking a customer’s hard currency is up for debate, and wide spreads between buying and selling hard currency mean that holders of dol-



lars may have different expectations about its value in rials than those being asked to accept them. The transactional inefficiencies, it seems, loom large.

These mundane facts aside, and not considering people’s psychological preference for a piece of paper which is backed by nothing other than the “full faith and credit” of a hostile foreign nation, we should ask ourselves whether the dollar is being appropriately (and efficiently valued) in comparison to other alternatives.

When we consider the financial tribune’s posted closing rates for the dollar as of the other week, the euro is posted at 65,750, the dollar at 56,800 and the AED at 15,100 (rial for each).

Basic triangular parity yields that these prices imply that the EUR/USD exchange rate, on the street in Iran at mid market, is 1.1575, some seven CENTS below the global market price of the euro, which, according to Bloomberg, is 1.2275!!! In other words, Iranians are willing to pay an additional six percent of their capital simply for the pleasure of holding U.S. dollar bills, as opposed to euros.

By extension, if we compute the implicit USD/AED rate from these figures, by dividing the USD/IRR rate by the AED/IRR rate, we arrive at 3,7615! When compared to the fixed and official exchange rate of the AED against the dollar of approximately 3,66, we find that Iranians are paying a premium 10 cents (of dirham) for the privilege of those sweet-smelling dollars. In other words, nearly three percent of their money is being cast aside because they would rather have a bill marked “United States of America” rather than “United Arab Emirates”. This case is all the more vexing since the exchange rate between the dirham and dollar is fixed and firm and dollars can be traded for dirhams with little or no transaction cost. Moreover, the proximity of Iran to the UAE where millions of Iranians travel frequently for business and pleasure suggests that, all else equal, the practical functional use for dirhams, as compared to dollars, should be much greater.

The same should be said of euros. The state of the world these days means that, in spite of many Iranians’ ill-founded dreams of moving to America or even visiting family there, American visas are now issued essentially only in cases of exceptional hardship, and only Iranians who are permanent residents of the U.S. (or hold U.S. passports) can easily travel there and use the dollars they buy. By contrast, Europe has, particularly since the JCPOA, warmly embrace Iran and Iranians, and Schengen visas are routinely applied for (and obtained) by ordinary Iranians at any number of European consulates across the country. In that sense, it would be rational for Iranians to want to squirrel away some euros for their upcoming vacations, or business trips, or to purchase goods and services from European vendors. Moreover, in contrast to the preposterous regulations imposed on Iranians and Iran by OFAC, Europe’s regulations don’t presume to tell Iran that the currency of the European



contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world’s reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

The field is divided into 24 standard

phases of development in the first stage. Most of the phases are fully operational at the moment.

Some \$72 billion has been invested in the field since starting its development.

The attack on Syria could upend long-quiet oil markets

The coalition missile strike on Syria late Friday seemed to confirm market anxieties about resurgent instability in the Middle East, which have pushed oil prices and futures up over the past week. Combined with successful tightening of the global supply by OPEC and its allies, analysts broadly foresee rising oil prices after three years of low and fairly steady prices – with the potential for real surges if things go badly in Syria.

Crude oil prices climbed steeply even before the U.S. strikes, climbing 2 percent to \$66.82 per barrel after President Trump announced his intention to take action in Syria. By Friday afternoon, oil prices had risen at the highest weekly rate in eight months.

A report issued by the International Energy Association on Friday expressed longer-term bullishness, based not just on the Syria situation, but also dwindling reserves following a collective 2016 agreement, known as the Vienna agreement, to cut global oil output.



Credit Suisse updated its price forecasts on Friday as well, to an average of \$70 for Brent crude.

A JPMorgan note, though, opined that Brent could spike to \$80 a barrel if the Syrian civil war expands.

That's because escalation could have implications far beyond Syria itself, where a long-running civil war has already devastated oil production.

A relatively muted Russian response so far suggests the Friday night strike may not escalate those tensions, though it's too soon to say much with certainty. But even if the worst does come to pass, crude prices seem unlikely to return to levels seen even as recently as 2014, when Brent Crude hovered around \$110 a barrel. Even with a steadily growing global economy, alternative energy sources including natural gas have continued to suppress oil demand.

(Source: Fortune)

Soaring oil demand is tightening the market

OPEC's oil production fell yet again last month, helping to further tighten the oil market.

The group's collective output fell by a whopping 201,400 barrels per day in March, compared to a month earlier. It was the largest single-month decline since November and it took OPEC's combined production down to 31.958 million barrels per day (mb/d), which is the lowest level in a year.

To be expected, Venezuela lost a significant chunk of output, falling by 55,300 bpd, taking production down to 1.488 mb/d, according to OPEC's latest Oil Market Report. But the ongoing production losses in Venezuela are not really surprising. The surprise was that output fell by rather large volumes elsewhere, including Algeria (-49,500 bpd), Angola (-81,700 bpd), Iraq (-13,100 bpd), Libya (-37,200 bpd) and Saudi Arabia (-46,900 bpd).

Some of those countries have seen production fluctuate, perhaps due to maintenance, and it isn't obvious that the losses are set to stick around for a while. But Venezuela is producing almost 500,000 bpd below its target as part of the OPEC agreement, which means the combined OPEC compliance rate is way above 100 percent.

As Bloomberg notes, the ongoing losses of Venezuelan output and the danger to Iran's oil production from U.S. sanctions could result in twice as much supply taken off of the market than OPEC intended. It should also be noted that

the U.S. is reportedly considering sanctions on Venezuela, which could make the losses there even worse.

Oil demand looks strong at 1.65 mb/d, an upward revision of 30,000 bpd from last month's report. Soaring demand is tightening the oil market faster than many expected at this point, and demand is a crucial variable that has heavily influenced oil prices in the past few years, perhaps more so than some people think.

All of this means that the oil market is tightening significantly. OPEC estimates that the commercial oil inventory surplus in OECD countries has fallen to just 43 million barrels above the five-year average, down from over 300 million barrels a year ago. In other words, almost 90 percent of the inventory glut has disappeared.

Those numbers have been thrown around for a while, and to be sure, there are some problems with them. The importance of the five-year average has been watered down over time because the metric increasingly encompasses surplus years. It amounts to a moving of the goal posts.

A more poignant figure comes from OPEC's latest report. Bloomberg notes according to OPEC data, oil inventories could decline at a rate of 1.3 mb/d in the second half of 2018, which would dramatically tighten the market this year. It is also a much more bullish figure than analysts thought a few months ago when U.S. shale output really kicked into



high gear.

Still, all signals suggest OPEC will try to keep the cuts in place through the end of this year. Saudi Arabia is reportedly targeting an \$80 oil price, so for now, the group is not worried about over-tightening the market. To be sure, however, there is a tension for OPEC as it drains inventories and pushes up oil prices. The risk is that U.S. shale will grow at a faster rate than expected. In fact, output in the Permian is skyrocketing right now because OPEC pushed oil prices above the breakeven threshold for most of the industry.

(Source: Business Insider)

Iraq's oil development contracts may draw 14 bidders

Fourteen companies have expressed interest in oil and natural gas exploration and development contracts to be auctioned by Iraq on April 25, the oil ministry in Baghdad said on Saturday.

The 14 have bought a package containing the bidding documents and terms of the contracts for the 11 exploration blocks to be auctioned, it said in a statement.



The blocks, located in border areas with Iran and Kuwait, and in offshore Persian Gulf waters, were to be auctioned in June.

That date was brought forward to April 15 and then postponed to April 25 to give bidders more time.

The oil ministry last month announced measures to reduce the fees paid to oil companies in the contracts to be auctioned.

The new contracts will exclude oil by-products from the companies' revenue, establish a link between prevailing oil prices and their remuneration, and introduce a royalty element. Oil companies operating in Iraq currently receive a fee from the government linked to production increases, which include crude and oil by-products such as liquefied petroleum gas.

OPEC's second-largest producer after Saudi Arabia, Iraq decided to change the contracts after a glut caused oil prices to crash in 2014, reducing Baghdad's ability to pay such fees.

Companies including BP, Exxon Mobil, Eni, Total, Royal Dutch Shell and Lukoil have helped Iraq expand production in the past decade by over 2.5 million barrels per day (bpd) to about 4.7 million bpd.

The semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government produces oil and gas from fields it controls in northern Iraq under a production-sharing model that is more profitable to companies. The new contracts offered by Baghdad will also set a time limit for companies to end gas flaring from oilfields they develop.

Iraq continues to flare some of the gas extracted alongside crude oil at its fields because it lacks the facilities to process it into fuel. Iraq hopes to end gas flaring by 2021.

Flaring costs the government nearly \$2.5 billion in lost revenue each year and could meet most of its unmet needs for gas-fired power, according to the World Bank.

(Source: Reuters)

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A North Korea success plan for Trump

By Daniel R. DePetris

Since he inherited the throne of the Hermit Kingdom from his father more than six years ago, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un had never stepped off of North Korean soil. That changed last week, when the young Kim traveled to Beijing to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Korea watchers have speculated that Kim’s two-day trip to China was an attempt by the North Korean leader to repair a relationship that has been frosty of late. Whatever the motive, President Donald Trump has interpreted Kim’s reported commitment to denuclearization as an affirmation of his “maximum pressure,” and now engagement, policy. Within hours of Kim’s visit to China, Trump boastfully tweeted, “There is a good chance that Kim [Jong-un] will do what is right for his people and for humanity” by disarming his nuclear weapons program.” Full, complete, and verified denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is, of course, the whole reason the White House is looking ahead to the yet-to-be scheduled summit between Trump and Kim. The president is eager to make history and shine where his four previous predecessors failed.



The prospects of Trump actually making that history is another question entirely, which is why it would be wise for the administration to counsel the president into lowering his expectations.

Don’t misunderstand the premise: The United States and North Korean leaders exchanging smiles and handshakes would be the definition of an historic diplomatic event. The last time a U.S. cabinet official met with the head of the Kim family was eighteen years ago, when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright pontificated with Kim Jong-il about a possible presidential retreat.

Yet at the same time, we all need to be brutally honest about the likelihood of Trump, or any American negotiator, extracting major deliverables from Kim during these discussions.

Notwithstanding the cheerful tone from Seoul and Beijing, and the oftentimes jubilant excitement beaming from President Trump, the history of North Korean nuclear negotiations over the previous quarter of a century is all the evidence one needs to be cautious, if not cynical.

One does not need to be an expert on the Kim regime’s leadership structure or decision-making process to grasp the reality that a Pyongyang without a nuclear weapons capability would be left in an extremely vulnerable position. As John Mearsheimer, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago, argued, Pyongyang has very little incentive to denuclearize. “We don’t see any evidence that the U.S., which has the most powerful conventional forces in the world, is giving up their nuclear weapons,” Mearsheimer noted, “So why would you expect North Korea to do so?”

Kim Jong-un has made some reassuring, if not carefully worded, statements about his willingness to denuclearize. He has conditioned those statements on Washington abolishing its “hostile policy” toward Pyongyang.

Assuming that Kim is genuine in his openness to shut down his nuclear weapons program — a big assumption — he will only think about doing so if security assurances from the United States are guaranteed, all 28,500 American troops are withdrawn from South Korea, all U.S. and UN sanctions are terminated, and the U.S. nuclear umbrella over South Korea and Japan is lifted. All of these demands are anathema to the Washington foreign-policy playbook, yet these are precisely the concessions Kim Jong-un will insist upon before, during, and after the summit with Trump, should that meeting come to pass.

The chance Kim agrees to swift denuclearization is vanishingly small. This, however, does not mean that President Trump’s decision to talk with his North Korean counterpart is misguided. Dialogue with Kim can still yield dividends for the United States.

Incoming National Security Advisor John Bolton has recommended a short meeting with Kim, in which the United States lays out an ultimatum: Either denuclearize on the front end or prepare for the worst. This course of action, however, would be exactly the wrong approach to take. An ultimatum would not only fail to coerce Pyongyang into offering concessions, but would also signal that the United States is a frightened country more comfortable with precipitating a crisis than leveraging its deterrent strength.

The truth is that the status quo favors the United States — time is on our side, not Kim’s.

Rather than walking away as Bolton advises, Trump should make the most of his personal dialogue with the North Korean leader to establish a secure, reliable communications link between Washington and Pyongyang — a channel to replace largely haphazard and issue-specific conversations with a more predictable mechanism. Communicating red lines and intentions clearly and directly benefits us. American and North Korean officials would have quickly troubleshooting in the event of a mishap or a crisis. Dialogue would both help keep a nuclear-armed North Korea in a box and decrease the chances of miscalculating or blundering into an enormously costly war.

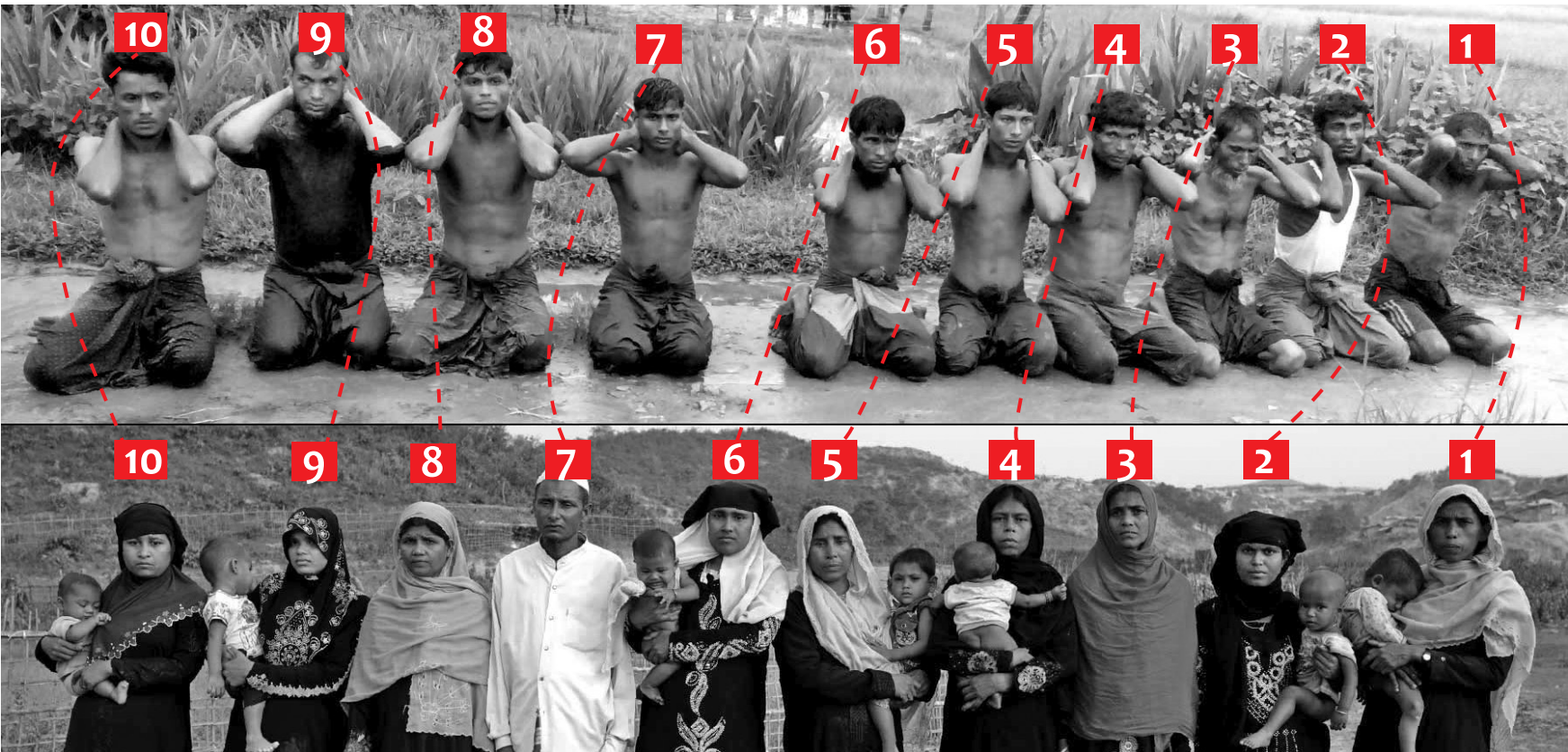
As much as we would all like to turn on the television one morning and learn that Kim Jong-un has relinquished his nuclear stockpile, it would be the epitome of foolishness if the administration threw all of its eggs in the denuclearization basket.

A Trump retreat with Kim can be a success if he focuses on attainable and important goals for the United States — decreasing risk, increasing dialogue, and avoiding a catastrophic war on the Korean Peninsula. The creation of a hotline between Washington to Pyongyang would reinforce the one policy that has proven successful with every other nuclear adversary: deterrence; containment; and clear-minded, pragmatic, and common-sense diplomacy.

