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# Rouhani to Pompeo: You can't decide for Iran

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## U.S. threatens ‘strongest sanctions in history’ on Iran

By staff and agencies

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced on Monday that the U.S. will apply economic and military pressure against Iran and will impose “the strongest sanctions in history” on the Islamic Republic. “Sanctions are going back in full effect, and new ones are coming,” CNN quoted him as saying in his speech at the Heritage Foundation. It was the first major speech to lay out

a new strategy after the U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal on May 8.

“The sting of sanctions will be painful if the regime does not change its course from the unacceptable and unproductive path it has chosen to one that rejoins the league of nations,” Pompeo said.

He said relief from sanctions would only come when the U.S. had seen tangible shifts in Iran’s policies. **→2**

## EC outlines measures to protect businesses in Iran

By Simon Warburton

European Union (EU) leaders meeting in Sofia have authorized the Commission in Brussels to take steps to protect the interests of companies operating in Iran.

The move follows President Donald Trump’s decision to withdraw from the nuclear deal, signed by the United Nations as well as the P5+1 members of the Security Council; UK, France, China, U.S.,

Russia and Germany, which paved the way for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) for sanctions to be lifted against Iran.

France in particular has several industrial titans with major business in Iran, namely Renault, PSA, Airbus and Total, with the EU’s move following urgent talks between Paris and 60 companies working with Tehran. **→2**

## ‘America First now increasingly means America Alone’

“America First now increasingly means America Alone,” Eric Schweitzer, the president of Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), told the RND group of newspapers.

In January Trump said he would always promote “America First”, as he expected other world leaders to do on behalf of their own countries, but added: “America First

does not mean America alone. When the United States grows so does the world.”

The United States has pulled out of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and Germany has acknowledged it could be hard to protect companies doing business with Iran, as a senior U.S. official renewed a threat of sanctions against European firms. **→4**

## U.S. secondary sanctions is principal red line for Iran: Askari

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW  
By Javad Heirannia

**TEHRAN** — Professor Hossein Askari, an expert on Saudi Arabia who also teaches international business at the George Washington University, strongly believes that most European financial institution and corporation “would cut business ties with Iran.”

Hossein Askari, who teaches at George Washington University, tells the Tehran Times that “If this happens, then Iran would get NO benefit from the JCPOA.”

Following is the text of the interview:

■ In regard to Trump’s violation of the Iran deal, what are the obligations and responsibilities of the deal’s other signatories?

A: It is difficult to give a short answer to this question. The other signatories are obligated not to snap back any sanctions on Iran. But if this is all that the other signatories do, then the agreement may have no benefit whatsoever for Iran. This would be the case if the U.S. imposes secondary sanctions (extraterritoriality) on European, Chinese, and Russian or for that matter on any other financial institution and corporation doing business with Iran. If the U.S. does this, these institutions and corporations have a choice. Do they risk U.S. sanctions (which may later entail horrific fines as we saw before the JCPOA) or do they cut business ties with Iran. I believe that most would cut business ties with Iran. If this happens, then Iran would get NO benefit from the JCPOA. Of course

the other signatories would say to Iran ‘we are market economies and cannot tell banks and corporations where to invest’ but Iran would be left out in the cold. They would argue that this is not their obligation. It would be only a matter of time until we get to this point.

So it is not so much the obligations that matter for Iran. For Iran to get benefits from the JCPOA, the other signatories would have to tell the U.S., and now, that if the U.S. were to sanction any non-U.S. financial institution or corporation for doing business (not related to Iran’s nuclear program) with Iran, then they would sanction U.S. institutions and corporations doing business in their territories. Now ask yourself if the other signatories are likely to do this? I believe the answer is no. **→7**

## European countries can save JCPOA: professor

By Javad Heirannia

**TEHRAN** — Farhang Jahanpour, an adjunct professor in the Department of Continuing Education at the University of Oxford and a Middle East expert, says that “President Trump’s withdrawal from the JCPOA was opposed virtually by the entire world, with the exception of Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.”

“I believe that Iran’s best option would be to stay in the deal and to persuade other signatories to the deal to honour their commitments. It seems that there is a momentum for other countries staying in the deal,” Jahanpour tells the Tehran Times in an exclusive interview.

Jahanpour, also a former senior research fellow at Harvard University, says that “It seems that a combination of legal, financial and political

steps by European countries could allow them to extend Iran the benefits of the deal.”

Following is the full text of the interview with Professor Farhang Jahanpour:

■ President Trump has withdrawn the United States from the JCPOA. How serious a blow is this to the nuclear deal?

A: In a way, Iran should be grateful to President Trump for having adopted such a clear stance regarding the JCPOA. He had three options, back the deal, stay in it but create uncertainty about its future, or withdraw from it. The first option would have been desired by all. The second option would have been the worst option for Iran, because it would have deprived Iran of enjoying the benefits of the deal, while the U.S. would not have officially



ARTICLE  
Payman Yazdani  
Political analyst

## U.S.-EU possible soft tactic to contain Iran

The U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) has created a new rounds of speculations about the three European major players’ (the UK, France and Germany) capabilities and abilities to keep the deal alive without the U.S.

