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## Rouhani to Trump: Tehran ready for any scenario toward nuclear deal

**POLITICS** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** – President Hassan Rouhani on Saturday warned U.S. President Donald Trump that Iran is ready for any scenario toward the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. “We have done essential planning for the JCPOA months ago and people will not face problem,” Rouhani said during a speech at the convention of senior government officials.

The president said Iran has the capacity to cause inconvenience for the Trump administration if the nuclear deal is ditched. “If necessary, we will deprive them of comfort which in my opinion is not difficult to do,” Rouhani remarked. Iran has repeatedly threatened if the nuclear agreement is killed it will resume enrichment of uranium to the purity level of 20 percent. **→2**

## UN envoy de Mistura visits Tehran for Syria talks

**POLITICS** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** – UN Special Envoy for Syrian Affairs Staffan de Mistura made a visit to Tehran on Saturday afternoon for talks with a number of Iranian officials on the Syrian crisis. De Mistura, who traveled to Tehran after his tour of Turkey and Russia, met with Hossein Jaber Ansari, Iran’s point man for Arab affairs, discussing the latest developments surrounding Syria.

After the meeting, Jaber Ansari said de Mistura visited Russia, Turkey and Iran to coordinate efforts with the three countries to find a way to follow up on the outcomes of the National Dialogue Congress, which was held in Sochi, Russia, earlier this year. The three guarantors of the ceasefire in Syria, i.e. Iran, Russia and Turkey, began the Syria peace talks in 2017 in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, with the aim of resolving the Syrian crisis. **→2**

## ‘Palestinian lecturer gunned down by Mossad in Malaysia’

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance movement says Israel’s spy agency Mossad was behind the assassination of a Palestinian lecturer in Malaysia. Malaysian police said on Saturday that the 35-year-old victim, identified as Fadi Mohammad al-Batsh, was shot dead by two gunmen on a high-powered

motorcycle near his home at Idaman Puteri condominium in the capital Kuala Lumpur (KL). “The suspect fired 10 shots, four of which hit the lecturer in the head and body. He died on the spot,” the official Bernama news agency quoted Kuala Lumpur police chief Mazlan Lazim as saying. **→13**

## Substantial part of sanctions “pain” being applied on Iranians: Nephew

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**  
By Javad Heirannia

**TEHRAN** – Richard Nephew, who served as the lead sanctions expert for the U.S. team negotiating with Iran, is of the opinion that “Iranian government is composed of Iranian people and that, by virtue of applying sanctions and pain, we were influencing them as well. And that answer is largely true, in my view.”

He adds that “I do know that a substantial part of the ‘pain’ of sanctions was being applied on the Iranian people.”

Fellow at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, says “Sanctions were part of a broad strategy, including diplomatic talks,

isolation, and threats of military escalation.” Nephew in his book, “The Art of Sanctions”, argue that “sanctions are ineffective if they are executed without a clear strategy responsive to the nature and changing behavior of the target.” Following is the text of the interview with Nephew about his book:

■ What was the necessity of writing of the book “The Art of Sanctions”?

There were two reasons. First, sanctions are -- like it or not -- a tool of foreign policy that are only getting more widely used, not less. Though the United States and Europe use them often today, it is only a matter of time until other countries begin to do the same. It is useful to start thinking about their application in a systematic way.

Second, by approaching sanctions with care and rigor, one can avoid a lot of the humanitarian problems that have affected them in the past and also avoid their failures, which can lead to military conflict. Improving sanctions can reduce the overall costs of political and diplomatic disputes, and possibly prevent wars. They merit being crafted with clarity and efficiency.

■ What was your main question in this book and your answers to it?

A: My main question was really how I would design and implement sanctions if I had a blank sheet of paper, without any existing policies. Then, I was able to create a framework that, in addition to being largely common sense, seems to satisfy my own instincts for efficiency and effectiveness. **→7**

## Zarif: Iran to start nuclear activities ‘at a much greater speed’ if JCPOA killed

**POLITICS** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says Iran is “ready” to restart enriching uranium at a speed “much greater” than the time before the JCPOA was signed if the U.S. administration goes ahead with its threat to scrap the agreement and reimpose sanctions on Iran.

“We have put a number of options for ourselves, and those options are ready, including options that would involve resuming at a much greater speed our nuclear activities,” Zarif told CBS News in an interview that is

to be broadcast on Sunday. “Those options are ready to be implemented and we will make the necessary decision when we see fit,” added Zarif who was Iran’s chief negotiator in drafting the nuclear agreement with the European Union, Germany and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council including the U.S.

On whether Iran would resume its nuclear activities even if the rest of the world asks otherwise, the top diplomat said the Islamic Republic would not unilaterally remain committed to a

deal that has already been broken. Separately on Friday, Zarif warned that the U.S. will “regret” if it leaves the nuclear pact as the reaction from the Islamic Republic and the international community will be “unpleasant” for the Americans.

On Saturday President Hassan Rouhani also warned Trump that Iran is ready for any scenario toward the JCPOA.

The president said Iran has the capacity to cause inconvenience for the Trump administration if the nuclear deal is ditched. **→2**

## Currency rate policies & foreign trade

By Haniyeh Sadat Jafariyeh

Iranian government, as top officials have announced, is on the process of renovating its foreign currency system via managing domestic foreign currency market, reigning the currency rates, improving cooperation with exchange shops, and reinforcing exports.

Setting the official rate at 42,000 rials to the dollar on April 10, following two-day hike in prices of foreign currencies that saw the greenback trading at 62,000 rials, the Iranian Cabinet, on April 12, ruled some new regulations for the traders.

According to First Vice-President Es’haq Jahangiri, the Rouhani administration has ratified a 16-article instruction and announced it to state-run organization, parts of which address new policies to be applied in the foreign trade,

including import regulations in free zones and some tax exemptions for exporters.

Importers, first, are required to officially register their purchase orders, including those at free trade zones and special economic zones, at sabtaresh.com (a website running under Iran Trade Promotion Organization). Second, they have to supply their required hard currency for trade exclusively from banks or certified currency exchangers.

According to the ratification, exporters are supposed to inject their export earnings to the country’s “economic cycle” through procedures set by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI). Exporters should bring back export revenues to economy firstly, via selling hard currency to a bank or an exchange shop through an online system called NIMA. They can, secondly, import specified and

required goods for the country after registering them officially. Thirdly, exporters can sell their hard currency to applicant importer based on an agreed and secondary rate via specified procedures on Sabtaresh.

To find a better view on the impacts of the recent approved regulations the Tehran Times conducted an interview with the Chairman of Swedish Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Reza Khelili Dylami.

Being asked about his opinion on the government’s recent measures including the one-night decision to make a single-digit dollar rate as well as those for imports and exports, Khelili Dylami described that applying one-night policies suggest that we are faced with a crisis caused by regional and international crises which are going to last for some time. **→4**



### EDITORIAL

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## Decoding Pompeo’s words at U.S. Senate

The CIA Director “Mike Pompeo”, who is nominee for Secretary of State, has recently mentioned meaningful words in his hearing at the Senate on Iran and the nuclear deal. In his words, he acknowledged that Iran was not after nuclear weapons even before the nuclear deal, nor will be in the future.

On the other hand, he has announced that he is seeking to fix and correct the nuclear deal with Iran! This is while the U.S. President Donald Trump is scheduled to announce his final decision on Iran’s nuclear deal by May 12. “I want to fix this deal,” Pompeo said. “That’s the objective. I think that’s in the best interest of [the United States].”

At his recent Senate hearing, Pompeo has emphasized that as CIA Director, he didn’t find any evidences that Iran has violated the nuclear deal. At the same time, he believes that Tehran can’t expand its program shortly after the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear accord. He emphasized that his goal is to correct the nuclear deal with Iran. Pompeo said:

“If there’s no chance that we can fix it, I will recommend to the president (Trump) that we do our level best to work with our allies to achieve a better outcome and a better deal,” he said. “Even after May 12, there’s still much diplomatic work to be done.”

A simple decoding of Pompeo’s remarks suggests that, despite the opposition to the nuclear accord, he is trying to deal differently with this issue as the future U.S. Secretary of State. Some analysts also believe that Pompeo has adopted such an approach to face the U.S. Senators’ relative opposition to the White House’s withdrawal from the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action).

In any case, according to Pompeo, Donald Trump may not make a final decision on the nuclear deal with Iran on May 12, and he will continue to consult with his European allies on what he calls “fixing the flaws of the JCPOA”.

Pompeo’s remarks indicate that the White House hasn’t come to a determined and clear decision on how to deal with the JCPOA yet. On the other hand, numerous consultations by representatives of the four countries, the United States, France, Britain and Germany, continues in silence. **→7**



### ARTICLE

**Ishtiyaz Hussain Toori**  
Analyst and journalist  
from Pakistan

## Shias of Parachinar – victims of Takfiri terrorism and govt apathy

Nestled high in a remote, mountainous region of Pakistan, not many people would have heard of Parachinar – described widely as the ‘heaven on earth’ for its scenic landscape. During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1970s, it was used by Americans and Saudis as training ground for militias fighting the Soviets. The same militias later gave birth to the Taliban.

Since 1980s, Parachinar, with majority Shia population, has seen the emergence of radical Saudi-sponsored Salafist groups, and sectarian violence has become a disturbing phenomenon, fueled by local and global terrorist organizations like the Taliban and ISIS. These terrorist outfits have committed horrendous crimes in this mountainous region, killing Shias and rendering them homeless.

Situated along the line dividing Pakistan and Afghanistan, Parachinar is a volatile region where security situation remains fragile and people live dangerously. After the ouster of the Taliban from Afghanistan in 2001, many Taliban militants crossed over into this region and established sanctuaries there. They would often launch targeted attacks against Shias, forcing many of them to abandon their homes. Government forces, instead of helping unarmed people against armed militants, stood paralyzed.

In 2007, almost seven years after the Taliban regime in Kabul was toppled, major violence broke out in Parachinar between local people and Taliban fighters. After years of suffering silently, people rose up and resisted with full might. In the ensuing clashes, more than five thousand people were killed and thousands were injured, most of them still dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). However, the valiant people of Parachinar refused to retreat or surrender and eventually forced the militants to withdraw from the region.

Since 2007, after being thrown out, Taliban have carried out many dastardly attacks in Parachinar, resulting in heavy civilian casualties. In a disturbing development, according to reports, ISIS is also now trying to gain foothold in the Shia-majority mountainous region. **→7**

### TENDER INVITATION NO.97/1001

**IRAN ALUMINIUM COMPANY (IRALCO)**, Would like to invite eligible suppliers for the supply of **120,000 MT.** Alumina on tender basis. Interested companies are allowed to send their competitive offer till **1-May-2018** based on our required instruction to following address: NO.49, Mollasadra Ave., Vanak Square Postal code: 1991614581 Tehran, Iran. Attention: Ms. Emadi, Ms. Yahyazadeh Tel: +98 21 88049046-7 Fax: +98 21 88049045 For obtaining tender’s documents and more information, please check: [www.iralco.ir](http://www.iralco.ir) Public Relations Department of Iran Aluminum Company





MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



**IRGC tasked with Israel's destruction in 25 years: Army chief**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Chief of the Iranian Army d e s k Abdolrahim Mousavi said on Saturday that destroying the Zionist regime is one of the major tasks of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), calling for a concerted effort towards that aim.

Speaking at a ceremony to commemorate the Iranian martyrs dubbed “Holy Shrine Defenders”, Major General Mousavi said the enemies have repeatedly failed to harm Iran through creating division between the IRGC and the Army, Mehr reported.

He said all the Iranian military is united against enemies’ plots to cause rift among armed forces.

The commander further said the IRGC is responsible for tackling cultural, political, economic, and social threats.



**Takht-Ravanchi: Trump will ‘pay the price’ if he rips nuclear deal**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Majid Takht-Ravanchi, deputy director of the presidential chief of staff for political affairs, has warned against the consequences of U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear agreement, saying Trump will have to “pay the price” if he exits the deal.

If one party withdraws from the pact, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), it would be “meaningless” to the Islamic Republic to continue the agreement, Takht-Ravanchi, who was involved in crafting the nuclear agreements with 5+1 group, said in an interview with the Khorasan newspaper published on Saturday.

The JCPOA is a two-way equation, and the equation’s balance should not be upset, he stressed.



**Navy chiefs of 35 countries to convene in Tehran**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Navy Commander Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi has announced that navy chiefs from 35 countries are slated to attend an international conference due to open in Tehran on Sunday.

Speaking to reporters during a press conference in Tehran on Saturday, Khanzadi said the Iranian capital is scheduled to host the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) from Sunday, April 22, to Wednesday, April 25.

In addition to the IONS member states, some countries like the Caspian Sea littoral states requested to take part in the gathering as guests, which was accepted, he added.



**General Fazli named Imam Hossein Cadet College chief**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — In a decree released on Saturday, IRGC chief Mohammad Ali Jafari appointed Brigadier General Ali Fazli as the new chief of Imam Hossein Cadet College.

Fazli replaced General Morteza Saffari, Mehr reported. Fazli was the deputy commander of Basij Organization for nine years.

Imam Hossein Cadet College was separated from the academic division of Imam Hossein University (IHU) in 2005. The IHU was opened in 1986.



**Top officials set to meet in Majlis**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — A meeting among the three d e s k branches of government is scheduled to be held in the parliament on Sunday afternoon, Fars reported.

The meeting is aimed at increasing the level of engagement among the government branches as well as reviewing national issues in different areas.

Representatives from the three main parliamentary factions are set to address the parliament, followed by Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri, Deputy Parliament Speaker Masoud Pezeshkian, and Judiciary Vice Chief Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje’i.

At the end of the meeting, President Rouhani, Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani and Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani will also address the parliament.



**‘Castros are indispensable part of Cuban history’**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Havana’s ambassador to d e s k Tehran says the Castros are an “indispensable” part of the Cuban history.

“I have no doubt about the continuity of the revolutionary project and the defense of our principles of sovereignty, independence and social justice,” said Alexis Bandrich Vega, in an interview with ISNA published on Saturday.

Pointing to President Rouhani’s visit to Cuba two years ago, the ambassador said Iran and Cuba “have the common goal of increasing the well-being of our peoples, defend our sovereignty and independence.”

# VP shrugs off U.S. threat to quit nuclear deal

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian First d e s k Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri said on Saturday that “nothing will happen” to Iran if the Trump administration goes ahead with its threat to abrogate the 2015 nuclear deal.

“The U.S. assumes that Iran will face serious problem if it withdraw from the deal while we are ready for any situation and have no concern,” he said at the convention of senior government officials.

“We have planning for management of the country and without the JCPOA [the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action] nothing will happen to the country,” the vice president stated.

U.S. President Donald Trump announced in a statement on January 12 that the Europeans have only 120 days to agree to an overhaul of the nuclear agreement and said if the text of the nuclear deal is not revised he would unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from it.

Iran, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the U.S., UK, France, Russia, and China - Germany and the European Union struck the nuclear deal in July 2015. The deal took effect in January 2016.



■ **‘People are committed to the system’**  
Jahangiri also said that the people are committed to the Islamic Republic system and have helped it in critical times.  
Jahangiri made the remarks in an open

reference to former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who has claimed that the people will revolt against the officials.  
He said that efforts are being made to make the people “disappointed” about the future,

saying that unity should be strengthened.  
“We should follow national dialogues aiming at boosting unity in the society,” he suggested. He said that problems can be solved through “national integrity”.

## We are on guard like army to resume nuclear work if JCPOA nixed: Salehi

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Ali Akbar Salehi, director d e s k of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, said on Saturday that the U.S. will be surprised by Iran’s response if it scraps the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

“We have said for several times that we hope that it would not be imperative for us to take technical decisions, but we are prepared in a way that the other side will be surprised. Hopefully, it will never happen,” he said on the sidelines of a convention of senior government officials.

Salehi, a nuclear physicist, noted that Iran is ready for any scenario from a technical point of view.

He reiterated that Iran can resume enriching uranium to purity of 20% in 4 days if the JCPOA is scrapped. Salehi had made similar remarks in the past.

He also said, “When the system takes a decision, we will be ready like an army to move. However, we hope that the other side would come to its senses and would



**Nuclear chief says U.S. will be surprised by Iran’s response if nuclear deal is scrapped**

## Iran’s FM, UN General Assembly president hold talks in New York

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and President of the United Nations General Assembly Miroslav Lajcak discussed a range of issues in a meeting Friday at the UN headquarters in New York.

Iran’s top diplomat and the UNGA chief talked about developments at the UN body and the upcoming High-Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.

They also weighed plans for a high-level meeting in July on tackling dust pollution, given the fact that Iran is grappling with that problem.

Iranian residents in the western and southwestern provinces that border Iraq are facing a growing trend in the influx of fine particles, which are generated by drought-hit marshlands in neighboring countries.

The disruptive dust storms have pushed pollution in those border areas to alarming levels, raising health concerns.

The particles, carried by winds, can penetrate the lungs and enter the bloodstream, causing serious diseases such as lung cancer, asthma and heart problems.

(Source: Tasnim)



## UN envoy de Mistura visits Tehran for Syria talks

➔ For his part, the UN envoy said, “Coming to Iran was very important to me. Iran is a very important player and is deeply involved in the Syrian issue.”

He added, “Currently, an opportunity has arisen so that we can have more talks on this issue.”  
De Mistura was scheduled to meet with

**Syria’s UN envoy de Mistura says, “Coming to Iran was very important to me. Iran is a very important player and is deeply involved in the Syrian issue.”**

other top Iranian officials.

Following his visit to Iran, the special envoy is scheduled to hold talks with European and American officials in a conference which will be held in Brussels on April 24-25.

After that he will present a report to UN Security Council.

## Rouhani to Trump: Tehran ready for any scenario toward nuclear deal

➔ “Since months ago Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization was ordered to be prepared and this organization is prepared for what they (the Trump administration) can imagine and what they cannot imagine,” the president explained.

Ali Akbar Salehi, the nuclear chief, sounded the same threat on Saturday, saying, “We are ready like an army.”

In a statement on January 12, Trump gave Europeans only 120 days to agree to an overhaul of the nuclear agreement and said if the text of the nuclear deal is not revised he would unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from it. The deadline falls on May 12.

Iran, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the U.S., UK, France, Russia, and China - Germany and the European Union struck the nuclear deal in July 14, 2015. The deal took effect in January 2016.

According to the agreement, Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear work for termination of nuclear-related



sanctions. However, the spirit and terms of the international agreement has been violated several times by the Trump administration and Congress.

■ **‘Islamic Revolution based on respect for people’**  
Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani said that the Islamic

Revolution is based on respect for people and solving their problems.

“We are successful if we convince the people and not threaten them and gain their support in anything we want to do,” he said.

“We have a heavy responsibility which we should carry out well. We should know that we cannot move forward without the people’s supports. You should convince the people with logic and the people should feel that what you said is right,” he noted.

■ **‘Monopoly in cyberspace is not good’**  
Rouhani also said that monopoly in cyberspace is not good.

The remarks by the president comes as Iran has taken steps to end the monopoly of Telegram.

However, he said, “Let the people live their lives. A part of our employment is in cyberspace.”

## Zarif: Iran to start nuclear activities ‘at a much greater speed’ if JCPOA killed

➔ “If necessary, we will deprive them (the U.S.) of comfort which in my opinion is not difficult to do,” Rouhani remarked.

Also on Saturday, Ali Akbar Salehi, director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, said that the U.S. will be surprised by Iran’s response if it scraps the accord.

“We have said for several times that we hope that it would not be imperative for us to take technical decisions, but we are prepared in a way that the other side will be surprised. Hopefully, it will never happen,” he said on the sidelines of a convention of senior government officials.

Salehi, a nuclear physicist, said Iran can resume enriching uranium to purity of 20% in 4 days if the JCPOA is scrapped.

Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council – the U.S., France, Britain, Russia and China – plus Germany signed the nuclear agreement in July 2015 and started implementing

it in January 2016.

The deal, which is officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is an international document endorsed by the Security Council Resolution 2231.

Trump, who took office one year after the accord came into force, has been a

**On whether Iran would resume its nuclear activities even if the rest of the world asks otherwise, the top diplomat said the Islamic Republic would not unilaterally remain committed to a deal that has already been broken.**

vociferous critic of it. He has called the agreement the “worst deal ever” and even threatened to tear it up.

In January, he decided to stick with the JCPOA, but gave the European signatories a May 12 deadline to “fix the terrible flaws” of the accord or have him abandon the agreement.

However, other parties to the agreement, namely Russia, China, Britain, Germany and France, have all criticized Trump’s hostile views, saying the deal is sound and has proven to be functioning.

Earlier this week, over 500 parliamentarians from the three European signatories to the deal called on U.S. Congress to support the JCPOA.



# OPCW heading to site of alleged chemical attack in Syria's Douma

## U.S., allies 'bombed' Syria peace talks: Russia

The Russian Foreign Ministry said a special commission from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) left on Saturday morning for the site of the alleged gas attack in the Syrian town of Douma.

Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov says the United States and its allies "bombed" the United Nations-backed Syria peace talks in Geneva by their recent military strikes against the country.

The U.S., France and Britain "on 14 April bombed not only made-up chemical sites in Syria, but also bombed the (UN-backed peace) talks in Geneva," Lavrov said following a meeting with UN envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura in Moscow on Friday.