(Source: The National Interest)

The day they took our men

The families of 10 massacred Rohingya men tell their stories



By Andrew R.C. Marshall

In February, a Reuters investigation revealed how Myanmar soldiers and Buddhist villagers had shot and hacked 10 Rohingya men to death. The families of the men made the painful choice to flee Myanmar without knowing their fate, crossing rivers and seas to reach safety in Bangladesh. There, in teeming refugee camps, they finally learned what happened on that rain-swept September day in their village of Inn Din.

The Reuters story and the photographs that accompanied it were the first confirmation for many of the families that their men were dead. Two photos show the men kneeling, one with their hands tied behind their backs, the other with their hands behind their necks. Another shows their bodies in a shallow grave.

On Tuesday, the Myanmar military said it had sentenced seven soldiers to long prison terms for their role in the Inn Din massacre. Two Reuters reporters who exposed the killings have been imprisoned in Yangon and face possible charges of violating the country’s Official Secrets Act.

Seven months after the murders, Reuters tracked down the victims’ families in different corners of the Bangladeshi camps to hear their stories of loss, love and survival. They agreed to gather for a picture.

1 ■ Hasina Khatun, 35
Wife of Dil Mohammed
“All the villages along the way were burning,” says Hasina Khatun of her five-day trek from Myanmar with her six children. “When we saw the fires, we started to run.” Her husband, Dil Mohammed, was a fish merchant in Inn Din. Now in Balukhali camp, she fights back tears when recalling the “very difficult” decision to leave Myanmar without him.

At Na Khaung To, the Myanmar beach where Rohingya boarded boats for Bangladesh, she gave the boatman two earrings. It was enough to pay for her five younger children, said the boatman, but not for her oldest boy, Sultan Ahmed.

“Please! He is my everything,” she begged, and the boatman relented.

2 ■ Settara, 22
Wife of Shoket Ullah
“He was a good man,” said Settara of her slain husband, Shoket Ullah, who sold fish in Inn Din. “He never quarreled with anyone.

He prayed five times a day. He worked hard.”

Settara now lives in Kutupalong camp with their 18-month-old daughter and longs for justice of the harshest kind. “The perpetrators should be killed like my husband was,” she said.

But justice feels like a luxury while Settara struggles to collect firewood and eke out her UN rations of rice, lentils and cooking oil. “It’s not enough,” she said. “But what choice do I have?”

3 ■ Amina Khatun, 40
Wife of Abdul Majid
Amina Khatun remembers the last glance she exchanged with her husband, Abdul Majid, near Inn Din before the soldiers marched him away. “He looked very scared and tired,” she said. “I don’t know why he was chosen.”

She and their eight children joined the great Rohingya exodus to Bangladesh. “We didn’t know where to go. We just followed the others. I thought my husband would follow.”

His death was confirmed in gruesome fashion when relatives in Thaingkhali camp showed her a photo Reuters obtained of the grave he shared with nine other men. “I saw his throat had been cut,” she said. “There’s no way I can get justice or take revenge. It all depends on Allah.”

4 ■ Rahama Khatun, 35
Wife of Shaker Ahmed
Rahama Khatun escaped Myanmar while seven months pregnant and pining for the husband she had left behind. Her first days in Bangladesh were equally grueling.

The family begged at the roadside, relying on food and clothes handed out by charitable Bangladeshis. Then they moved to Kutupalong camp which, along with neighboring Balukhali, makes up the world’s largest refugee settlement. There, on a mud-floored shack, Rahama gave birth to her ninth child.

The family survives on UN rations of rice and lentils. It’s a dreary diet, but Rahama has no cash to buy the fish that was so abundant in Inn Din. “If my husband was here, he could work and earn money for us,” she said.

5 ■ Nurjan, 40
Mother of Abulu
After her son Abulu was taken by the soldiers, Nurjan sought refuge in a nearby forest with other Rohingya residents of Inn Din. She wanted to return to the village to

negotiate Abulu’s release, but the others said it was too dangerous and stopped her.

“I really wish I’d gone,” she said. “I don’t care if they’d killed me.” Abulu was hacked to death by Buddhist villagers, according to testimony gathered by Reuters and a photo of the grave showing his mutilated body.

But in Nurjan’s dreams, he is alive and unhurt. “I dreamed about him only a few nights ago,” she said, her eyes filling with tears. “He told me, ‘Mother, I’m fine. Don’t worry about me.’”

6 ■ Shuna Khatu, 30
Wife of Habizu
When soldiers took Habizu away that afternoon, his wife Shuna Khatu waited near the beach with fading hopes. “At first, I thought he’d come,” she said. “Then it got dark and I knew he never would.” She had two children with Habizu and a third was on the way.

They fled north. They saw smoke rising from Rohingya villages and soldiers in the distance. After three days, she reached a Myanmar beach where thousands of Rohingya scrambled aboard boats for Bangladesh. Once, she said, some soldiers passed nearby and the giant crowd quivered with panic.

Shuna Khatu gave a boatman her earrings, necklace and some cash. He ferried her family to Bangladesh, where she gave birth to a son, Mohammed Sadek, who will never know his father.

7 ■ Abdu Shakur, 55
Father of Rashid Ahmed
Abdu Shakur argued with his wife about leaving their son Rashid Ahmed behind. She wanted to wait for the soldiers to release him. But Abdu Shakur insisted they bring their three younger children to safety in Bangladesh, and trust that Rashid would follow. “I believed he would come,” he said.

Five days later, the family reached a beach where thousands of scared and hungry Rohingya waited for fishing boats bound for Bangladesh. Only then did Abdu Shakur grasp the enormity of the exodus. “It felt like everyone was leaving,” he said.

Five months later, in a refugee camp in Bangladesh, he learned that Rashid had been killed. “Praise be to Allah, my son has gone to heaven,” he said.

8 ■ Nurjan, 45
Mother of Nur Mohammed
Nurjan tried not to panic when she watched the military lead away her son Nur Mohammed and the nine other Rohingya

men. “The soldiers told us not to worry,” she said.

Nurjan waited and prayed for three nights in a nearby forest, where hundreds of other Rohingya were sheltering. But Nur Mohammed never reappeared.

By then, with their homes on fire and soldiers patrolling the area, most Rohingya were heading north to Bangladesh. Nurjan reluctantly followed. “I was in shock,” she said. “I didn’t want to leave my son but I had no choice. There was no way I could have stayed there.”

Nurjan told her story in a shack in Thaingkhali camp in Bangladesh. Then she collapsed with grief.

9 ■ Marjan, 25
Wife of Abdul Malik
Marjan lives with her five children on a treeless ridge in Thaingkhali refugee camp. “Even after I got here, I always thought he would come,” she says of her husband, Abdul Malik, a religious teacher at Inn Din.

Malik was the first to be detained by soldiers at Inn Din in September. His twin girls - Muqarrama and Muqaddasa, aged 7 - saw their father beaten until he bled, said Marjan. Now, when they see Bangladeshi soldiers patrolling the camp, the twins run away in terror.

Marjan soothes her troubled children with all she has left: false hope. “They ask me, ‘When will father come?’ I tell them, ‘Pray to Allah. Then he will come.’”

10 ■ Hasina Khatun, 25
Wife of Abul Hashim, Sister of Abulu (5)
Hasina Khatun lost two loved ones at Inn Din: her husband, Abul Hashim, and her brother, Abulu. From her shack in Thaingkhali camp, she can’t imagine ever returning to Myanmar. “If I go back, what will I do? I have no husband, no brother. Who will look after us?”

Hasina was eight months pregnant when she fled Myanmar. “Please, Allah, let me give birth in Bangladesh,” she prayed as she struggled along muddy paths in heavy rain. Her prayer was answered: Her boy was born in Thaingkhali.

Hasina doesn’t believe Myanmar will ever be safe enough for Rohingya to return. “For a few days they’ll be good to us,” she said of the military and her former Rakhine neighbors. “Then they’ll start killing us again.”

(Source: Reuters)

‘Lula’ is in prison, and Brazil’s democracy is in peril

When a huge anti-corruption dragnet sweeps up a country’s most popular politician, justice is served, but democracy is tested. That is the situation facing Brazil, where Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva — known simply as Lula to his ardent followers — surrendered to police on Saturday night to start serving a prison sentence for corruption and money laundering. Thus begins a tumultuous and unpredictable course to elections in October.

It is a measure of da Silva’s fall that a plaque on the federal police building where he is being held bears his name as the president who dedicated the building in 2007. Back then, he was globally hailed for fighting poverty and inequality, and was proclaimed by President Barack Obama as “the most popular politician on earth.” Hundreds of da Silva’s die-hard followers were camped outside the building, the vanguard of a powerful cohort that would gladly vote Mr. da Silva back into the presidency despite his conviction.

Mr. da Silva’s imprisonment is only one outcome, albeit the most dramatic, of federal investigations that began in 2014 into bribery by the state-owned oil company Petrobras and the construction giant Odebrecht. “Operation Car Wash” and related investigations have generated hundreds of indictments and convictions, many in the highest levels of Brazil’s government and corporate elite, along with multibillion-dollar corporate fines.

The sweep has struck a major blow against corruption in the largest and most populous country of South America, but it has also destabilized the country’s political system,



helped push the economy into recession and left thousands unemployed. How Brazil weathers the crisis will be watched carefully by nations suffering from deeply entrenched corruption.

Polls show that da Silva still commands by far more support than any other Brazilian politician. His imprisonment, though, makes it most unlikely — though not impossible — that he will be able to run for president in October. His defense team hopes that the Supreme Court will rule that jailing him before he had exhausted his appeals was unconstitutional, but other investigations against him are underway.

That leaves the field, and the future, wide open. Without Mr. da Silva, the left has begun to fragment. His successor as president, Dilma Rousseff, was impeached for breaking budget rules; her successor, Michel Temer, the current president, has been charged with corruption and his popularity rating is near zero. Left to its own devices, the Congress is not likely to support any anti-corruption drive. About a third of the legislators face legal challenges but are effectively protected by a Constitution under which high officials and politicians can be tried only in the high courts, which move slowly and rarely convict. For all the successes of Operation Car Wash, nothing has been done to fix the judicial system. The danger of a lurch to populism and political radicalization is obvious.

However painful and disheartening the fall of a charismatic and dynamic leader, and however exhausted Brazilians must be from the political havoc of recent years, this is not the time to give up. History shows that battling corruption takes years, but also that incremental successes do change norms. Judges like Sérgio Moro, who has courageously led the prosecution in Operation Car Wash, have demonstrated that Brazil does have the institutions and means to take on even the most powerful — and most popular — of malefactors.

There are still six months to go before the national elections. They should be spent in search of a leader who can ensure that the gains against corruption are not setbacks for democracy.

(Source: The NYT)

Trump and allies can’t accept defeat in Syria: expert

1 → Fabricated accusations against the Syrian government are to help create pretexts for deeper foreign intervention in the war-struck country in favor of the US and its allies’ interests as well as the Israeli apartheid regime. Perhaps, the most notorious of these false flag operations is the East Ghouta incident of August 2013, when Syria was misleadingly accused of using the nerve agent Sarin in an alleged attack in Ghouta. However, according to a senior UN diplomat, Testimony from victims strongly suggests it was the rebels, not the Syrian government, that used the weapons.

In 2017, the US accused President Bashar al-Assad of carrying out an alleged attack, which stunningly came after less than a week after US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said that removing Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was no longer a «focus» of diplomatic policy, which raises questions on the incentive behind such a move.

On 7 April 2018, reports emerged from the opposition-held city of Douma east of the Syrian capital Damascus that scores of civilians had been killed and hundreds injured in a chemical attack. Soon Trump used Twitter, which has become his platform of communication, to accuse the Assad government of carrying out the attack, and threatening that soon, or maybe not so soon he will teach the “monster” a lesson.

However, facts trigger the thought on such a case. Why would President Assad, who is clearly winning the war use Chemical weapons? Nevertheless, American, British and French forces fired more than one hundred missiles targeting different military and civilian facilities Saturday at dawn, in breach of all international laws and norms, and even before US Congress approval on the strike.

Talking to the American Herald Tribune, Iranian Middle East expert Dr. Masoud ASadollahi underlined the timing of the strikes, which came after the successful advances of the Syrian army and its allies across Syria. The Wahhabi terrorists, otherwise called rebels by many mainstream Western media outlets, are the only faction that has anything to gain from chemical weapons use in Syria; only a US-Western intervention can save them from annihilation and compensate for the defeats they have faced.

“The Wahhabi and terrorist groups have been badly defeated in the different areas across Syria, especially during the past few months. These defeats include that of Daesh in Deir al-Zour and Abu Kamal, the collapse of the so-called Islamic Caliphate, as well as the defeats of other armed groups across Syria whether in East of Aleppo, the North of Hama, Abu al-Duhur and Eastern Ghouta. These groups lost areas which they had been occupying for the past 7 years,” said the Dr. Asadollahi.

The Middle East expert assured “this defeat is not only a defeat for the terrorist groups, but also a defeat to the supporters



and backers of these terrorist groups including the US, Britain and France, as well as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, who all see this as an intolerable downfall.”

The expert points out those foreign powers cannot tolerate the fact that they have been defeated at the hands of the Syrian army, supported by Iran, Russia and Hizbullah through what seems to be unconventional warfare.

“Since the very beginning of the crisis in Syria, we have witnessed that every time the Syrian army advanced in battles, it was instantly accused of using chemical weapons. But let us stop and think for a second, why would an army that has been advancing and is liberating more and more occupied lands resort to such means? It simply does not need to,” said the expert.

Previous experiences prove this fact; the US and its allies cannot tolerate the situation, and therefore use a fabricated scenario of chemical weapons as a pretext to meddle in the region, such as in the instances of 2013 in Ghouta and 2017 in Khan Sheykhoun.

Dr. Asadollahi reiterated that “During the past years, whenever the Syrian army was advancing and defeating the armed groups in Syria’s Eastern Aleppo, Khan Sheykhoun, the North of Hama, and the Eastern Ghouta, this was when it would get

accused of using chemical weapons.”

According to the Middle East affairs expert, “During the Obama administration, when the Syrian government was accused of using chemical weapons and the US declared it was willing to hit Syria, Russia mediated to end the stand. The difference is that Trump’s threats today come in the context of putting extreme pressure on Russia, a staunch supporter of the Assad government in international bodies and on the ground. The US, France and Britain’s goal is to have Russia put pressure on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to step aside. However, this will not happen.”

These powers, according to Dr. Asadollahi, are trying to compensate for their loss through such an attitude, however real political change does not happen overnight and that easily, and this US-led aggression cannot really change anything on the ground.

He also underscored that “the US missiles launched on Saturday at Syria was a ‘performance’, which Trump has used to find his way out of the embarrassing situation in which he had put himself, especially in absence of consensus on the attacks by US government personnel such as the US Defense Secretary James Mattis who expressed concerns over the matter as well

as Western allies such as Italy and Germany who opposed the move.”

In anticipation of what the Russian response might be Dr. Asadollahi said “Russia will most probably target terrorist groups in Syria’s Idlib in response to the American attacks that took place this morning.”

Syria and its allies are winning, it is very clear and such aggression by the US and its allies and client regimes will not change the course of the war.

Trump’s explicitly vulgar language, along with the US and its allies’ actions in Syria today unveil the real face and nature of the West, which is ‘anything’ but democratic. It shows how they simply cannot tolerate the fact that the terrorist groups in Syria and the broader “Middle East”, with whom they are aligned and who they support and fund, have failed in achieving the American goals of hegemony.

With all these facts and history in mind, the US and its allies are what should be dubbed as the “Axis of Evil”; an alliance including the US, Britain, France, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Turkey; players that have been sponsoring terrorism, supporting and funding Wahhabi terrorist groups and meddling in the internal affairs of other countries.

The US and its allies, by ignoring international law and before having any concrete evidence against the Syrian government surely confirm that this is the case. This is simply a repetition of history.

A study released by two nonprofit journalism groups showed that President Bush and his top aides publicly made 935 false statements about the security risk posed by Iraq in the two years following September 11, 2001. “In short, the Bush administration led the nation to war on the basis of erroneous information that it methodically propagated and that culminated in military action against Iraq on March 19, 2003,» reads an overview of the examination, conducted by the Center for Public Integrity and its affiliated group, the Fund for Independence in Journalism.

Today, even if western public opinion chooses to believe that the UK’s Prime Minister Theresa May and Trump are certain that Syria did in fact stage a chemical attack in Syria’s Douma, the international community will probably see May as another Blair, who may choose to say in the future “If I knew then what I know now, of course I would never have taken Britain to war in Syria.”

Perhaps, the US president after Trump may say what Trump once said “You do whatever you want. You call it whatever you want. I want to tell you. They lied. They said there were weapons of mass destruction, there were none. And they knew there were none. There were no weapons of mass destruction.”

These are the world’s unlearned lesson; the forgotten truths about why the US and its allies invaded Iraq.

Attack on Syria violated international laws: Lendman

1 → ■ The attack occurred before the inspection of Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Why didn’t the U.S. wait for the result of the inspection before launching the strikes?

The U.S. and its allies don’t want anything revealed publicly exposing their illegal premise for attacking Syria.