Following the U.S. President’s unilateral move to withdraw from the Iran’s Nuclear Deal, lots of diplomatic and political efforts have been made both by the European and Iranian officials to keep the internationally achieved deal alive.

Islamic Republic of Iran has announced that it will remain in the JCPOA just if the EU can guarantee Iran’s benefits and interests under the JCPOA in the absence of the U.S., otherwise Tehran will leave the deal, too.

Despite all measures taken and political promises made by the European sides to keep the JCPOA alive, over the past ten days many big EU firms and international companies have announced their decisions to stop their activities and operations in Iran including Total, Eni, Siemens, Airbus and Maersk.

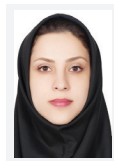
Just couple of days after the U.S. withdraw from the JCPOA, French gas and oil giant Total has announced that due to return of the U.S. sanctions against Iran it has to pull out of Iranian Southern Pars oil field.

Italian oil giant Eni has also decided to abrogate its agreement with Iran to study oil and gas in Iran.

Maersk as the biggest shipping company in the world has announced that due to its vast activities in the U.S. and to avoid possible U.S. punishments, it will stop its activities in Iran.

Considering the limited capabilities and potentialities of the EU to challenge the U.S. hegemony and also the fact that EU governments cannot force private sectors to work with Iran, it is not realistic to expect the EU to save the JCPOA.

As I mentioned in my previous writing, the possibility of job division between the U.S. and EU to contain Iran should not be ignored. **→13**



ARTICLE  
Mahnaz Abdi  
Head of the TehranTimes  
Economy Desk

## Iran’s European trade partners’ supportive steps to tackle U.S. sanctions

On May 8, Donald Trump officially pulled the United States out of Iran’s nuclear agreement, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA, which was implemented in January 2016.

Trump administration has announced that it will re-impose some sanctions against Iran after a 90-day wind-down period (August 6, 2018) and some other sanctions after a 180-day wind-down period (November 4, 2018).

Moving to avoid the effects of soon-to-be-imposed U.S. sanctions, Iran’s trade partners are studying the ways to maintain their trade ties with Iran and protect their companies doing business with the country.

The European Union, Iran’s third top trade partner after China and the United Arab Emirates, whose trade with Iran tripled after the nuclear deal, rising from €7.7 billion in 2015 to €21 billion in 2017, is planning new measures to neutralize U.S. sanctions against Iran.

In an attempt to find the ways for shielding European companies doing business with Iran, the EU leaders gathered in Bulgarian capital Sofia on May 16.

“Following the green light of the EU leaders at the informal meeting in Sofia, the European Commission has today taken steps to preserve the interests of European companies investing in Iran and demonstrate the EU’s commitment to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – the Iran nuclear deal”, the European Commission Press Release Database (europa.eu) published on May 18.

The President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker said: “In Sofia, we saw a show of European unity. As long as the Iranians respect their commitments, the EU will of course stick to the agreement of which it was an architect - an agreement that was unanimously ratified by the United Nations Security Council and which is essential for preserving peace in the region and the world. But the American sanctions will not be without effect. So we have the duty, the Commission and the European Union, to do what we can to protect our European businesses, especially SMEs.” **→4**



## Intl. Holy Quran Exhibition underway in Tehran

**CULTURE** A couple studies a desk publisher’s catalogue during the 26th International Holy Quran Exhibition now underway at Tehran’s Imam Khomeini Mosalla on May 20, 2018.

The exhibition is organized every year during the holy month of Ramadan that is known as the spring of the Holy Quran.

The showcase will be running until June 4.

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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



U.S. behind massacre of Palestinians: Judiciary chief

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** – Iranian Judiciary chief Sadeq Larijani on Monday condemned the Israeli regime’s recent mass killing of Palestinians who had protested against the U.S. embassy’s relocation to al-Quds (Jerusalem), saying Washington was behind the tragedy.

On May 14, concurrent with the opening of the U.S. embassy in al-Quds, Israeli snipers killed 62 Palestinians including eight children. The snipers also injured about 2000 Palestinians.

“The oppressed people of Palestine, who have been constantly in struggle and displaced over the past 70 years, are well aware that they should continue to resist” Sadeq Larijani said at a meeting with high-ranking judicial officials in Tehran.



U.S. showing no respect for intl. commitments: diplomat

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iraj Masjedi, the Iranian ambassador to Baghdad, said on Sunday that the U.S. has no respect for international law and commitments.

During an Iftar party with a number of Iraqi officials and political and scientific figures, he said that the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal and relocation its embassy to al-Quds proved that Washington ignores international law and obligations.

President Trump withdrew the U.S. from the international nuclear deal on May 8. He also relocated the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds (Jerusalem) on May 14.



Majlis amends Palermo bill, returns it to Guardian Council

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** - Yahya Kamalipour, a member of the Majlis Judicial and Legal Committee, said on Sunday that Majlis has made some amendments to the Palermo bill and sent it back to the Guardian Council for final approval.

He said that there were some mistakes in translation of the Palermo bill which has been corrected.

Back in January, the parliament passed the Palermo bill in order to join the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).



Tehran urges respect for Venezuelan people’s votes

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** - Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Monday that foreigners should respect the Venezuelan people’s votes in the presidential elections.

Venezuelan officials declared Nicolas Maduro the winner of Sunday’s presidential election.