"We came very close to a re-launching of the Geneva process with a real dialogue between Syrians, mainly on the question of constitutional reform," Lavrov noted.

Russian officials say the tripartite Western attacks hit Syria right at the moment the country had a chance to have a peaceful future.

The Syrian government and opposition groups are already involved in a political process mediated by Russia, Iran and Turkey in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The talks have led to the formation of four de-escalation zones across Syria and helped significantly reduce violence in the country.

The talks in Astana have been going on in tandem with another series of talks held in Geneva and brokered by the UN. Previous rounds of negotiations under the auspices of the UN over the past five years have failed to achieve tangible results.

De Mistura, who also met Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, said the UN's priority was to "lower the temperature" following the tripartite attacks.

"I am very pleased to hear... that in spite of what happened last week and it is still very recent, there is a strong commitment from the Russian Federation to push for the political process," De Mistura said.

"It is important we turn the page on this alleged chemical attack because we need to go back to the basics," he noted.

On April 14, the U.S., France and Britain carried out missile attacks on a number of



targets in Syria in response to a suspected chemical attack in the Syrian town of Douma, near Damascus, that reportedly took place on April 7. Syria has rejected any role in the alleged attack, which is yet to be investigated.

According to the Russian Defense Ministry, the Syrian army shot down 71 out of the 103 missiles fired during the attack, using Russian-made air defense systems, including S-125, S-200, as well as the Buk and Kvadrat units.

Following the strikes, Russia announced it may consider giving Syria S-300 systems so it can defend itself in the face of such acts of aggression.

■ **German parliament condemns U.S.-led strikes on Syria as illegal**

Meantime, jurists at the German parliament have said the recent U.S.-led airstrikes that hit Syria over an alleged chemical attack violated international law.

"The use of military force against a state, as a sanction against the violation of an international convention by this state, is an infringement of the prohibition of the use of violence in international law," experts at Bundestag, Germany's lower house of parliament, said in reply to a question filed by the far-left Die Linke party.

The experts referred in particular to the United Nations declaration from their 1970 General Assembly, which stresses "the duty of States to refrain in their international relations from military, political, economic or any other form of coercion aimed against the political independence or territorial integrity of any State".

The UN Security Council had also rejected armed retaliation, stressing that it is "incompatible with the objectives and the principles of the United Nations."

The experts also said Britain's declared motive for joining the U.S. in the airstrikes on Syria was "not convincing."

Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May said it was "legally and morally right" for Britain to join the attack on Syria to prevent "further human suffering". But the experts said there were questions over "whether the military attacks are really appropriate to prevent further suffering" in the war-torn country.

■ **Militants surrender another area**

Meanwhile, Syrian media say Takfiri militants have agreed to surrender another area near the capital, Damascus, under a deal with the government, which enables their exit to northern Syria.

"An agreement has been reached in the area

of Eastern Qalamoun providing for terrorists to exit al-Ruhayba, Jayrud and Al-Nasiriya starting from" on Saturday, Syria's official SANA news agency reported.

Some 3,200 militants and their families were expected to leave as per the agreement, according to state media.

The militants would hand over heavy and medium-size weapons as well as ammunition depositories to the government before leaving for the northern town of Jarablus in Aleppo Province and the neighboring province of Idlib, which is the last major militant-held territory in Syria.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) also said buses had already entered East Qalamoun to transfer the militants and their family members out of the area.

The latest militant evacuation deal came a day after the so-called Jaish al-Islam (Jaysh al-Islam/Army of Islam/Brigade of Islam) terrorists handed back another Qalamoun town, Dumayr, to the Damascus government and headed to Jarablus.

The Syrian army continues its push to secure Damascus and its surroundings after it liberated the entire Eastern Ghouta last week on the back of both military operations and evacuation deals with the militants there.

The country is also preparing to cleanse the southern districts of Damascus, including Yarmouk, of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) and al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra/Jabhat Fateh al-Sham) terrorists.

Syrian jets reportedly targeted the ISIL positions in al-Hajar al-Aswad district in the capital's periphery. An ISIL hideout and their ammunition depots were destroyed.

The area is much smaller than Eastern Ghouta.

The ISIL was defeated by the Syrian army and its allies late last year after three years of afflicting the country with unrelenting bloodshed and destruction.

The army, however, is on alert to get rid of pockets of ISIL remnants still active in the country.

(Source: agencies)

## Palestine UN envoy calls for probe into Israeli crimes

The Palestinian ambassador to the United Nations has called on the world body to set up an independent commission to investigate Israeli crimes after four more Palestinians were killed in the besieged Gaza Strip. Riyad Mansour made the comments during a press conference in New York, expressing hope that the Geneva-based Human Rights Council would approve a resolution authorizing a commission "to investigate these crimes."

His remarks came a few hours after Gaza's Ministry of Health announced that four Palestinian demonstrators, including a 15-year-old teenage boy, had sustained fatal injuries in clashes with Israeli soldiers during anti-occupation protests along the border between the blockaded sliver and occupied territories earlier in the day.

Reports said that at least 40 Palestinian protesters had also been wounded by Israeli gunfire and suffered tear gas inhalation as well.

Mansour also stressed that an investigation must be "independent and transparent", as UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and others have called for. He also told journalists that Palestinians would not accept an investigation that Israel has announced because "it cannot be credible."

The Palestinian envoy also accused Israel of neutralizing the International Criminal Court, saying that Tel Aviv could not be part of a probe into the atrocities it has committed against the Palestinian nation. Furthermore, Mansour noted that all of the Israeli criminals must face punishment, criticizing the international community for being silent about the Israeli crimes.

Meanwhile, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov denounced Israel's atrocities in the besieged enclave.

The Palestinian rally, dubbed the "Great March of Return," will last until May 15, which coincides with the 70th anniversary of Nakba Day (Day of Catastrophe) on which Israel was created.

The Great March of Return began on March 30 and will last for six weeks. Israel has responded to the peaceful demonstrations with an iron fist, killing more than 30 unarmed Palestinians over the past three weeks. Tel Aviv has come under criticism in the international community by allowing its snipers to open fire on the unarmed protesters that come close to the fence.

The weeks-long march has been organized by the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement, which governs Gaza. It evokes a longtime call for Palestinian refugees to regain ancestral homes in the territories under Israeli occupation.

Every year on May 15, Palestinians all over the world hold demonstrations to commemorate Nakba Day, which marks the anniversary of the forcible eviction of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homeland by Israelis in 1948.

More than 760,000 Palestinians - now estimated to number nearly five million with their descendants - were driven out of their homes on May 14, 1948.

Since 1948, the Israeli regime has denied Palestinian refugees the right to return, despite UN resolutions and international law that upholds people's right to return to their homelands.

(Source: Press TV)

NICICO CEO reveals:

# NICICO to develop its investment in Rafsanjan Special Economic Zone



National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO)

The first session of "resistance economy" of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) was held in Rafsanjan Special Economic Zone in the presence of Mohammadreza Baniasadrad the Chief Executive of the company, senior managers of State Pension Fund (SPF) and subsidiary companies of Sarcheshmeh Copper Investment Company.

CEO of the company was the first speaker who said, "development of investment opportunities related to company in Rafsanjan Special Economic Zone should be put atop agenda of the companies besides its affiliated corporations."

About one month has passed since the appointment of Mohammadreza Baniasadrad as the chief executive of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) and it seems that removal of pollution emitted from Sarcheshmeh Copper Production Company has been put atop agenda.

With due observance to the said issue, it seems that removal of pollution in Sarcheshmeh Copper Production Company with the operation of an acid factory by the end of the current year in 1397 (to end March 20, 2019), accelerating copper mines and mineral development projects of Kerman Province with the aim of increasing concentrate production in the company, producing cathode in the company as much as its nominal capacity in Khatoonabad and Sarcheshmeh smelting factories and generating employment through activation of small copper mines, etc. have been put atop agenda of the managing director and members of the Board of Directors of the company, the issue of which has been taken into serious consideration.

Accordingly, chief executive of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) visited Rafsanjan Special Economic Zone.

In this joint meeting, Asadrad emphasized on the purposeful planning for having active and dynamic presence of affiliated companies in Rafsanjan Special Economic Zone and added, "this joint meeting has been held with the aim of provision of a roadmap in cooperation with affiliated companies to set up development in economic area of the city using application of existing potentials in Rafsanjan Special Economic Zone."

Synergy of developmental activities of copper industry in cooperation with subsidiary companies with the approach of attraction of investment of private sector and foreign



companies in this zone, moreover supplying and focusing on materialization of objectives of resistance economy, can play a decisive role in generation of employment for job-seeking people of Kerman province."

To materialize this objective, removal of barriers should be taken into serious consideration, he said, adding, "paying due attention to the infrastructural barriers of the region in water issues, investment in the field of development of power plant and production of required parts in the copper industry can pave suitable ground for more dynamism of the region."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the chief executive of the company pointed to the significance of Rafsanjan Special Economic Zone and said, "NICICO should take effective steps for developing this Zone."

Baniasadrad pointed to commissioning Sarcheshmeh Acid Production Plant and said, "relying upon the assistance of the Almighty God, this production unit will be

put into operation before the termination of the current Iranian calendar year in 1397 (to end March 20, 2019)."

"We have decided to launch Sarcheshmeh Acid Production Plant in order to solve pollution problem at the company forever."

Ali Mohammadi Member of the Board of Directors of National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) was the other speaker who termed the key role of Rafsanjan Special Economic Zone in the development of Kerman Province and added, "presently, we are after removal of barriers ahead of development of this zone, because, if this zone is developed, it will have many positive effects on reducing costs of the company and increasing productivity due to the low distance of Sarcheshmeh Copper Production Company to Rafsanjan."

Mohsen Arsalan Official in Charge of "Resistance Economy" in National Iranian Copper Industries company (NICICO) was the other speaker who said, "in line with

fulfilling its social responsibility, NICICO currently plays an important role in materializing long-term objectives for the economic development of cities including Anar, Shahr-e Babak, and Rafsanjan."

In this regard, National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) tries to play a leading role in the field of generating employment through supporting intellectual and creative activities among youth and young adults, technical, agricultural and mineral innovators and even activities of knowledge-based companies.

Focusing on implementing executive programs of these types of activities for the generation of employment is the main objective of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO), he opined.

■ **Provision of Comprehensive Plan for Development of Rafsanjan Special Economic Zone**

Seyyed Hojjatollah Mousavi Chief Executive of Copper Pension Fund was the next speaker who expressed his special thanks to the CEO of NICICO due to prioritizing the Fund and its affiliated companies and added, "over the previous year, we have tried to set up consolidation between affiliated and subsidiary companies for the development of activities related to the copper industry in Kerman Province."

For this purpose, joint and expert-level meetings were held in the presence of senior managers of Special Economic Zones of the country in order to flourish the region, he added.

In conclusion, he added, "Copper Pension Fund promises to use all its potentials for the development of Rafsanjan Special Economic Zone through constructing projects related to the copper industry."

Chief executive of Pension Fund said, "we took advantage of opinion of an experienced consulting engineer for the development of Rafsanjan Special Economic Zone, based on which, we are after using our potentials and capabilities for progress of this region."

Consulting engineer of the project acknowledged, "this comprehensive project has been launched in order to remove the problem facing copper industry of the country."

To conclude his remarks, he once again reiterated, "we will make our utmost efforts to develop and boom Rafsanjan Special Economic Zone through fulfilling projects related to the copper industry."

By A.Saeedi



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	95265.9
IFX	1067.11

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	68.40/b
Brent	76.06/b
OPEC Basket	70.96/b
Gold	\$1,336.70 /oz
Silver	\$17.14/oz
Platinum	\$930.85/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Supplying gas to 3 remaining power plants to be expedited

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — In a meeting with the senior officials on Saturday, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani called on Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh to expedite the trend of gas supplying to the country’s power plants.



Following the president’s remarks, Saeid Mo’meni, the director for gas supplying in the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC), said there are 84 power plants throughout the country, of which 81 power plants have received gas and supplying gas to the remaining three power plants will be expedited, Shana news agency reported.

Currency rate policies & foreign trade

**1 →** “It is worth noting that mechanisms such as these [the over-night made emergency measures] will prevent crises from getting deepened in the short-run, however, their long-term impacts should be questioned,” he said.

According to him, a single-digit rate dollar will bring a transient stability, while providing incentives to spur exports and reduce imports will come in favor of domestic production and will lessen unemployment. “However, the question here is if the applied policies will improve the quality of domestic products as well or they will act as a type of [economic] rent for domestic production,” he noted.

“Regarding that in the last Iranian year, \$54 million of goods were imported into the country, 55 percent of which were raw materials, the foreign currency rate would definitely have a direct effect on domestic production and

prices stability would rely on CBI’s ability in meeting the market’s demand. And I believe that the central bank, backed by its reserves, would face no difficulty to supply the required need,” he added.

The applied policies can be found practical in case they regard businessmen as efficient role players in business and trade and do not put pressure on the private sector, the Chairman asserted.

In fact, the announced 42,000 rial rate for dollar does not seem to be a mere economic decision since it includes some security aspects.

Shouldering the blame for the created unregulated market on enemies of the Islamic Republic and of the Rouhani administration, First Vice-President Es’haq Jahangiri described around a week ago that since the country’s export revenues has injected tens of billions of dollars

Annual car manufacturing up 13.7%

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iranian carmakers manufactured over 1,535 vehicles during the past Iranian calendar year 1396 (ended on March 20), with 13.7 percent rise from the figure of its preceding year, Industry Ministry has announced.

According to the ministry’s data, car manufacturing in Iran stood at over 1.35 million in the calendar year 1395, IRIB news reported on Saturday.

As reported, 1,442 million passenger cars were manufactured in the past year, with 14.9 percent growth from 1.255 million cars in its previous year.

Some 1,381 minibuses and middle buses



were manufactured in 1396, indicating 52.6 percent increase from 905 minibuses and middle buses manufactured in 1395.

Also, 1,782 buses were manufactured in the last year, with 53.9 percent rise from 1,158 buses manufactured in the year before.

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Production units in industrial parks exported \$2.18 billion of goods during the last Iranian calendar year (ended March 20, 2018), IRNA

quoted Iranian deputy industry minister as saying on Saturday. According to Sadeq Najafi, the figure is projected to reach \$4 billion by the end of the present year (March 20, 2019).

There are 85,000 production units in Iran, 1,700 ones are large and industrial and the rest are medium and small-sized, the report added.



of foreign currency into Iran in recent weeks, the experienced unstable market was the result of a wider political plot seeking to discredit the administration and foment instability.

The Iranian cabinet on Wednesday ordered all state-run organizations and companies to replace U.S. dollar with euro in reporting their financial statements, to reduce its reliance on the U.S. currency.

Some believe that the switch from dollar to euro will have heavy costs. As they say extra layer of currency swapping involved may add to the cost of imports into Iran and push the prices higher in the country.

While, some express that the taken policy will let Iran benefit from its oil revenues more than before and also will facilitate its international

\$8b increase in mining, petrochemical exports predicted

**ENERGY** TEHRAN — Head of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) predicted that regarding the created capacities, Iran’s exports from mining and petrochemical sectors will witness rises of \$1.5 billion and \$6.5 billion respectively by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019).

Making the remarks in a meeting on Saturday, Mojtaba Khosrotaj underlined the significance of expanding non-oil exports, IRIB news reported.

During the meeting, Masoud Kamali Ardakani, director general of the exports development office of TPO, said: “An-



ual exports of petrochemicals in the preceding year 1396 reached about \$15 billion, showing 8 percent rise, while exports of mining products hit \$7.5 billion with an increase of 14 percent,” he added.

Industrial parks export up to \$2.2b of goods in a year

Brazil cheers IMF’s revised forecast

With Brazilian economists cutting their growth forecasts for the Latin American giant, the country’s top policy makers welcomed an upward revision by the International Monetary Fund, while downplaying the fact its estimate remains lower than others.

“I don’t know if you saw, but Brazil was one of the countries for which the IMF most intensely changed its growth forecast,” central bank chief Ilan Goldfajn told reporters on the sidelines of the IMF’s spring meeting in Washington. “It’s possible there’s another adjustment next time. If our projections are maintained, I think it’s likely they end up raising it.”

The IMF increased its forecast for Brazil to 2.3 percent in 2018, according to its World Economic Outlook released this month, up from 1.9 percent previously. But the 2018 forecast remains lower than all but five of 38 predictions from economists surveyed by Bloomberg. A series of weak economic data have

prompted Brazilian economists to cut their 2018 growth forecast for three straight weeks, to 2.76 percent.

While the central bank estimates Latin America’s largest economy will expand 2.6 percent, Finance Minister Eduardo Guardia expects 3 percent. He hasn’t yet found sufficient reason to lower the ministry’s outlook but he could do so in its next bi-monthly review, he told reporters in Washington.

“I haven’t looked into details of their number,” Guardia said of the multilateral fund’s projection. “Traditionally the IMF has more conservative forecasts than the market average, it’s a question of the parameters they used. I prefer to look at our number and the average of Brazilian analysts.”

In discussing the IMF’s revised forecast, both Guardia and Goldfajn stressed Brazil has emerged from a two-year recession that was its worst on record. Analysts no longer debate whether the economy is

undergoing recovery, but rather its speed, Goldfajn said. He added that any outlook from 2.5 percent to 3 percent is “within the reasonable margin.”

The IMF’s forecast falls outside that range because it is more pessimistic about the prospect of upcoming presidential elections prompting some investors to delay projects, Alejandro Werner, director of the Western Hemisphere’s department, said in an interview. He agreed the trend is more significant than its exact path, particularly because projecting rebound after such deep recession is inherently imprecise.

“Measuring the effect of electoral uncertainty on investment is more an art than a science,” Werner said. “I don’t claim that we have a crystal ball that is much better and much less opaque than Ilan’s crystal ball. I say both our crystal balls are relatively opaque, and we’re trying to do our best with that.”

(Source: Bloomberg)

Closer euro area integration ‘pays off,’ says Italian fin. min.

After imposing import tariffs on solar panels and washing machines in January, Trump moved to levy steel and aluminum in March along with about \$50 billion in other goods.

After China responded with a list of U.S. goods that would be subject to tariffs, Trump raised the stakes on April 4 by directing the U.S. Trade Representative to consider \$100 billion in additional levies.

But a Reuters analysis of Chinese imports shows that to quickly reach \$100 billion worth of goods to tax, Trump may have to target cellphones, computers, toys, clothing, footwear, furniture and other consumer goods, prompting price rises at U.S. retailers.

“There is no way to avoid consumer products when you’re thinking about how to hit \$100 billion worth of imports coming from China,” said Hun Quach, vice president of international trade for the Retail Industry Leaders Association which represents U.S. retailers.

How much the news tariffs would hit wallets depends on variables that make calculating the impact of the tariffs on individual products hard to measure. Companies can absorb some of the costs, and some companies can shift production in China to other countries, cutting the final bill for America’s shoppers.

After washing machines imported by LG Electronics’ were hit with a 20 percent tariff in January, the company raised U.S. prices by about \$50 per machine, or 4 percent to 8 percent.



LG opted to absorb part of the tariff cost, which was imposed at a time when construction was already well underway on its new U.S. factory that will begin producing washers in late 2018, avoiding U.S. tariffs.

Companies with complex supply chains, mainly those in high technology industries, can also change how their internal costs are charged among subsidiaries to lower their tariff bill.

Trump’s first round of import tariffs deliberately left most consumer electronics untouched, but out of the \$506 billion in U.S. imports from China last year, finding another \$100 billion to tax without hurting U.S. shoppers will not be easy.

The USTR could quickly find \$100 billion but at the cost of targeting three broad categories of consumer electron-

ics - cellphones at \$44 billion, computer equipment at \$37 billion, and voice, image and data recorders at \$22 billion.

U.S. supply chains would also be hurt as many consumer electronics products depend on the export of American semiconductors, software and other inputs to China for assembly before being imported back to the United States.

U.S. allies South Korea, Japan and Taiwan also supply cellphone parts for companies like Apple Inc, including displays, cameras and fingerprint scanners, and would feel the impact.

“You end up shooting yourself in the foot, shooting your allies in the foot, and maybe you wound China’s big toe,” said Chad Bown, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

(Source: CNBC)

Second Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO.96/121-143/14

**Tender Holder:**  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

**Subject of Tender:**  
**Purchasing, Installation and Commissioning of Electrical Equipment in accordance with the technical specification and other terms and conditions mentioned in the tender documents.**

**Deadline and How to Receive the Tender Documents:**  
From **23<sup>rd</sup> Apr 2018 (1397/02/03)** by **4 p.m.** on **Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2018 (1397/02/11)** with presentation of introductory letter by company or its representative and the receipt of paying the documents fee.

**Place of Receiving the Tender Documents:**  
Interested participants may refer to purchasing (KALA) Dept., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor of IRIB Administration Complex, Hotel Esteghlal St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran Iran.

**The Fee of the Tender Documents and How to Deposit it:**  
Submission of payment receipt for the amount of 2,000,000 Rials to account No.4101029171204273 with CENTRAL BANK OF IRAN in the name of IRIB.

**Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participation to Tender:**  
The amount of deposit for participant in tender is **USD 38500** fixed or its equivalent in 1,925,000,000 Rials which should be in the form of Bank Guarantee.

**Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:**  
The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted no later than **4 p.m.** on **02<sup>nd</sup> Jun 2018 (1397/03/12)** and at the address mentioned in the 4th clause.

**Time and Place of Opening Envelopes:**  
The date of opening envelopes A&B is on **03<sup>rd</sup> Jun. 2018 (1397/03/13)** at **3 p.m.** in the office of Financial Vice President and opening of envelope C will be after technical evaluation.

**For more information, please see:**  
[www.iriboffice.ir/tenders](http://www.iriboffice.ir/tenders) and <http://iets.mporg.ir/> Tel: **00982122167463**

**Purchasing (kala) Dept. of IRIB**



# Asian oil demand to hit record, but industry can't take eyes off Middle East

**SINGAPORE, (Reuters)** — Asian oil demand will hit a record in April just as global crude values are lifted to levels not seen in three years by Middle East supply risks and top exporter Saudi Arabia withholding output and noisily pushing for prices at \$80 to \$100 per barrel.

Most analysts have pointed to escalating Middle East conflicts, a crisis in Venezuela, and the supply cuts of Saudi Arabia and other producers as the main drivers taking global benchmark Brent and U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude futures this week to their highest since late 2014 at almost \$75 and \$70 a barrel, respectively.

Yet a much more fundamental reason has also sparked oil's bull run: Asian demand, which Goldman Sachs said this week points to an average price of \$80 a barrel in 2018.

"Rising tensions in the Middle East have likely played a role in oil price strength, but we believe a tight physical market is the key driver," U.S. investment bank Jefferies said on Friday in a note to clients.

Trade data in Thomson Reuters Eikon shows seaborne imports of crude oil by Asia's main buyers will hit a record this month, a big portion going to slake China's voracious thirst.

By end-April, China will likely have taken in more than 9 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude, its most ever. That's nearly 10 percent of global consumption and more than a third of Asia's overall demand. At \$75 a barrel, it implies monthly import costs for China of more than \$20 billion.

The record comes despite maintenance season, which usually dents imports at this time of year, and indicates that China's oil



requirement is bigger than expected.

"Chinese demand points to strong growth," said U.S. bank Goldman Sachs in a note to clients, adding that it may be "higher than currently estimated".

■ **Re-stocking, teapots, reserves**

Michal Meidan of consultancy Energy Aspects said Chinese buyers were re-stocking after running down inventories late last year.

Much of China's new demand also comes from the advent of non-state refiners - often called teapots - as crude importers, resulting in record refining throughput.

"A number of teapots are starting new Crude Distillation Unites (CDUs) and secondary units, pulling in more crude," Meidan said, adding that there may also be some purchases of Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPRs).

Beyond re-stocking and teapots, analysts said China's economic performance has also been stronger than expected.

"Chinese growth of 6.8 percent in Q1 is higher than its target of 6.5 percent for the year. The supportive growth environment in China is one key reason for a supported oil demand story in general," said Barnabas Gan, analyst at Singapore's OCBC Bank.

Suresh Sivanandam of energy consultancy Wood Mackenzie said he expected China's overall oil demand to grow by 370,000 bpd this year to 12.78 million bpd.

Adding in other regions, Goldman said global oil demand in the first quarter of 2018 is likely to post the strongest year-on-year growth since the last quarter of 2010.

A tighter market is also showing up in rising costs for crude deliveries to Asia as Middle East producers raise their official selling prices (OSPs).

The OSPs for Abu Dhabi's Murban and Saudi Arabia's Light crudes are currently showing their highest premiums to Dubai since 2014.

■ **Dark clouds?**

With demand growing all around, some analysts say there is little reason to expect anything but further price increases.

Standard Chartered Bank said this week there were "no bears left in this oil town".

So far, refineries in Asia are still operating at high levels to meet strong demand, despite rising crude feedstock prices eating into profit margins.

"Refiners are not likely to reduce imports or trim down run rates despite the price increase," said Lee Dal-seok, senior research fellow at state-run think tank Korea Energy Economics Institute.

Still, some dark clouds loom.

China's Sinopec, Asia's largest refiner, plans deep cuts to its May crude imports as its biggest refinery - the 460,000 bpd Zhenhai Refining and Chemical Company - goes into major overhaul.

Several traders said more such outages are due in May and June, likely reducing China's crude imports in coming months.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) this week also released its World Economic Outlook in which it warned that rising U.S.-China trade restrictions threatened global growth.

"The prospect of trade restrictions and counter-restrictions threatens to ... derail growth prematurely," said IMF Chief Economist Maurice Obstfeld.

Goldman Sachs does not share the IMF's concerns.

Worries about "trade wars and fears that higher oil prices will start to weigh on demand growth ... are overdone," it said.

## Russia says oil supply situation has improved but not yet at a 'full recovery'

The supply-cutting deal led by OPEC has not yet completed its mission to rebalance the oil market, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak told CNBC Friday.

The agreement was initially brought forward to boost oil prices after years of stalled levels. Oil producing countries are set to meet in June to review the deal.

Novak acknowledged that their agreement has worked, but there's still more to be done.

"Undoubtedly, the situation is much better than it was three months, half a year or a year ago, but the patient has not yet fully recovered," Novak told CNBC's Steve Sedgwick in Jeddah.

"To continue with the metaphor: we have brought the temperature down but we have not seen a full recovery yet," he added.

OPEC, Russia and several other allied producers have spearheaded an ongoing effort to try to clear a global supply overhang and

prop up prices. The agreement, which came into effect in January 2017, has already been extended through until the end of this year.

When asked if Russia and other oil suppliers in the deal might jump off before the expected end-date, Novak repeated that such a decision would need more market data.

"I cannot at the moment give you a precise answer because we do not have the full idea how the market is going to perform in the forthcoming months. We need to carry

on monitoring the situation," Novak said.

"I cannot tell unequivocally: yes or no, this would be too blunt," he said. "We keep our options open in order to be able to take a more balanced decision based on more accurate data over a longer-term period."

Earlier on Friday, the Saudi Arabian Energy Minister, Khalid al-Falih, told CNBC that it's not mission accomplished yet for the oil producers.

(Source: CNBC)

## Private Chinese chemical giant gets largest-ever oil import quota

Hengli Petrochemical, a unit of private Chinese chemical giant Hengli Group, has obtained state approval to import 400,000 bpd of crude oil—the largest quota ever handed to a private Chinese refiner, as it aims to start a new refinery this year, challenging the smaller independent Chinese refiners.

Listed Hengli Petrochemical said in a stock exchange filing that the Chinese state economic planner, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), had approved the import quota.

Hengli Petrochemical has plans to begin this October trial runs at a new refinery on the northeastern port city of Dalian, a facility which will be one of the five biggest Chinese refineries.

"We hope to get enough allowances for the refinery to start trial operations in October," a senior Hengli official told Reuters on the condition of anonymity.

The Dalian refinery's two crude distillation units (CDU) are designed to process 30 percent of Saudi Arabia's Arab Medium crude, 60 percent of Saudi Heavy, and 10 percent Qatar Marine, according to the official.

"Hengli's world-class scale, sophisticated refinery configuration that favors high-end petrochemicals and its location means it will be a killer competitor to teapots," Harry Liu of consultancy IHS Markit told Reuters.

The new big refinery will be stiff competition for the small independent refiners—known as 'teapots'—that typically operate refineries with capacities of below 100,000 bpd.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## Disney to build solar farm to power 2 out of 4 of its parks

Walt Disney has announced that by the end of the year, it will have a 270-acre solar farm to power two of its four theme parks.

The new initiative is in collaboration with Reed Creek Improvement District and Origis Energy USA, a solar project developer.

The 50-megawatt solar facility will include half a million solar panels and it is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emission by more than 57,000 tons a year, Disney stated in a blog post.

«That's the annual equivalent of removing 9,300 automobiles from the roads. More broadly, this initiative will join the numerous efforts The Walt Disney Company has launched to deliver its 2020 goal of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent compared to 2012,» Disney mentioned in the announcement.

The solar facility will be near Disney's Animal Kingdom and construction is expected to begin in the coming months.

In addition, teams from Disney's Animals, Science and Environment and Horticulture will come up with ways to make the facility pollinator friendly, meaning wildflowers and vegetation maybe placed there, «creating a safe and welcoming habitat for butterflies, bees and other insects, including endangered and at-risk species,» Disney explained.

The two parks that will benefit from the new solar facility have not been named.

(Source: mynews13.com)



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## Why Trump is panicking

By Renato Mariotti

“Attorney-client privilege is dead,” according to President Donald Trump, who unleashed an angry Twitter tirade last week in response to search warrants executed at the office, home and hotel room of his personal attorney, Michael Cohen. The president is also reportedly considering firing Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein to rein in special counsel Robert Mueller.

Trump is right to be concerned about the search of Cohen’s office, but not because it was improper or a violation of attorney-client privilege. In fact, there are established Justice Department procedures regarding searches of attorney offices. What should concern Trump is that the search of Cohen’s office presumably met the rigorous requirements of those procedures and ultimately resulted in the seizure of communications between Trump and Cohen, according to the Washington Post.



As a starting point, the search of Cohen’s office suggests that he is in very serious legal jeopardy. A federal judge would not have issued the search warrant unless the judge concluded that there was good reason to believe that a crime was committed and that evidence of that crime existed in Cohen’s office. That’s bad news for Cohen, who is reportedly under investigation for bank fraud, wire fraud and campaign finance violations.

What’s even worse news for Cohen is that federal prosecutors rarely use search warrants in order to obtain documents in white collar investigations. Typically, they use subpoenas that force the defense to review documents and provide only relevant, no privileged documents to the government that are organized and formatted so the government can easily access them. (In fact, procedures require prosecutors to “take the least intrusive approach” by considering subpoenas instead of warrants.) If prosecutors resorted to a search warrant in this case, it means they had reason to believe Cohen would not have turned over the appropriate documents via subpoena. In other words, it suggests they have evidence that he tried to obstruct their investigation or mislead investigators.

So instead, federal prosecutors in Manhattan followed Justice Department procedures to obtain a search warrant of Cohen’s office, home and hotel room. To do this, prosecutors would have had to obtain approval from the United States attorney in Manhattan and consult with the Criminal Division of the Justice Department. Rules also obligate prosecutors to establish procedures, such as a “taint team,” to ensure that privileged materials that have been seized aren’t reviewed by investigators.

The Justice Department guidelines also mandate that the search warrant be “drawn as specifically as possible.” This is important because every search warrant lists the “items to be seized.” In the application for the search warrant, the prosecution must establish that there is good reason to believe that those items are evidence of a crime and that those items will be found at the location to be searched. For example, if the prosecutors are investigating a particular bank loan obtained by Cohen, they might have sought to seize documents relating to that loan.

With this in mind, reports that the FBI seized communications between Trump and Cohen should be alarming to Trump because this means that the communications between Trump and Cohen fell within one of the categories of “items to be seized.” To use the prior example, if the FBI sought to obtain documents relating to a bank loan obtained by Cohen, the seized communications between Trump and Cohen were related to the loan that is under investigation.

That is a significant problem for the president — he was communicating with a man under criminal investigation about matters that are under criminal investigation. While some of those communications could be privileged, the “taint team” of attorneys that are walled off from the investigators will determine whether each communication is privileged. Communications that are unrelated to legal advice or are in furtherance of an ongoing crime, are not privileged.

**The raids on his attorney’s files are extremely dangerous for the president.**

Today’s news that the search warrant reportedly sought communications between Trump and others (including Cohen) regarding the suppression of the infamous “Access Hollywood” tape raises the stakes even higher for the president. This means that a federal judge reviewed evidence and concluded that there is good reason to believe that those communications would constitute evidence of a federal crime. That means that Trump’s communications were within the scope of the federal criminal investigation even before the FBI conducted their searches.

It’s never good news for a person under investigation when their lawyer’s office is raided by the FBI. Given Cohen’s loyalty, and Trump’s ability to pardon Cohen for federal offenses, Trump is likely unconcerned that Cohen will “flip” on him. Yet Trump was reportedly in “meltdown” mode yesterday, considering whether to fire Attorney General Sessions, Rosenstein and Mueller. He’s wrong to believe that Mueller has acted improperly, but he’s right to be gravely concerned about his communications with Cohen, which are now in the hands of the FBI. Cohen is in serious legal jeopardy, and his communications could lead Mueller to Trump.

(Source: Politico)

# Will the next superbug come from Yemen?

By Sam Loewenberg

It was two days after the young Yemeni man was released from surgery that the doctors first noticed the smell. The bullet that wounded the leg of the 22-year-old college student had shattered bone and torn a hole in the soft tissue. Now, the wound was emitting a distinct smell, described in the medical literature as “offensive.” It strongly suggested infection, perhaps life-threatening, and the wound was not getting better.

Realizing that normal antibiotics were not working, the doctors at a trauma center run by Doctors Without Borders sent a blood culture for analysis to their new microbiology lab, the only one of its kind in the region. The tests found a bacterium, *Acinetobacter baumannii*, resistant to most standard antibiotics. Nobody knows how the student — who was identified using his initials, A. S., to preserve his privacy — acquired the drug-resistant infection, but it is so common in Yemen that it could have come from the bullet itself or the sand on the ground when he fell, said Dr. Nagwan Mansoor, the chief physician in Doctors Without Borders’s antibiotic stewardship program.

Doctors started the gunshot victim on a program of specialized antibiotics, medicines rarely used because of their potentially dangerous side effects. He required numerous surgeries, seven in all. What would normally have been a five-day stay became three weeks, during which the man was put into isolation to prevent him from infecting other patients. When his family came to visit, they could not touch him without wearing protective clothing.

S. survived. “We captured the patient from the mouth of death,” said Dr. Mansoor. But A. S. was lucky: Most hospitals in Yemen do not have the capacity or protocols in place to detect and treat drug-resistant infections; if he had been anywhere else, he would have lost his leg, or died.

The Saudi-led bombing campaign in Yemen has produced thousands of casualties and created vast numbers of refugees. But the real cost may not become apparent for years to come. After years of bombardment that has crippled the food supply, destroyed basic infrastructure and disrupted medical care, Yemen has become a breeding ground for antibiotic-resistant disease, with potentially catastrophic consequences — and not just for Yemen.

When penicillin was first widely introduced in 1942, it was a revolution in medicine. Infections that used to kill no longer did. Similar breakthroughs followed, but the threat of microbes developing resistance to these wonder drugs has been a concern from the beginning. Until recently, the threat of drug-resistant disease was largely theoretical, a generalized fear rooted in a few isolated cases.

It’s happening now in Yemen. The conflict is taking on aspects of warfare once found only in history books, when the real toll of a military campaign is not the immediate damage from weapons, but the long-term and far greater impact of disease that spread in the chaos of armed conflict. “It’s a huge burden on the health system that can barely take care of primary health care,” said Ana Leticia Nery, the medical coordinator for Doctors Without Borders in Yemen, which has long been the poorest country in the Middle East. More than 60 percent of the patients admitted



**After years of bombardment that has crippled the food supply, destroyed basic infrastructure and disrupted medical care, Yemen has become a breeding ground for antibiotic-resistant disease, with potentially catastrophic consequences — and not just for Yemen.**

to the medical organization’s hospital in Aden have antibiotic-resistant bacteria in their systems.

The widespread prevalence of multidrug-resistant infections has nearly quadrupled the amount of time patients must spend in a field hospital to recover from war wounds. This extra time, plus the specialized antibiotics a patient requires to overcome a drug-resistant infection, means far fewer patients can be treated than the norm, and the care is much more expensive and difficult.

Similar problems are reported to be occurring through the war-torn regions of the Middle East, including Iraq and Syria, and countries with extensive refugee populations, like Jordan. “There is a scary, scary prevalence of multidrug resistance we see in the Middle East,” Dr. Nery said.

In humanitarian crises, the focus is on emergency care, and other problems are often missed. Surveillance of drug resistance is spotty, but it appears that “many people are dying of infections” in Middle Eastern conflicts, said Susan Elden, a health adviser on Syria for Britain’s Department for International Development. Findings similar to Doctors Without Borders’s Yemen experience have appeared in small studies in Syria, she said, adding, “The global aid architecture has not caught up with the realities” of multidrug-resistant infections in conflict zones.

It’s a threat to American national security, too. Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan

were laid low by drug-resistant infections for many years before the military began a program in 2009 to tackle it. The causes of drug resistance in the American military were many of the same as in civilian populations: poor hygiene, overuse of antibiotics and treatment in multiple facilities, said Dr. Kent E. Kester, a retired colonel who led the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and oversaw the drug resistance program.

Doctors Without Borders is unusual among relief organizations in that it is paying attention to drug resistance at all. This was born of necessity. The normal protocols it uses for antibiotics in sub-Saharan Africa often do not work in Yemen and other war-torn Middle Eastern countries because of the high prevalence of drug resistance, Dr. Nery said. “We saw that our patients are not improving with the usual antibiotics. Our patients are not getting better.”

Before the war, Yemen had a functioning, if fragile, health system. The war destroyed it, along with the country’s water and sanitation infrastructure. Many small children are not even getting routine vaccinations. Nearly 18 million people are hungry, with many close to famine levels. By conservative estimates, 10,000 civilians have been killed, with 52,000 more wounded — fertile ground for drug resistance.

Antibiotic consumption was already very high in the region. A 2014 study found a prevalence of nonprescription antibiotic use by 48 percent of the population in

Saudi Arabia and 78 percent in Yemen. Syria was a major producer of antibiotics, both for itself and for export.

It’s a recipe for catastrophe: a struggling health system where antibiotics remain widely available with little oversight, combined with an overwhelming number of wounded in hospitals and weak hygiene and infection-control practices. Doctors in Yemen, struggling to treat the rush of patients, often use broad-spectrum antibiotics on even simple infections. “This creates a new generation of multidrug-resistant bacteria,” Dr. Mansoor said, and inadvertently sets the stage for a public health meltdown.

Diseases from the 19th century have re-emerged in force. Yemen faces the fastest-growing cholera outbreak ever recorded, with more than one million people affected, a quarter of them small children. Diphtheria has emerged as well.

Doctors Without Borders, which has been in Yemen since 1986, appears to be the only relief agency tracking drug resistance in the area, and last year it set up its dedicated microbiology lab. Other medical-relief agencies I contacted said that they were too busy to be following the issue.

This goes to a core problem: a lack of surveillance and infection-control procedures as part of humanitarian response, which are increasingly a necessity with so many prolonged conflicts. “Where we need the most information, we don’t have it,” Ms. Elden said.

(Source: The NYT)

## View on the DRC: Millions are desperate, their government does not care

The world has managed to largely ignore one of its worst humanitarian crises, unfolding now in central Africa. The Democratic Republic of the Congo holds over a tenth of the globe’s malnourished children; more than 13 million people need aid. Around 4.5 million people are displaced internally, and another 750,000 have fled abroad. The International Crisis Group has warned that deterioration is likely — and the risk of “a steeper descent into chaos” is real. Multiple conflicts across 10 provinces intensify; their roots are complex, but President Joseph Kabila’s refusal to leave office has aggravated them. Civilians are caught between the brutality of rebel groups and of security forces. There are growing fears of civil war, in a country already so deeply scarred: the 1998-2003 conflict killed millions and sucked in neighbors. Meanwhile, the budget of the UN peacekeeping mission — the world’s largest — has been slashed.

One faint glimmer of hope comes from Geneva on Friday, where the United Nations, European Union and donor nations have convened a funding conference which aims to raise \$1.7bn. Last year’s much smaller appeal received less than two-fifths of the money it sought. Oxfam warns that only half a million of the four million people with acute malnourishment received treatment in 2017.

Extraordinarily, the DRC itself will be absent from the table. Kabila’s government is boycotting the meeting, denying there is a crisis. Its estimates of the displaced population are laughably low at 231,000: around a 20th of the UN figure. It has lobbied other countries to dismiss or denounce the aid drive, which it describes as a demoniza-



**The country is in the grips of one of the world’s worst crises. But Joseph Kabila is boycotting the funding drive that could help his people.**

tion campaign. And it justifies all this on the grounds that the desperately needed drive for support will discourage foreign investment. Never mind those fleeing and dying: the DRC is open for business. Of course, Kabila needs no support; his family boasts vast wealth. But more than

half of his people still survive on less than a pound a day.

As painfully slow and small as the DRC’s progress has been since the war ended, there have been improvements. Poverty and child mortality rates have decreased since the end of the war; more children are in school. Much more is possible. The country holds half of Africa’s forests and water resources, as well as mineral reserves worth trillions of dollars. The vast natural wealth which has attracted so many predators has the potential to enrich its citizens, not merely bring more misery. But the devastating effects of years of malign interference by western powers, regional rivals and powerful foreign businesses are compounded by domestic misrule. The European commission’s humanitarian chief says foreign assistance would be effective only with local government cooperation.

While immediate needs must be met, improving the bigger political picture is essential. Kabila is already two years over his five-year term, and barred from standing again by the constitution. At the end of 2016, internal and external pressure forced him to agree a path to elections in the Saint Sylvester deal. But the 12-month deadline came and went with no sign of such polls. The government has dug in, reliant on its resources, on short-term deals with anyone who looks useful and increasingly on force — while blaming the unrest for the electoral delays.