Russia has indisputable evidence no CW attack

occurred in Douma. There’s no evidence for the OPCW to find –no toxic traces, no one ill or hospitalized with CW symptoms, no one dead from CW exposure.

The OPCW largely supports Western interests, so it’s unclear precisely what it will report. Douma medical personnel reported treating no one for CW exposure. Russian toxic weapons experts in Douma found no traces of any toxins or anyone

harmd by them.

The U.S. wanted to launch its strikes with allies before OPCW inspectors complete their analysis.

■ The air attack on Syria was limited. Some argue the limitation was out of fear of the reaction of Russia and Iran. What do you think?

A: I expected a harsher attack, surprised it was limited, but more could come later, following an

other false flag CW attack, perhaps much tougher than overnight.

I’m extremely disappointed with Russia, leaving Syria on its own to contend with U.S.-led attacks. Russia’s S-400 missile defense systems could have downed all or nearly all the incoming missiles.

Putin let Assad down by not helping him defend his nation against aggression.

■ Would the launch of airstrikes on Syria change the balance of power in Damascus?

A: The attack changed nothing on the ground. Russia’s intervention changed the dynamic with a small force, defeating Washington’s imperial agenda in Syria, a key reason for the overnight attack accomplishing nothing.

After his outrageous bluster, Trump had to do something. It could have been much worse.

U.S.-led airstrikes on Syria and its consequences

By Zhou Dong-chen

MODERN DIPLOMACY — On April 14, 2018, the United States and its allies—Britain and France—launched precision strikes on Syria which is one fully-recognized sovereign state by the United Nations. For the sake of legitimacy of their “aggression”, France claimed that the attacks were purely aimed at the chemical depots, Britain stated that it was not about intervening in civil war. And the U. S. President made a formal address in which, he said that Syrian dictator Bashar runs the very terrible regime that used chemical weapons against his own people, “a crime of one monster” as described by him.

What three powers said sounds good, but all they acted in a violation of international norms and practices, let alone the UN Charter. As the well-established nuclear powers and the permanent members of UN Security Council, the U.S., Britain and France openly despised the highest international organization and the expectation of the peoples over the world. In effect, just one day ago, Secretary-General Guterres already called for the creation of an independent panel that “could determine who used chemical weapons in Syria, as the absence of such a body increases the risks of a military escalation in a country already driven by confrontations and proxy wars.” Yet, three ruling powers which had launched wars against Iraq, Libya and now Syria simply ignored the appealing from international community.

If we go through the message given by President Trump, it is evident to catch the points hinted as follows. First, sovereignty is no longer important as previously held. As long as you are deemed as “unfriendly” or the regime run by dictatorship, the United States and its allies should have responsibility to take “police actions” against it or directly or indirectly to replace it as did previously. What about the consequences of the “change of regime” in the country or the region? Sorry, that is not our business. The common practices and international norms are still valid, but all can be interpreted accordingly.

Second, the United States is the strongest economy in the world, and American warriors must carry on the duties globally. If any state or its leader is regarded as the potential threat, the United States joined by its allies has the capabilities to launch precision strikes on the targets associated with any global competitors. As the U.S. is the leader of the free world, other countries must make a clear choice either as a pawn or a victim. However, this time Germany and Japan openly rejected the demand from Washington. Third, the U.S. is not for its self-interest to take this kind of “police action”, and it has to do it simply because dictator always violates his own people’s rights, at times using savage chemical weapons to attack the innocent people. As the flagship of the world democracy and liberty, the U.S. has moral and legal rights and commitment to respond to these atrocities by Syria.

In contrary, the United States is a civilized nation; and alongside the other allies and friendly states, it makes all efforts to




establish a strong deterrent against the production, spread, and use of chemical weapons. This is a vital national security interest of the United States. Meanwhile, Trump tried to warn Iran and Russia with his iron hand in a velvet glove: “No nation can succeed in the long run by promoting rogue states, brutal tyrants, and murderous dictators.” Once again, the United States puts forward its own criterions as the only moral standards to judge who is good or bad guy. Given this, Trump pointed his fingers to President Putin by saying that 2013 Russian government promised the world that they would guarantee the elimination of Syria’s chemical weapons. Assad’s recent attack — and today’s response — are the direct result of Russia’s failure to keep that promise. Evidences? No, sorry. Yet we believe what we said. What arrogance!

It is undisputed that the United States has a lot to offer, with the greatest and most powerful economy in the history of the world. However, it is impossible for the world, at least most of the countries, to hold that three nuclear powers’ precision strikes against Syria was marshalling their righteous power against barbarism and brutality. The consequences are very unpredictable.

It can be perceived that first, the US and its allies set an irresponsible example to ignore the authorities of the United Nations. Second, they openly violated the international norms and laws, in particular the UN Charter (Article 2. 3) that writes clearly “All members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice are not endangered.” Third, their behavior resume or will soon resume the cold war mentality. As a matter of fact, the United States has directly or indirectly encouraged some of its so-called “regimes” to challenge the regional stability and peace or discouraged some countries which want to approach it for the regional peace and stability. As Kissinger put it 20 years ago, America exercises an unparalleled ascendancy around the world. Yet, at the apogee of its power, the United States finds itself in an ironic position. The United States should respect legitimate Russian security interests. For Russians, they see “a strong state” as a guarantor of order and the initiator and the main driving force of any changes.

Now, Trump and his conservative team just want to turn away this warning.

Second Announcement



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1397.104



National Iranian
Drilling Company

Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender(First Publish/Second Publish)-Retender						
One-Stage(compressed)						
TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
14,170	566,000,000	11,306,071,897	PARTS FOR NATIONAL SWIVEL MODEL P-500	3,157,682	Tender No.: FP/17-96/047 Indent No.: 48-22-9622030	1

Brief description of subject:
National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address Pasdaran Blvd., Airport Square, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through one-stage public tender (compressed) upon following terms and conditions:

A) Qualitative evaluation of tenderer:
The evaluation is based on article (J) implementing regulations of the law of tenders and also carried out base on worksheets qualitative evaluation inquiry in the tender documents. Minimum acceptable point of quality is 60.

B) Preparation of tender documents:
Purchasing of documents:
In order to receive the tender documents, 510,000 Rials should be paid to account number 4001114004020491 in central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.

Receiving of documents:
Tenderers must obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum 10 days after the date of second publication till Apr 28,2018 in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept. , National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN
Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and receive tender documents from foreign procurement department in due date and participates in tender will be known as tenderer from tender committee.

C) Delivery of envelopes of bids and call quality evaluating:
Tenderers shall submit simultaneously envelopes of bids including bank guarantees(A), financial offer(C) and stamped and signed of tender documents(B) along with qualification worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 40 days maximum till June 09,2018 , to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN.
Notice: The deadline for the refusal of bidders participation in the tender is the last day of determined for submission of bids.

D) Tender Guarantee:
Type of guarantee:
A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activities licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to the account number 4001114006376636 to accumulated funds of National Iranian Drilling Company to the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.

Duration of credit guarantee & quotation:
This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.
More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. WWW.NIDC.IR
NIDC Telegram Channal: [@nidc_pr](https://t.me/nidc_pr)
National Iranian Drilling Company
Foreign Procurement of Capital Goods

تهران تایمز نوبت اول ۱۳۹۷/۰۱/۲۶ نوبت دوم ۱۳۹۷/۰۱/۲۷

Rushing into a second referendum would doom Scottish independence

By Jamie Maxwell

Since then, however, Scotland's First Minister has been forced into a dizzying strategic retreat. Nationalist sentiment has ebbed. The SNP lost 21 of its 56 MPs at the British general election last June. And plans for a rerun of the first independence poll in 2014, which saw 55 percent of Scots opt to remain part of the UK, were abruptly shelved.

The question of when another independence referendum should take place, and of how it could be won, is now the source of an increasingly bitter rift within the once-unified ranks of Scotland's nationalist movement.

Pete Wishart, the SNP's longest-serving MP, urged independence supporters to be patient in their demands for "indyref2". Staging another ref-

erendum too soon and losing, he warned, would be terminal for Scottish nationalism, as it has been for the secessionist campaign in Quebec.

The "lesson from Quebec is that a defeated second referendum could set back the cause of independence by decades," Wishart wrote. "[And] there is no guarantee that the movement would bounce back."

The online response was savage. Hardcore SNP activists rounded on Wishart, questioning his commitment to independence and even accusing him of being a "poster boy" for a pro-UK lobbying group, Scotland in Union. But behind the Twitter frenzy, a more nuanced critique of Wishart's position could be found.

■ The next referendum?

Many senior nationalists believe the window for another referendum is rapidly closing. They point to polls indicating that Scotland's two main pro-independence parties - the SNP and the Greens - are on course to lose their combined majority in the Scottish Parliament at the next devolved election in 2021, which would create a sizeable legislative stumbling block to self-government.

Instead, they want Sturgeon to call a vote on independence either just before or just after the UK formally exits the EU in March 2019. This, they argue, would allow Scotland to escape the economic upheaval of Brexit, salvage its place in Europe, and bring the curtain down on a decade of UK government austerity cuts.

"Decisions made in Scotland are better decisions for Scotland," Chris McEleny, a candidate in the SNP's ongoing deputy leadership race, stated last week. "That is why I believe we should have a referendum on our independence within the next 18 months."

In reality, if Sturgeon did decide to gamble on a snap poll, the conditions for a nationalist victory would be far from favorable.

First of all, the Scottish electorate is in no rush to renew the battle over Scotland's constitutional status. According to one recent survey, nearly 60 percent of Scots oppose holding another referendum at any point in the next few years, while just 30 percent of Scots actively expect independence to occur within the next 10 to 20 years.

Secondly, the move would undoubtedly trigger

a protracted legal challenge from Westminster that would take months to resolve and could result in a Catalan-style standoff between Scottish politicians and the British legal authorities.

Thirdly - and most importantly - there is very little sign of any sustained backlash against Brexit among Scottish voters.

■ Political mechanism

Despite the mounting threat Brexit poses to the UK's economic health, and Theresa May's inept handling of the Brexit negotiations, support for independence - the only political mechanism capable of rescuing Scotland's EU membership - has stalled somewhere around the 45 percent mark, which is more or less where it's been since September 2014. ➔13

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اتاق خواب جهت سکونت کارمندان
یک شرکت بین المللی در شمال و شمال
غرب تهران جهت اجاره نیازمندیم

خانم دیبا: ۰۹۱۲۸۱۰۳۲۰۶

دفتر: ۲۲۶۶۲۴۵۴ - ۲۸۱۴۱

حدود ۳۰۰۰ متر بنا سند اداری در
شمال شهر تهران جهت اجاره به یک
کمپانی اروپایی. فوری نیازمندیم.

خانم دیبا: ۰۹۱۲۸۱۰۳۲۰۶

دفتر: ۲۲۶۶۲۴۵۴ - ۲۸۱۴۱

مالکین محترم

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شما را جهت اجاره به سفارتخانه ها و شرکت های خارجی نیازمندیم.

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Tehran has potentiality to become a smart city: VP

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — With an eye to the development of knowledge enterprises and startup ecosystem in Tehran, the city has the potentiality to be turned into a smart city in the near future, the vice president for science and technology has said.

“Tehran has a great capacity for turning into a smart city, which is done by development of startups,” Sorena Sattari said after visiting some startups in Tehran on April 11, ISNA reported.

With development of innovative businesses in the city, Tehran can benefit from urban services in new forms, he explained.

Several abandoned factories and unused urban spaces can turn into knowledge enterprises, he proposed.



Tehran Municipality can introduce these places into knowledge enterprises and support them to turn them into productive companies, he suggested.

■ Supporting Iranian products

Iranian startups and knowledge enterprises are, in fact, Iranian companies, which should be supported, he said.

“We aim to develop and support Iranian knowledge enterprises and startups in the current year,” he explained.

He said that state-run organizations should cooperate with Iranian startups.

“Startups provide direct services for public with reasonable prices, however, they cannot offer their products unless they are developed,” he explained.

Startups can be considered as a way to fulfill citizenship rights all over the world as well as in Iran, he said.

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

Useful smartphone tricks you wish you knew before now

There are so many awesome features tucked into our smartphones that we are constantly discovering new options – except they’re often not new. They’ve been there the whole time waiting to be used or in most cases, discovered.

Some folks have no idea they can silence their phone at night except for emergencies. Others don’t realize they can snap a picture with the volume button, use a phone as a magnifying glass, or a photo scanner. Read more if you want to know how to master these tricks.

We’re so busy downloading apps that we overlook the built-in options that can spare us time, headaches, and frustrations. For example, you can still make a phone call if you have a bad cell connection. This is smartphone trick for clearer calls even when you have a bad signal.

Here are three smartphone tricks that you wish you’d known all along. Luckily, it’s not too late to take advantage.

■ Out of office messages

Spend less time charging and more time living.

Whenever we leave work for a few days, we usually create an automated email message. “I will be out of the office from June 21st until...” Such messages are helpful, both for you and for everyone trying to get in touch.

Sometimes, we leave our calling area as well. We may be taking a cruise to Antarctica. We may be hiking in the woods. Perhaps we just want to unplug for a little while. So you would think that smartphones have the same feature, and that it would be easy to use.

You’re half right: this feature does exist, but it’s a little hard to figure out on your own. Here are two ways to do it, on iPhones and Androids:

■ iPhone

Apple calls this feature “Automatic Reply,” and it can be found in your Settings. As with regular email, you can set an end date when you have presumably returned to civilization and can return calls.

■ Android

For Google products, this feature is called “Out of Office,” and it works the same way. Here you’ll find it in the Menu.

Click here for the precise instructions for setting an “Out of Office” message on your smartphone.

■ How to prevent inadvertent dial

People have been inadvertently calling each other since the dawn of cell phone technology and it’s usually because they sit down on their phone’s keypad. In all fairness, any unlocked phone has the potential to dial a saved number, or call someone back, because some part of your body pressed the wrong buttons by accident.

Today, smartphone users can usually prevent the physical dialing. There are other ways to embarrass yourself with a smartphone, such as catching the attention of Siri or Google Assistant.

■ Disable “Hey Siri”

Activating your iPhone by saying “Hey Siri” has wowed many iPhone users. This “wake phrase” is pretty cool but only if you’re skilled at using it. You don’t want to wake Siri up by saying something similar (“Hey, Silly,” etc.)

People have been known to make calls they didn’t intend just because Siri thought they were asking to place a call. Perhaps the best solution is to switch off the “Hey Siri” feature when your phone is locked.

■ Prevent people from snooping on your phone

People can be nosy, even those closest to you. Some can’t help themselves. No matter how much they respect your privacy they can’t help but glance at your phone when you’re tapping out a text message.

The easiest way to prevent eavesdroppers is to keep your phone locked at all times and avoid loaning your phone to anyone. Old-fashioned phones were a little more trustworthy because all they could do was make calls. Your smartphone is a treasure trove of personal information.

Even a locked phone can give away information, if you have push notifications. Anyone can see the name of the person texting you, plus the first sentence or two of their message. Emails and voicemails can also come with identifying information.

You are wise to switch these various settings off.

(Source: msn.com)

Iranian alternatives for Telegram in close-up

By Setareh Behroozi

Iranian alternatives for Telegram messaging application are now on the table for Iranian users, who are encouraged by the government to replace their Telegram account with a domestic application.

The replacement of Telegram, as the most popular messaging app in Iran, with Iranian messaging applications is being turned into a challenge on the national level.

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.

Here there is a short introduction to three famous Iranian messaging applications, which are introduced as good alternatives for Telegram:

■ Soroush

Soroush, an Iranian messaging application, is considered as one of the most probable replacements of Telegram.

Developed by the Soroush Resaneh Institute, it was launched in January 2016.

Affiliated to Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), Soroush stated that it had over 700,000 active users since January 2017.

It is available in all platforms and its current manager is Seyyed Meysam Seyyed Salehi, who previously was the CEO of Fan Ava Data Center, which provided high-speed Internet for customers.



■ iGap

Founded by Mohammad Rasoul Kazemi, iGap messaging application launched in 2016. It is supported by the RooyeKhat Media Company Ltd., which design and develop communicative solutions and digital products.

Kazemi, 30, stated in an interview last month that all of his employers are under 30 as well.

“I am an expert in computer [science] and developing a domestic messaging ap-

plication, was always one of my concerns,” Kazemi announced in a note he published on his Instagram account.

“I have not been supported from any organization and I announce that iGap has the capacity to cover all 40 million Iranian users,” he continued.

In December 2017, Kazemi announced that he will give 10 billion rials (about 200,000 dollars) to the first person to break iGap.

Iran, Senegal discuss co-op in nanotechnology



TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian and Senegalese officials

have discussed ways to expand relations in the field of nanotechnology.

The deputy vice president for international and technological affairs, Ali Morteza Birang, and the head of the innovation policy and foresight research group at the Technological Studies Research Institute, Reza Assadifard, held a meeting with Senegalese Minister of Scientific Research and Innovation Mary Teuw Niane in Dakar last week.