Qassemi said, “Holding elections in spite of domestic pressure and foreign threats and sanctions is a great victory for democracy in Venezuela.”

He expressed hope that foreign sides would respect the Venezuelans’ votes and support political stability in the country.



Six ministers, two MPs request unblocking of Twitter

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** – Six ministers and two members of the Majlis have requested the unblocking of Twitter in Iran, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting reported on Monday, quoting a source.

They made their request in a letter to the attorney general, the source said. The eight signatories of the letter are members of the Committee on Criminal Content Recognition, a subsidiary of the Judiciary which decides what websites should be blocked in the country.

In their letter, they argued that Twitter provides a healthy environment for media activists and the youth to “yield stronger impact in the global community”.

Twitter was blocked in Iran following the 2009 post-election unrest.



Drug-trafficking bands smashed in Tehran

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Police have dismantled three drug-trafficking bands in the capital Tehran.

Brigadier General Hossein Rahimi, the provincial police chief, said that Tehran police forces had annihilated three big drug trafficking bands during the widespread operations carried out from Friday to Sunday, ISNA reported.

The police forces seized over one ton of various drugs including morphine, opium, hashish and heroin from the smugglers, he said, adding that 15 members of the bands were arrested in the operations.

The police commander said that the smugglers had carried the narcotics from the southeastern borders and sent the cargo to the suburbs of Tehran.

# Was it plan B or declaration of war?!!!

NEWS ANALYSIS

After Trump announced U.S. pullout from the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA) on May 8, his new secretary of state Mike Pompeo on Monday set out Washington’s plan B which looked more like a declaration of war rather than a new roadmap.

Pompeo said the U.S. will apply economic and military pressure against Iran and will impose “the strongest sanctions in history” on the Islamic Republic.

As foreign secretary he was expected at least superficially to use a diplomatic language. However, he used a tough and hostile language against Iran and listed a number of conditions that Iran should accept for a new deal.

He talked in a way as if Iran is the source of all troubles in the Middle East and the larger world or possibly the warming of the climate.

Journalists who were listening to his speech at the Heritage Foundation were saying one should not expect Pompeo to speak like a chief diplomat because he is serving Trump who according to Professor Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London



Middle East Institute, “is the most dangerous man in recent human history” and French President François Hollande in August 2016 said makes one to “retch”.

Among his list of conditions was that Iran should not be allowed to enrich uranium, a right which Iran is entitled to as a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation

Treaty (NPT).

Pompeo, whose speech showed that like his boss he is also full of hatred for Iran, is ignoring that fact that it was not Iran’s fault that Saudi Arabia and its coalition are caught in the Yemen quagmire despite the use of U.S.-supplied sophisticated weapons against Houthi rebels.

## Tehran: Any talks with U.S. ludicrous after JCPOA experience

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Foreign Ministry has forthrightly rejected its regard for any talks with Washington in response to a developing plan by the U.S. administration to initiate new nuclear negotiations with Tehran.

“This proposition by America is for sure shameful and ludicrous. It sounds like a joke that they should quit a multilateral international deal, which is backed by a UN resolution, and then look for further negotiations under new circumstances. I think nobody would even consider that,” Bahram Qassemi, the Foreign Ministry’s spokesman, told a press conference on Monday.

Qassemi made the remarks before new U.S. Secretary of States Mike Pompeo presented his plan B. Pompeo’s speech at the Heritage Foundation looked like a declaration of war rather than a new roadmap. It was full of hostile language. He said Iran would not be allowed to enrich uranium, a right enshrined in the NPT which Iran is a signatory.

Pompeo announced on Monday that the U.S. will apply economic and military pressure against Iran and will impose “the strongest sanctions in history” on the Islamic Republic.

Qassemi said, “By unilaterally quitting the JCPOA, America demonstrated not only to us, but to all independent countries, to the EU, and all others that it cannot be a trustworthy partner. Before the JCPOA, America had already demonstrated disregard for international rules by violating some of its commitments.”

The Foreign Ministry’s response comes a few days before a meeting of the joint commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in Vienna to discuss the U.S. exit from the multilateral nuclear agreement.

The joint commission was set up by the six world



powers (the U.S., UK, France, Russia, China, and Germany), Iran, and the European Union to handle any complaints about the nuclear deal’s implementation. The meeting, which will take place on Friday, however will miss the U.S. for its withdrawal from the deal.

“We will not have any negotiations with Europe beside the JCPOA. Our talks will pivot around the JCPOA. I think European leaders and politicians are very wise and well know what topics they will discuss with Iran, that topic being the JCPOA,” Qassemi explained.

He pointed out that in preliminary talks with Iran, European countries have said they will put in place mechanisms to ensure Iran’s interests in the JCPOA while the U.S. stays out.

However, the diplomat said, “Words are not enough. We do not need words. We surely look at and attach significance to what happens in practice.”

He added, “We believe that in Europe there is some serious determination to work with us and keep up the JCPOA without America.”

### ■ ‘Those countries which entered Syria without Damascus permission must leave’

Elsewhere in the press conference, Qassemi commented on misinterpretations of a recent statement by Russian President Vladimir Putin who demanded foreign forces to leave Syria.