Now it promises that there will an election in December this year, and that Kabila will not be a candidate. Few place confidence in his pledges. Only sustained, coordinated and forceful diplomacy by western and African partners stands a chance of holding him to them.

(Source: The Guardian)



# Quran is the soul of Islam: professor

## EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

By Jalal Heirannia

**TEHRAN** — Charles Taliaferro, a professor of philosophy at St. Olaf College in the U.S., believes that “The Quran is the soul of Islam, the culmination of divine revelation from Adam to Muhammad.”

“I believe that the compelling beauty of the Quran is revealed with its being addressed as a living whole rather than studied only in parts,” Taliaferro tells the Tehran Times.

Following is the text of the interview with Professor Taliaferro:

■ What is the role of Quran in uniting Muslims?

A: The Quran is the soul of Islam, the culmination of divine revelation from Adam to Muhammad. Its role in shaping lives, worship, language, matters of governance and philosophy, centuries of study and interpretation, its role in the arts, would be difficult to exaggerate. The unity of Muslims worldwide or even regionally is difficult to conceive without the Quran playing a major role.

■ Why do some try to show Quran as a book that teaches violence?

A: Islamophobia fuels some of this. Fear and ignorance



are at play. The same is true of hostile critics of the Bible in the west. The Quran and Bible must each be interpreted as whole sacred texts, understood in their entirety rather than piecemeal, taking surahs out of context.

The absurdity of such partial readings would be like

claiming that Muslims believe there is no God, for they report that «There is no God,» but ignore that the fuller text is «There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet.»

■ What is the role of common studies on Quran in uniting Muslims (such as common studies between Shia Muslims and Sunni Muslims)?

A: This will be something that is very much in the hands of all those involved across the spectrum from scholars to laypersons. Its role in uniting Muslims will depend on good will, open minds and hearts. I have seen in the west the ways in which a sacred text, the Bible, can be used divisively, but among persons united in revering wisdom, it can be transforming.

■ How can Muslims use Quran’ teachings for making “Unified Ummah”?

A: I suggest it would by the patient, reverent, widespread understanding of the Quran in its entirety. I suppose most of us wind up aligning only with parts of sacred texts, but therein lies a source of tension and fragmentation. I believe that the compelling beauty of the Quran is revealed with its being addressed as a living whole rather than studied only in parts.

## Decoding Pompeo’s words at U.S. Senate



➔ Western sources have argued that these countries are consulting on the three controversial issue, namely «the Sunset clauses», «limiting Iran’s missile power» and «extensive inspections of Iran’s military sites». These sources claimed that the only remaining disagreement between the four countries is over deletion of the so-called Sunset clauses from the nuclear deal, and thus putting permanent limitations on Iran’s nuclear program. Pompeo is currently the CIA director, and ironically, he was one of the foremost critics of the Iran nuclear deal when he served as a House Republican from Kansas. Trump fired Secretary of State «Rex Tillerson» over the raised disagreements, and picked Pompeo as his successor in March, just two months before the deadline on May 12 to decide whether to bring back sanctions that former President of the United States waived when the JCPOA was first implemented.

Before this, many Western politicians and analysts saw the nomination of Mike Pompeo for secretary of state by Trump as a sign of Washington’s withdrawal from the nuclear deal. Beyond that, John Bolton’s appointment as U.S. national security advisor also sent a

clear message to the international system that Trump is about to pull out of the nuclear deal with Iran. John Bolton is now silent about the fate of the JCPOA! The silence seems very meaningful at the current time. It’s obvious that John Bolton is one of the main opponents of the nuclear deal with Iran, and he doesn’t even believe in negotiating with the European Troika on maintaining the JCPOA. The important question, however, is whether Bolton’s silence reflects the continuing paradoxical and vague approach of the U.S. towards the JCPOA? Or did Trump ask him to be silent in this regard and wait for the final results of their talks with Europe? American senators still don’t have a clear picture of Trump’s final decision about the JCPOA. Meanwhile, some Republican senators like «Rand Paul» and «Jeff Flake» are worried about the costs and consequences of Trump’s decision to refuse joining other members of P5+1.

Most U.S. senators tried not to mention the nuclear deal with Iran in their speeches during recent weeks. This is while some senators such as «Tom Cotton» and «Ted Cruz» strongly encourage Donald Trump’s government to pull out of the nuclear deal with Iran.

## Shias of Parachinar – victims of Takfiri terrorism and govt apathy



➔ Last year, after the Al Quds Day rally on the last Friday of Ramadan, more than 100 people were killed in two deadly explosions carried out by the militant group, also known by its Arabic acronym Daesh.

Prior to the attacks, some leaflets had been distributed in Kurram Agency, warning Shias to stop supporting Bashar al Assad government in Syria or brace up for more attacks. In Afghanistan also, Hazara Shias are attacked by ISIS on the pretext that they fight in Syria under the banner of ‘Fatemeyon’ brigade, defending the holy shrines.

It is important to note here that a large number of people from Parachinar are fighting in Syria, under the banner of ‘Zainabiyon’, protecting the holy shrine of Sayyeda Zainab (sa).

Many of them have been martyred while defending the holy shrines, which is clearly a source of consternation for Salafist groups in Pakistan that receive briefings directly from Riyadh.

Parachinar, a federally governed area of Pakistan, is also a victim of government’s

callousness and indifference. The region, through a systematic policy framed way back in General Zia ul Haq’s time, who was fiercely against Shias, has been kept away from the gains of economic progress and development. The economic condition of people is weak and living standards are shockingly poor.

Following the twin-blasts in Ramadan last year, people in Parachinar protested for eight days, refusing to bury the dead, demanding peace, security and economic development.

The protest was called off only after Pakistan’s Army Chief Qamar Javed Bajwa visited the region and gave assurances to the protestors. The assurances proved to be hogwash as nothing much has changed in all these months.

While the security situation remains volatile, economic condition of people continues to go from bad to worse. And, quite appallingly, nobody wants to listen to the woes of people – not the government, not the human rights bodies, not the international community. Their only crime is they are Shias.

## Substantial part of the «pain» of sanctions was being applied on Iranian people: Nephew

➔ ■ You argue that “sanctions are ineffective if they are executed without a clear strategy responsive to the nature and changing behavior of the target”. Do you think U.S. have “clear strategy” toward Iran beside its sanctions?

A: I think so, though you and your readers may disagree. It was to apply sanctions in order to persuade the Iranian government that it was better to find a negotiated settlement to international concerns with the Iranian nuclear program than to continue developing that program without addressing those concerns. Sanctions were part of a broad strategy, including diplomatic talks, isolation, and threats of military escalation. At various times, we underscored the importance of this issue to Iran’s leaders, including through in person meetings.

At times, our clarity was lost by virtue of disagreements within the United States and with our partners as to what the nature of the dispute is and how best to solve it. But, in all, I think starting in 2006 and continuing until 2015, our strategy was sensible and clear.

■ You are leader in the design and implementation of sanctions on Iran. Do you know the main “pain” and pressure of the sanctions was on the people of Iran and not government?

A: The easy answer is for me to point out that the Iranian government is composed of Iranian people and that, by virtue of applying sanctions and pain, we were influencing them as well. And that answer is largely true, in my view.

But, part of my book is also about honesty. So, being honest, yes, I do know that a substantial part of the «pain» of sanctions was being applied on the Iranian people. It was being done in order to help motivate the Iranian government to make changes to its nuclear policies that, in my view (and



that of my government), could eventually threaten the United States, our allies, and our interests.

I will note, however, that the pain applied was done neither callously nor carelessly. Throughout the 2006-2013 timeframe, we received many proposals that would have sharply increased sanctions pain. In fact, it would have been easier for us to have agreed to them.

Instead, we tried to be strategic, thoughtful and careful in how we used sanctions. We also maintained humanitarian exemptions to sanctions and even expanded them, such as with medical devices and personal telecommunications. I personally encouraged U.S. and foreign companies engaged in such legal trade to continue with it and to utilize those licenses, and I was not alone within the U.S. government.

Though the Iranian people were damaged

through sanctions, this was not an Iraq-style sanctions program and we made clear that there were opportunities for the Iranian government to take to relieve sanctions. And, when the Iranian government took advantage of one of those opportunities, we swiftly moved to relieve the agreed sanctions (and I was part of that too).

Moreover, it should be remembered that the alternative to using sanctions would not have been to accept Iran’s nuclear program expanding absent the confidence of the international community that it was intended strictly for peaceful uses.

So, yes, I am prepared to be open and honest about how sanctions inflict pain and how that is a necessary component of their functioning. But, the purpose of the book is to make clear that sanctions can be applied sensibly, avoiding unnecessary suffering and damage to a sanctions target. And, it is

my hope that we will take such approaches again in the future.

■ You argue that “The efficacy of sanctions lies in the application of pain against a target, but targets may have significant resolve to resist, tolerate, or overcome this pain. Understanding the interplay of pain and resolve is central to using sanctions both successfully and humanely.” When you argue about the “target”, how can you separate the government and people? In other words, how can you separate between nation and state in the case of Iran nation-state?

A: Well, I would argue that in many cases you cannot, but that’s where knowing the country being targeted is so important. In the case of the Iranian government, its fundamental basis is from the popular revolt in the 1970s and the reconstitution of the Iranian government as representative of the people. Whether the Iranian government still does that is a decision for Iran’s population to make (though I have my views), but it remains the foundational theory of the modern Iranian state. So, in targeting sanctions against Iran, one would be wise to take that into account.

Other countries are different, with their government more or less influenced by the views and concerns of the people (even in theory). For some countries, it is possible that a ruling elite are even more important and that the population’s views are completely discounted. In those countries, targeting the population is meaningless; it’s the elites who ought to be targeted with pressure. This, in my view, explains differences in the U.S. sanctions regimes against Iran and against Russia, for example.

And, of course, as noted, there are ways to help address the damage done to populations, such as through humanitarian exemptions and so forth, all depending on the sanctions used.

## UN a surreal comedy of cowardice: U.S. analyst



**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — A senior American political commentator deplored the United Nations’ muted response to the Israeli regime’s recent killings of unarmed Palestinians and said the organization has become “a surreal comedy of contradictions and cowardice”.

“I think the response from the Netanyahu government (to Palestinians’ mass protests) reflects a kind of almost delusional arrogance that has been seen before, but rarely this starkly,” John Steppling, who is based in Norway, told the Tasnim News Agency in an interview.

He further deplored the UN’s inaction and said, “The UN has become a surreal comedy of contradictions and cowardice.”

Steppling is a well-known author, playwright and an original founding member of the Padua Hills Playwrights Festival, a two-time NEA recipient, Rockefeller Fellow in theater, and PEN-West winner for playwriting. He is also a regular political commentator for a number of media outlets around the world.

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ As you know, Gazans staged a third consecutive Friday of protests along the border with the occupied territories, after mass demonstrations since March 30 that have sparked violence in which Israeli forces have killed 35 Palestinians and injured more than 1,500 others. For the past three Fridays, tens of thousands of Palestinians have gathered near the border at five main sites across the Gaza Strip for what has been dubbed the “Great March of Return”. Israel has responded with snipers firing live ammunition, as well as tank shelling and airstrikes. What do you think about the developments and the Israeli regime’s crimes?

A: I think the response from the Netanyahu government reflects a kind of almost delusional arrogance that has been seen before, but rarely this starkly. They believe they are above all international law and they have a total indifference to world opinion. And Avigdor Lieberman, the defense secretary stated that nobody in Gaza was innocent. A normal government would not openly state something that is tantamount to an admission that Palestinians are meant to be eliminated. That is really the reality here. Of course, there were other statements, the usual posturing as victims, the usual attempt to blame Hamas or Iran or whoever, but these statements are made with little conviction. There is a kind of boredom almost in the Netanyahu government. They sound irritated that they have to shoot unarmed protesters. As I say, it is delusional...a collective delusion. Stanley Cohen wrote an article in which he said «Advancing itself as a democracy under siege, Israel has long since abandoned any pretense of equality and justice in its limitless thirst to seize what little remains of Palestine as it exalts a racist de jure Jewish state in its quest.»

■ Israel has rejected international calls for probes into recent deaths and insisted that its open-fire rules for Gaza will not change. Some Western states, particularly the U.S. and Britain, who call themselves champions of human rights, have supported the Tel Aviv regime’s crimes against Palestinians. The UN has also failed to restore the rights of the people. What is your assessment? What role can Muslim countries play in protecting the rights of the oppressed people of Palestine?

A: The U.S. response is utterly predictable. And the thing that has to be remembered here is that the U.S. today is the Imperialist aggressor around the world, but particularly in the Middle East. The recent accusations against (Syrian President Bashar) Assad and the attempt to sell the obvious lie about a chemical weapons attack speak to a genuine insanity in Western leaders. James Mattis, the (U.S.) defense secretary, is himself a war criminal who oversaw and covered up the massacre at Fallujah. A massacre in which white phosphorus was used. And yet a few years later Mattis makes speeches about civilizational norms and how this cannot be allowed to happen.

In the UK, you see the same hypocrisy from Theresa May and Boris Johnson. The latter a wanton colonialist who is oblivious to global criticism. The UN has become a surreal comedy of contradictions and cowardice. To answer what can Muslim countries do, the short answer is to reject western Capital, and especially to reject any cooperation at all with the U.S.

■ Saudi Arabia’s crown prince, Mohammad bin Salman, has recently said that Israelis “have the right to have their own land” and that formal relations between Tel Aviv and Riyadh could be mutually beneficial. Given the fact that the Saudi regime once opposed Israel’s right to exist, what do the comments signal to the world’s public opinion? Do the remarks have an impact on the oppression against Palestinians?

A: Mohammed Bin Salman is a tool of Western Imperialism. It does beg questions about the recent palace coup that consolidated and increased his power.

Who was behind that? Whoever it was, the reality is that Bin Salman is a cynical puppet of the U.S. and NATO. The Saudis, of course, see the writing on the wall, too. Their medieval monarchy has no place in the 21st century if it ever had a place anywhere, and a restive population clearly has grown tired and angry with the royal family and their profligate hoarding of wealth -- they are not at all a secure regime right now. And the same can be said for the U.S., really, and to a degree even Europe. The Israeli state is naked before the world.

Criminal, cruel, and determined to now seize all land and simply eliminate, by any means necessary, the Palestinian population. The horrors of this week ...whether acknowledged or not, will haunt the conscience of the West in the same manner the genocide of Native Americans still haunts them. Eventually, such states will finally collapse. And we may be witnessing the first stages of that collapse.



# In this golden age of political arrogance, David Cameron is king

By Rafael Behr

The former prime minister's most prominent trait in power – and probably the reason he lost it – was his combination of blithe confidence with peevishness when challenged by people he judged to be his social inferiors, which covers most people. So it is not surprising to learn now, in a TV interview, that Cameron is satisfied with the decision he made to call an EU referendum ("I believe I was right"), while also believing the outcome was a bad one ("we've taken the wrong course").

No one likes admitting error. For public figures it can be ruinous. That is why political apologies tend to adopt the passive voice – "mistakes were made", "sorry for upset that was caused", "sorry if offence was taken". There is nothing new in this,

but it feels as if political responsibility has become especially diffuse recently. There is a culture of treating bad things that happen as acts of nature, hurricanes that formed somewhere out at sea, beyond view, and blew in without discernible cause.

Theresa May, under duress, apologized for anxiety caused to the Windrush generation, whose entitlement to the security and privileges of British citizenship was callously shredded. But the prime minister is unable to articulate what, or who, caused the anxiety. Earlier this week she tried to deflect blame on to the last Labour government, as if no one would notice that her narration of the scandal omitted the operation of the Home Office between 2010 and 2016, when she was in charge of it.

May's motivation here is old-fashioned tactical

evasion and partisan counter-attack, albeit not very effectively executed. But she also conveys a sincere belief in her own immunity from blame. She is not conceited in the haughty Cameron mold. She certainly doesn't carry herself with effortless social aplomb. But her shyness must not be mistaken for modesty. She has a different kind of arrogance: a pious certainty of moral purpose that allows her to imagine her critics must be driven by motives shabbier than hers. (This, notably, is a trait she shares with the leader of the opposition.)

## ■ Surviving criticism

Partly that is just a feature of a long-serving politician. A certain thickness of skin is required to survive Westminster's vicious contact sport. And once you get into the habit of surviving criticism, it is easy to

evolve the belief that none of it is justified.

But there is a more profound diffusion of responsibility in British politics right now. It flows from the perversity of a government committed to a course of action that the incumbent prime minister could not bring herself to recommend to the country in a referendum. A monumental, epoch-defining thing is happening. Yet no one who believed in the idea before it became a political reality has executive control over the outcome.

Boris Johnson, the highest-ranking leave campaigner in government, would rather hint that he is unhappy with the choices May is taking than demonstrate the courage required to unseat her and test different choices in practice. The foreign secretary embodies a common desire to enjoy the

status of an office without the responsibility contained in that office. He wanted his ambition to be inflated by the spirit of Brexit, but not to own the consequences of Brexit.

Johnson was not in Cameron's cabinet, but the model of being pro-leave in government, without having to explain how a government might safely go about leaving, was pioneered by the former prime minister. He was so confident of winning the referendum that he allowed Tory Brexiters to campaign against him without surrendering the security of their ministerial berths. He suspended cabinet responsibility, allowing colleagues to serve the government in the morning, criticize government policy in the afternoon, and join rallies with the government's sworn enemies in the evening. ➔13

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**Price per each sq \$36**  
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many storage rooms, completely  
renovated, good access to highway  
**Ready for Renting to foreign Com  
panies & Residency**  
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& new furn  
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**\$3000**  
**Ms.Diba: 09128103206**

### فقط مالکین محترم

یک ساختمان مستقل با ۲۰۰ تا ۳۰۰  
اطاق خواب جهت سکونت کارمندان  
یک شرکت بین المللی در شمال و شمال

غرب تهران جهت اجاره نیازمندیم

خانم دیبا: ۰۹۱۲۸۱۰۳۲۰۶

دفت: ۲۸۱۴۱ - ۲۲۶۶۲۴۵۴

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

خانم دیبا: ۰۹۱۲۸۱۰۳۲۰۶

دفت: ۲۸۱۴۱ - ۲۲۶۶۲۴۵۴

مالکین محترم

ملک های فروش و اجاره ای خود را (آپارتمان،  
ویلا، مستغلات، اداری و تجاری) به ما بسپارید.

بهترین مشاوره، برترین سروس، بالاترین رضایت

مالکین محترم املاک مبله و غیرمبله، مسکونی، اداری و تجاری، ویلا و مستغلات  
شما را جهت اجاره به سفارتخانه ها و شرکت های خارجی نیازمندیم.

مالکین محترم

ویلاهای شما را جهت اجاره به منزل سفیر و مدیران  
شرکت های بین المللی در مناطق شمالی تهران  
نیازمندیم.



Farmanieh (\$2800)  
200sq.m, 3bdrs  
pkg, balcony, & F.F

Nice view  
Zaferanieh  
200sq.m, 3bdrs  
S/p, S, & J  
(\$3800)

Elahieh Villa (\$8000)  
1200sq.m, 5bdrs  
S/p, & nice yard

Jordan Apts  
(\$1800) 2bdrs, & S/p  
(\$2400) 3bdrs, & S/p

Darrousbldg  
3storey, 12bdrs  
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## Achaemenid-era objects seized in Fars



A pedestal of a column used to be standing in Persepolis, southern Iran.

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — Two relics dating from Achaemenid-era (c. 550–330 BC) have recently been confiscated in Marvdasht, southern Fars province.

“The objects included an urn and a [massive] pedestal of a column which were seized from a home in Dorudzan region, in Marvdasht,” IRNA quoted Esmail Zera’atian, Fars province’s police chief, as saying on Thursday.

The Achaemenid Empire was founded by Cyrus the Great. At its greatest extent from the Balkans to the Indus Valley, it was one of the largest empires in history, spanning 5.5 million square kilometers, and was larger than any previous empire in history.

## You can ski down the roof of this new Swiss hotel

The village of Le Brassus, Switzerland is not known for much. Its population hovers inexactly around a thousand people, depending on where you draw the boundary, and it sits within the equally sleepy Vallee de Joux. Yet Le Brassus does have one thing to its name: it’s been the home of the luxury watchmaker Audemars Piguet since 1875. Now, though, it’s become clear that Audemars Piguet isn’t satisfied building just watches. That’s why the company has broken ground on Hotel des Horlogers, a 75,000-square-foot luxury hotel beside its existing small-town workshop.

Hotel des Horlogers may not be worth mentioning if it weren’t for its most unique feature: a roof you can ski down. Developed by the freethinking Danish architects Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG), the hotel is designed to mimic the surrounding sloping landscapes.

“The terrain fluidly becomes the roof, inviting guests to descent on skis towards the slopes of Vallée de Joux,” BIG explains. “The Hôtel des Horlogers is seamlessly integrated into the smooth topography of the scenic Vallee de Joux. Five zig-zagging room slabs expand into a gently sloping exterior path, leading directly to the museum and local ski trails.” Early renders also show that the roof will be covered in grass during the summer, further blending the building into its habitat. While few details of the hotel’s interior are known, the architects have said that there will be about fifty guest rooms inside, plus a pair of restaurants, a bar, a spa and a conference center; naturally, these on-site amenities will be oriented to maximize their views of the slopes. The hotel is currently under construction, and is expected to open in 2020.