During the meeting, Birang explained achievements of Iran in knowledge-based

economy and development of science and technology parks in the country.

Holding educational courses for development of nanotechnology and conducting projects to use nanotechnology in agriculture were highlighted during the meeting.

During the event, Niane pointed to construction of ‘science town’ in the country to create jobs for the young Senegalese generation in the near future.

They discussed inking an agreement according to which, the two countries improve nanotechnology research labs and hold technical courses to train experts in the field of nanotechnology.

How technology is changing the way children think and focus

Thinking. The capacity to reflect, reason, and draw conclusions based on our experiences, knowledge, and insights. It’s what makes us human and has enabled us to communicate, create, build, advance, and become civilized. Thinking encompasses so many aspects of who our children are and what they do, from observing, learning, remembering, questioning, and judging to innovating, arguing, deciding, and acting.

There is also little doubt that all of the new technologies, led by the Internet, are shaping the way we think in ways obvious and subtle, deliberate and unintentional, and advantageous and detrimental. The uncertain reality is that, with this new technological frontier in its infancy and developments emerging at a rapid pace, we have neither the benefit of historical hindsight nor the time to ponder or examine the value and cost of these advancements in terms of how it influences our children’s ability to think.

There is, however, a growing body of research that technology can be both beneficial and harmful to different ways in which children think. Moreover, this influence isn’t just affecting children on the surface of their thinking. Rather, because their brains are still developing and malleable, frequent exposure by so-called digital natives to technology is actually wiring the brain in ways very different than in previous generations. What is clear is that, as with advances throughout history, the technology that is available determines how our brains develop. For example, as the technology writer Nicholas Carr (link is external) has observed, the emergence of reading encouraged our brains to be focused and imaginative. In contrast, the rise of the Internet is strengthening our ability to scan information rapidly and efficiently.

The effects of technology on children are complicated, with both benefits and costs. Whether technology helps or hurts in the development of your children’s thinking depends on what specific technology is used and how and what frequency it is used. At least early in their lives, the power to dictate your children’s relationship with technology and, as a result, its influence on them, from synaptic activity to conscious thought.

Over the next several weeks, I’m going to focus on the areas in which the latest thinking and research has shown technology to have the greatest influence on how children think: attention, information overload, decision making, and memory/learning. Importantly, all of these areas are ones in which you can have a counteracting influence on how technology affects your children.



■ Attention

You can think of attention as the gateway to thinking. Without it, other aspects of thinking, namely, perception, memory, language, learning, creativity, reasoning, problem solving, and decision making are greatly diminished or can’t occur at all. The ability of your children to learn to focus effectively and consistently lays the foundation for almost all aspects of their growth and is fundamental to their development into successful and happy people.

Attention has been found to be a highly malleable quality and most directly influenced by the environment in which it is used. This selective attention can be found in the animal kingdom in which different species develop attentional skills that help them function and survive. For example, wolves, lions, tigers, and other predators have highly tuned visual attention that enables them to spot and track their prey. In contrast, their prey, including deer and antelope, have well-developed auditory attention that allows them to hear approaching predators. In both cases, animals’ attentional abilities have developed based on the environment in which they live.

The same holds true for human development. Whether infant recognition of their parents’ faces or students paying attention in class, children’s immediate environment determines the kind of attention that they develop. In generations past, for example, children directed considerable amounts of their time to reading, an activity that offered few distractions and required intense and sustained attention, imagination, and memory. The advent of television altered that attention by offering children visual stimuli,

Iran to hold intl. conference on religion, culture, and technology



TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The first

international conference on religion, culture, and technology will be held from April 24 to 26 in the cities of Tehran and Qom.

Tehran’s Sharif University of Technology will host the first two days of the event and Qadir Conference Center in Qom will host the last day of the event, said Hamidreza Ayatollahi, the secretary of the conference on Sunday.

“About 310 articles in Persian language and 20 articles in English language have been submitted to the secretariat,” he explained.

About 100 articles will be presented during the event, he said.

The nature of technology and its relation with modern science, technology and cultural diversity, technology and globalization, cultural challenges of newly emerged technologies, and Islamic morality and technology are amongst the themes of the conference.

The conference aims to highlight the relation between humanities with technical science according to religion and domestic situation of the societies and to show the potentials of Islamic thoughts in criticizing modern social sciences.

fragmented attention, and little need for imagination. Then the Internet was invented and children were thrust into a vastly different environment in which, because distraction is the norm, consistent attention is impossible, imagination is unnecessary, and memory is inhibited.

Technology conditions the brain to pay attention to information very differently than reading. The metaphor that Nicholas Carr uses is the difference between scuba diving and jet skiing. Book reading is like scuba diving in which the diver is submerged in a quiet, visually restricted, slow-paced setting with few distractions and, as a result, is required to focus narrowly and think deeply on the limited information that is available to them. In contrast, using the Internet is like jet skiing, in which the jet skier is skimming along the surface of the water at high speed, exposed to a broad vista, surrounded by many distractions, and only able to focus fleetingly on any one thing.

In fact, studies (link is external) have shown that reading uninterrupted text results in faster completion and better understanding, recall, and learning than those who read text filled with hyperlinks and ads. Those who read a text-only version of a presentation, as compared to one that included video, found the presentation to be more engaging, informative, and entertaining, a finding contrary to conventional wisdom, to be sure. Additionally, contrary to conventional educational wisdom, students who were allowed Internet access during class didn’t recall the lecture nor did they perform as well on a test of the material as those who weren’t “wired” during class. Finally, reading develops reflection, critical thinking, problem solving, and vocabulary better than visual media.

Exposure to technology isn’t all bad. Research (link is external) shows that, for example, video games and other screen media improve visual-spatial capabilities, increase attentional ability, reaction times, and the capacity to identify details among clutter. Also, rather than making children stupid, it may just be making them different. For example, the ubiquitous use of Internet search engines is causing children to become less adept at remembering things and more skilled at remembering where to find things. Given the ease with which information can be found these days, it only stands to reason that knowing where to look is becoming more important for children than actually knowing something. Not having to retain information in our brain may allow it to engage in more “higher-order” processing such as contemplation, critical thinking, and problem solving.

(Source: psychologytoday.com)

Scientists explain why Gulf Stream ocean currents are being disrupted by climate change

The 2004 sci-fi movie blockbuster “The Day After Tomorrow” involved a global-warming scenario that seemed too weird to be plausible.

The North Atlantic Ocean circulation became disrupted, causing the northern section of North America and Europe to experience a sudden ice age.

As that occurred, a tsunami flooded Manhattan and massive storms pounded Tokyo and Los Angeles. It was a disaster of epic proportions, which took place within a couple of hours of screen time.

Climate scientists, including Andrew Weaver, then at the University of Victoria, pooh-poohed the possibility of a new ice age.

And Stefan Rahmstorf of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Research declared that the scenario was “unrealistic and exaggerated”.

■ Key ideas

However, Rahmstorf also stated that some of the dialogue introduced audiences to key ideas about the risk of a shutdown of the North Atlantic Ocean current.

Flashforward 11 years and researchers at the Potsdam Institute, including Rahmstorf, are offering up a frightening real-life development, which was published this week in the journal Nature.

She’s the lead author of a new study reporting that that a “sea-surface fingerprint” shows that it has slowed by about 15 percent



since the middle of the 20th century.

According to Caesar, this fingerprint shows cooling south of Greenland and warmer waters off the east coast of the United States.

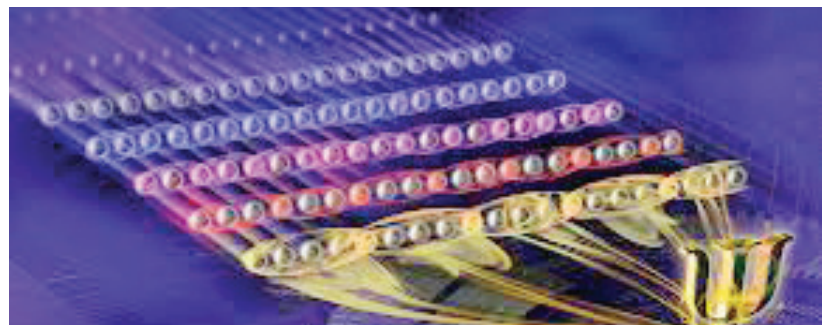
She says the “main reason” is rising

greenhouse gas emissions.

In the same video, Rahmstorf says that climate models predict a “very specific pattern” of sea surface changes when the Gulf Stream system slows down.

The North Atlantic Ocean circulation became disrupted, causing the northern section of North America and Europe to experience a sudden ice age.

Quantum physicists achieve entanglement record, researchers say



Some of the new quantum technologies ranging from extremely precise sensors to universal quantum computers require a large number of quantum bits in order to exploit the advantages of quantum physics.

Physicists all over the world are therefore working on implementing entangled systems with more and more quantum bits. The record is currently held by Rainer Blatt’s research group at the Institute of Experimental Physics at the University of Innsbruck.

In 2011, the physicists entangled 14 individually addressable quantum bits for the first time and thus realized the largest completely entangled quantum register.

Now, a research team led by Ben Lanyon and Rainer Blatt at the Institute of Quantum Optics and Quantum Information (IQOQI) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, together with theorists from the University of Ulm and the Institute of Quantum Optics and Quantum Information in Vienna, has now realized controlled multi-particle entanglement in a system of 20 quantum bits.

■ The quantum bits

The researchers were able to detect genuine multi-particle entanglement between all neighboring groups of three, four and five quantum bits.

Physically, entangled particles cannot be described as individual particles with defined states, but only as a complete system. It is par-

ticularly difficult to understand entanglement when numerous particles are involved.

Here a distinction must be made between the entanglement of individual particles and real, genuine multi-particle entanglement. Genuine multi-particle entanglement can only be understood as a property of the overall system of all particles concerned and not be explained by a combination of the subsystems being entangled.

At the Institute of Quantum Optics and Quantum Information in Innsbruck, the team of physicists has now used laser light to entangle 20 calcium atoms in an ion trap experiment and observed the dynamic propagation of multi-particle entanglement in this system.

■ Neighboring particle triplets

The “particles are first entangled in pairs,” describes Lanyon. “With the methods developed by our colleagues in Vienna and Ulm, we can then prove the further spread of the entanglement to all neighboring particle triplets, most quadruplets and a few quintuplets.

These detection methods were developed by Martin Plenio’s research group at the University of Ulm and Marcus Huber’s team at IQOQI Vienna. “We have chosen a MacGyver approach,” says first author Nicolai Friis with a smirk. “We had to find a way to detect multi-particle entanglement with a small number of feasible measurement settings.”

(Source: eurekalert.org)

The mystery of the strange ‘giant’s causeway’ has been solved



For the first time, scientists have managed to reproduce the chemical processes that build those awesome geometric columns out of volcanic rock – one famous example being the Giant’s Causeway on the coast of Northern Ireland.

The polygonal columns form as hot magma cools and contracts into rock, but up until now it hasn’t been clear where that temperature threshold is. Exactly when does the shift from molten liquid to fractured rock start happening?

Now a team from the University of Liverpool in the UK thinks it has the answer: between 840 and 890 degrees Celsius (1,544 and 1,634 degrees Fahrenheit). That’s just below the point where magma crystallizes into basalt rock, about 980 degrees Celsius (or 1,796 degrees Fahrenheit).

■ The magma cools

The “temperature at which magma cools to form these columnar joints is a question that has fascinated the world of geology for a very long time,” says one of the researchers, volcanologist Yan Lavallée.

“We have been wanting to know whether the temperature of the lava that causes the fractures was hot, warm or cold. Now, with this study, we have found that the answer is hot, but after it solidified.”

To reach that conclusion, the scientists used basaltic columns extracted from the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland. Gripped in a clamp,

He says that “exactly that pattern” has been in observational data since about 1870 in the Gulf Stream.

■ Major implications

“I see no other explanation for this than indeed a slowdown of the Gulf Stream system,” Rahmstorf adds. “That would have major implications for people living on both sides of the Atlantic.

“For example, this slowdown leads to excessive sea-level rise on the east coast of the United States,” he continues. “It changes the tracks of the storms going into Europe and it has even been linked to extreme heat waves in Europe.”

Caesar says as greenhouse gas levels rise, this brings more precipitation, as well as the loss of sea ice in the Arctic and melting of glaciers on Greenland.

The colder, denser water then flowed south in the opposite direction below the warmer water going north in the current.

But the new fresh water being dumped into the North Atlantic is hindering the engine driving the Gulf Stream.

That’s because precipitation and melted ice is less dense, and doesn’t sink so easily.

This accounts for the slowdown. And if human beings don’t curb the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, it’s only going to get worse.

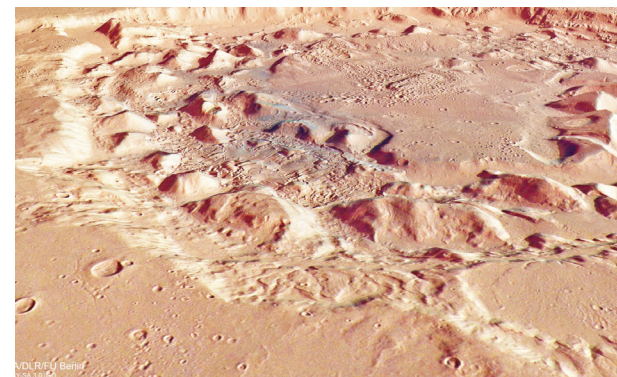
(Source: straight.com)

Is this feature on Mars a crater or a supervolcano?

The European Space Agency released new images of a strange feature on Mars called Ismenia Patera. Scientists weren’t able to figure out how this feature on the Martian landscape came to be.

Ismenia Patera is located in the Arabia Terra region of Mars, which is on the planet’s northern hemisphere. A patera is a broad, shallow, bowl-shaped feature on a planet’s surface. Scientists believe that this is one of the oldest geological features on the surface of Mars. Some of the segments of the feature date back almost 4 billion years.

Despite so much visual information regarding Ismenia Patera, scientists haven’t been able to determine its origin. Some of the theories regarding its creation include a meteorite impact or a supervolcano that released so much magma that it caused the structure to collapse and create Ismenia Patera.



Regarding the features, a topographic map shows that inside Ismenia Patera, there are various peaks, valleys, and dips. The impact theory suggests that if it is a crater, then those inner features were created by the ice and sediment that seeped into the crater when it was created. If the supervolcano theory is true, then those structures were created by the collapse of the volcano.

The ESA launched the Mars Express mission as an effort to get a better sense of the Red Planet. Its orbiter continues to shed light on some of the mysteries of Mars and was responsible for taking the photographs of Ismenia Patera.

Mars Express was designed to study as much of Mars as possible. It was sent to get a better understanding of the Martian atmosphere and climate, along with collecting knowledge about the surface of the planet by gathering data on the mineralogy and geology.

(Source: Tech Times)

A tremendous supply of rare earth metals is sitting in Japanese waters

Certain so-called “rare-earth” metals are vital to modern manufacturing and technology. Applications range from lasers and magnets to ceramic capacitors, oxidative agents, high-temperature superconductors, stainless steel, and PET scanners. A new report on the sea floor around Japan’s Minami-Tori-shima, also known as Marcus Island, indicates the mud is positively saturated with rare-earth elements and yttrium, abbreviated REY. (Yttrium is not always classified as a rare-earth element, but is extremely similar.)

Finding an area with a high concentration of rare-earth elements is, well, rare. The REY elements aren’t actually unusual on Earth; cerium is the 25th most abundant element within the Earth’s crust and is more prevalent than copper. While they may not be particularly hard to find in an absolute sense, they tend to be distributed over wide areas, as opposed to in concentrations that would make them easier to mine.

There are 17 different rare-earth elements, and while the specifics of where they are mined varies somewhat depending on the element, most REY mining currently occurs in China, with Australia as the second-largest worldwide supplier.

In 2011, research reports indicated that REY-rich mud with mineral concentrations up to 2,230 ppm was widely distributed across the Pacific Ocean.

A subsequent 2013 report focused on Marcus Island showed particularly rich deposits of up to 5,000 ppm REY existed around the small coral atoll.

The richest samples were up to 0.66 percent rare earth oxides, compared with a typical concentration of 0.05 to 0.5 percent for Chinese mines.

The calculated REY for the entire research area is more than 16 million tons of rare-earth oxides.

(Source: extremetech.com)

Night owls have higher risk of dying sooner: study

Night owls -- people who prefer to stay up late and sleep late -- have 10 percent higher risk of dying sooner than larks, people who go to bed early and rise early, reports a new study. This is the first study to show ‘owls’ have higher risk of mortality. Owls also suffer from more diseases and disorders than morning larks. Employers should allow greater flexibility in working hours for owls, scientists said.

Night owls -- people who like to stay up late and have trouble dragging themselves out of bed in the morning -- have a higher risk of dying sooner than “larks,” people who have a natural preference for going to bed early and rise with the sun, according to a new study from Northwestern Medicine and the University of Surrey in the UK.