Qassemi said, “As long as there is the need, and there is the threat of terrorism there, and the Syrian government wishes so, Iran will continue its support for the Syrian government. Let me underline that this is the ones who entered the Syrian territory without the consent of its government who need to get out.”

Putin and his Syrian counterpart Bashar al-Assad held a meeting in Syria in Sochi last week during which Putin said foreign forces will leave Syria after the Syrian army’s complete victory against the terrorist groups and the start of political process in the country.

While some media outlet interpreted Putin’s statement as an indirect reference to Iran, sources in Syria’s presidential office denied the media reports.

Quoting unnamed Russian officials, the sources told the Arabic-language al-Mayadeen newspaper on Sunday that Putin’s remarks did not include the Russian forces and Iranian advisors who are in Syria on the request of the legal government and they will leave the country whenever Damascus wants.

On the Iraqi election result, Qassemi said Iran is optimistic about future relations with the neighboring country.

“Iran’s relations with Iraq follows a specific framework under any government and circumstances... We respect the choice of the Iraqi people... We are looking for a powerful, stable, and advanced Iraq which establishes good ties with its neighbors,” he said.

## EC outlines measures to protect businesses in Iran

**1 →** “In Sofia, we saw a show of European unity,” said European Commission (EC) president, Jean-Claude Juncker. “As long as the Iranians respect their commitments, the EU will of course stick to the agreement of which it was an architect - an agreement that was unanimously ratified by the UN Security Council and which is essential for preserving peace in the region and the world.

“But the American sanctions will not be without effect. So we have the duty, the Commission and the EU, to do what we can to protect our European businesses, especially SMEs.”

Specifically, the EC has proposed several measures:

- Launched the formal process to activate the Blocking Statute by updating the list of U.S. sanctions on Iran falling within its scope. The Blocking Statute forbids EU companies from complying with the extraterritorial effects of U.S. sanctions, allows companies to recover damages arising from such sanctions from the person causing them, and nullifies the effect in the EU of any foreign court judgements based on them.

- The aim is to have the measure in force before 6 August 2018, when the first batch of U.S. sanctions take effect.

- Launched the formal process to remove obstacles for the European Investment Bank (EIB) to decide under the EU

budget guarantee to finance activities outside the European Union, in Iran. This will allow the EIB to support EU investment in Iran and could be useful in particular for small and medium-sized companies. All relevant rules and procedures will apply to individual financial operations.

- The European Parliament and the Council will have a period of two months to object to these measures, once proposed, before they enter into force. This period can be shorter if both Institutions signal their non-objection before the end of the period. The processes can be ended if political circumstances no longer justify the adoption of the measures.

- As confidence building measures, the Commission will continue and strengthen the ongoing sectoral cooperation with, and assistance to, Iran, including in the energy sector and with regard to small and medium-sized companies.

- Financial assistance through the Development Cooperation or Partnership Instruments will also be mobilised.

- The Commission is encouraging Member States to explore the possibility of one-off bank transfers to the Central Bank of Iran. This approach could help the Iranian authorities to receive their oil-related revenues, particularly in case of U.S. sanctions which could target EU entities active in oil transactions with Iran.

(Source: [www.just-auto.com](http://www.just-auto.com))

## U.S. threatens ‘strongest sanctions in history’ on Iran

**1 →** He said Washington would be open to a new treaty and wanted the support of America’s allies.

“Iran will never again have carte blanche to dominate the Middle East,” he said.

Pompeo noted that the Trump administration was ready to part ways with allies and even use sanctions against them if necessary.

“We understand our re-imposition of sanctions and the coming pressure campaign on the Iranian regime will pose financial and economic difficulties for a number of our friends,” Pompeo said. “But you should know that we will hold those doing prohibited business in Iran to account.”

In exchange for a change in behavior, Pompeo claimed that the U.S. would be willing to end sanctions, re-establish commercial relationships and allow it to have advanced technology.

Elsewhere, Pompeo criticized the nuclear deal for what he called its “fatal flaws”.

On May 8, Trump declared U.S. pullout from the international nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

The nuclear deal was signed in July 2015 between Iran, Germany, the European Union and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. It went into effect in January 2016.

International Atomic Energy Agency has reported ten times that Iran has been committed to the nuclear deal.

Also, he faulted Iran for the pro-democracy movement in Bahrain. He is either too stupid to understand that the uprising in Bahrain was influenced by the Arab uprising or he is just resorting to every ridiculous ploys to demonize Iran.

Pompeo also looked unhappy for Iran’s help to Iraqis in their war against ISIL. As former CIA chief he must not be that much stupid not to know that if it was not for Iran’s prompt action ISIL terrorists, who are ideologically inspired by Saudi Wahhabism, had captured Baghdad and other important cities in Iraq and more than a decade of efforts by the U.S. to calm down conflicts in Iraq would have gone up in the air in a matter of hours or days.

The secretary of state ridiculously claimed that Iran supported al-Qaeda. In fact, al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups are a joint product of Saudi Arabia and the U.S. who were fanning the flames of religious extremism to counter the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Summarily, Pompeo did not present a plan B. His strategy looked more like a declaration of war and he appeared like a “war minister” and not a “foreign minister”.