(Source: forbes.com)



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Budapest urban landscapes

Budapest, including the Banks of the Danube, the Buda Castle Quarter and Andrassy Avenue, has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

This stretch of the Danube has been the location of human settlement since the Paleolithic. It was the site of the Roman city of Aquincum, situated to the north of the inscribed property which comprises parts of two originally quite separate cities: Buda on the spur on the right bank and Pest on the plain on the left bank.

Pest was the first medieval urban center, devastated in 1241-2. A few years later the castle of Buda was built on a rocky spur on the right bank by King Bela IV. Thereafter, the city reflected the history of the Hungarian monarchy.

After the end of the Turkish occupation, recovery did not really begin until the 18th century. In the 19th century, the



Chain bridge on Danube river in Budapest, Hungary

city’s role as a capital was enhanced by the foundation of the Hungarian Academy, housed from 1862 in a neo-renaissance palace, and by the construction of the imposing neo-gothic Parliament building (1884–1904).

As a center for receiving and disseminating cultural influences, Budapest is an outstanding example of urban development in Central Europe, characterized by periods of devastation and revitalization. Budapest has retained the separate structural characteristics of the former cities of Pest, Buda and Obuda. One example thereof is the Buda Castle Quarter with its medieval and characteristically Baroque style, which are distinct from the extended and uniquely homogeneous architecture of Pest (with its historicizing and art nouveau styles) which is characterized by outstanding public buildings and fitted into the ringed-radial city structure. All this is organized into a unity arising from the varied morphological characteristics of the landscape and the Danube, the two banks of which are linked by a number of bridges.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Tehran’s main museums to collect entire revenues

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — Four major museums in Tehran, which were obliged to deposit a percentage of their revenues to government funds, now collect all their earnings.

“All incomes generated from four major [heritage] museums in Tehran will be returned to them based on an approval by the parliament which is in line with the Sixth Five-Year Development Plan (2016-2021),” ISNA quoted Mohammadreza Kargar, an official with the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, as saying on Wednesday.

Niavaran and Sadabad cultural-historical complexes, the Golestan Palace, and the National Museum of Iran will now receive their entire profits without offering a percentage to the government funds, the official explained.

“To extend the scheme to cover other museums [affiliated to CHHTO], a board of trustees should be formed to open an account to which the earnings can be deposited,” he added.

The earnings are regularly added to the state revenues, 60 to 70 percent of the sum will be eventually paid back to the museums, he said.

Some eight million people paid visit to heritage museums and historical sites across Iran during the two-week New Year (Noruz) holidays, which ended on April 2.



Foreign travelers look at historical relics on show at the National Museum of Iran, downtown Tehran.

## Dubai fair to highlight Iran’s tourism potential, traditions



Holidaymakers hike across a desert route in Sistan-Baluchestan province, southeast Iran.

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Iran will be participating in the 25th Arabian Travel Market in Dubai, which opens its doors to the public today.

During the three-day event, Iran’s pavilion will highlight tourism potential, traditions, handicrafts and rituals that are originated from the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan.

“Taking part in the exhibit can have a huge impact on international marketing for the province,” CHTN quoted Alireza Jalalzai, the provincial tourism chief, as saying on Tuesday.

Worldwide tour operators will join the fair that will be held from April 22 to 25, the official added.

Sistan-Baluchestan had long been shunned by potential foreign travelers though it is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites of Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut Desert, shared with Kerman Province.

The province also boasts arrays of mangrove forests which are repleted with diverse species of seabirds such as flamingos and herons.

Over 39,000 travel professionals, government ministers and international press are expected to visit the business-to-business (B2B) exhibit that will showcase over 2,800 products and destinations, the organizers say.

## Your next pilot could be drone software

Would you get on a plane that didn’t have a human pilot in the cockpit? Half of air travelers surveyed in 2017 said they would not, even if the ticket was cheaper.

Modern pilots do such a good job that almost any air accident is big news, such as the Southwest engine disintegration on April 17.

But stories of pilot drunkenness, rants, fights and distraction, however rare, are reminders that pilots are only human.

Not every plane can be flown by a dis-

aster-averting pilot, like Southwest Capt. Tammie Jo Shults or Capt. Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger.

But software could change that, equipping every plane with an extremely experienced guidance system that is always learning more.

In fact, on many flights, autopilot systems already control the plane for basically all of the flight. And software handles the most harrowing landings -- when there is no visibility and the pilot can’t see anything to even know where he or she is. But human

pilots are still on hand as backups.

A new generation of software pilots, developed for self-flying vehicles, or drones, will soon have logged more flying hours than all humans have -- ever.

By combining their enormous amounts of flight data and experience, drone-control software applications are poised to quickly become the world’s most experienced pilots.

### ■ Drones that fly themselves

Drones come in many forms, from tiny

quad-rotor copter toys to missile-firing winged planes, or even seven-ton aircraft that can stay aloft for 34 hours at a stretch.

When drones were first introduced, they were flown remotely by human operators. However, this merely substitutes a pilot on the ground for one aloft. And it requires significant communications bandwidth between the drone and control center, to carry real-time video from the drone and to transmit the operator’s commands.

(Source: CNN)

## Smartphone apps for spontaneous travel

By Justin Sablich

While travelers have long been able to set up airfare alerts, these apps go a step further in helping flexible travelers plan a last-minute trip.

Have you ever just shown up at an airport without a clear travel plan? If your lifestyle allows for that sort of a lack of planning, but you’d rather ease into such a spontaneous adventure, there are several phone apps that can make unplanned travel feel less risky and more affordable.

While travelers have long been able to set up airfare alerts using Google Flights, Skyscanner, Kayak and a host of other web-based tools, the following apps go a step further in helping budget-conscious people who want to go somewhere but don’t know (or care) where.

### ■ Hopper

Within the Hopper app there is a feature — once referred to as Flex Watch but now integrated into the Hopper app’s main functionality — which, as the original name suggests, aims to help those with flexible travel dates or destinations as well as spontaneous travelers.

You have the option to search for airfare of a specific destination, or you can tap on the box that asks “Flexible?” From there, simply choose your time frame (either “anytime” or any range up to 10 months in advance) and a length range (somewhere between a weekend and two weeks). You then set your home city; your destination can be either a specific city or “Anywhere.”

I first tried the former option using a theoretical long-weekend trip from New York to Chicago. After setting the appropriate parameters, Hopper gave me the most affordable options. In this case, round-trip airfare from New York to Chicago for March 1 to 5 was available for \$112. Scrolling further down led me to a chart showing which months of the year are the least and most expensive for this route. (It turned out that March is the second cheapest month to travel from New York to Chicago.)

I also tried the “Flexible?” option to see what it could offer me from my home base of New York. It provided a range of trips



of varying length available over the next several months, from nine days in Denver for a round-trip price of \$145 to seven days in Reykjavik for \$205. These are great deals if you’re free to go on the specified dates that accompany the airfare.

Once you settle on a trip, you have the option to book directly on the app (note that the cheapest fares are often nonrefundable, as my Chicago one was). But if I wasn’t ready to commit, I could have selected “Watch this trip for updates,” which basically bookmarks my trip by putting it on a “Watch” list.

Also from Hopper is a separate app with one function: to show you the best flight deals for the current day from your location. Unlike the main app, Get the Flight Out (GTFO) is for spontaneous travelers only.

After setting your home city, you’ll see a simple list with destination cities and round-trip airfare. A recent test yielded a nonstop flight leaving for Buffalo that night and returning a few days later (a Sunday) for \$336. If I had continued, the app would have sent me to book the flight, whether it be directly with the airline or to a third-party seller like Travelocity.

### ■ HotelTonight

Let’s say you got your last minute flight — you’ll need a place to stay.

HotelTonight is an app that offers travelers last-minute, same-day hotel deals and in-app ratings from users. The makers

of the app say that hotels with unsold rooms share this information with them, hence the great bargains.

Searching for a room in Buffalo for my fake trip, I saw there was one room left at the Curtiss Hotel for \$99, a room that the app says would normally cost \$161. It looked quite nice, and 91 percent of the 34 people who have booked there using the app liked it.

The only problem is this deal was just for one night, and I was (theoretically) planning on eating chicken wings through Sunday. After going back to reset my dates, the Curtiss was unfortunately no longer an option. But there was a Days Inn near Niagara Falls for \$45 a night, and many other options.

Initially, the app only allowed for same-day bookings, but it eventually expanded to seven days and now allows for up to 100 days in advance.

Other apps for last-minute hotel deals include HotelQuickly and One Night.

### ■ Hipmunk

If you prefer to do all of your spontaneous bargain hunting in one app, consider Hipmunk, which studies itineraries and other data to find affordable travel deals.

You can search for specific destinations and dates, but those seeking inspiration will like the “Discover” tab, which shows a wide variety of deals based on categories ranging from basics like “Beach” and “Europe” to “Roman Empire” and “World’s Best Nightlife.”

Tapping on “Beach” reveals round-trip flights to Cancun from \$254, and then a calendar showing current prices for each day through the end of April. But, because I’m all about living in the moment, I decide I want to leave today, which is going to cost me roughly twice as much (\$510).

There’s also a “Get a Room Tonight” button on the destination page, which will display a ranked list of rooms available for same-day booking.

Other apps that let you search for airfare and hotel rates include Last Minute and CheapTickets.

(Source: The New York Times)



# A concussion could increase a person’s chance of getting Parkinson’s disease

A new study shows that if one has received at least one mild concussion, the person has a 56 percent chance of getting Parkinson’s disease.

The study was conducted on 300,000 U.S. Veterans who have suffered from some sort of traumatic brain injury (TBI). However, this new study has raised more questions than answers.

TBI has been described as a violent blow to the head. Objects that penetrate the brain tissue can also lead to TBI.

TBI usually results in bleeding, bruising, or other severe physical damage to the brain that can lead to permanent damages or death. There is also mild traumatic brain injury, which can lead to headaches, dizziness, fatigue, or nausea.

Parkinson’s disease is a long-term disorder of the central nervous system that affects the person’s ability to walk and move their body parts. Side effects of Parkinson’s disease mainly include shaking and slowness of moving.

**■ Slowness of moving**  
Study author Dr. Raquel Gardner stated that though the results suggest that a person may suffer from sort of head injury, there’s no guarantee that person will get Parkinson’s disease. She also brought up that the veterans who were



**“Upwards of 40 percent of adults have had a traumatic brain injury (concussion), so these findings are definitely concerning,” the study author states.**

tested in the study did not develop the degenerative neurological disorder. She added that results are still something to

be “concerned” about.  
“Upwards of 40 percent of adults have had a traumatic brain injury (concussion),

so these findings are definitely concerning,” Gardner stated.

Dr. Rachel Dolhun, who is the vice president of the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research, also disputed the study’s findings by stating that the odds are still slim in a person getting Parkinson’s disease from TBI.

**■ Parkinson’s disease**  
“Having a TBI doesn’t definitively equate with getting Parkinson’s disease. The risk is still pretty small,” Dolhun stated.

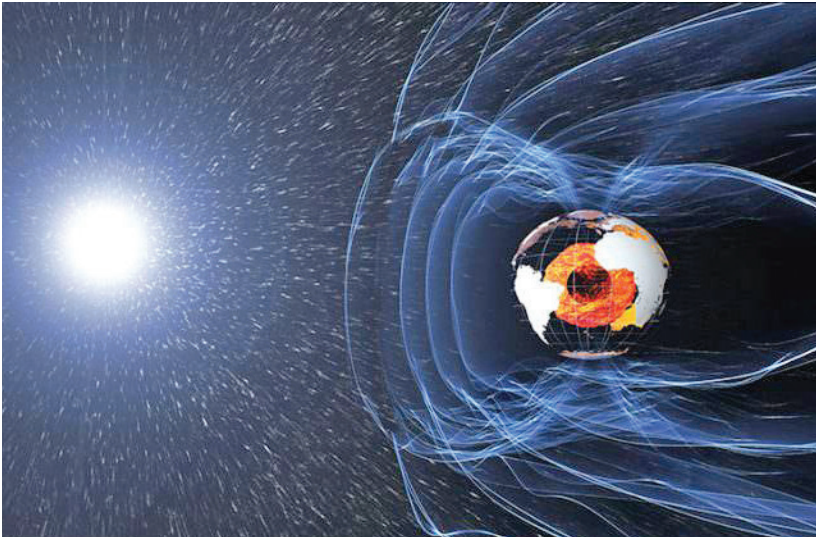
Though the results can be argued, it has given a new thought for experts on the disorder and for those who have suffered from Parkinson’s disease and a TBI. The late boxing legend Muhammad Ali showed signs of Parkinson’s disease when he was 38 years. He was officially diagnosed with it at the age of 42.

Ali teamed up with actor Michael J. Fox, who was also diagnosed with the disease at the age of 29, to raise awareness for it and to find a cure. Ali also worked with Fox’s foundation and would donate to it consistently.

While there hasn’t been a cure developed to combat this disease, researchers suggest that a healthy diet and lifestyle is one way to prevent getting the degenerative disease.

(Source: Tech Times)

## Did you know the Earth has a second magnetic field? Its oceans



Earth’s magnetic field is one of the most mysterious features of our planet. It is also essential to life as we know it, ensuring that our atmosphere is not stripped away by solar wind and shielding life on Earth from harmful radiation. For some time, scientists have theorized that it is the result of a dynamo action in our core, where the liquid outer core revolves around the solid inner core and in the opposite direction of the Earth’s rotation.

In addition, Earth’s magnetic field is affected by other factors, such as magnetized rocks in the crust and the flow of the ocean. For this reason, the European Space Agency’s (ESA) Swarm satellites, which have been continually monitoring Earth’s magnetic field since its deployment, recently began monitoring Earth’s oceans – the first results of which were presented at this year’s European Geosciences Union meeting in Vienna, Austria.

The Swarm mission, which consists of three Earth-observation satellites, was launched in 2013 for the sake of providing high-precision and high-resolution measurements of Earth’s magnetic field.

The purpose of this mission is not only to determine how Earth’s magnetic field is generated and changing, but also to allow us to learn more about Earth’s composition and interior processes.

**■ Atmospheric processes**  
Beyond this, another aim of the

mission is to increase our knowledge of atmospheric processes and ocean circulation patterns that affect climate and weather.

The ocean is also an important subject of study to the Swarm mission because of the small ways in which it contributes to Earth’s magnetic field. Basically, as the ocean’s salty water flows through Earth’s magnetic field, it generates an electric current that induces a magnetic signal.

Because this field is so small, it is extremely difficult to measure. However, the Swarm mission has managed to do just that in remarkable detail. These results, which were presented at the EGU 2018 meeting, were turned into an animation, which shows how the tidal magnetic signal changes over a 24 hour period.

“We have used Swarm to measure the magnetic signals of tides from the ocean surface to the seabed, which gives us a truly global picture of how the ocean flows at all depths – and this is new.

Since oceans absorb heat from the air, tracking how this heat is being distributed and stored, particularly at depth, is important for understanding our changing climate.

By learning more about Earth’s magnetic field, scientists will be able to learn more about Earth’s internal processes, which are essential to life as we know it.

(Source: universetoday.com)

## Russian scientists learned to perform a diagnosis by analyzing saliva



Nature endowed the human with a unique protective system, the immunity. It is capable to protect the body from different external and internal effects. However, disorders of the immune system lead to various diseases from allergy and type I diabetes to more dangerous autoimmune diseases, such as multiple sclerosis.

Scientists around the world are engaged in research on the immune response, how the body reacts to the invasion of foreign bacteria, microorganisms and viruses. Scientists of Polytechnics University proposed a laser-correlation spectroscopic technique (also called dynamic light scattering) for studying the immune response in body fluids, for example, in saliva. It is known that saliva contains the same immune proteins as blood.

Moreover, it is much easier and cheaper in comparison with blood analysis.

The proposed method is to analyze the scattered light obtained by laser illumination of human’s biological fluid (saliva or blood). The laser beam is focused on the sample. The proteins in the liquid scatter the light, which is registered by the detector.

**■ Determining sizes of particles**  
By analyzing the change in the intensity of scattered light in time, it is possible to determine the size of the particles floating in the liquid.

The particle size changes during the activation of immunity, the proteins are binding and become larger.

In addition, the size composition of biological fluids in different people can vary. It depends on the certain diseases in the organism. Thus, it is possible to determine whether the human body reacts to infections properly and to diagnose the diseases.

Due to this method, it is also possible to test medical drugs not on a human, but on his biological fluids. This approach becomes purely individual. At the same time, it is impossible to perform the analysis of each person’s immunity individually, without unambiguous doctor’s testimony, because most of the biochemical methods are complex and expensive.

“We offer a cheap and effective method of diagnosing the diseases without any indication. We need a laser, a receiver and a program for data analysis. In the course of routine clinical examination, saliva can be tested so that the patient can learn more about the disease before the symptoms appear. This method will increase the chances of recovery,” - says Elina Nepomnyashchaya, an engineer of the scientific group at the Institute of Physics, Nanotechnology and Telecommunications SPbPU.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

## Minecraft aiming to use ocean update to restore real coral reefs

Minecraft, an immersive computer game in which players use blocks to build the world they inhabit, is now trying to build something in the real world.

The makers of the game are using a new ocean update - which will be the first to give players a chance to focus on building underwater worlds – to promote rebuilding actual corals.

The game’s website announced the initiative, the Coral Crafters regrowth project, on Tuesday.

Developers are planning six Biorock installations, fixtures placed in ocean waters around which new reefs can grow. They are said to facilitate far quicker growth than natural reef processes.

Biorock structures can be arranged in elaborate designs, and Minecraft’s site said three of its fixtures will be fashioned to look like two of its iconic block characters, Alex and Steve, as well as a sea turtle.

The other three will be designed by popular YouTubers who play the game.



One, Rabahrex, will work with schoolchildren in his native Mexico on a design. Another, Logdotzip, is allowing fans to vote from three designs for the final one he will submit.

**■ Animals called polyps**  
Reefs are collections of small marine animals called polyps, which come to host the algae that gives them their fantastic colors in a symbiotic relationship.

According to a recently-updated post on the website for Columbia University’s Earth Institute, 75 percent of the world’s coral reefs

face environmental risk and a quarter are already permanently damaged.

Citing a report by the World Resources Institute, 90 percent of coral reefs could be in danger by 2030, and possibly all of them by mid-century.

Reefs are one of the most important habitats for marine species. Fishing and pollution have long threatened them, and now warming waters are frequently resulting in what’s called coral bleaching. That process robs them of their rich colors, and more seriously can lead to disease, reproductive issues and death.

A report published in the journal Nature this week notes that Australia’s Great Barrier Reef, the world’s largest and most famous reef, lost a third of its corals in a bleaching event in 2016. The lead author of the report, Terry Hughes, told The Atlantic that initial research indicates a heat wave last year triggered another bleaching, and the reef has now lost half its corals since 2015.

(Source: wafb.com)

## Do not eat romaine lettuce, the CDC warns

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention announced a multistate E. coli outbreak linked to romaine lettuce after 53 cases were reported in 16 states since April 9. All contaminated lettuce was traced back to Yuma, Arizona, and the public is advised to not buy or consume romaine lettuce unless it can be confirmed that it was not grown in here.

“Unless the source of the product is known, consumers anywhere in the United States who have any store-bought romaine lettuce at home should not eat it and should throw it away, even if some of it was eaten and no one has gotten sick,” the CDC said.

According to the CDC announcement, there have been 53 cases of E. coli infections linked to romaine lettuce, 31 of which were severe enough to require hospitalization.

Of the hospitalizations, five patients developed a type of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome. There are no reported deaths as of Friday at 4 p.m. EDT. As of yet, the infected states include : Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Virginia, Missouri, Louisiana, Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana, Washington and Alaska.

The current CDC warnings cover whole heads and hearts of romaine lettuce, as well as chopped romaine, salads and salad mixes that contain romaine. The CDC has yet to narrow down the contaminated lettuce to a particular brand, common grower, supplier, or distributor.

(Source: Newsweek)

## The human brain can create structures in up to 11 dimensions

Last year, neuroscientists used a classic branch of maths in a totally new way to peer into the structure of our brains.

What they discovered is that the brain is full of multi-dimensional geometrical structures operating in as many as 11 dimensions.

We’re used to thinking of the world from a 3-D perspective, so this may sound a bit tricky, but the results of this study could be the next major step in understanding the fabric of the human brain - the most complex structure we know of.

This brain model was produced by a team of researchers from the Blue Brain Project, a Swiss research initiative devoted to building a supercomputer-powered reconstruction of the human brain.

The team used algebraic topology, a branch of mathematics used to describe the properties of objects and spaces regardless of how they change shape.

They found that groups of neurons connect into ‘cliques’, and that the number of neurons in a clique would lead to its size as a high-dimensional geometric object (a mathematical dimensional concept, not a space-time one).

“We found a world that we had never imagined,” said lead researcher, neuroscientist Henry Markram from the EPFL institute in Switzerland.