The study, on nearly half a million participants in the UK Biobank Study, found owls have a 10 percent higher risk of dying than larks. In the study sample, 50,000 people were more likely to die in the 6½ -year period sampled.

“Night owls trying to live in a morning lark world may have health consequences for their bodies,” said co-lead author Kristen Knutson, associate professor of neurology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

Previous studies in this field have focused on the higher rates of metabolic dysfunction and cardiovascular disease, but this is the first to look at mortality risk.

The scientists adjusted for the expected health problems in owls and still found the 10 percent higher risk of death.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

BSI to partake in 11th edition of FINEX

Bank Saderat Iran (BSI) will partake strongly in the 11th edition of International Exhibition of Exchange, Bank and Insurance entitled “FINEX” 2018, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

As the largest privately-funded bank in the country, the bank will take part in the 11th edition of FINEX with a focus on submitting its future program, expounding objectives and also using the new capacities created in post-sanctions period.

With its 66 years of fruitful experience in the field of offering widespread currency and rials services, Bank Saderat Iran is considered as the largest private bank in the capital market of the country.

Presence of companies, units and experts of various departments of the bank in the aforementioned exhibition will bring about the possibility of taking advantage of



constructive viewpoints of economic activists of the country.

The subsidiary companies of the bank [including Sepehr Capital Supply Company, Bank Saderat Brokerage Company, Sepehr Financial Group and Mabna Card Aria Company] will showcase their latest achievements at the exhibition to the clients, economic activists, shareholders and dear fellow countrymen, the report added.

It is worth mentioning that experts of the bank will attend the exhibition due to its high potentials in various fields of management, marketing, investment, credits, modern banking services, etc.

Exhibition booth of the bank will welcome dear visitors from April 16-19, 2018 at the 11th edition of International Exhibition of Exchange, Bank and Insurance entitled “FINEX” 2018, in the main hall of Persian Gulf, Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank concluded.

L/Cs, worth \$4bn, opened by BIM in past year

Letters of Credit (L/Cs), worth \$4 billion, was opened by the Bank of Industry & Mines (NIM) in the past Iranian calendar year in 1396 (ended March 20, 2018), the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Abbas Daneshvar Manager of Bank of Industry & Mine for International Affairs made the above remark and said, “according to statistics, the rate of Letters of Credit (L/Cs), opened by the bank in the past Iranian calendar year in 1396 (ended March 20, 2018), stood at about four billion dollars, showing a considerable hike as compared to a year earlier.

With due observance to the said issue,

the bank managed to embark on opening a number of seven credit lines, valued at over \$30 billion, with foreign financial institutions in cooperation with the Central Bank of Iran and Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran, affiliated to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance (MEAF), the manager maintained.

He pointed to the implementation of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official title of nuclear deal, and added, “after the implementation of JCPOA, Islamic Republic of Iran managed to adapt its financial system with IFRS (International Financial

Reporting Standards).”

Fighting against money laundering and also financing terrorism, managing risk, observing principles of corporate governance, observing KYC and Due Diligence rules and regulations are of the important cases for the international banks in order to reestablish and resume brokerage relationship with the Iranian banks, he observed.

In conclusion, Abbas Daneshvar Manager of Bank of Industry & Mine for International Affairs said that necessity of adapting domestic financial standards with the internationally accepted financial standards is of paramount



importance, the issue of which should be taken into serious consideration.

How to stay mindful at workplace

By Sadaf Abbassi, M.A student of career counseling

We usually spend around 8 hours a day at workplace. Regardless of how much we are found of our job, who can claim that sometimes workplace is confusing or annoying place.

There might be days that we are not in the right mood, things are not going well at home or there are some problems at work. For these inevitable situations, we suggest you to benefit from mindfulness.



Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we are doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what is going on around us.

It has been said that the human mind is like a monkey, jumping from one bench to another and from one thought to another. This monkey is hard to control, but since we are human beings, mastering our minds should be one of the greatest ways to improve both our personal and professional development.

Mindfulness is a quality that every human being already possess and there is no need for special trainings. Although mindfulness is innate, it can improve by doing some techniques, which are in a vast range; such as lying down, being seated, walking, standing or moving, and meditating. While trying to be fully present, it might seem a little bit difficult at the beginning and you may feel like you are losing control, but just keep up with your mind and watch how things becomes more clear to you. Here are some things you can do to stay mindful at work:

■ **Smile**
It's no magic. It has been scientifically proven that repetitive smiling changes the mood and increases neurons (brain cells) ability to maintain a positive point of view toward life. Smile, even if you are tired or are not in the mood. The amazing fact about smiling is that it is contagious. When you smile at people, it makes them feel relax so they respond you in a positive way, and consequently, you will feel better about yourself. It may seem strange but smiling has such a strong impact on our brains that even looking at a smiling face in a photograph will make you feel safe and happy. It also reduces stress.

■ **Relax**
Take several deep breaths, pay attention to every part of your body, and loosen their muscles to remove physical tension out. Focus on your breathing rhythm and witness how inhaling more oxygen sharpens your awareness. This will reduce pressure, anxiety, tension and calms the brain down. Even spending some times at workplace for doing religious rituals is a great way to increase your concentration.

■ **Yawn**
It may seem funny but the effect of yawning has been neglected, even among scientists. This yet mysterious body function, reduces anxiety, improves self-awareness and the ability to empathy. Although Yawning seems to be against social manners, it has immediate effect on the body and brain to relax and increases memory and cognitions. Try to artificially yawn for 6 to 15 times, after that, a real one will come and you will find yourself mindful and totally relaxed.

■ **Meditate**
Meditation has wonderful effects on your body and brain. Meditating 20 to 30 minutes a day, increases physical and emotional health, releases anti-stress hormones, and has positive effects on cognition and mental health. You can find somewhere quiet at work for meditating only a few minutes to see how it affects your mood and function at work.

■ **Light exercise**
Exercise empowers the brain just as it empowers the body. It might be considered as a meditation because exercise increases concentration and regulates breathing that leads to being mindful. Exercise protects us from tension damages, reduces stress, and is as effective as anti-depression medicine. Even if you cannot leave your work for a few minutes, you can stretch your body right where you are and notice how it makes you feel happier and more present-minded.

■ **Talking**
Talking requires social communication, and the more sociable you are, the better your cognition system works. In fact, every kind of social isolation damages the brain and causes aggression, depression and other psycho-neurological disorders. Without communication, we will not be able to cooperate with others or achieve peace. Try to have a small and peaceful conversation with your colleagues to create empathy and compassion, which will improve your brain function.

LEARN ENGLISH

Christmas Day

A: Dad, dad, dad! Wake up! It's Christmas!
B: Timmy. It's too early for this. Look, it's six in the morning! Go back to bed!
A: No way! Santa already came and left all our presents! Can we go open them? Please! Please!
C: Of course we can honey. Bill, come on. Get dressed.
B: Fine! Not like Santa brought me any gifts!
C: Bill! Honestly. You can be such a **grouch** sometimes.
A: Look at all these presents under the Christmas tree! Awesome!
B: Alright Timmy, **knock yourself out**. We should get ready and **head** to the market to buy everything for the Christmas dinner tonight.
C: Yeah you're right. It's the first time we are **hosting** Christmas dinner at our house so everything has to be perfect.
B: I got the list right here. Ham, turkey, mashed potatoes, ingredients for the gravy and of course, yams!

■ **Key vocabulary**
grouch: a bad-tempered person
knock oneself out: go ahead; do as you please
head: to go directly to
host: hold an activity
■ **Supplementary vocabulary**
cannot sit still: cannot sit patiently while waiting due to excitement, anxiety, etc.
bursting with excitement being so excited that one feels as though it is bursting out from within themselves
wrapping paper: heavy decorated paper used to wrap gifts
candy cane: a striped stick of peppermint candy with the top curved to resemble a walking cane
hot cocoa/chocolate: a beverage made from cocoa powder and milk and sugar; usually drunk hot

(Source: irlanguage.com)

On the degradation of Anzali wetland

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — There are many reasons behind Anzali Wetland's degradation in recent years among which one can refer to poor waste management policies and locals' lack of knowledge regarding benefits of the wetland.

Covering more than 19,000 hectares, the wetland is located near the northern port city of Bandar Anzali, neighboring the Caspian Sea. The wetland was designated as a Ramsar site on June 23, 1975. It is fed by several rivers and separated from the Caspian Sea by a dune system. The lagoon is home to submerged and floating vegetation and also extensive reed beds. It bears international importance in terms of breeding, staging and wintering water birds.

Some believe that it takes some 10 days to visit all the sections of this vast spectacular wetland. However, this unique ecosystem is facing great threats which call for immediate attention.

■ **Considerable amount of waste**
In some part of the wetland, you can see nothing but waste, Iran daily paper quoted environmentalist Mohammad Amin Ma'soumi as saying on April 11 in a report on the wetland's degradation.

The waste has formed a thick layer of sediment in some parts of the lagoon which makes it impossible for boats to cross, he added.

He went on to say that the wetland is like a bowl, if sediment is continuously added to it, the water will finally overlap and exit the wetland, leaving a bare land behind.

The waste and its leachate combined with the standstill water give off strong smell in some areas, he regretted.

For instance, some 150,000 tons of waste



Some believe that it takes some 10 days to visit all the sections of Anzali wetland. However, this unique ecosystem is facing great threats which call for immediate attention.

is produced and dumped in Bandar Anzali every day which lead to entering of some 90,000 liters of leachate to underground waters and the wetland, Ma'soumi noted.

And this is just the recorded volume of waste from Bandar Anzali, while waste from other cities like Rasht also enter this wetland.

Water pollution is an indispensable result of this great wave of waste which leads to decreasing the water's oxygen level and ultimately the death of fishes residing in the

lagoon, he highlighted.

■ **Occupying wetland areas**
Some sections of the wetland have drained completely and there are individuals who set fire in those regions in hope of occupying them in the future, said Armin Safdel, a social activist.

If one can plant saplings in an area for 15 years, they can own that land legally, he added. Some 17 hectares were burnt during the previous [Iranian calendar] year 1396 (March

Tehran mayor may be appointed in a month

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Tehran City Council tries to appoint the new mayor in a month, Tasnim quoted city councilor Zahra Nejad-Bahram as saying on Sunday.

The first session of the council for discussing and de-

fining the required criteria for the next mayor was held on Sunday morning, she added.

The resignation of the former mayor Mohammad Ali Najafi was finally accepted last Tuesday. His first resignation was rejected by the council on April 8. Najafi's reason for resigna-

tion was his newly diagnosed disease. Currently, Sami'ollah Hosseini Makarem is the caretaker of the municipality.

There are still speculations over Tehran's new mayor, however, no candidate has been introduced by councilors till date.

Eleven lions killed by poisoning in Uganda national park

Conservationists are mourning the death of 11 lions that were killed with poison in a national park in Uganda.

The three lionesses and eight cubs are thought to be victims of villagers who blame wildlife for killing a cow.

The Uganda Wildlife Authority said it was launching an investigation after the pride was found dead at the Queen Elizabeth National Park.

It is believed only 19 lions are now left in the park, and experts warned of potential extinction across Africa.

There were immediate calls for "domestic

animals" to be banned from the park and for the authority to compensate farmers whose cattle are killed by big cats in an effort to prevent future revenge attacks on wildlife.

Conservationists are worried the lion population in Africa is falling. A 2013 survey found the population had dropped by 30 per cent, and numbers in Uganda are now estimated at 400. The park is one of the last strongholds of the big cats in the country.

Wildlife experts also say the lions' natural prey is declining, while the number of humans is rising and encroaching on lions' traditional roaming areas, leading to greater conflict over

land use.

The authority told The Independent: "Investigations will confirm the type of poison that was used. Investigations should lead to the identification, arrest and prosecution of the people behind this heinous act."

But a spokesman denied natural prey was in decline. "The challenge is that there are people who graze cattle in the wildlife sanctuary so lions can easily prey on the cows. We have more than enough natural prey for the big cats," he said.

Richard Kamara, a ranger with the authority, posted on Facebook: "The solution

should be that all communities living within the park MUST not have any domestic animal, or else communities be relocated to other areas outside protected area."

Mark Jones, associate director of the Born Free Foundation in the UK, said: "Uganda's lions face an uncertain future, and cannot withstand these kinds of incidents.

"These animals need protecting from revenge killing and poaching through robust law enforcement, efforts to help local people live alongside wildlife without conflict, and ending the trade in their body parts.

(Source: Independent)

World's first electrified road for charging vehicles opens in Sweden



The "dynamic charging" – as opposed to the use of roadside charging posts – means the vehicle's batteries can be smaller, along with their manufacturing costs.

A former diesel-fuelled truck owned by the logistics firm, PostNord, is the first to use the road.

Hans Säll, chief executive of the eRoadArlanda consortium behind the project, said both current vehicles and roadways could be adapted to take advantage of the technology.

In Sweden there are roughly half a million kilometers of roadway, of which 20,000km are highways, Säll said.

"If we electrify 20,000km of highways that will definitely be enough," he added. "The distance between two highways is never more than 45km and electric cars can already travel that distance without needing to be recharged. Some believe it would be enough to electrify 5,000km."

At a cost of €1m per kilometer, the cost of electrification is said to be 50 times lower than that required to construct an urban tram line.

Säll said: "There is no electricity on the surface. There are two tracks, just like an outlet in the wall. Five or six centimeters down is where the electricity is. But if you flood the road with salt water then we have found that the electricity level at the surface is just one volt. You could walk on it barefoot."

National grids are increasingly moving away from coal and oil and battery storage is seen as crucial to a changing the source of the energy used in transportation.

The Swedish government, represented by a minister at the formal inauguration of the electrified road on Wednesday, is in talks with Berlin about a future network. In 2016, a 2km stretch of motorway in Sweden was adapted with similar technology but through overhead power lines at lorry level, making it unusable for electric cars.

(Source: The Guardian)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Ground broken for first women-only beach in Qeshm Island

Construction of the first women-only beach in the Persian Gulf island of Qeshm, southern province of Hormozgan, started on Thursday.

The project which is stretching over 2.5 hectares of southern coasts will be developed in three separate phases, IRNA reported.

Making an investment of 100 billion rials (nearly \$2.5 million) the private sector is financing the project.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“dia-”

■ **Meaning:** through or across
■ **For example:** This lesson is designed to help students identify and measure the *diameter* of a circle.

PHRASAL VERB

Get somebody down

■ **Meaning:** to make someone feel unhappy and tired
■ **For example:** His lack of social life was beginning to get him down.

IDIOM

Have something on the brain

■ **Explanation:** to think or talk about something constantly
■ **For example:** Stop talking about golf. You've got golf on the brain!

آغاز عملیات اجرایی نخستین پلاژ ویژه بانوان در جزیره قشم

عملیات اجرایی نخستین پلاژ شнай ویژه بانوان در جزیره قشم از توابع استان هرمزگان پنجشنبه شب آغاز شد. به گزارش ایرنا، پروژه احداث نخستین پلاژ ویژه بانوان به مساحت ۲,۵ هکتار در ساحل جنوبی جزیره قشم در سه مرحله اجرا می شود. ای پروژه با ۱۰۰ میلیارد ریال سرمایه گذاری بخش خصوصی تا پایان سال جاری به بهره برداری خواهد رسید.

A sad day in History

U.S.-led coalition hit Syria in defiance of intl. law

By Nima Chitsaz

In defiance of international law the Syrian Arab Republic was hit on the claim that the Syrian strongman Bashar al-Assad forces had used chemical agents on its own people. The questions is who actually believes such scenario?

The Syrian people who have suffered all that one can endure in a life time in about six years still love their country and president.

Hundreds of anti-war protesters marched in downtown Los Angeles, United States, on Saturday, April 14, against the U.S., British and French forces launched airstrikes against government facilities in Syria.

The local NBC news affiliate said the protest took place around Pershing Square and was organized by the International Action Center. It said protesters were concerned over the potential of yet another war in the Middle East.

A much smaller and more subdued protest also took place in a San Francisco plaza, where the local NBC news affiliate said such protests had become a tradition among a coalition of anti-war groups following every major military action by the U.S.

Nearby, a group of half dozen anti-war protesters from the group 'Code Pink' held signs outside the home of House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and Senator Dianne Feinstein, both of whom represent the San Francisco Bay Area.

Anti-war protesters have also held demonstrations in New York City, calling on the world to "defend Syria and defeat U.S. imperialism," after President Donald Trump ordered a military strike against the war-ravaged country.

The protesters rallied in Union Square, New York City, on Saturday,

The protesters were holding signs, reading, "U.S. out of Syria and the near East," "No War on Syria" and "U.S./NATO Get Your Bloody Hands Off Syria."

They called Trump "a fascist," who should be removed from office.

A similar rally was held in Chicago with demonstrators holding placards of "No U.S. Attacks on Syria," "No U.S. Bombing of Syria" and "American Lives Are Not More Important Than Other People's Lives."

They put into question the real purpose of the U.S. military strike, saying it was for the need of the U.S. competition with its power rivalries.