## Rouhani to Pompeo: You can’t decide for Iran

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani reacted strongly to the hostile remarks against Iran by new U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, saying, “Who are you who want to decide for Iran and the world”.

Pompeo, who was CIA chief until he was confirmed as secretary of state on April 26, said in a speech on Monday that the U.S. will apply economic and

military pressure against Iran and will impose “the strongest sanctions in history” on the Islamic Republic. The harsh remarks by Pompeo came nearly two weeks after Trump withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 international nuclear deal.

“A person who was at the center of espionage until yesterday and now introduced as secretary of state wants to decide for (others),” Rouhani asserted,

adding, “Who are you who want to decide for Iran and the world.”

Rouhani said the world cannot tolerate that the U.S. decide for the world through bullying.

The president said the Americans have experienced the “remarks” by George W. Bush and noticed their consequences but again a new group has come to power who repeat those “words”.



# Paraguay president inaugurates Israel embassy in al-Quds

## U.S. peace plan to offer Palestinians half W. Bank, Abu Dis as capital

Paraguay opened its Israel embassy in al-Quds (Jerusalem), the second country to follow the United States in making the politically sensitive move from Tel Aviv.

Paraguayan President Horacio Cartes and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attended the inauguration ceremony on Monday.

The U.S. relocated its embassy to al-Quds (Jerusalem) a week ago, drawing Palestinian and international anger, and was followed by Guatemala on Wednesday.

Palestinian leaders see East al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of their future state and have said that the U.S. President Donald Trump's move disqualifies the U.S. as a peace mediator.

### ■ Trump's new plan

Meantime, Trump has proposed to establish a Palestinian state with limited sovereignty over around half of the West Bank and Abu Dis as its capital, an Israeli intelligence website reported.

The plan, due to be revealed next month, is reportedly intended to serve as a springboard for more negotiations between Israel and Arab governments, DEBKAfile reported.

Five administration officials told U.S. media on Friday that Trump was preparing to reveal the "peace" plan after the end of the holy month of Ramadan in mid-June.

His son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner and Jason Greenblatt, his special adviser for international negotiations, are the main authors of the text, it added.

Trump had discussed the text with three Arab leaders, namely the House of Saud regime Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MBS), United Arab Emirates (UAE) emir Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed, Qatari emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi.

However, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan declined an offer to come aboard even before tensions rose between Tel Aviv and Ankara over Israeli massacres in the Gaza Strip, the report said.

DEBKA revealed on April 27 some of the elements incorporated in the U.S. plan, saying that it would be unveiled on the date scheduled by Washington, regardless of a Palestinian boycott.

Last December, Trump decided to recognize the occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel's "capital."

Trump's declaration prompted Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas to formally declare that Palestinians would no longer accept the U.S. as a mediator to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as Washington was "completely biased" towards Tel Aviv.

"The Israeli prime minister will issue a cautious statement proposing that the Trump plan be the springboard for immediate negotiations with Arab governments on certain mutually acceptable points," DEBKA added.

Sources who have had access to Trump's plan told DEBKAfile that a Palestinian state will be established with limited sovereignty across about half of the West Bank and all the Gaza Strip.

The besieged sliver of land, they said, will be integrated in the new state provided the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas agrees to give up its arms.

However, most of the West Bank and the border crossings will be under the Israeli security control, the sources revealed.

According to the plan, Palestinians are offered Abu Dis east of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as their capital.

The Arab neighborhoods of East al-Quds



(Jerusalem) will be part of the Palestinian state, "excepting the Old City, which will be part of Israeli Jerusalem," DEBKAfile said.

### ■ Congressman urges U.S. to recognize Syria's Golan as Israeli territory

Elsewhere, a member of Congress has urged the U.S. to recognize Syria's Golan Heights as an Israeli territory after Washington's relocation of its embassy to al-Quds (Jerusalem) last week.

Republican Representative Ron DeSantis said in an interview published on Israel's Walla news website on Sunday that he had brought the proposal before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, of which he is a member.

Israel seized the Golan Heights from Syria during the 1967 Six-Day War and has continued to occupy two-thirds of the strategically-important territory ever since, in a move that has never been recognized by the international community.

The Israeli regime has built tens of illegal settlements in the area since its occupation and has used the territory to carry out a number of military operations against the Syrian government.

DeSantis said he had suggested the proposal as an amendment to a chapter on Syria in the U.S. military budget.

DeSantis also said the proposal is a natural follow-up to the U.S. embassy's relocation from Tel Aviv to al-Quds (Jerusalem) last Monday. He noted that as the embassy move would help take al-Quds (Jerusalem) off the negotiating table, the U.S. recognition of Israel's claim to the Golan would clarify it has no intention of forcing Tel Aviv to relinquish the territory.

### ■ Seven Palestinian inmates have died in Israeli prisons since 2017

Separately, a Palestinian official says at least seven Palestinians have lost their lives in Israeli prisons and detention centers since 2017, noting that the jails have turned into a place where the inmates are doomed to death and face arbitrary and repressive measures.

Head of the Palestinian Authority's Committee for Prisoners' Affairs, Issa Qaraqa, said in a statement on Monday that Aziz Oweisat, a resident of Jabal Al-Mukaber neighborhood of occupied East al-Quds (Jerusalem), died in Yitzhak Shamir Medical Center, formerly known as Assaf Harofeh Medical Center and

located 15 kilometers from Tel Aviv, the previous night following a serious deterioration in his health.