“There are tens of millions of these objects even in a small speck of the brain, up through seven dimensions. In some networks, we even found structures with up to 11 dimensions.”

Just to be clear - this isn’t how you’d think of spatial dimensions (our Universe has three spatial dimensions plus one time dimension), instead it refers to how the researchers have looked at the neuron cliques to determine how connected they are.

“Networks are often analyzed in terms of groups of nodes that are all-to-all connected, known as cliques. The number of neurons in a clique determines its size, or more formally, its dimension,” the researchers explained in the paper.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

## Unprecedented wave of large-mammal extinctions linked to prehistoric humans

Homo sapiens, Neanderthals and other recent human relatives may have begun hunting large mammal species down to size -- by way of extinction -- at least 90,000 years earlier than previously thought, according to a new study. The magnitude and scale of the extinction wave surpassed any other recorded during the last 66 million years, according to the study.



A life-sized display of Archie, a Columbian mammoth, is on display at the University of Nebraska State Museum in Morrill Hall. A new study suggests that such massive mammals were much more likely than their smaller counterparts to go extinct in regions occupied by ancient humans.

Homo sapiens, Neanderthals and other recent human relatives may have begun hunting large mammal species down to size -- by way of extinction -- at least 90,000 years earlier than previously thought, says a new study published in the journal Science.

Elephant-dwarfing woolly mammoths, elephant-sized ground sloths and various saber-toothed cats highlighted the array of massive mammals roaming Earth between 2.6 million and 12,000 years ago.

With the help of emerging data from older fossil and rock records, the new study estimated that this size-biased extinction started at least 125,000 years ago in Africa. By that point, the average African mammal was already 50 percent smaller than those on other continents, the study reported, despite the fact that larger landmasses can typically support larger mammals.

But as humans migrated out of Africa, other size-biased extinctions began occurring in regions and on timelines that coincide with known human migration patterns, the researchers found. Over time, the average body size of mammals on those other continents approached and then fell well below Africa’s. Mammals that survived during the span were generally far smaller than those that went extinct.

(Source: Science Daily)



## 18 wetlands totally drained in Iran: deputy environment chief

**ENVIRONMENT d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Some 18 wetlands in Iran are completely dried up and some 24 are in critical condition, deputy chief of the Department of Environment, Masoud Tajrishi, has said.

Tajrishi highlighted that the wetlands in Iran are not in a good condition and if the current trend of low precipitation continues the wetlands will turn to hotspots for sand and dust storms.



“International working groups in Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia are established and have recognized the potential hotspots for sand and dust storms to reduce the crisis and in order to decrease the risks of sand and dust storms formation we must reform irrigation patterns and also adapt ourselves to water shortage,” ILNA quoted Tajrishi as saying.

“Water withdrawal from groundwater resources in 230 plains is forbidden and even so we are depleting these resources by withdrawing excessive 5-billion-cubic-meter of water,” Tajrishi regretted.

Mentioning Lake Urmia, northwestern Iran, which has gone through severe dryness over the past 20 years, Tajrishi said that compared to four years ago sand and dust storms occurrence and hotspots have decreased by 61 percent.

“However, if we fail to increase the water level in the lake the current condition will persist,” he said, stating, “in fact if we manage to increase water level by 1 and a half meters within the next four years 85 percent of the hotspots will be covered with water, the technical know-how is in place but we need the parliamentarians to cooperate with us.”

The lake was planned to be filled with 370 million cubic of water this year but once the water reached 220 million cubic meters the parliament members asked the Energy Ministry to stop the water from flowing into the lake, he regretted.

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

Wetlands are drying up one after another, groundwater resources are depleting due to unsustainable agricultural practices and the dried up wetlands and plains will turn into sources for sand and dust storms which haunt people, especially those living southern, southwestern, and southeastern provinces every now and then.

## LEARN ENGLISH

### Stir Fry

A: Oh, man. I had the best supper last night. My wife made a stir fry and it was amazing!

B: I love stir fry! Crispy **bite-sized** vegetables covered in a mixture of **soy** sauce and **oyster** sauce. **Wilted** greens and fresh **bean sprouts**. **Throw in** some onion and garlic and ginger! Mmm! Mmm! It's almost lunchtime. I would **die for** a plate of stir fry right now!

A: Well, you can keep the vegetables, I'll take the meat. The stir fry my wife made was really **hearty**, with **chunks** of beef and **slivers of bell peppers** and onion...

B: What? You call that a stir fry? More meat than vegetables? That's the worst insult you could throw at a Chinese stir fry! What a **disgrace** to the **wok** she fried it in! What you had is **equivalent** to a **fajita** without the wrap! Silly Americans!

#### ■ Key Vocabulary

**bite-sized:** you can eat it with one bite

**soy:** a source of oil and is eaten as food

**oyster:** a type of shellfish that can be eaten cooked or uncooked

**wilted:** dried

**bean sprout:** a new growth on a plant

**throw in:** action of adding something

**die for:** extremely desirable

**hearty:** large(used for meals)

**chunk:** a solid piece or lump

**sliver:** small thin sharp pieces

**bell pepper:** a kind of pepper, with hot-tasting

**disgrace:** shame, loss of reputation or dishonor

**wok:** a large metal Chinese cooking pot

**be equivalent to:** equal to

**fajita:** a Mexican meal consists of chicken and vegetables

#### ■ Supplementary vocabulary

**chop suey:** American-Chinese dish consisting of meats cooked quickly with vegetables and bound in a starch-thickened sauce

**kung pow chicken:** Chinese dish made with peanuts and marinated with chili peppers

**fortune cookie:** a biscuit served in Chinese restaurants, containing a piece of paper that says what is supposed to happen to you in the future

**chow mein:** a Chinese dish made with meat, vegetables, and noodles

(Source: irlangia.com)



# Iran sees Russian language an option to end English monopoly

**SOCIETY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran is considering Russian language as an option among other languages to be added to its educational curriculum, aiming to end the monopoly of English as the second language on schools, Tasnim quoted Education Minister Mohammad Bat'haei as saying on Friday.

He made the remarks in a meeting with Vyacheslav Nikonov, the chairman of the State Duma Committee for Education and Science, following his trip to Moscow last week to attend the Ministerial Forum on “Global Dialogue on ICT and Education Innovation”, which was held in Moscow on April 18 and 19.

He went on to say that he had discussed this issue with Russian Education and Science Minister Olga Vasilieva and accordingly, a workgroup is going to be established to develop the required memorandum of understanding.

Nikonov for his part, welcomed this idea, adding that Farsi is now being taught in some universities of Russia.

He called for devising plans to teach Farsi in Russian schools along other languages like Chinese.



Mohammad Bat'haei

#### ■ Wave of criticism in social media

This event provoked a wave of criticism among Iranians in social media. Some believe that due to its global importance, English cannot be removed from Iranian curriculums, at least for now.

Others believe that the educational system which cannot provide a standard and efficient system for teaching the

easy-to-access English, how can teach the less known Russian language in schools. Iranian students study English for 6 years in schools but most of them just learn a bunch of vocabulary and strict grammar rules which rarely become applicable in their future lives.

Promoting Russian or any other languages in Iran is positive measure,

no doubt, since every language opens a new window in learner's life. However, it seems that it is better to expand language ties in universities where students themselves choose to specialize in a language.

Teaching Russian in Iranian schools is conditioned on teaching Farsi in Russian schools, Bat'haei tweeted in an answer to these criticisms, Mehr reported on Friday.

Another important topic in the future MOU is to introduce the culture of Iran to Russian students, he added.

#### ■ Decrease in Russian speakers

The number of Russian speakers has decreased by about 50 million since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, TheMoscowTimes quoted Nikonov as saying on August 29, 2017.

He further called for an expansion of the Eurasian Union and an increase in educational programs abroad to counter the decline from a high of 350 million to 300 million Russian speakers today.

The decrease is primarily due to the growing linguistic hegemony of English and changes in state education policies in the former Soviet republics, he added.

## Foreign investment to start soon in Iran's medical equipment industry

**SOCIETY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Foreign investors will soon start their activities in Iran's medical equipment industry, said an advisor to the Iranian health minister.

Among foreign investments, Reza Mas'ali specifically referred to Brazil and Japan, hoping for joint manufacturing of medical equipment with these countries in the near future, Nasimonline reported on Friday.

Some distinguished companies which manufacture high-quality products have expressed readiness for launching joint production lines in Iran, he said, without giving further details. Touching on the support provided by health ministry for Iranian medical equipment manufacturers, he added that some 1,000 domestic manufactures are active in this sector.

The health ministry aims to export \$240 million of medical equipment to other countries



in the current [Iranian calendar] year 1397 (March 2018 – March 2019), he highlighted.

Currently, 4 organizations which issue EU standards have established their offices in Iran, he said, adding, this is one of the achievements of the health minister's trip to Europe in February.

## Waste management, bane of life for Tehraners



**ENVIRONMENT d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Waste management has set alarm bells ringing for the residents of the Iranian capital, Tehran, the head of Tehran province's department of environment said on Friday.

Kiumars Kalantari made the remarks over a clean-up scheme on the occasion of the International Mother Earth Day, April 22, here in Tehran.

Speaking on waste management, Kalantari noted that 25 percent of the waste produced in the metropolis of Tehran is recyclable and 70 percent can be converted to compost.

There are 21 bodies responsible in waste management sector, Kalantari said, adding, there are serious shortcomings in this sector, especially waste segregation at source, which need to be addressed.

There are also 81 non-government groups active in the field of environment in the province of Tehran who are always deeply concerned about the environment and are accompanying the environmental bodies, he highlighted.

According to a report published by United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in October 2016, waste generation per capita in Iran's urban areas is about 658 grams per day while Iranian waste generation per capita in rural areas is about 220-340 grams per day. Average Iranian waste generation per capita amounts to some 240 kilograms per year.

In Tehran alone waste generation per capita is estimated at 750-800 grams per day and each Tehrani citizen generates about 270-450 kilograms of waste per years.

The report continues that unfortunately only 7 percent of the waste is separated at the source, 13 percent is recycled and only 2.5 percent of them end up in formal or sanitary landfills and some 77.5 percent of the waste will be burnt or buried in informal landfills located in the countryside or deserts near cities.

## Rangers wounded in armed conflict with poachers

**ENVIRONMENT d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Three rangers were wounded in an armed conflict with poachers in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, the provincial department of environment announced on Saturday.

While patrolling Dez National Park, the rangers spotted illegal fishers in the area and started chasing them which flared up an armed conflict, Fars news agency quoted Ahmadreza Lahijanzadeh, the department of environment's director general, as saying.

The three rangers who didn't wear bulletproof vests were shot in the arm and shoulder, Lahijanzadeh said, regretting that the ranger who was shot in the shoulder is in a critical condition now.

In June 2016, two rangers named Mohammad Dehqani and Parviz Hormozi



were killed during an armed conflict with poachers. Another ranger named Asadollah Taqizadeh was sentenced to death for killing a poacher in July 2007. Fortunately in Taqizadeh's case the deceased family spared his life and he got released from the prison in March 2016.



Khorasan razavi  
Water and Wastewater company

### Call for identification of investors for

Completion of a section of wastewater system in **Khaf** through Buyback contract (Auction)

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

**A-** Brief description of the project:

- Subject: completion of a section of the wastewater system in **Khaf**, including: **WWTP and sewer**

- Concessioner: The **Khorasan razavi** Water and Wastewater Company

- Construction period: **3** years

- Commercial operation period: Financial model to be submitted

- Treatment efficiency: **Surface water discharge**

- Population coverage: **54436** person

- Project site: City **Khaf** Province **Khorasan razavi**

**B-** General conditions for investment:

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

- Date, deadline and address to collect the qualification documents: Qualified investors may submit their letter of intent for investment in the plan and collect the qualification documents from **21/04/2018** until the end of office hours on **01/05/2018** from: **mashhad-sadaf-vakil abad blvd- The Khorasan razavi Water and Wastewater Company- the technical support unit (TSU)**

- Address and deadline for submission of the required documents: The completed evaluation forms should be submitted at 15.00 on **monday** dated **21/05/2018** to: **The Khorasan razavi Water and Wastewater Company Secretariat**

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

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

[www.abfakhorasan.ir](http://www.abfakhorasan.ir) e-mail:[info@abfakhorasan.ir](mailto:info@abfakhorasan.ir)

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# North Korea says will stop nuclear tests, scrap test site

North Korea will immediately suspend nuclear and missile tests and scrap its nuclear test site and instead pursue economic growth and peace, the North's state media said on Saturday, ahead of planned summits with South Korea and the United States.

North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un said his country no longer needed to conduct nuclear tests or intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) tests because it had completed its goal of developing the weapons, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

It was the first time Kim directly addressed his position on North Korea's nuclear weapons programs ahead of planned summits with South Korean President Moon Jae-in next week and with the U.S. President Donald Trump in late May or early June.

The pledge to halt the development of nuclear weapons, initiated by his grandfather, would mean a significant reversal for the young leader, now 34, who has staked his security on his nuclear arsenal and spent years celebrating such weapons as an integral part of his regime's legitimacy and power.

A testing freeze and commitment to close the test site alone would fall short of Washington's demand that Pyongyang completely dismantle all of its nuclear weapons and missiles.

But announcing the concessions now, rather than during summit meetings, shows Kim is serious about decentralization talks, experts say.

"The northern nuclear test ground of the DPRK will be dismantled to transparently guarantee the discontinuance of the nuclear test," KCNA said after Kim convened a plenary session of the Central Committee of the ruling Worker's Party on Friday.

The North's official name is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).



The Pyonggye-ri site is North Korea's only known nuclear test site, where all of its six underground tests were conducted, including the last and largest in September.

Trump welcomed the statement and said he looked forward to a summit with Kim.

"North Korea has agreed to suspend all Nuclear Tests and close up a major test site. This is very good news for North Korea and the World - big progress! Look forward to our Summit," Trump said on Twitter.

South Korea said the North's decision signified "meaningful" progress toward decentralization of the peninsula and would create favorable conditions for successful meetings with it and the United States.

China, North Korea's sole major ally which has nevertheless been frustrated by its defiant development of weapons, welcomed the

announcement saying it would ease tension and promote decentralization.

"The Chinese side believes that North Korea's decision will help ameliorate the situation on the peninsula," a foreign ministry spokesman, Lu Kang, said in a statement.

## ■ Cautious welcome

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe also welcomed the North Korean statement but said it must lead to action.

"What's important is that this leads to complete, verifiable decentralization. I want to emphasize this," Abe told reporters.

The United States, Japan and South Korea have historically been the main targets of North Korea's anger.

Australia and Britain were also cautious.

The British government said in a statement that Pyongyang's commitment was a

positive step and hoped it indicated "an effort to negotiate in good faith".

Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said "verifiable steps" would be needed to ensure testing had indeed been halted.

"We're all looking for evidence that Kim is really serious about negotiations, and announcements like this certainly suggest he is, and that he is trying to make clear to the world that he is," said David Wright, co-director of the Global Security Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

North Korea has said its nuclear and missile programs are necessary deterrents against the United States hostility. It has conducted numerous missile tests with the aim of being able to hit the United States with a nuclear bomb.

The tests and escalating rhetoric between Trump and Kim raised fears of war until, in a New Year's speech, the North Korean leader called for a reduction in military tensions.

He sent a delegation to the Winter Olympics in the South in February, leading to that in ties with his old enemies.

Many U.S. officials and experts doubt Kim's sincerity about denuclearizing, viewing the recent flurry of diplomacy as a ploy to win relief from economic sanctions.

United Nations Security Council sanctions imposed on North Korea after its first nuclear test in 2006 and extended over the past decade have aimed to deny it a considerable amount of international trade, banning critical exports such as coal, iron ore, seafood and textiles, while limiting oil imports.

That has threatened the policy of "byung-jin" - simultaneous military and economic development - that Kim has adopted since taking power in 2011.

(Source: Reuters)

## ISIL declares war on Iraq's general elections

As Iraq approaches an important election to choose a new parliament and government, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group has vowed to carry out attacks against candidates running for office.

Referencing the Jordanian radical Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's 2005 call for a "bitter war" on Iraq's parliamentary elections at the time, the group said that candidates and voters who participated in the elections would be considered infidels and outside Islam.

"Candidates in elections are claiming divinity and seeking to become demigods, while those who vote for them have taken them as divine and partners to God," the ISIL terrorist group report said, quoting al-Zarqawi.

Al-Zarqawi is known as the ISIL godfather who led an offshoot of al-Qaeda in 2004. He was killed in a 2006 United States airstrike in Baqubah, north of Baghdad.

## ■ Claims in three attacks

An info graphic that appeared on pro-ISIL social media accounts on Friday claimed the group was behind three separate attacks in Anbar, Kirkuk and Diyala provinces in the

last 10 days. It said the militants had targeted "polytheistic democracy," referring to Iraqi political candidates for the elections scheduled for May 12.

The ISIL claimed the attacks this month targeted a headquarters of al-Hal party in Anbar's Hit city, a leader of the Turkmen Nationalist Movement in Kirkuk and a leader of the Turkmen Front in Kirkuk.

It said 25 candidates, party members and their guards had died in the attacks.

Iraqi officials were not immediately available to comment.

Iraqi political parties on Sunday started campaigning for parliamentary elections, in which nearly 7,000 candidates are competing for 329 seats.

Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has promised successful elections despite the challenges of stabilizing areas retaken from ISIL and returning millions of residents displaced by war to their homes.

## ■ Remnants of ISIL

The elections next month will mark Iraq's first trip to the ballot box since the rise of ISIL in 2014. The group gradually



took control of large swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria, establishing a so-called caliphate.

The Iraqi government declared victory against the ISIL terrorist outfit last December.

(Source: agencies)

## Erdogan: Emergency rule good for economy as stops terrorism, strikes

Businesses should welcome Turkey's state of emergency because it guards against terrorism and prevents workers from going out on strike, President Tayyip Erdogan said on Saturday.

Parliament this week voted to extend the state of emergency, introduced following a failed coup in July 2016, for a further three months. It is the seventh such extension of emergency rule, which lets Erdogan and the government bypass parliament in passing new laws and allows them to suspend rights and freedoms.

The extensions have been roundly criticized by human rights groups and Turkey's Western allies. The country's main business

lobby, TUSIAD, this week renewed its call for a swift end to emergency rule.

"The state of emergency only affects terrorists. Now it's preventing labor strikes, such as the Bursa strike, which we stopped right away. It's a struggle against terrorism," Erdogan said in a speech to the DEIK business lobby, which represents Turkey's private sector overseas.

"When our business people say the state of emergency should be lifted, it upsets us... We will continue extending it for the peace of our country, yes we will, for the 10th time if necessary."

Earlier this year authorities stopped workers in the northwestern city of Bursa, home

to the auto industry and a hub for textile manufacturing, from going out on strike.

Under emergency rule, strikes, protests and displays of civil disobedience can be shut down on security grounds.

Erdogan this week set snap presidential and parliamentary elections for June, bringing them forward by more than a year in a shock move that may have left the opposition ill-prepared to credibly challenge him.

The United States this week said it had concerns about Turkey's ability to hold free and fair elections under emergency rule, comments that Ankara dismissed.

The United Nations last month called for

an end to the state of emergency, saying it had led to "massive and serious" human rights violations in largely Kurdish southeastern Turkey, including killings and torture.

Turkey slammed that report as rife with unfounded allegations. Ankara says its measures are necessary, given the severity of the security threats it faces.

More than 160,000 people have been detained since the failed coup and a similar number of civil servants sacked from their jobs, the United Nations has said. Scores of media outlets have been shut and journalists and activists have been detained.

(Source: Daily Star)

## Armenian PM calls for dialogue with opposition protesters

Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan, appointed this month after 10 years as president, called for immediate dialogue on Saturday with opposition protesters who accuse him of clinging to power and demand he step down.

Sargsyan's call coincided with a ninth consecutive day of rallies by tens of thousands of opposition supporters demonstrating against his appointment.

"I'm deeply concerned by political developments in the country and call on MP Nikol Pashinyan to start a political dialogue in order to avoid irreversible losses," Sargsyan said in a statement. "It should be done immediately."

Pashinyan, an opposition MP (Member of Parliament) and the leader of the protests, said it was "too late to talk to the government."

"I'm calling on Serzh Sargsyan to accept our demand" he told journalists.

Parliament voted on Tuesday to allow Sargsyan, who served as president of the small ex-Soviet republic from 2008 until this month, to become premier, in a job switch his opponents say show he wants to continue to wield power.

Under a revised constitution approved by a referendum in 2015, the prime minister now has the most power in Armenia, while the presidency has become largely ceremonial.

Sargsyan's ally, Armen Sarkissian, was sworn in as president last week after being elected by parliament in March.

Opposition activists marched through the capital Yerevan on Saturday, waving national flags and chanting: "Make a

stand, say no to Serzh."

They blocked several streets in the center and staged sit-ins. Police had detained about 200 activists on Friday.

The Defense Ministry called on demonstrators to unblock streets around the ministry and to stop preventing movement of cars with the ministry's number plates.

"Any such attempt will be strictly prevented," the ministry said in a statement.

Armenia seceded from the Soviet Union in 1991 but remains dependent on Russia for aid and investment. Many Armenians accuse the government of corruption and mishandling an economy that has struggled to overcome the legacy of central planning.