■ Trump's 'Mission Accomplished' claim sparks questions

The United States President Donald Trump's declared "Mission Accomplished" hours after missile strikes on Syria with the help France and Britain, but questions remain unanswered on what was actually the mission and its possible achievement.

The strikes hit three sites -- one in the Syrian capital, Damascus, and two in the city of Homs -- which Trump claimed were "associated with the chemical weapon capabilities" of the Syrian government.

The aggression, however, was limited to a single night, with the U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis saying it was a "one-time shot" to send a strong message to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

A Syrian military statement, however, said most of the missiles fired from both the sea and aircraft were shot down. The Russian military also confirmed the Syrian air defenses' shooting down of the Western missiles.

Trump's "Mission Accomplished" tweet drew comparisons to a similar declaration made by the former U.S. president George W. Bush.

In May 2003, Bush stood on an aircraft carrier under a "Mission Accomplished" banner and said "major combat operations in Iraq have ended" - just six weeks after the invasion of the country.

The war, however, dragged on for many years and the banner became a symbol of a U.S. premature judgment.

Ari Fleischer, Bush's White House press secretary at the time of the speech, tweeted on Saturday, "I would have recommended ending this (Trump's) tweet with not those two words."

Additionally, many analysts and media outlets said the tripartite attack on Syria had accomplished nothing but rather raised questions about the U.S. mission in Syria.

The Guardian said, "The real question now is not what damage the strikes have done to the Assad regime's remaining chemical stockpiles but its wider calculus for the ongoing war."

The New York Times reported, "The strike brought home Mr. Trump's competing impulses when it comes to Syria -- on the one hand, his manifold chest-thumping intended to demonstrate that he is the toughest one on the international block, and on the other, his deep conviction that American involvement in the Middle East since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, has been a waste of blood and treasure".

Some critics argued that if Trump was truly concerned about the victims of the alleged chemical attack in Syria, he should



reverse his policy of barring Syrian refugees from the U.S.

■ Inspectors in Syria to probe alleged chemical attack

Elsewhere, inspectors have arrived in Damascus at the request of the Syrian government to determine whether chemicals were used in a town near the capital, an excuse used by the U.S. and its allies to bomb the country before any investigation.

Inspectors from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the United Nations chemical watchdog, arrived at a Damascus hotel on Saturday.

The Syrian government surrendered its chemical weapons stockpile during a process monitored by the OPCW in 2014.

Shortly after the attack, Russia's Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Konstantin Kosachyov said the strikes were highly likely an attempt to hamper or block the OPCW's mission. He called the attacks an outrageous violation of international law and a groundless attack on a sovereign government.

"A pre-designed scenario is being implemented," Russia's Ambassador to Washington Anatoly Antonov said. "The U.S. - the possessor of the biggest arsenal of chemical weapons - has no moral right to blame other countries."

The Russian military said Britain was behind the alleged chemical attack.

"Today, the Russian Defense Ministry has other evidence proving the United Kingdom's direct involvement in the organization of this provocation in Eastern Ghouta," ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said.

He said the Western-backed rescue group known as the White Helmets had been instructed by London in the days before the attack to plan a "provocation."

■ Corbyn: Britain needs war powers act to stop govt. independent action

Meantime, British opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn has called for a war powers act that would stop the government of Theresa May from launching strikes without first consulting MPs.

"I think parliament should have a say in this and I think the prime minister could have quite easily done that," Corbyn told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show on Sunday.

"She took a decision sometime last week that we were going to work with (French President Emmanuel) Macron and Trump in order to have an impact on the chemical weapons establishment in Syria."

Corbyn, who has issued a plea for an independent United Nations-led investigation of the chemical weapons attack, said that May "could have recalled parliament last week" or "she could have delayed until tomorrow when parliament returns."

Meanwhile, a new poll shows that only a quarter of Britons supported May's decision to launch air strikes.

The exclusive survey for The Independent shows only 28 percent back the strikes, 36 percent oppose it, 26 percent neither opposed nor supported it and 11 percent did not know.

■ U.S. envoy to Moscow: Russia was forewarned of U.S.-led attack on Syria

Washington had notified Moscow prior to staging massive missile strikes against Syria, the American Ambassador to Russia has said, clarifying that the U.S.-led attack was not intended as "a conflict between superpowers."

"Before we took the action, the United States communicated with the Russian Federation to reduce the danger of any Russian or civilian casualties," said Jon Huntsman in a video posted to the official Facebook page for the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, further insisting that "all the targets" in the U.S.-led attack were "linked" to what he alleged as Syria's "illegal chemical weapons program."

"This is not about a conflict between superpowers, but about the principle that the use of chemical weapons is simply unacceptable," Huntsman added as quoted in a report by the Washington-based The Hill news outlet.

The U.S. diplomat further cited a "large amount of credible reporting" to falsely blame Damascus for the alleged chemical attack in the Syrian town of Douma, vowing that "we would still welcome cooperation with

Russia that will do the right thing and joint the rest of the world in condemning the Assad regime for its horrific actions and ensuring they cannot happen again."

This is while Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia called on Washington and its allies earlier in the week to drop plans for potential military intervention in Syria, warning that he "cannot exclude" the possibility of direct military confrontation between Moscow and Washington in case Syria comes under attack.

■ Syrian Army announces full liberation Eastern Ghouta

The developments followed as the General Command of the Syrian Army and Armed Forces has announced that Eastern Ghouta in the Damascus Countryside is now completely terrorism-free following two months of operations in the region.

"Following a number of concentrated and powerful military operations in the past week, units from our brave armed forces and its allies managed to cleanse Eastern Ghouta in all its neighborhoods and (surrounding) villages, from the armed terrorist organizations after driving out all terrorists from the city of Douma, the final base for terrorists in Eastern Ghouta," said a statement released by the military late on Saturday.

Recently, Moscow brokered an agreement between the militants based in Eastern Ghouta and the Syrian government, enabling the former's safe exit to Jarabulus, a militant-held town in northern Syria.

Russia said hundreds of Takfiri Jaish al-Islam (Jaysh al-Islam/Army of Islam/ Brigade of Islam) terrorists and their families had left Douma, according to the deal.

"At the same time we are resisting with our air defense capabilities to the tripartite aggression which was staged by the United States of America, France and Britain against numerous targets in Syria," added that statement.

■ UNSC rejects Russia draft resolution slamming strike on Syria

The UN Security Council has failed to adopt Russia's draft resolution condemning the recent joint airstrikes by the U.S., Britain and France on Syria, which came following an alleged chemical weapons attack on the Syrian town of Douma.

The resolution was rejected at an emergency meeting of the Security Council on Saturday that was convened at Moscow's request, with three votes in favor, eight votes against and four abstentions.

The one-page draft resolution, read by Russia's Permanent Envoy at the UN Vasily Nebenzia, condemned the military action against Syria and called on the three Western countries to "halt the aggression against the Syrian Arab Republic immediately and without any delay" and refrain from further use-of-force actions in violation of the UN Charter.

■ Syria's UN envoy: Message of support for terrorists

Meantime, in the Security Council meeting, Syria's envoy to the UN Bashar Jaafari condemned the strikes on Syria as a "flagrant violation of the UN Charter" and described the U.S. and its allies as "liars and hypocrites" who are "supporting terrorists in Syria."

Jaafari described that strikes by the U.S., Britain and France as "another message to the terrorists" that encourages them to use chemical weapons in their future attacks.

The "three aggressors" showed the terrorist groups that they can "continue to commit their crimes not only in Syria but in other countries," he added.

■ Putin: Syria airstrikes against UN charter

Meanwhile, during a phone conversation with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Russian President Vladimir Putin stressed that the attacks on Syria grossly breached the United Nations Charter and principles of international law.

"Today, a phone conversation between President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and President of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan took place. [They] discussed escalation around Syria following missile strikes launched by the United States and its allies on the country," read a

statement released by the Kremlin.

"Russia's president underlined that the Western countries' steps breach grossly the UN Charter and fundamental norms and principles of international law," it added.

It further noted that the two leaders agreed that "in light of the recent events, bilateral cooperation, aimed at meaningful promotion of the political solution in Syria, should be intensified."

■ Pence threatens response to possible retaliatory moves by Syria

The U.S. Vice President Mike Pence has threatened that Washington is set to respond to possible retaliatory moves against its missile attacks on Syria, by Damascus or its allies, specifically Russia and Iran.

"The United States is ready to respond, to defend our forces; and to be clear, the US is also ready to take additional action in a sustained way to ensure that Syria understands that there will be a price to pay if they ever use chemical weapons again," Pence proclaimed on Saturday in a press briefing in the Peruvian capital Lima, where he is attending a Latin American summit, filling in for Trump, who did not attend to oversee the Syria bombardment.

He further underlined that Trump and his advisers did consider the possibility of a military response from Syria, Russia or Iran in the days leading up to the U.S.-led attack on Friday night.

■ U.S. reportedly notified Israel strikes on Syria 12-24 hours earlier

The United States reportedly notified Israel of missile strikes against Syria in advance.

Between 12 and 24 hours before the strikes on Friday, the US, Britain and France on Friday, Tel Aviv received the message, an Israeli source told Reuters on Saturday.

The announcement was later confirmed by a U.S. embassy spokesperson.

■ U.S.: Locked & loaded if Syria uses toxic gas again

The U.S. has warned it "is locked and loaded" to strike Syria if there are any more chemical attacks, hours after more than 100 bombs targeted facilities in Damascus and Homs said to be associated with the use of chemical weapons.

Speaking to an emergency session of the UN Security Council on Saturday, Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said: "If the Syrian regime uses this poisonous gas again, the United States is locked and loaded."

"When our president draws a red line, our president enforces the red line."

Haley said the U.S. and its allies "acted, not as revenge" but to "deter the future use of chemical weapons by holding the Syrian regime responsible for its atrocities against humanity".

■ Naurt: Obama 'never did enough' to stop Syria carnage

US State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert has slammed former President Barack Obama for not taking action against the Syrian government after the chemical weapons attack on Eastern Ghouta in September 2013.

During a phone interview with Al Jazeera on Saturday, the senior U.S. official said the Obama administration's reluctance to intervene militarily had allowed subsequent chemical attacks to take place.

"President Obama's administration by many accounts never did enough to try to stop this," she said, adding Obama had drawn a "red-line" and let Syrian President Bashar al-Assad "run right through" it.

■ A sad day in history

The United States, Britain and France have launched joint military strikes against Syria.

In the early hours of Saturday, the US, Britain and France launched a barrage of missile attacks against Syria in response to what they claim to have been a chemical attack by the Syrian government in the town of Douma in the suburb of Damascus on April 7. Syria rejected the accusations as "chemical fabrications" made by the foreign-backed terrorists in the country in a bid to halt advances by pro-government forces.

Syrian air defenses responded firmly to the Western powers' attacks, shooting down most of the missiles fired at the country.

Syria's Foreign Ministry denounced the strikes as a "brutal, barbaric aggression" aimed to block a probe by the OPCW, a global watchdog.

Syria has strongly rejected any role in the suspected attack, which took place just as the Syrian army was about to declare full victory against the militants operating in the Eastern Ghouta region near Damascus.

Meanwhile, the U.S.-led attack drew immediate and fierce condemnation from Syria as well as China, Russia, Iran and Iraq, accusing Washington, London and Paris of deliberately violating international law and blatantly breaching Syria's sovereignty.

In condemning the U.S.-led attack, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad insisted on Saturday that the missile strikes would only strengthen his nation's resolve to keep its fight against Western-backed terror groups and "crush terrorism in every inch of the nation."

Kim Jong Un meets high-ranking Chinese diplomat in Pyongyang

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has met with a high-ranking Chinese diplomat in Pyongyang, amid a flurry of diplomacy following Kim's recent surprise visit to Beijing.

Song Tao, who heads the ruling Communist Party's International Department, led an art troupe to Pyongyang to attend an arts festival, according to China's Foreign Ministry.

Kim made an unannounced trip to Beijing last month ahead of potentially breakthrough meetings with South Korean President Moon Jae-in and the United States President Donald Trump.

Kim said during his meeting with Song on Saturday that he and Chinese President Xi Jinping "reached important consensus" in Beijing,

(Source: Xinhua)



Double standards: U.S., Britain, France stand by Saudi regime in Yemen but pose as moral crusaders in Syria

The Syria attack reveals the hypocrisy of the West -- which fuels the House of Saud regime-led bombing campaign in Yemen despite documented abuses -- but relies on unverified claims to punish Syria, journalist and broadcaster Neil Clark told RT.

As Riyadh's campaign in Yemen enters its fourth year, it has been repeatedly accused by rights groups of civilian casualties during the bombardment. However, in Syria's case, reports of a chemical weapon attack in Douma that are yet to be independently corroborated became the trigger for a coordinated military action, Clark pointed out.

"On the one hand, they are rolling out the red carpet for Saudi leaders and they are supporting, either directly or indirectly, the Saudi bombing of Yemen, which is causing a great humanitarian catastrophe -- and how many children has that conflict killed?"

"On the other hand, they pose as moral paragons, as moral crusaders when they claim children have died in Syria's chemical weapons attack without evidence," he said.

Clark argued that by continuing its weapons sales to Riyadh, the West "has been feeding and supporting that conflict."

Between March 2015 (the start of the Saudi regime-led campaign) and February 2018, almost 6,000 civilians were killed and 9,500 wounded, according to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In its report in March, Amnesty International said it has documented at least 36 coalition airstrikes that appeared to be carried out in violation of international humanitarian law, many of which may constitute a war crime. At least 513 civilians perished in their raids, including 157 children, it said.

"So, on one hand we have got documented evidence of children dying in huge numbers in Yemen through cholera and through bombing. That's true, that's evidence, actually. And the same powers responsible for that are bombing Syria in response to unverified claims of attacks on children in Syria," Clark said. "The double standards are totally, totally off-the-scale."

Just last month, British Prime Minister Theresa May, the U.S. President Donald Trump, and French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed the Saudi regime Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), the Persian Gulf country's defense minister and de-facto ruler who is on a charm offensive in Europe and the U.S.

As a result, Britain, which has provided a steady supply of arms to the ultraconservative kingdom, signed a huge arms deal with Riyadh that will see it purchasing 48 Typhoon jets from British firm BAE Systems.

In his own meeting with bin Salman in Washington, President Trump boasted about \$12.5 billion in finalized sales of American weapons to the Saudi regime. In May 2017, he chose Saudi Arabia for his first foreign trip as president and signed a record \$350-billion arms deal.

France, which according to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) was Saudi regime's third biggest weapons supplier between 2013 and 2017, might soon also conclude a new series of deals with the kingdom.

Last week, a French defense minister official told Reuters that France had agreed on a new arms export strategy with Saudi Arabia. According to reports in French media, Paris can soon start selling navy patrol boats and Caesar artillery canons to the Saudi regime, manufactured by CMN and Nexter respectively.

(Source: RT)

Rushing into a second referendum would doom Scottish independence

8 → This fact illustrates the underlying dilemma facing the SNP as it attempts to grapple with Brexit: Scots may be more pro-European than people in other parts of the UK, but only up to a point. And if they are forced to choose between sharing sovereignty with Brussels and sharing it with London, all the available evidence suggests they will pick London as the safer and more familiar option, even if that means remaining anchored to a country wracked by rising levels of political and economic uncertainty.

There are risks associated with inaction, too. In what is widely seen as an attack on the principle of Scottish devolution, Westminster is trying to repatriate powers from Brussels that should otherwise revert to the Scottish Parliament after Brexit. And, of course, the SNP's control of the Scottish electoral landscape won't last forever. Moreover, as the unexpected success of Jeremy Corbyn demonstrated last year, public attitudes can change dramatically in an instant.

But these considerations have to be weighed against the possibility of losing two independence referendums in under a decade. Given its current internal tensions, Scottish nationalism almost certainly wouldn't survive that. The irony for Nicola Sturgeon is that, having fought hard against Brexit, she wouldn't survive it either.

(Source: aljazeera.com)

Ritchie caps Newcastle comeback as Arsenal’s struggles continue

Two fine team goals from Newcastle capped a terrific comeback as they come from behind to beat Arsenal 2-1 on Sunday.

Alexandre Lacazette opened the scoring for the visitors when he fired home from Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang’s cross.

However Newcastle hit back just before the half hour mark when a nice move was finished off by Ayoze Perez, who slammed past Petr Cech at the near post.

Arsene Wenger had made six changes from the 2-2 draw against CSKA Moscow on Thursday and his team looked disjointed.

Calum Chambers missed a great chance and the Gunners were made to pay when substitute Islam Slimani’s header was flicked on by Perez into Ritchie’s path, with the winger making no mistake to give his manager the perfect birthday present.

For Arsenal they are still without a point away from home in the Premier League in 2018.

(Source: Goal)

Gianluigi Buffon won’t back down over Michael Oliver comments

Juventus captain Gianluigi Buffon says he won’t back down over the comments he made regarding Michael Oliver following his red card and the side’s Champions League defeat.

Buffon was given his marching orders for dissent after Real Madrid won a decisive injury-time penalty, and accused Oliver of having, “a bag of rubbish for a heart.”