He stressed that Palestinian prisoners need international protection, demanding concrete measures to bring the occupying Tel Aviv regime before the International Criminal Court.

Oweisat had been serving a 30-year prison sentence since 2014, when he was convicted of alleged involvement in attempts to blow up a pipeline supplying gas to Armon Hanatzif settlement.

He was severely beaten at Ishel Prison in the occupied territories earlier this month.

### ■ Israeli prison service accused of killing Palestinian inmate

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Prisoners Society (PPS) has accused Israeli prison officials of killing Oweisat.

The PPS stated that the 53-year-old suffered several life-threatening injuries but Israeli forces "refused calls to release him to get medical treatment despite knowledge that his health was in a critical condition."

Palestine's official Wafa news agency reported that several Palestinians demonstrated at Damascus Gate in al-Quds (Jerusalem) on Sunday to protest the medical negligence that led to Oweisat's death.

Israeli forces, in return, attacked the protesters using clubs, tear gas, stun grenades and rubber-coated steel bullets. A number of Palestinian demonstrators sustained injuries as a result.

More than 7,000 Palestinians are reportedly held at Israeli jails. Hundreds of the inmates have apparently been incarcerated under the practice of administrative detention, a policy under which Palestinian inmates are kept in Israeli detention facilities without trial or charge.

Some Palestinian prisoners have been held in administrative detention for up to eleven years. Palestinian inmates regularly stage hunger strikes in protest at the administrative detention policy and their harsh prison conditions in Israeli jails.

According to reports, at least 13 Palestinian lawmakers are currently imprisoned in Israeli detention facilities. Nine of them are being held without trial under administrative detention.

### ■ Israel plans new settlements south of al-Quds

The developments follow as Israel is planning to build four new settlement buildings in the occupied territories.

The new buildings will each have 22 housing units and are expected to be built in the Gilo settlement located to the south of al-Quds (Jerusalem), says Palestinian media on Sunday.

According to the report, the fresh settlements will be inhabitable by the end of next year.

Last week, two-thirds of the 15 United Nations Security Council (UNSC) member states raised alarm over the non-implementation of a 2016 resolution which urges the Israeli regime to stop its settlement expansion on occupied Palestinian territory.

About 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built illegally since the 1967 occupation of the Palestinian lands.

### ■ Palestinian FM to press ICC to probe Israeli war crimes

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki is set to hold a meeting with the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to urge the world's only permanent war crimes court to conduct a thorough investigation into Israeli atrocities following the latest massacre of dozens of Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Maliki will arrive in The Hague in the Netherlands late on Monday and will meet with ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda the next day, after at least 65 Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces on May 14 as they protested the U.S. decision to relocate its embassy from Tel Aviv to occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem).

More than 2,700 others were also wounded during the clashes near the Gaza fence on the eve of the 70th anniversary of Nakba Day (Day of Catastrophe), which coincided this year with the opening of the U.S. embassy in al-Quds (Jerusalem).

The Palestinian embassy in The Hague said in a statement that Maliki would update Bensouda on the situation in the Palestinian territories and also "submit a referral" on the issue of Israeli settlements during their talks at the ICC.

(Source: agencies)

## Taliban warns Kabul residents to 'keep away' ahead of attacks

The Taliban warned Kabul residents on Monday to avoid "military centers" in the heavily fortified city, saying they are planning more attacks in the capital where civilians have long taken the brunt of the casualties.

The militant group has issued such warnings to civilians before, including during a failed attempt to take the western city of Farah last week, but it is believed to be the first time they have singled out Kabul.

The warning comes after the United Nations said the war-weary capital - where the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group is also stepping up its attacks - is already the deadliest place in the country for civilians.

The Taliban said they are planning more attacks on "the enemy's military and intelligence centers" as part of an annual spring offensive.

"Therefore, to avoid civilian casualties and only cause damage to enemy military, we are asking Kabul residents to keep away... We don't want even a single innocent civilian to be killed", a statement published online said.

The group did not define what was meant by "military and intelligence centers".

Such targets are difficult to avoid given the overcrowded city is the heart of the country's intelligence, government and military operations and also plagued by traffic jams due to ubiquitous checkpoints and barriers.

The Taliban are stepping up their Al Khandaq spring offensive in an apparent rejection of calls for the militants to take up the Afghan government's February offer of peace talks.

The group portrays itself as taking care to avoid civilian casualties, but has claimed attacks such as a massive bomb hidden in an ambulance in January which detonated in a crowded street and killed more than 100 people.

The extremists' chilling ability to hit at the heart of the country despite increased police checks has spotlighted security and intelligence failures, with the government of President Ashraf Ghani coming under increasing pressure to protect civilians.

Kabul - overflowing with returning refugees and internally displaced Afghans fleeing war and seeking jobs and security - has been the deadliest place in the country for civilians for months.

Figures from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) show that Afghan civilians were deliberately targeted in militant attacks and suicide blasts in 2017.

The capital is a top target, with 16 percent of all casualties during the year - a total of 1,831 people killed and wounded - occurring in Kabul alone. The UN has warned that 2018 could be even deadlier.