(Source: Reuters)

## Democrats sue Russia, Trump campaign for alleged 2016 election conspiracy

The United States Democratic Party sued the Russian government, the U.S. President Donald Trump's campaign and WikiLeaks, charging that they carried out a wide-ranging conspiracy to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

In its federal lawsuit in Manhattan, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) said that top officials in Trump's campaign conspired with the Russian government and its military spy agency to hurt Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton and tilt the election to

Trump by hacking Democratic Party computers.

The lawsuit alleged that Trump's campaign "gleefully welcomed Russia's help" in the 2016 election and accuses it of being a "racketeering enterprise" that worked in tandem with Moscow.

"During the 2016 presidential campaign, Russia launched an all-out assault on our democracy and it found a willing and active partner in Donald Trump's campaign," said Tom Perez, chair of the DNC. "This constituted an act of unprecedented treachery."

The suit prompted Trump to send a Friday evening tweet that called the Democrats "obstructionist" and promised a counterattack based on his longstanding assertion that Clinton committed a crime with her personal email server. "This can be good news in that we will now counter for the DNC Server that they refused to give to the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), the Wendy Wasserman Schultz Servers and Documents held by the Pakistani mystery man and Clinton Emails," Trump, a Republican, wrote.

Trump appeared to refer to Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz, who chaired the DNC during the election when its servers were hacked, and a Pakistan-born information technology worker found by the House of Representatives inspector general to have inappropriately accessed congressional data.

The campaign operation Trump has already set up ahead of the 2020 president election called the lawsuit frivolous and characterized it as a fundraising effort.

(Source: Reuters)

## China carries out aircraft carrier drills in Pacific as Taiwan tensions rise

China has carried out aircraft carrier drills in the Pacific, its navy said on Saturday, ramping up tensions with Taiwan over its military exercises in the sensitive region.

Beijing's sole aircraft carrier and two destroyer ships carried out "offensive and defensive drills to test their combat muscle" on Friday, China's navy said on its official microblog site on Weibo.

The exercises took place in an area east of the Bashi Channel, which runs between Taiwan and the Philippines, it said.

China sees democratically-governed Taiwan as a renegade part of its territory to be brought back into the fold and has not ruled out reunification by force.

In Beijing's latest military drills, photos showed J-15 fighters waiting to take off from the Liaoning aircraft carrier. The Jinan and Changchun destroyer ships also participated in the training.

Taiwan has accused China of "saber rattling" after Chinese bombers and spy planes flew around Taiwan on Thursday, and the Chinese navy conducted live-fire drills off the Taiwan Strait a day earlier.

"China has deliberately manipulated (the exercise) to pressure and harass Taiwan in an attempt to spark tensions between the two sides and in the region," Chiu Chui-cheng of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council told a regular briefing on Thursday.

"(We) will never bow down to any military threat and incentive."

Beijing has stepped up military patrols around Taiwan and used diplomatic pressure to isolate it internationally since pro-independence President Tsai Ing-wen took office.

Chinese President Xi Jinping observed the navy's largest-ever military display this month in the South China Sea, which involved 76 fighter jets and a flotilla of 48 warships and submarines.

Beijing has also been angered by Washington's arms sales to Taipei, and China protested last month after President Donald Trump signed a bill allowing top-level United States officials to travel to Taiwan.

(Source: AFP)

## 'Palestinian lecturer gunned down by Mossad in Malaysia'

➔ Mazlan said a recording of a closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera near the scene showed the two assailants waited for about 20 minutes for the Palestinian lecturer to arrive.

"We believe the lecturer was their target because two other individuals walked by the place earlier unharmed," he said.

Batsh was heading to a mosque for dawn prayers, and had been reportedly living in Malaysia for 10 years. He was a lecturer at a private university.

The Palestinian man's family and a senior Islamic Jihad leader, Khaled al-Batsh, blamed Mossad for the murder.

The family said that the lecturer was supposed to have left for Turkey on Saturday to attend a conference on energy.

Speaking in an interview on Lebanon-based Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television network, Khaled al-Batash demanded that Malaysia "conduct a comprehensive and rapid investigation to prevent the escape of the assassins."

## ■ Malaysia: Foreign agent link possible

Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said authorities were not discounting the possible involvement of foreign agents in the killing of the Palestinian private university lecturer.

There has been no comment from Israeli authorities.

Batsh was a vocal supporter of the Palestinian cause on social media. He had shared many tweets supporting the Great March for Return, and had also voiced his sympathy for slain Palestinian journalist Yaser Murtaja.

Israeli agents are widely believed to have killed numerous Palestinian resistance activists overseas in the past.

Palestinian drone expert Mohamed al-Zawari was killed in his car by multiple gunshots in front of his house in the town of El Ain, located seven kilometers north of Sfax, Tunisia, on December 15, 2016.

The Ezzeddine Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement, blamed Israel for the killing, noting that Zawari had been a member of the group for 10 years and had been supervising its drone program.

Mahmoud Abdel Rauf al-Mabhouh, a senior Hamas military commander and one of the founders of the Qassam Brigades, was assassinated by Mossad agents at Al Bustan Rotana hotel in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), on January 19, 2010.

(Source: Press TV)

## In this golden age of political arrogance, David Cameron is king

➔ Brexiteers have subsequently been accused of wanting to have their cake and eat it. But for years Cameron indulged radical Euroscepticism as if it were a manageable eccentricity or cultural foible, wholly compatible with the demands of responsible government. He ran the magic cake shop for Tory politicians.

## ■ Britain leaving EU

He did this because he worried about splitting the party and imagined that was the likelier hazard than Britain actually leaving the European Union. When it turned out he was wrong, he shrugged and left the stage, humming a little tune, with the jaunty gait of a man who has never had to clear up his own mess; whose tables have always been laid before he arrives and cleared by the staff after he leaves.

And now, nearly two years later, he tells us he thinks he made the right choices. Former prime ministers aren't generally in the business of trashing their own legacies and, since the Brexit plebiscite is certain to be Cameron's biggest contribution to the history books, he doesn't have much incentive to think of it as a monumental blunder. Also, his position is logically consistent. A democrat can be glad that the nation was consulted and accept, with a heavy heart, a disappointing verdict.

But Cameron's heart doesn't sound heavy. His manner is as breezy as ever. He seems to consider two notions – that the referendum was a good idea and that Brexit is a bad idea – as distinct entities in time and space and not part of a political sequence defined by actions for which he had responsibility.

He doesn't have to be sorry that the referendum was held. But he might, as a courtesy to those who agree with his verdict on the result and who now live with the consequences, sound a bit sorry that he failed to win the argument; that he gambled with other people's money and jobs, miscalculated the odds and blew it. He may not have wanted Brexit, but he still has to own it.

(Source: The Guardian)



## West Brom roar back after Mohamed Salah nets 31st goal of Premier League season

West Brom's hopes of surviving the drop remain bleak despite a sensational late comeback to salvage a 2-2 draw against Liverpool at the Hawthorns.

The rock-bottom Baggies knew a victory was a must if they were to realistically stay in with a chance of avoiding relegation, but they fell behind on four minutes when Danny Ings netted his first goal in 930 days. Mohamed Salah then thought he had sealed the points on 72 minutes with a clever dinked finish. It was the Egyptian's 31st top-flight strike of the season and saw him equal the record for most goals in a 38-game campaign.

But West Brom reduced the arrears through Jake Livermore 11 minutes from time before Solomon Rondon's header late on ensured Darren Moore's unbeaten run stretched to three games.

The result means Liverpool remain third, eight points clear of fifth-placed Chelsea having played a game more.

West Brom are eight points adrift of safety with just three matches left to play and need a minor miracle to avoid dropping to the Championship.

(Source: Eurosport)

## Roma will be eyeing revenge against Liverpool, warns Ancelotti

Carlo Ancelotti believes Roma will have revenge on the mind when they face Liverpool in the first leg of their Champions League semi-final on Tuesday. The Serie A side are tantalisingly close to their first final appearance in European football's elite competition since losing to the Merseyside club on penalties in the 1984 final at their own stadium. Ancelotti, who played for Roma between 1979 and 1987, missed that game through injury, but believes the impact of that defeat still lingers and will motivate the current crop of players over their two clashes with Jurgen Klopp's side.

He told Omnisport at the Match for Solidarity: "I did not play that game because, unfortunately, I was injured.

"And they lost because I was not playing that night.

"The Roma-Liverpool final will always be a sad memory for me, and it will be the same for Roma's supporters.

"I was in Rome on the day of Bruno Conti's retirement and I told everyone there that football will always give you a chance at revenge. And this can be a great chance for Roma.

"It's impossible to erase that defeat, but of course they can avenge the 1984 final. "It will be tough because Liverpool are in great form. "But Roma did amazing against Barcelona and they can reach the final."

(Source: Goal)

## Clash between top two ´more decisive´ for Napoli, Allegri claims

Massimiliano Allegri claims the pressure will be on Napoli in their showdown with his Serie A leaders Juventus in Turin on Sunday.

The Partenopei take on the title-holders at Allianz Stadium seeking to narrow the four-point gap between second and first place, with four further matches to come in the league after this round. Addressing a news conference, Allegri pointed out the fact that Juve have a greater margin for error, and can also deal a major blow to the hopes of Maurizio Sarri's team if they come out on top this weekend. "We're in better psychological shape than Napoli. It's very simple, tomorrow a mini-league begins of five games, we have a four-point advantage," he said.

"There are other points available to win the title. It'll certainly be important for Serie A, but it won't be decisive.

"We must play with cool heads, because it is far more decisive for Napoli than it is for us."

Allegri dismissed rumours suggesting forward Paulo Dybala is struggling with injury and could be left out of the crunch fixture.

"Dybala is in good shape, I don't understand why he shouldn't be," the coach said.

And the former AC Milan boss is also backing striker Gonzalo Higuain, who has not scored since a 2-0 win over Atalanta on March 14, to make an impact.

"Gonzalo Higuain has these peaks and troughs over a season," Allegri said. "He's in great shape and I think tomorrow he will be decisive."

(Source: Four Four Two)

## Ibrahimovic not in Sweden's World Cup plans, says Andersson

Zlatan Ibrahimovic has again teased fans over the prospect of him taking part in the FIFA World Cup, even though Sweden head coach Janne Andersson insists the enigmatic striker is not in his plans.

Sweden's all-time leading goalscorer retired from international football after his country bowed out in the group stage of UEFA Euro 2016.

A play-off win over Italy in November saw the Scandinavian nation battle their way to Russia 2018 in the absence of their former talisman, who is enjoying a new lease of life after joining LA Galaxy from Manchester United.

Ibrahimovic, 36, suffered cruciate knee ligament damage last April and found himself on the periphery at Old Trafford this term, but has scored three times in as many MLS appearances.

Asked by reporters in Los Angeles whether he would be at the finals, he replied: "I'm going to the World Cup, yes."

On whether that would be in a playing capacity, Ibrahimovic stuck to the line he gave to talk show host Jimmy Kimmel earlier this week.

"If I give you more you will get too many followers [on social media], so we'll keep it like this [under wraps]," he said.

(Source: SBS)

# Cristiano Ronaldo to be offered new bumper deal BEFORE World Cup

Real Madrid reportedly want to get star forward Cristiano Ronaldo tied down to a new contract before this summer's FIFA World Cup. According to AS, while there have been some doubts about the 33-year-old's long-term future at the Santiago Bernabeu, the Portugal international has recently made it clear he wants to sign a new deal in the Spanish capital

"Sources close to Real Madrid estimate that Ronaldo could go from earning €21 million net to a figure of around €30 million plus a further €2 million in add-ons," AS reported. "It would place him closer to the €35 million salary which Neymar earns at PSG...but he would still be a way off matching the €45 million salary which Lionel Messi takes home."

AS also wrote that Madrid want their No. 7 to sign the contract before heading to the World Cup in Russia and that Los Blancos won't extend Ronaldo's deal beyond 2021.

It's tough to argue against giving Ronaldo a pay rise, as he continues to cement his legacy as one of football's all-time greats.

This season, the former Manchester United man started slower than usual. But since the turn of the year, he's been in spectacular form for Zinedine Zidane's side.

What's made the run even more impressive is the point in the campaign it's come at, as Ronaldo's goals have given Madrid a chance of finishing the season on a high.

While Los Blancos' chances of retaining La Liga are gone, they are still the team to beat in the UEFA Champions League. They have made it to the semi-final of that competition, where they are set to face Bayern Munich. Madrid will be confident of winning it for a third time in a row.

Ronaldo has been crucial to the team's progress. In the quarter-finals, he showed his class, scoring a stunning overhead kick against Juventus in the first leg before slotting the



decisive penalty in the second leg to send Madrid through.

There's no doubt Ronaldo's style has changed since moving to Madrid in 2009. He's no longer an enterprising winger full of flicks and tricks; he's evolved into the perfect penalty-box striker, using his acceleration, power and technique to finish off chances so consistently.

Given his continued influence on the biggest games, Ronaldo deserves to be in the same wage bracket as Neymar and Messi. Madrid supporters will hope a fresh contract will put an end to any lingering rumors their star man might be on the move this summer.

(Source: Bleacher Report)

## Patrick Vieira ´flattered´ by Arsenal links but happy at New York City



Patrick Vieira is "flattered" after being linked with taking over as manager of former club Arsenal but says he is "happy" as New York City coach. The former France midfielder won three Premier League titles with the Gunners under Arsene Wenger, who will leave the club at the end of the season.

"I spent nine years at Arsenal which makes the club really special for me," he told New York radio station WNYE.

"But that is not enough to coach the team."

Vieira, like Wenger, arrived at Arsenal in 1996 when he signed from AC Milan and made 371 appearances for the club, scoring 32 goals.

He was part of two Double-winning sides with the Gunners, as well as the famous 'Invincibles' side which went through the 2003-04 league campaign unbeaten.

Vieira, a World Cup winner in 1998 with France, went on to play for Juventus and Inter Milan in Italy before returning to the Premier League when he joined Manchester City in January 2010.

He retired as a player before going into coaching and left his role as head coach of Manchester City's Under-21s to take over at New York City in January 2016.

"I am always flattered to hear my name linked with different football clubs. That is good for your ego but at the same time, I am happy here," he said.

"We will see what will happen in the next couple of years."

Other names that have been linked with replacing Wenger include ex-Barcelona boss Luis Enrique, former AC Milan, Chelsea and Bayern Munich coach Carlo Ancelotti, Germany boss Joachim Low, Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers and Monaco coach Leonardo Jardim. Wenger will leave Arsenal a year before his contract with the club expires and former Gunners striker Ian Wright believes he jumped before he was pushed. "Arsene Wenger is a man of principle, honesty and integrity - that is why I am convinced he has been sacked and not resigned," Wright told The Sun.

(Source: BBC)

## U.S. gymnastics coaching duo says doctor's sex abuse surprised them



The coaching couple who helped turn the U.S. women's gymnastics team into a global powerhouse said in a TV interview aired on Friday that they knew nothing about the alleged sexual assaults by team doctor Larry Nassar at their training camp.

Nassar is serving a life sentence after nearly 200 victims testified that he sexually abused them over decades, a scandal that shook the gymnastics world and prompted a series of civil investigations into the sport and the U.S. Olympic Committee.

Martha and Bela Karolyi, under whose coaching U.S. gymnasts have consistently medaled since the 1990s, told NBC they were shocked by the revelations that Nassar abused young women at the couple's Huntsville, Texas, facility, which had been the Olympic training site for the USA Gymnastics National Team.

"The whole thing is just like an explosion, a bomb exploding," Bela Karolyi said in the NBC interview, a portion of which was shown Friday on the "Today" program.

Martha Karolyi said she had no way of

knowing Nassar had been sexually abusing athletes.

"I heard during the testimonies that some of the parents were in the therapy room with their own child and Larry Nassar was performing this -- and the parent couldn't see," she said. "How could I see?"

She expressed sympathy for the women, including some gold medalists who were teenagers at the time, who said Nassar abused them under the guise of medical treatment.

"Any child who was violated by Nassar, it's a crime and it's so sad," she said.

The Karolyis opened their complex in the mid 1980s and it is credited with playing a vital role in making the U.S. women's team a dominant force in global competitions.

The entire board of directors at USA Gymnastics, the sport's governing body in the United States, resigned as a result of the revelations, as did the president and athletic director at Michigan State University, where Nassar also worked.

(Source: Reuters)

# Beyond the bars: How rugby is reforming Italian prisoners



A trial match was organized in February 2010 to gauge interest, and training sessions began soon after.

The La Drola project was born.

"The dream was to set up the first penitentiary rugby team: The La Drola Rugby Sports Association -- in the Piedmont dialect, drola means 'strange thing' or 'silly thing'," says Rista.

The first official match between a team of inmates and an outside XV took place in October 2011.

Reports were reaching the bosses that this was having a positive effect on inmates' physical and mental well-being. Rista noted the growing level of cohesion between teammates, a sense of shared and individual responsibility.

"The good results of the first year test were very encouraging, but after the success of the Drola Project, there were hundreds of spontaneous inmates requests to be included in the team -- from Turin as well as from other penitentiaries

around Italy," adds Rista.

■ 'Strange thing'

The idea began in 2009 when the visionary director of Turin's Lorusso e Cutugno prison, Pietro Buffa, fell in love with rugby after a visit to New Zealand.

Having already introduced boxing, football and basketball to his prison, he wanted to see if rugby's values could take root among the inmates. Having never played, he called upon the region's favorite rugby son Walter Rista, the Piedmont region's most-capped player, who appeared on the wing for Italy five times in the 1970s.

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(Source: CNN)



# Our Preparations for 2018 Asian Games on right track: Official

**S P O R T S** Nasrollah Sajjadi, chef de mission to Team Iran for the upcoming 2018 Asian Games, said that their preparations for the Games have been going well but they will have a tough task in the competition.

“Iran has improved a lot in the previous editions. The Iranian delegation came 10th in the 2002 Asian Games in Busan with a total 36 medals. Iran finished in sixth place in the 2006 Asian Games in Doha, winning 48 medals. We came fourth in the 2010 Asian Games in Guangzhou with 59 medals and finished in fifth place in the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon, winning 57 medals,” Sajjadi said.

“There is still room for improvement but the countries, namely Kazakhstan, India, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Chinese Taipei have also improved in the recent years. We should consider the fact that hosts Indonesia are eying their best ever place in this edition. They want to finish the Games in the fourth place,” he added.

“We know that China and Japan will definitely win the first and second places and the other countries try to finish in the best place. Our preparations have been going well and we hope to finish in fourth place,” Sajjadi stated.

Asked him to predict the number of medals Iran is going to win in this year’s Games, Sajjadi said, “First, we have to announce our final list for the Games and then we can talk about the medals.” He claimed that Iran national volleyball team is to participate at the 2018 FIVB Volleyball Nations League (VNL) and the FIVB World Championships and the second team will take part at the Asian Games.

The reporters asked him about Iran’s flag-bearer in the Asian Games, Sajjadi said, “We haven’t decided that yet.”

The 18th Asian Games will be held from August 18



to September 2, 2018, with 10,000 athletes from 45 National Olympic Committees competing in 40 sports, 67 disciplines and 463 events.

In addition, there will be 5,000 media, including 1,500 from Indonesia, 5,000 team officials from the 45 NOCs and 30,000 volunteers and workforce.

## Iran earn third consecutive victory at World Super 6



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran sitting volleyball team earned their third successive victory in the World Super 6 in the northwestern Iranian city of Tabriz on Saturday.

The Iranian team beat Ukraine in straight sets (25-14, 25-18, 25-18) at the Sadra Sports Hall.

Team Melli will face Germany on Sunday.

Iran started the campaign on a high note, defeating Russia 3-0 (25-22, 25-20, 25-17) on Thursday and then edged past arch-rivals Bosnia and Herzegovina 3-2 (22-25, 25-17, 25-19, 22-25, 15-12) on Friday.

Iran had defeated the Bosnian team two years ago in the 2016 Paralympic Games final at Rio de Janeiro.

Six of the world’s best male sitting volleyball national teams participate at the Super 6 from April 19 to 24.

This is the second edition of the international competition, which only included women’s teams last year and saw Russia taking gold in Hangzhou, China.

The event features reigning world champion Bosnia and Herzegovina, Paralympic gold medalist Iran, world No.6 Germany, No.9 Russia, No.5 Ukraine and No.8 USA.

## Nekounam candidate to take charge of Iran U23 football team



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Ex-Iran captain Javad Nekounam has been reportedly nominated as a candidate to coach Iran U23 football team.

Iran, a powerhouse of the Asian football, has not been in the Olympics since the 1976 games in Munich.

The team is without a coach since parting company with Amirhossein Peyrovani.

Nekounam currently coaches Iran’s first division Nassaji Mazandaran. He has served as coach of Khooneh be Khooneh football team.

Nicknamed Neku, and widely regarded as one of Asia’s greatest footballers, Nek-

ounam represented the Iran national team a record of 151 times, playing several major tournaments including two World Cups and four Asian Cups.

Former Persepolis and Sepahan coach Zlatko Kranjcar and Ex-Iran assistant coach Omid Namazi had been linked with the vacant job.

Ex-Iran and Persepolis midfielder Hamid Estili had been already named as new technical manager of Iran U23 football team.