Speaking to Italian television, Buffon was far from conciliatory, saying:

“The content remains and I stand by all of it.

“I’d say them all again - maybe with a different type of language.

“You find a way to speak, right or wrong, that at times can seem excessive - but this is me, I am Gigi Buffon.”

The penalty gave Real a 4-3 win over Juventus after the away side had taken a 3-0 lead, with extra time looming.

After the match, Buffon described the decision as a, “dubious incident,” and claimed on Saturday he was speaking for “my team-mates and fans, even in a not very composed fashion”.

He then went on to criticise Oliver further:

“I’m sure Oliver will have a great career in future, but he’s too young to officiate a match like that.

“A referee with more experience would not have blown his whistle and decided not to become the protagonist of the match.

“He would have left it running, turned around and let the two teams fight it out in extra time. Let the pitch do the talking.”

Juventus are four points clear of Napoli in Serie A, while Real will take on Bayern Munich in the semi-finals.

(Source: Eurosport)

Neymar: There was friction with Edinson Cavani

Paris Saint-Germain striker Neymar has revealed that there were tensions between him and fellow forward Edinson Cavani at the start of the season. Famously, the two publicly rowed on the pitch over who should be allowed to take penalties.

Following the dispute, there have been months of speculation that Neymar is ready to return to Spain with a transfer to Real Madrid. Speaking on Altas Horas on TV Globo, Neymar admitted that there were difficulties:

“It was made to sound bigger than it really was.

“Of course there was a certain tension, friction with Cavani, but we resolved it quickly.

“Three days after it happened, we all sat down and we talked. We’re two great players, but we’re also people and we had to resolve the personal side of things.

Despite the revelation, Neymar played down the significance of the problems, saying it was exaggerated for the benefit of the press:

“But the reports which came out were much bigger, I think because that’s what sells: people oversell the stories, talk about things they shouldn’t.”

(Source: Mirror)

Manchester City ready to move for Kylian Mbappe

Manchester City will move for Kylian Mbappe if Paris Saint-Germain have to cash in on the French wonder-kid after failing to meet Financial Fair Play rules.

French champions-elect PSG are being investigated by UEFA, European football’s governing body, after paying Barcelona £198million for Brazilian superstar Neymar last summer and then tying up a loan deal with Monaco for Mbappe which will see them pay £167m for the teenager this close-season.

If the moneybags Parisiens are found to have broken FFP regulations they face being booted out of the Champions League, as well as being hit with huge fines.

That would put pressure on them to sell some of their top players — and City are monitoring the potential consequences for that deal with Monaco over Mbappe.

Blues boss Pep Guardiola wanted to sign the 19-year-old last summer, after seeing Mbappe star in Monaco’s two Champions League last-16 games against his team.

The Catalan even launched a personal charm offensive by visiting the player in France — only for PSG to blow all other suitors away by promising to make Mbappe the world’s second most expensive player, behind Neymar.

City are looking to add some superstar quality to a squad that has dominated the Premier League this season but gone only a round further in Europe, before quarter-final elimination by Liverpool.

We revealed in January that Guardiola wants Chelsea’s Eden Hazard.

(Source: Guardian)

Pass master Ricciardo celebrates surprise victory in China

Daniel Ricciardo made a string of thrilling overtaking moves to snatch a surprise Chinese Grand Prix victory on Sunday after a safety car strategy gamble by his Red Bull team paid off handsomely.

The Australian, who started sixth after almost missing qualifying, made the most of fresher tyres to finish 8.8 seconds ahead of Valtteri Bottas in a Mercedes.

“I don’t seem to win boring races,” he grinned from the podium, before chugging the champagne from his racing boot in a trademark ‘shoeey’.

“They are all pretty fun but that was unexpected.”

Kimi Raikkonen took third place for Ferrari but title contenders Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel both endured trying afternoons, the four times world champions ending up fourth and eighth respectively.

“I was in no-man’s land today,” said Hamilton. “I had no pace.”

Vettel, who won the first two races of the season for Ferrari, saw his lead over Hamilton slashed from 17 points to nine.

The German’s race untraveled spectacularly, a collision with Red Bull’s Max Verstappen dropping him down the order, after the pre-race favorite had initially made a good start from pole and held the early lead.

Verstappen had a 10 seconds penalty applied post-race for causing the collision, dropping the Dutch youngster from fourth to fifth.

Vettel was also passed by the McLaren of Fernando Alonso two laps from the end.

■ **Minor miracle**

Ricciardo’s mechanics had performed a minor miracle to change a blown engine after practice on Saturday, getting him out just in time during the first phase of qualifying.

“Putting ourselves 24 hours ago, I thought we might be starting at the back of the grid,” said the Australian. “Today is the real reward for that work.”

Sunday’s win was Ricciardo’s first since a chaotic Azerbaijan Grand Prix last June and it also broke Mercedes’ Shanghai stranglehold, with the champions having won the last six races there.

Mercedes are yet to win this year, the first time since the turbo hybrid era started in 2014 that they have been beaten for three races in a row.

Ricciardo and Verstappen were not early contenders but the deployment of the safety car on the 32nd of 56 laps, after the Toro Rosso pair Pierre Gasly and Brendon Hartley collided and left debris on track, swung the race Red Bull’s way.

Bottas was in the lead at that stage ahead of Vettel, having



overhauled the German during the pitstops, while Verstappen was fourth and Ricciardo sixth.

Red Bull pulled both their cars into the pits, ‘double-stacking’ them and bolting a set of fresh soft tyres on each.

The advantage of fresh tyres allowed Verstappen and Ricciardo to scythe through the field.

“The safety car was so unlucky for us,” exclaimed Bottas over the radio.

Verstappen botched his chances of victory, and a possible one-two for Red Bull, with scrappy attempts to overtake the main title contenders.

The Dutchman ran wide and dropped back behind Ricciardo when trying to pass Hamilton and later spun his Red Bull and Vettel’s Ferrari while attempting to pass the German for third — an error he owned up to afterwards.

Renault’s Nico Hulkenberg finished sixth for Renault, ahead of Alonso whose aggressive overtaking move on Vettel was ‘noted’ by stewards.

Spaniard Carlos Sainz was ninth for Renault with Kevin Magnussen rounding out the top 10 for Haas.

(Source: Reuters)

Batistuta: Depending on Messi is very dangerous



Gabriel Batistuta has warned that Argentina can’t rely on Lionel Messi at the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™ like they did so abundantly in its qualifiers.

La Albiceleste managed merely seven points from a possible 24 without ‘The Atomic Flea’ in their preliminary campaign. With him they seized 21 points from a possible 30, culminating in a come-from-behind 3-1 victory in Ecuador that ensured Argentina didn’t miss out on their first World Cup since Mexico 1970.

“Messi is a player who can play in any team,” said Batistuta. “I’d always want him in my team, but depending on a player doesn’t seem fair to me, for with the level of the national teams we are going to face at the World Cup, depending on a player is very dangerous.”

Over-reliance on Messi is not the only problem to which coach Jorge Sampaoli must find a solution. Nobody has made the striker’s position their own, with the likes of Sergio Aguero, Dario Benedetto,

Gonzalo Higuain, Mauro Icardi and Lautaro Martinez among those in contention.

“For me, the No9 should be Higuain, and [I think] the coach thinks the same,” said Batistuta. “There’s a lot of pressure on him — every touch has to be a goal. Let’s hope that in the World Cup every one will go in.

“There are other No9s that can give guarantees to the coach. There’s no problem in having so many options. It’s a nice problem, an abundance that not many countries have.”

Argentina are in Group D at Russia 2018, alongside Iceland, Croatia and Nigeria.

Batistuta is the only man to have scored a hat-trick at more than one World Cup, having done so against Greece in 1994 and Jamaica in ’98. ‘Batigol’ was Argentina’s record marksman for 20 years — he shared the distinction with Diego Maradona for 15 months — until being surpassed by Messi in 2016.

(Source: FIFA)

‘Wow, what a number’ - Klopp lauds Liverpool’s 40-goal Salah



Jurgen Klopp heaped praise on record-breaking star Mohamed Salah after the Liverpool forward celebrated his 40th goal of the season against Bournemouth.

Salah was on target in Liverpool’s 3-0 win over the Cherries in the Premier League on Saturday as he became the first Reds player since Ian Rush in 1986-87 to break the 40-goal mark in a season.

It has been a remarkable debut campaign for Salah following his off-season arrival from Serie A side Roma, who Liverpool will face in the Champions League semi-finals — the Egypt international leading the Golden Boot race with 30 Premier League goals ahead of Harry Kane.

Speaking about Salah post-match, manager Klopp told reporters: “It’s good, impressive. What a number, wow. And what a number of goals we scored as team, around about 100 as a team, I don’t know, didn’t count.”

Salah is five goals clear of two-time

reigning Golden Boot winner and Tottenham striker Kane.

“A completely normal boy in that situation wants to be top of the scoring list, Golden Boot, it’s completely normal, we will not be in his way,” Klopp said.

“He knows that the way we play suits him. You did see that the boys are looking and searching for him a little bit too much, it’s like ‘give it to him’, so we have to mix it up a little bit. He is the threat, but the ball is here, but it’s all good.

“He didn’t look today like he doesn’t want to score in the next few games.

“He isn’t distracted by this Golden Boot, he wants to have it but he wants us to be successful that’s how it is and if he does get the Golden Boot, it’s likely we are successful, so no problem with that.

“As a striker, you have to make decisions, if you score, everybody loves you, if you don’t score then, hmm... then people start discussing, so it’s all fine.”

(Source: Four Four Two)

Qatar wants FIFA talks to discuss 48-team World Cup in 2022

Qatar wants talks with FIFA to discuss the feasibility of increasing the 2022 World Cup to 48 teams after football’s governing body expressed interest in enlarging a tournament already having to overcome operational challenges.

The Gulf nation took two days to publicly respond to calls on Thursday from South American football nations to fast-track the jump from 32 to 48 teams at World Cups by four years.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino, who has already secured approval for World Cup expansion from 2026, has said he is receptive to the CONMBEOL request while acknowledging a feasibility study was required.

Qatar’s infrastructure, which is being rapidly developed to cope with the World Cup, will already be stretched by the requirements of staging the Middle East’s first World Cup. Enlarging the tournament would see the number of games rise from 64 to 80.

“Before any decision is taken it is important that discus-



sions are held on the operations and logistics of an increase in size of the tournament in Qatar,” the Qatar World Cup organizing committee said in a statement to The Associated Press on Saturday.

“Regardless of the outcome, we are confident in our ability to deliver a successful World Cup in 2022.”

The tiny desert nation has only eight stadiums planned for the event and expanding the tournament might work only if the additional games are shared in the region.

The tournament is already due to operate on a tight 28-day schedule to minimize the disruption caused to the European season. Rather being staged in the usual June-July slot, the 2022 World Cup was shifted by FIFA to November-December because of the extreme summer heat.

Preparations for the event are being disrupted by the ongoing boycott by neighbors, including Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, who severed diplomatic and travel links with Qatar in June 2017.

Kuwait, which retains ties with Qatar, would be a possible option to take on the burden of additional World Cup matches. But bringing another nation into the hosting, or requiring Qatar to build more stadiums, could increase the human rights scrutiny that has dogged it since winning the FIFA vote in 2010.

(Source: ESPN)

Ashkan Dejagah dreams big with Iran

S P O R T S Despite being drawn to face Spain, European champions Portugal and Morocco in the 2018 World Cup group phase, Ashkan Dejagah is confident they have a chance to book a place in the knockout stage.

“We want to write our own history and book a place in the second round for the first time. And is not just a slogan. We firmly believe that we can do it because we have the potential,” says Dejagah in conversation with FUSSBALL BILD.

The former Hertha Berlin and Wolfsburg expects his second World Cup tournament for Iran and the fifth overall.

But for Dejagah everything must go according to plan. The midfielder had surgery on his right knee in February and is currently in Tehran for the rehabilitation process.

Iran became the first team from Asia to qualify for the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia. Unbeaten in 10 games in the final group stage and conceding only twice, Carlos Queiroz has developed a well-organized, well-oiled and well-drilled machine.

The self-confidence of the players and the expectations of the fans are therefore huge.

At the last World Cup, Dejagah and Co. played a wonderful match against Argentina. The Albiceleste got outplayed by Team Melli for most of their World Cup encounter, gifting them the best chances of the match, but Lionel Messi came up absolutely massive in the end.

“And now we’re even stronger, we’ve never had so many players who play in the European leagues and gain important experience there. Four years ago, we had to rely on a strong defensive and a counter-attacking master plan. We are still compact, but we also have a few strong



talented players who are doing well on the offensive,” the Nottingham Forest midfielder added.

Dejagah wore the captain’s armband several times in the qualification round, although he had no club.

“The fact that the coach was still there for me makes

me incredibly proud. I am very happy since he has trusted me. We have a very tough group in the World Cup. We do not have Portugal’s Ronaldo or Spain’s Iniesta, but we will do our best to make our dream come true,” the 31-year-old concluded.

Persepolis want to win Group C: Branko Ivankovic



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic says they’ve already qualified for the next stage but they are going to defeat Al Sadd to win the group.

The Iranian giants can finish as table-toppers in Group C of the 2018 AFC Champions League if they overcome Al Sadd at Azadi Stadium on Monday.

Persepolis have won both of their home games against Uzbekistan’s Nassaf and Al Wasl of the UAE and secured their place in the next round following a scoreless draw away at Nasaf two weeks ago.

“Persepolis and Al Sadd have already advanced to the knockout stage but we

want to finish the group stage as table-toppers,” Ivankovic said in the pre-match news conference.

“We want to show how good we are. Persepolis will face Al Sadd as champions of Iran and we’re determined to advance to the knockout stage as winners,” the Croat added.

“Al Sadd are a strong team and we have a lot of respect for them. The team take advantage of Xavi who is one of the best players in the world,” Ivankovic explained.

“Persepolis will do their best to make their fans happy in the match against Al Sadd. We want our fans enjoy a beautiful match,” the Persepolis coach concluded.

Al Sadd determined to beat Persepolis: Jesualdo Ferreira



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Al Sadd coach Jesualdo Ferreira says that to play against Iranian giants Persepolis is a great honor for them but they are here to win the match.

Al Sadd can finish as table-toppers in Group C of the 2018 AFC Champions League with even a draw against Persepolis at the Azadi Stadium on Monday.

Al Sadd currently occupy first position and two more goals from striker Baghdad Bounedjah in a 2-1 victory over Al Wasl in early April confirmed a place in the last 16.

“First of all, I have to say to play Persepolis in Tehran is a great honor for us. Persepolis are a strong team and both teams

want to win the group,” Ferreira said in the pre-match news conference.

“Persepolis and Al Sadd have no stress since they have already secured their places in Round of 16. I think the Azadi Stadium is a great atmosphere to play in,” the Portuguese added.

Persepolis key players Mohsen Rabikhah and Farshad Ahmadzadeh will miss the match against Al Sadd due to injury.

“Thank you for telling me about the players but Persepolis are a great team and have so many good players. They want to win the match and we also focus to earn three points,” Jesualdo told the reporters.

Asia’s World Cup build-up hit by poor results amid coach changes

HONG KONG (Reuters) — Asia’s record number of teams preparing for the World Cup have found themselves increasingly challenged by poor results amid several coaching changes ahead of the finals in Russia.

Five nations will represent the Asian Football Confederation at this year’s tournament, the first time that many countries from the region have qualified for the World Cup.

But only one of the Asian teams will travel to the June 14-July 15 finals with the coach who was at the helm a year ago.

Carlos Queiroz’s tempestuous seven-year reign with Iran has been serene compared to that of his counterparts in Japan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia and Australia, with those countries heading to Russia with uncertainty clouding their potential progress.

The decision by the Japan FA to replace Bosnian Vahid Halilhodzic with Akira Nishino last week followed in the wake of Ange Postecoglou’s decision to resign as Australia coach and Dutchman Bert van Marwijk’s departure from Saudi Arabia.

The Koreans, meanwhile, fired Uli Stielike last June after a loss to Qatar put the country’s hopes of a ninth straight appearance at the World Cup in jeopardy.

The German’s replacement, Asian Champions League-winning coach Shin Tae-yong, has at least been given time to fashion his own team.

Steering the nation to a pair of scoreless draws against Iran and Uzbekistan ensured the Koreans qualified for the finals, allowing Shin the chance to build towards Russia.

Not that their progress has been entirely smooth.

After winning an East Asian Championship in Japan in December that did not feature any of the region’s Europe-based player, Shin’s side suffered back-to-back defeats against Northern Ireland and Poland last month.

■ SAUDI PROBLEMS

Saudi Arabia’s preparations have been even more fraught, with van Marwijk’s initial replacement Edgardo Bauza fired after three games, to be replaced with Juan Antonio Pizzi.

Pizzi, too, has had problems. Any encouragement from a 1-1 draw with Ukraine was dashed by Roberto Martinez’s Belgium side who thrashed the Saudis 4-0 with Romelu Lukaku scoring twice.