(Source: AFP)

## Venezuela's Maduro wins presidential vote boycotted by opposition

Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro won a new six-year term on Sunday in what is being seen as a controversial vote.

According to the results announced by Tibisay Lucena, president of the National Electoral Council (CNE), President Maduro obtained 5.8 million votes while his main opponent, Henri Falcon, collected a total of 1.8 million votes.

A total of 8.6 million Venezuelans voted, putting turnout at 46.01 percent, lower than the projected 48 percent, according to the CNE.

Maduro, an unpopular political heir to the late leftist President Hugo Chavez, hailed his win as a victory against "imperialism," but his main rival refused to recognize the results, alleging irregularities.

The country's main opposition coalition, the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), had boycotted the election, while the two most popular opposition leaders, Henrique Capriles and Leopoldo Lopez, were barred from running in the vote.

Turnout in Sunday's vote was low compared with the 2013 presidential elections, which had a turnout above 80 percent. Polling stations were kept open beyond its closing time at 6 pm. Telesur, the state broadcaster, announced they would stay open "as long as there are people in line to cast their vote".

But his main rival, Falcon, called for a new vote, alleging the election was marred by irregularities and lacked legitimacy.

### ■ Reactions

Claudio Fermin, the campaign chief of Falcon's party, said his team documented 900 cases of voting irregularities involving benefits being offered outside polling stations to those who backed the president.

The United States, which has slapped sanctions on the Maduro government, called the elections a "sham", adding that it would not recognize the results.

Posting on Twitter ahead of the vote, the U.S. mission to the United Nations called the process an "insult to democracy".

President of Chile, Sebastian Pinera, tweeted that his country "like the majority of democratic countries," would not recognize the vote, "it does not represent the free and sovereign will of the people," he added.

Laura Chinchilla, Costa Rica's president, denounced "electoral fraud in Venezuela" and called for the "retreat of ambassadors, and sanctions on members of the regime."

However, back in Venezuela, thousands of Maduro supporters danced outside the Miraflores presidential palace in the capital, Caracas.

Hyperinflation, food and medicine shortages, rising crime and broken water, power and transportation networks have sparked violent unrest in recent years and left Maduro with a 75 percent disapproval rating.

### ■ The Opposition

The opposition MUD said the elections were moved ahead to take advantage of divisions within the coalition.

Most of the candidates who might have run against Maduro were barred from running, including Capriles and Lopez.

Although it's not clear for everybody what is coming next after this election, some members of the opposition say they will continue to fight.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Syrian army clears south Damascus of ISIL

The Syrian Army has liberated the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk, located south of Damascus, from terrorists, a security services source told Sputnik.

Damascus is completely freed from militants as Syrian Army clears the last stronghold, according to the source.

"The Syrian Army has liberated the Yarmouk camp south of Damascus and hoisted the Syrian flag there," the source said.

Syrian state television says the Syrian army has taken control of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) in Al-Hajar Al-Aswad district South of Damascus.

The Syrian army is clearing out the last remaining blocks of the recently liberated Yarmouk camp, located in the south of Damascus, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

A Syrian officer said that the soldiers should inspect every building in the camp in order to find potential suicide attackers or snipers to avoid violence in the future.

Earlier, the Syrian government forces regained control over the eastern neighborhoods of the district of Yarmouk located south of Damascus. The operation was launched after the liberation of Eastern Ghouta on Damascus' outskirts from militants. With the last remaining town, Douma, being retaken from militants on April 12.

Yarmouk refugee camp and surrounding settlements were the last strongholds of ISIL and al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra/Jabhat Fateh al-Sham) terrorists near Damascus. Since an armed conflict broke out in Syria in 2011, the Yarmouk refugee camp for Palestinian and Syrian refugees had been regularly taken over by different militant groups, which has resulted in catastrophic humanitarian conditions for the refugees. Currently, some 18,000 refugees live in the camp.



### ■ France steps up military presence along Syria-Iraq border

France has expanded its military presence in Syria, joining the United States in its support for Kurdish militants that are accused of being used by the U.S. to partition the country.

Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency reported on Sunday that French Special Forces had established six artillery batteries in eastern Syria along the border with Iraq, which are controlled by the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

The news agency quoted local sources as saying that the new artillery batteries, located north of Baguz village in Syria's eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr, had fired their first shots.

The U.S.-led coalition confirmed on Twitter that "artillery from France" was supporting the SDF forces in an alleged

attack on ISIL terrorists to the east of the Euphrates River in eastern Syria.

The U.S. and its allies have been bombarding what they call ISIL positions inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a United Nations mandate. The strikes, however, have on many occasions resulted in civilian casualties and failed to fulfill their declared aim of countering terrorism.

The Kurdish-dominated SDF is composed largely of militants from the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG/Yekineyen Parastina Gel), an anti-Damascus outfit regarded by Turkey as the Syrian branch of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê).

The SDF militants, mainly active in the eastern part of the Euphrates River, are purportedly fighting against the remnants of the ISIL Takfiri terrorist group, which has already been driven out of all its urban bastions both in Iraq and Syria.

Damascus regards them as unwelcome armed forces occupying parts of the Syrian territory without the consent of the central government.