Football tournament at the 2020 Summer Olympics will be held from 22 July to 8 August 2020 in Japan.

## Yokoyama the hero as Japan emerge champions

Amman: Japan became champions for a second successive time, as Kumi Yokoyama’s superb late goal secured a 1-0 win over Australia in the AFC Women’s Asian Cup 2018 final on Friday.

The win means Asako Takakura’s charges are the first team to win back-to-back Asian titles since DPR Korea in 2003.

The Nadeshiko survived a deluge of Australian shots at goal, including a saved penalty kick in the 15th minute, before substitute Yokoyama’s strike turned the match in their favour with just six minutes remaining.

Seven days after the sides played out a crucial Group B tie to see who would remain in the tournament, they met again at the same venue to decide who would win it, and – in a repeat of the previous meeting – it was Australia who started the stronger.

The Matildas were sharp from the opening seconds and Japan were only kept on level terms by goalkeeper Ayaka Yamashita’s 13th minute double save, which denied both Sam Kerr’s spinning volley and Lisa De Vanna’s follow-up.

Australia had a great chance to score when they were awarded a penalty after Nadeshiko captain Saki Kumagai handled Tameka Butt’s shot at goal just a minute later, but Yamashita – superb all night – came to the rescue again, denying a tame effort from Elise Kellond-Knight.

Japan seemed to gain a measure of confidence from the early reprieve, and began to exert a greater influence on the



match, with Mana Iwabuchi and Rumi Utsugi both firing shots at the Australian goal in the 24th minute.

One of the stars of the tournament, Iwabuchi created a superb chance when her pass put Yui Hasegawa through on goal 11 minutes later, with the fingertips of Lydia Williams keeping the sides level.

A well-timed Kerr run saw her breach Japan’s defensive line on the verge of half-time, but – with a clear sight of goal – the AFC Women’s Player of the Year’s heavy touch effectively derailed the chance, and Yamashita made a comfortable save.

Alen Stajcic’s side came out firing after the break, and Emily van Egmond nearly opened the scoring in stunning fashion in the 53rd minute, when her 35-yard drive hammered into the crossbar.

The Australian efforts at goal continued with regularity, with Butt and Chloe Logarzo trying their luck without reward as they continued to push for a crucial opener.

But, against the run of play, it was Japan who took the lead with a brilliant goal from 24-year-old substitute Yokoyama in the 84th minute.

Twelve minutes after being introduced, the forward received the ball from Hasegawa, took a touch around Kennedy and drilled the ball beyond Williams into the top corner of the net from 18 yards to notch her fourth goal of the tournament in less than 100 minutes of playing time.

Australia pressed for a late equalizer, but Japan held firm to lift their third major trophy in seven years, and their first under former playing great Takakura.

### ■ Roll of Honor

- Champions: Japan
- Runners-up: Australia
- Third-place: China PR
- Most Valuable Player: Mana Iwabuchi (Japan)
- Top Scorer: Li Ying (China)
- Fair Play: Japan

(Source: the-afc)

## Blind Football Worlds Draw takes place in Madrid

The draw for the International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) Blind Football World Championships, one of the most hotly anticipated Para sport competitions of 2018, will take place on Monday (23 April) in Madrid, Spain.

Sixteen teams will go into the pots to be drawn in four groups for the tournament.

IBSA Blind Football committee Chairperson Ulrich Pfisterer and Angel Luis Gomez, President of the Spanish Federation for Blind Sports (FEDC), will make the draw at the Colegio Sagrado Corazon.

Live coverage will be available from 1pm (CET) at the official website [www.madrid.blindfootballworldcup.com](http://www.madrid.blindfootballworldcup.com) which will also be launched on Monday.

Madrid 2018 gets underway on 7 June with

the Opening Ceremony and the first group stage match. The quarter finals and play-offs begin on 13 June with the final taking place on 17 June. As well as the title on offer, the competition is also an important step on the road to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics.

All 44 matches will be held at the Colegio Sagrado Corazon which has capacity for 400 fans. Entry will be free to spectators.

Brazil are the favorites, having won four consecutive Paralympic titles and three successive world titles. Copa America champions Argentina, African champions Morocco and Asian title holders China also highlight the field.

The competition will be the biggest in history with six teams qualifying for the first time. Mexico, Costa Rica, Mali, European

champions Russia\*, Thailand and Iran will all make their debuts.

The 2018 IBSA Blind Football World Championships are being organized by FEDC and the Spanish National Organization for the Blind (ONCE).

\*Editor’s note: The International Paralympic Committee suspended the Russian Paralympic Committee on 7 August 2016 for its inability to fulfil its IPC membership responsibilities and obligations, in particular its obligation to comply with the IPC Anti-Doping Code and the World Anti-Doping Code (to which it is also a signatory). As a result of the suspension, Russian athletes cannot enter IPC sanctioned events or competitions, including the Paralympic Games.

(Source: Paralympic.org)



## Alireza Beiranvand dreams of playing for Liverpool

**Persian League** — Iran national football team and Persepolis custodian Alireza Beiranvand has spoken about his dream to play for Liverpool.

The 25-year-old goalkeeper has won back-to-back titles with Persepolis in Iran Professional League.



Now, he is dreaming of playing for a European big club like Liverpool or PSG.

Beiranvand says his dream can come true with a good performance at the 2018 World Cup, where Team Melli has been drawn along with Spain, Portugal and Morocco.

“I am under contract with Persepolis for three more years and It’s a great honor to play for the team,” Beiranvand said in an interview with anten.ir.

“I think Persepolis will win Iran Professional League for the third successive year. Of course, our players should extend their contracts,” he added.

“I know Iran has a difficult task in the 2018 World Cup but I want to shine in the competition. I can join a European big club after a good performance at the World Cup. Personally, I like to play in Liverpool or PSG,” Beiranvand said.

## Iran stays best Asian futsal team in latest rankings

**Press TV** — The Iran men’s national futsal team has maintained its position as Asia’s best in the latest Asociación Mundial de Futsal (AMF) rankings, and upheld its place in the world’s overall standings to stay put in the sixth slot.

According to the latest classification published by the AMF, which is the governing body of futsal, the Iranian squad collected 1,654 points.

Kazakhstan took the eighth slot in the latest AMF rankings with 1,532 points. The Central Asians are followed by Japan’s Samurai Five and the Small Table of Thailand, who have claimed the 15th and 18th places respectively with 1,358 and 1,285 points.

The Brazil national futsal team, nicknamed Canarinho (Little Canary), is the top-ranked futsal team in the world rankings with 1,935 points. Spaniards notched up 1,807 points to sit in the second position, while third-placed Russians earned 1,700 points. Portugal accumulated 1,696 points to stand fourth.

## Iran to play Uzbekistan on May 19

**TASNIM** — Iran national football team will meet Uzbekistan in a friendly match as part of preparation for the 2018 World Cup.

The match has been scheduled to be played on May 19 in Tehran’s Azadi Stadium.

Iran defeated Uzbekistan twice in the 2018 World Cup qualification in Group A.

Team Melli will also play two friendlies against Turkey and Greece before traveling to Russia.

Iran have been drawn with Spain, Portugal and Morocco in Group B of the 2018 World Cup.

Carlos Queiroz’s team are determined to advance to the next stage for the first time.

Iran have never gotten past the group stage in four World Cup appearances.

## Iran’s Jahanbakhsh named Eredivisie player of the week

**TASNIM** — AZ Alkmaar Iranian winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh has been named Eredivisie player of the week.

Jahanbakhsh scored his first-ever hat-trick in the match against Vitesse Arnhem Wednesday night, helping his team to win the match 4-3.

“This gives me confidence and I’m feeling good about that. The most important thing is to keep playing, to feel free and to do my best,” Jahanbakhsh said.

Jahanbakhsh has been linked with a move to Italian giant Napoli after the 2018 World Cup.

He is AZ’s best quality player – a terrific winger who can create or score a goal from nothing. Many have already complemented AZ’s exciting football this season, which is down to the hard-work of manager John van den Brom.

## Iran able to send coaches to Azerbaijan: Masoud Soltanifar

**IRNA** – In the sports that Iran holds a high world rank, it can send coaches to Azerbaijan in the fields, said the Iranian minister of youth and sports in Baku.

‘President Hassan Rouhani always stresses cooperation with Azerbaijan to the Iranian cabinet,’ said Masoud Soltanifar.

Soltanifar said that a lot of agreements in sports have been signed between Iran and Azerbaijan, and there are no limits in that.

The Azeri Minister of Youth and Sports Azad Rahimov said that Iranians participate in all the competitions held in Azerbaijan and that his country is ready to share experiences with Iran.



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Tehran to host intl. symposium on set and costume design

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** – The 2nd Tehran International Symposium on Set and Costume Design will be held at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran from April 27 to May 4.

The event will put its focus on research by organizing panel discussions by professionals of set and costume design such as Bahram Badakhshani, Amir-Hossein Qodsi, Payam Forutan, Rana Amini, Maryam Naeimzadeh, Alaeddin Pajhan, Reza Mehdizadeh and Keyvan Moqaddam.

An exhibition is scheduled to be organized to showcase works by professionals and students.

Best set and costume designs of the last year in Iranian theater and cinema will be honored during the closing ceremony of the symposium.

*A poster the Tehran International Symposium on Set and Costume Design*

Tehran library displays Sadi rare books

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** – The Royal Library of the Niavaran Cultural Historical Complex in Tehran displayed two rare copies of Persian poet Sadi’s Gulistan (The Rose Garden) and Bustan (The Orchard) on Saturday to celebrate National Sadi Day.

*Two rare copies of Persian poet Sadi’s Gulistan and Bustan are on display in an exhibition at the Royal Library of the Niavaran Cultural Historical Complex in Tehran on April 21, 2108.*

The copy of the Bustan was calligraphed in 1865 by Mohammad bin Mahdi bin Mohammad who inscribed under the pseudonym “Ali-Akbar”, the complex announced in a press release.

The book has been illuminated by Mirza Abdolvahab Mozaheb-bashi.

Haji Mohammad bin Mohammad-Ebrahim inscribed the copy of the Gulistan in 1804 and Mohammad-Hadi Zarkesh is the illuminator of the book.

These books have never before been showcased at any public exhibition.

The books will be on display for ten days.

As one of the greatest figures of classical Persian literature, Sheikh Muslih od-Din Sadi Shirazi (C. 1213-1291) is famous worldwide for his Bustan and Gulistan.

Pages from numerous copies of the masterpieces are kept at major libraries and museums of the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

“Starless Dreams” named best doc at Sherbrooke festival

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Iranian filmmaker Mehrdad Oskui’s “Starless Dreams” has won the Cercle d’Or for best documentary at the Festival cinéma du monde de Sherbrooke in Canada.

The film follows a group of under-18-year-old girls taken into care for a variety of reasons ranging from drug dealing and trafficking to pick-pocketing and manslaughter. As the New Year approaches they all hope to celebrate it with their families.

“In Syria” (“Une famille syrienne”) by Philippe Van Leeuw from Germany was picked as best feature at the festival, which was held in Sherbrooke from April 9 to 15.

The story of the film is set in Damascus where a mother attempts to keep her family safe as war rages and a sniper lies in wait outside her home.

This film also won the Public Award Radio-Canada.

The Cercle d’Or for best short film remained at home as “The Last Day” (“Le Dernier Jour”) from the Canadian director Louis-Charles Blais received the Award.

Iran celebrates National Sadi Day

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Persian literature aficionados and literati from across Iran came together at the mausoleum of Persian poet Sadi in Shiraz on Friday to celebrate National Sadi Day.

Speaking at the ceremony, Iranian philosopher Gholamhossein Ebrahimi-Dinani called Sadi a poet unique in the power of imagination and wisdom.

The director of the Center for the Study of Sadi, Kurosh Kamali Sarvestani regarded Sadi as the king of words and said, “If Sadi were never born, the nature of our life would absolutely be different from what it is.”

“Sadi is a celebrated poet whose words equal our aims and goals in modern life,” he added.

He said that Sadi believes if mankind is seeking salvation in life, he must discover the truth of the time.

Fars Governor General Esmaeil Tabadar, who was also among the guests attending the celebration, called Sadi the symbol of Iranian wisdom.

The celebration came to end with a concert by Salar Aqili who performed a repertoire of Sadi’s songs.

One of the greatest figures of classical Persian literature, Sheikh Muslih od-Din Sadi Shirazi (C. 1213-1291) is famous worldwide for his Bustan (The Orchard) and Gulistan (The Rose Garden).



Vocalist Salar Aqili and his band perform during a celebration for National Sadi Day at the mausoleum of the poet in Shiraz on April 20, 2018. (IRNA/Reza Qaderi)

Iranian cinema poetic and realistic: Giovanni Spagnoletti

**By Manijeh Rezapoor**

**TEHRAN** – Italian producer Giovanni Spagnoletti who is a member of the jury at the 36th Fajr International Film Festival has described Iranian cinema as poetic and realistic.

Talking to the Tehran Times on Friday, he said that he knows Iran through the art films he has seen from Iranian filmmakers such as Amir Naderi and Abbas Kiarostami in Italy and at international events during the 1980s.

“After that Iranian cinema was a must for me to see,” he noted.

“The Iranian cinema is near Italian neorealism, I think it has the same spirit, which seeks to know the reality of the people of the country and their ideas. It focuses on the poetry and the spirituality of the people, and I think this is very important,” he explained.

Spagnoletti also said that what he likes to see in Iranian cinema is landscapes, people and melodrama.

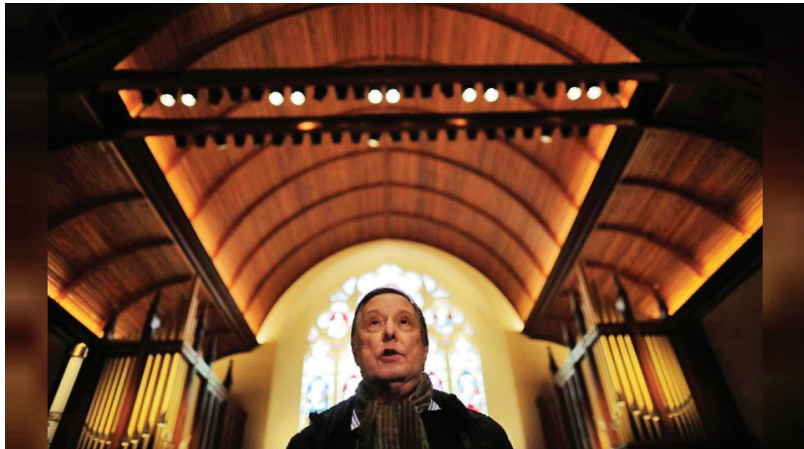
He said that Iran’s new wave of cinema



Giovanni Spagnoletti in an undated photo and its most important films came after the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. Similarly, the neorealist films in Italy began with World War II.

The cinema in both periods shows war, misery and the difficulties of life, he added. However, the Italian cinema has produced more comedy films.

“Exorcist” director Friedkin films the real thing in documentary



Director William Friedkin attends a walking tour around Georgetown that focused on some of the film locations from the original Exorcist in Washington D.C., U.S. April 17, 2018. REUTERS/Carlos Barria

**ROME (Reuters)** — William Friedkin, director of the 1973 classic film “The Exorcist”, is dealing with the devil again but don’t expect more twisting heads, levitating beds or spurts of green vomit.

That was fiction. This time, it’s the real thing with no special effects but it is nonetheless harrowing.

Friedkin has made an hour-long documentary called “The Devil and Father Amorth” about perhaps the world’s most famous exorcist, Gabriele Amorth, an Italian priest who died in 2016 at the age of 91.

“Some people will see this and be skeptical. I’m not a skeptic,” Friedkin, 83, said in a telephone interview ahead of the release of the documentary in New York and Los Angeles on Friday.

Friedkin struck up a friendship with Amorth, a disarmingly jovial man despite his serious work.

“We had hours of conversations about the New Testament and about the case he was working on,” said Friedkin, who was raised in a Jewish family in Chicago.

“I found him to be the most spiritual man I ever met.”

On May 1, 2016, about four months before Amorth died, he allowed Friedkin to watch an exorcism of a 46-year-old Italian woman, on condition that he did it without a crew, used only a small camera and did not interfere with the rite.

It takes up the bulk of the documentary, which also includes interviews with psychologists.

“My terror of what I was witnessing turned into empathy for the pain she was experiencing,” Friedkin said.

The footage shows the woman being held down by Amorth’s assistants. She writhes and shouts in a raspy voice that is not hers. Amorth, who had a cult-like following in Italy, performs the rite in Latin and Italian as others, known as “auxiliary exorcists,” give him prayerful support in the room.

“I witnessed a complete transformation of personality and a woman who had strength way beyond her physical capabilities at the age of 46 and she had a complete transformation of the way she spoke and sounded,” he said.

“I can’t tell you I wasn’t frightened. I was two feet away from them and it was harrowing, even though I knew what to expect because he (Amorth) had told me.”

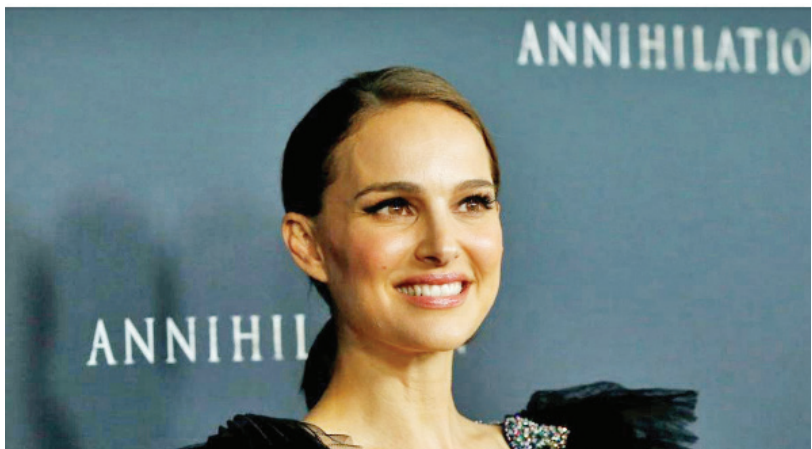
The 1973 film was based on William Peter Blatty’s 1971 novel of the same title. A work of fiction, it was inspired by a newspaper article Blatty had read when he was a student at Georgetown University in Washington.

In the 1973 movie, Linda Blair plays a 12-year-old girl who is possessed and some of the contortions of her face and body have become the stuff of cinematic history.

In one of his books, Amorth said the 1973 film’s special effects, such as the twisting head and green vomit, were “over the top” but that he was grateful for the attention it drew to the problem.

Friedkin said he has long had an affinity with Christianity.

Natalie Portman snubs Israeli award ceremony over “distressing” events



Cast member Natalie Portman poses at the premiere for “Annihilation” in Los Angeles, California, U.S., February 13, 2018. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

**JERUSALEM (Reuters)** — Israeli-American actress Natalie Portman has refused to attend a ceremony in Israel to accept a million-dollar prize because of “distressing” events in the country, the organizers said, announcing the prize-giving had been canceled.

Israel has drawn international criticism for its response to Palestinian protests on the Gaza-Israel border during the last three weeks, in which its troops have killed 35 Palestinians have wounded hundreds.

Government ministers said Portman appeared to have been manipulated by the Palestinian-led international campaign to boycott Israel.

The foundation that awards the Genesis Prize quoted a representative for Portman as saying: “Recent events in Israel have been extremely distressing to her and she does not feel comfortable participating in any public events in Israel.”

The statement on its website gave no further details of her reasons. Portman’s publicist in Los Angeles did not immediately respond to an email seeking further information.

The foundation said it admired Portman’s “humanity, and respects her right to publicly disagree with the policies of the government of Israel.

“However, we are very saddened that she has decided not to attend the Genesis Prize Ceremony in Jerusalem for political reasons. We fear that Ms. Portman’s decision will cause our philanthropic initiative to be politicized.”

Israel’s culture minister, Miri Regev, said Portman was supporting the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement

which aims to isolate Israel over its treatment of Palestinians.

“I was sorry to hear that Natalie Portman fell like a ripe fruit into the hands of supporters of the BDS,” Regev said.

Minister of Strategic Affairs Gilad Erdan expressed disappointment at Portman’s cancellation.

Erdan invited Portman to Israel to tour the Gaza border and to meet Israeli families there, saying the media had “distorted the truth and portrayed the recent riots on the Israel-Gaza border as peaceful demonstrations, and Israel’s response as disproportionate.”

The daily protests, dubbed “The Great March of Return”, began on March 30 along the Israel-Gaza frontier, reviving a longstanding demand for the right of return of Palestinian refugees to towns and villages from which their families fled or were driven out when the state of Israel was created.

Israel has stationed sharpshooters to stop attempts by Palestinians to breach the 40-km (25-mile) border or sabotage the security fence. Troops shot and killed four Palestinians on Friday.

Erdan said the Israeli military response was “proportionate, careful, and in line with international law”, adding: “the great majority of those killed by Israeli fire have been members of Hamas and other terrorist groups.”

The Genesis Prize has been awarded since 2014 to individuals for excellence in their professional fields and “who inspire others through their dedication to the Jewish community and Jewish values”.