While Saudi Arabia stumble towards the World Cup’s opening game against hosts Russia, their ex-coach van Mar-

wijk has been parachuted into Postecoglou’s old position with the Socceroos.

Given barely three months to fine-tune an Australia team that struggled in the latter stages of qualifying, he oversaw an encouraging 0-0 draw with Colombia last month after a 4-1 debut thrashing against a Norway side who failed to reach the finals.

Nishino, meanwhile, will be hard pressed to lift the mood of a Japan camp that has been battered in recent months.

A record 4-1 loss by South Korea in December could have been dismissed as inconsequential had Halilhodzic steered the team to positive results against Mali and Ukraine last month.

But a draw with the African side was followed by a loss to the Ukrainians, prompting the normally conservative JFA to fire a coach who had been under pressure for much of the last year.

“I want to get results,” Nishino said at his unveiling on Thursday. “It’s the World Cup, so I want us to show that we are good enough to get to the knockout round.

“But first of all I want the players to perform in the way that they are capable of. I want to bring that out of them.

“We have the players with the spirit to do that.”

Preview - Group D: Al Hilal SFC v Esteghlal



Kuwait City: Bottom faces top in Group D of the AFC Champions League on Monday when Al Hilal take on Esteghlal at Kuwait Sports Club Stadium.

Esteghlal are already assured of a place in the next round having beaten Al Rayyan 2-0 in early April, but the Iranian side must avoid defeat to win the group.

The two-time continental champions, who are without suspended duo Roozneh Cheshmi and Omid Ebrahimi, warmed

up for the game with a 1-1 draw against Gostaresh Foolad Tabriz last week.

Runners-up last year, Al Hilal’s form has dropped dramatically this time round and their 2-1 defeat in Al Ain on Matchday Five confirmed their early elimination.

The Saudi side go into the game on a high, though, after a 4-1 win over Al Fateh secured the Saudi Pro League title on Thursday. Ali Al Bulayhi misses the game through suspension.

(Source: the-afc)

Preview - Group C: Persepolis v Al Sadd



Tehran: Persepolis can finish as table-toppers in Group C of the 2018 AFC Champions League if they overcome Al Sadd at Azadi Stadium on Monday.

The Iranian side have won both of their home games and secured their place in the next round following a scoreless draw away at Nasaf two weeks ago.

Al Sadd currently occupy first position and two more goals from striker Baghdad Bounedjah in a 2-1 victory over Al Wasl in early April confirmed a place in the last 16.

The hosts, who are without the suspended Shojae Khalilzadeh, drew 1-1 with Pars Jam Bushehr on Wednesday although they have already been crowned Iranian champions.

The visitors’ last Qatar Stars League game was a 9-1 victory over Al Kharitiyath just over a week ago as they brought a poor recent domestic run to an end. They will be without the suspended Abdelkarim Hassan.

(Source: the-afc)

Iranian judokas claim three medals in Junior Asian Judo Cup

Press TV — Iranian judo practitioners have displayed fine athletic skills at the Junior Asian Cup in Uzbekistan, and been awarded three medals, including one silver, at the continental sporting event.

Abolfazl Shojaei defeated a contestant from the host nation in the first round of men’s under 90-kilogram weight class.

He later obtained two consecutive victories over Tajik and Kazakh rivals, and advanced to the semi-final round.

Shojaei prevailed over another representative from Uzbekistan and found a place in the title challenge.

He, however, lost to his Kazakh opponent in the final and scooped the silver.

Additionally, Reza Azizi earned a bronze medal in the men’s over 90-kilogram weight division.

Maral Mardani also claimed the third spot in the women’s over 70-kilogram weight section.

The Junior Asian Judo Cup kicked off in the Uzbek capital city of Tashkent on April 11, and finished on April 15, 2018.

The tournament attracted 255 judo practitioners from 10 countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

I want to leave Sweden’s Allsvenskan: Alireza Haghighi

Persian League — Ex-Iran national football team goalkeeper Alireza Haghighi says that he is going to leave Sweden’s Allsvenskan in the summer.

The 29-year-old keeper joined Swedish professional football club GIF Sundsvall in March on a three-month contract.

Now, Haghighi is going to leave Allsvenskan after his contract runs out.

“I want to leave Sweden’s Allsvenskan after the 2018 World Cup. I want to play in another European league, therefore I have to choose my new team before the season starts,” he told fotbollskanalen.se.

Haghighi predicts Team Melli has potential to make the Iranians happy in the 2018 World Cup, where the Persians have been drawn with Spain, Portugal and Morocco in Group B.

“Iran’s group is difficult, but we have no easy team in the World Cup. Carlos Queiroz’s Iran has shown that they are the best in Asia. Spain is perhaps the best team in the world, Portugal has Cristiano Ronaldo and Morocco has many good players, but Iran will struggle to advance to the next round and make the people happy,” said the goalkeeper.

Haghighi represented Iran national football team in the 2014 World Cup and showed a decent performance against Argentina in group stage.

Iranian tennis player Safi takes crown at 2nd Qatar Asian Junior 14&U event

Press TV — Iranian tennis player Meshkat Al-Zahra Safi has emerged victorious over her opponents during the second edition of Qatar Asian Junior 14&U tournament, and proudly stood on the top podium.

The Iranian junior sat in the first spot of the individual chart, and lifted the crown at the Khalifa International Tennis & Squash Complex in the Qatari capital city of Doha.

Additionally, Safi and Donya Ameri got the women’s doubles bronze.

Artin Nazari and Saman Rezaeian also settled for a third-place finish in the men’s doubles.

The second edition of Qatar Asian Junior 14&U tournament started on April 7, and finished on April 13, 2018.

The tournament brought together young tennis players from Great Britain, Hong Kong, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Nepal, Qatar, Romania, Syria and the United states.

Ehsan Hadadi wins second gold at USSD competitions

IRNA — Iranian discus thrower Ehsan Hadadi claimed his second gold medal in USSD competitions in Chula Vista, Saint Diego.

He won the gold medal with a 67.04 meters throw.

“The competitions were held in a high level and attended by several well-known throwers. I don’t care about the title and the record is important for me,” Hadadi said.

On Friday, the Iranian thrower won a gold medal, posting a personal best discus throw of 68.85 meters.

Hadadi is currently training under guidance of Mac Wilkins in Unites States of America.

He competed and won a silver medal at the 2012 Summer Olympics with a 68.18 m throw.

Hadadi is preparing for the 2018 IAAF Diamond League, salted for May 4 in Doha.

ACL: Irmatov to referee Al Hilal v Esteghlal

TASNIM — Uzbekistan international referee Ravshan Sayfiddinovich Irmatov has been named as referee of Saudi Arabia’s Al Hilal and Esteghlal of Iran.

Irmatov will be assisted by his tow compatriots.

Already-qualified Esteghlal will play already-eliminated Al Hilal on Monday in Group D of the AFC Champions League.

The match will be played at the Al Kuwait Sports Club Stadium in Kuwait City.

Ravshan Sayfiddinovich Irmatov is an Uzbek professional football referee.

The 40-year-old referee has officiated in the Uzbek League since 2000, as well as at international level since 2003.

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Hamid Hesam named Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Writer Hamid Hesam was announced as the Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year during a special ceremony at the Art Bureau on Sunday.

He won the title for his latest book “When the Moonlight Was Missing”, which carries the memories of veteran Ali Khoshlafz who was seriously wounded in the 1980-1988 Iran–Iraq war.

He is also the author of “Water Never Dies” based on memories of veteran Mirza Mohammad Solgi who lost his legs in the war.

Painter Hassan Ruholamin, filmmaker Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian, graphic designer Mohammadreza Doostmohammadi and documentarian Mehdi Naqavian were other nominees for the title.

A large number of cultural figures and Officials, including Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization director Hojjatoleslam Seyyed Mehdi Khamushi and Art Bureau director Mohsen Momeni-Sharif, attended the ceremony.

Choosing the Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year is part of the programs arranged for the Week of Islamic Revolution Art, which is annually organized by the Art Bureau to commemorate the martyrdom anniversary of documentary filmmaker Morteza Avini.

Sunscreen festival to screen “Limit”

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Javad Darai’s short film will be competing in the 13th edition of the Sunscreen Film Festival in St. Petersburg, Florida.



A poster for “Limit” by Iranian director Javad Darai

short film at the Tryon International Film Festival in the U.S. in the state of North Carolina.

It also was selected as best foreign short film at the International Hollywood Hills Awards in Los Angeles at the same time.

Fajr festival announces lineup for Special Screenings

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The 36th Fajr International Film Festival has announced the lineup for the Special Screenings, a section dedicated to screening the best films from several countries.



A selection of 11 films from Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, Afghanistan, Macedonia, Ireland, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Mongolia and Bosnia will go on screen in the category, the organizers announced on Sunday.

The lineup includes “Directions” by Stephan Komandarev, “A Ciambra” by Jonas Carpignano, “Rosa Chumbe” by Jonatan Relayze, “A Letter to the President” by Roya Sadat and “The Secret Ingredient” by Gjorce Stavreski.

“Song of Granite” by Pat Collins, “Yeva” by Anahid Abad, “Centaur” by Aktan Arym Kubat and “Scary Mother” by Ana Urushadze are also among the films.

The 36th edition of the Fajr festival will be held in Tehran from April 19 to 27.

Swedish illustrator Marit Törnqvist joins Iranian artists for Tehran showcase

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Swedish illustrator Marit Törnqvist has joined three Iranian artists in an exhibition that opened at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran on Friday.

Illustration by Nushin Safakhu, Keivan Akbari and Mahsa Mansuri from Iran are also on display at the exhibit named “Children’s Book Illustrations in Intercultural Dialogue”, the forum has announced in a press release published on Sunday.

Törnqvist is scheduled to deliver a speech titled “Dialogue of Two Different Worlds” on April 20.

Törnqvist was born in 1964 in Uppsala. Since the age of five, she has been living in the Netherlands, but spends at least three months in Sweden every year.

She studied art at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. Her first commission for Rabén & Sjögren was to do two picture books. One of them was her fellow writer Astrid Lindgren’s “A Calf for Christmas”.

She has also designed the set for Lindgren’s “Story Train” and the Villa Villekulla room at Junibacken children’s museum in Stockholm. She was also awarded the Emil Prize in memory of Astrid Lindgren in 2004.

Among her credits are also Lindgren’s “The Day Adam Got Mad”, “In the Land of Twilight”, “Sunnanäng” and “Sagoresan”.

The exhibit will be running until April 23 at the Forum located on Musavi St., off Taleqani Ave.



Swedish illustrator Marit Törnqvist poses beside her works in an exhibition at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran on April 13, 2018. (Honaronline/Zeinab Shoaiei)

Tehran museum to review French cinema

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA) plans to review French cinema by screening six movies selected by Jean-Michel Frodon, the former editorial director of the French film magazine Cahiers du Cinema.

The screening program is scheduled to open at the Cinematheque of the museum today, the museum announced on Sunday.

Director François Truffaut’s 1970 film “The Wild Child”, will open the program. It tells the story of a child who spends the first eleven or twelve years of his life with little or no human contact.

French Ambassador François Sénémaud and TMCA director Ali-Mohammad Zare’ are scheduled to attend the opening ceremony.

Olivier Assayas’s “Summer Hours” (2008), Jean-Pierre Melville’s “The Silence of the Sea” (1949), Nicolas Philibert’s documentary “In the Land of the Dead” (1992), Robert Bresson’s “Pickpocket” (1959) and Mahamat Saleh Haroun’s “A Screaming Man” (2010)



A poster for the French film festival in Tehran.

are the films to go on screen during the three-day program.

Frodon is scheduled to attend review sessions, which will be organized after each screening.

From arcade to big screen, Dwayne Johnson has love for “Rampage”

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — It was a decades-old, deep love of arcade video game “Rampage” for actor Dwayne Johnson - and now the burly action star has been able to inhabit the treacherous monster-filled science-fiction world in its big-screen adaptation.

“I played the game in Hawaii when I was 13 years old,” Johnson, 45, told Reuters ahead of the Warner Bros. -distributed release of “Rampage” in U.S. theaters on Friday.

“I used to not go to school and go to this pool hall, it was very dingy, and we’d play pool and foosball and then play the ‘Rampage’ video game for hours,” added Johnson, who rose to prominence as professional wrestling’s “The Rock.”

“Rampage,” which was first released as an arcade game in 1986, tells the story of primatologist David Okoye, played by Johnson, who joins forces with an albino gorilla named George in an attempt to thwart an invasion of monsters.

Matters are complicated as George grows to be an aggressive beast after he is subjected to a mysterious experiment that also claims a wolf and crocodile who both threaten to destroy much of the United States.



Cast member Dwayne Johnson poses at the premiere for the movie “Rampage” in Los Angeles, California, U.S., April 4, 2018. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

U.S. radio host and conspiracy theorist Art Bell dead at 72



U.S. radio host Art Bell in an undated photo

NEW YORK (Reuters) — U.S. radio host Art Bell, known for his discussions of conspiracy theories and paranormal phenomena during his popular syndicated show “Coast to Coast AM”, has died at his home in Nevada aged 72, the local sheriff’s office said.

The show developed a cult following after he created it in 1993 and was touted as the country’s most listened to overnight radio program. It featured Bell expounding on topics as diverse as UFO sightings, Bigfoot and crop circles.

Bell retired in 2015 citing safety concerns for his family. His studios were

located in his hometown of Pahrump, in Nye County, Nevada.

Nye County Sheriff Sharon Wehrly announced the death of the “longtime resident” in a brief video statement. She said he died on Friday, and that an autopsy was scheduled for later this week to determine the cause of death.

The current host of the show, George Noory, said in a statement: “Art was a legend – a radio icon who went against the grain and developed an amazing show ... His impact on my life is beyond words. He will be missed, but I know he is now on another journey.”

Iranian photographers honored at Montenegro contest

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Several Iranian photographers have been honored at the MNE PBK CIRCUIT 2018, a photography contest that is organized by the Montenegro Photo Club.

The contest was organized in the three cities of Budva, Podgorica and Kotor. Amin Mahdavi won the PSA Gold Medal for his photo entitled “Bold” in the Open Monochrome category in Budva.

Kaveh Manafzadeh received an honorable mention for “Flamingo” in the Open Color section in that city.

The FIAP Blue Badge, the top prize of the contest in the city, was awarded to Thomas Holm from Denmark.

In the Salon Podgorica, Mahdavi received an honorable mention for “Eve” in the Woman category and his fellow photographer Kourosh Yazdani won an honorable mention for “Forced” in the Portrait section.

The FIAP Blue Badge in this section was presented to Luc Stalmans from Belgium.

In the Open Color section of the Kotor contest, Saeid Mohammadzadeh won an honorable mention for his work entitled



“Bold” by Iranian photographer Amin Mahdavi won the PSA Gold Medal in the Open Monochrome category at the MNE PBK CIRCUIT 2018 in Macedonia.

“Space Ship” while the FIAP Blue Badge in this category went to Graham Cashell from Ireland.

French court freezes assets of late rocker Johnny Hallyday

The film directed by Brad Peyton also stars British actress Naomie Harris, Swedish-Canadian actress Malin Akerman and American actor Jeffrey Dean Morgan.

“Rampage” is a passion project for Johnson, who is also an executive producer and turned heads during the promotional tour by revealing he had often suffered bouts of depression beginning when he was a teenager.

But Johnson says he could not let his early love of the video game get in the way of paying attention to film’s the bottom line.

“Money’s not growing on trees for anybody, so there’s also responsibility there, we had to make sure that it’s good,” Johnson said. “You want to have fun but you also recognize that the pressure is on to deliver especially in the monster genre.”

Morgan, 51, said the film also brought him back to his childhood memories.

“That kind of stuff is why I wanted to be an actor when I was playing whatever I was playing in the backyard, spy or cowboys and Indians or whatever we were playing when we were 5 years old, recreating ‘Godzilla’ movies,” he said.



A giant poster of late French singer and actor Johnny Hallyday is displayed on the facade of the Madeleine Church during a ‘popular tribute’ in Paris, France, December 9, 2017. (Reuters/Pascal Rossignol)

PARIS (Reuters) — A French court on Friday froze the real estate assets and royalties of singer Johnny Hallyday, as his widow and two children from a previous marriage squabble over an inheritance estimated at up to 100 million euros (\$120 million).

The rocker died in December at the age of 74 after a battle with lung cancer. Hundreds of thousands of people paid homage in a memorial service to the man who sold more than 100 million records in a nearly 60-year career.

French media estimates of his wealth vary

wildly, with some saying it may be much lower than reported because of debts.

While the details of Hallyday’s will have not been made public, the lawyers said it appeared to leave everything to his fourth wife Laeticia, 42, who married Hallyday when she was 21. Hallyday’s actress daughter Laura Smet, 34, and singer son, David Hallyday, 51, took legal action, asking for the estate to be frozen.

The court accepted that but rejected their demand to have a say on a posthumous Johnny Hallyday album which is likely to be a huge seller.