A pro-opposition monitoring group said the SDF, backed by artillery support from allied American and French forces, was advancing on Sunday against ISIL in eastern Syria near the border with Iraq.

Earlier this month, SDF militants and the U.S. troops launched an operation in a small sliver of desert territory near the Iraqi border, where ISIL controls the main villages of Hajjin, Sousa and al-Shaafa in Dayr al-Zawr.

(Source: agencies)



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	95227.5
IFX	1106.95

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,050 rials
EUR	49,415 rials
GBP	56,465 rials
AED	11,451 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	71.74/b
Brent	78.57/b
OPEC Basket	76.75/b
Gold	\$1,288.75 /oz
Silver	\$16.48/oz
Platinum	\$889.60/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



**Electricity equipment exports to Iraq, Afghanistan hit \$120m in a year**

**E N E R G Y** **TEHRAN** — Iran's exports of electricity equipment to Iraq and Afghanistan showed 30 percent rise during the past Iranian calendar year of 1396 (which ended on March 20) and stood at over \$120 million, IRIB reported on Monday.

According to a member of Iran electricity industry syndicate, the exports are planned to reach \$150 million by the end of the current year (March 20, 2019)

"Syria, Armenia, Belarus, and Kyrgyzstan are also among the customers of Iranian electricity products and equipment", Arsalan Fathipour said.



**Over \$142.6b of budget needed for completion of development projects**

**E C O N O M Y** **TEHRAN**— A member of development committee of the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) announced that \$6 quadrillion rials (more than \$142.6 billion) of budget is needed for completion of development projects in Iran, Tasnim news agency reported.

Calling on the government to prepare proper ground for completion of all such projects, Alim Yarmohammadi underlined the significance of attracting foreign investments in this regard.



**Copper concentrate output increases 15% in a month**

**E C O N O M Y** **TEHRAN** — Iran National Copper Company could produce 107,795 tons of copper concentrate in the first month of the present Iranian calendar year 1397, Farvardin (March 21- April 20), registering 15 percent growth in comparison with the same time in the preceding year, IRNA reported on Monday.

According to the latest data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) the companies under Iran National Copper Company produced 94,116 tons of copper concentrate during the first month of the preceding year.

As Iranian Deputy Industry Minister Mehdi Karbasian announced earlier, Iran's annual production of copper concentrate witnessed a six-percent-growth in the previous Iranian calendar year 1396.

‘America First now increasingly means America Alone’

**1 →** German companies also face the prospect of possible extra levies — Trump imposed a 25 percent tariff on steel imports and a 10 percent tariff on aluminum in March but the European Union has been granted exemptions until June 1.

Schweitzer called for the EU to take a tough line in the trade dispute with the United States, saying while it was important to remain in dialogue over difficult conflicts, "we're moving in the wrong direction if we automatically react to new unreasonable demands with concessions."

Nonetheless, a DIHK survey published earlier this month showed a record number of German companies believe economies in foreign markets where they do business will improve despite rising political and trade risks. *(Source: Reuters)*

Turkey dollar-bonds tumble as investors fret over lira

Turkey's dollar-denominated bonds tumbled across the curve on Monday with some issues losing more than 2 cents while investors fretted over the central bank's ability to rein in double-digit inflation as the lira plumbled fresh record lows.

The 2034 issue chalked up the steepest losses, dropping 2.377 cents, while the bond maturing in 2036 also lost more than 2 cents, according to Tradeweb data. Both issues were trading at record lows, with losses more pronounced at the longer end of the curve. *(Source: Reuters)*

Over \$903,000 of state-owned shares divested in 2 months

**E C O N O M Y** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Privatization Organization (IPO) has transferred 38 billion rials (about \$903,686) worth of the state-run shares to the private sector in the past two months, Tasnim news agency reported on Monday.

The shares of 630 Iranian enterprises are planned to be transferred to the private sector by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019).

The list of the enterprises to be privatized this year was approved by the Divestiture Board of Iran's Privatization Organization (IPO) on May 4.

Implementation of privatization plan aimed at more productivity, investment making, job creation, promotion of trade balance, more competition in domestic economy, and reducing financial and



Tehran Stock Exchange

Iran nominated to host 12th World Chambers Congress in 2021

**E C O N O M Y** **TEHRAN** — Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) is announced to be among the final candidates for hosting the 12th edition of World Chambers Congress in 2021, the portal of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) reported on Sunday.

The announcement was made during the International Certificate of Origin Council Meeting which was co-hosted by International Chamber of Commerce's World Cham-

bers Federation and China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT).

ICCIMA will be competing against Dubai Chamber of Commerce, Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce (ECCSA), and Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) for the position.

The next World Chambers Congress will be co-organized with the Brazilian Commercial and Business Associations (CACB) and held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on June 12-14, 2019.

Iran's European trade partners' supportive steps to tackle U.S. sanctions

**1 →** The EU announced a package of measures on last Friday to counter U.S. sanctions on Iran. The plans unveiled by the European Commission include enabling its member states to make direct payments for oil to Iran's central bank and the revival of a 1990s era so-called "blocking statute" to allow companies to ignore U.S. sanctions without fear of punishment in Europe, Financial Times reported.

The blocking statute — which will be based on a 1996 measure developed in response to U.S. sanctions on Iran, Libya and Cuba — will forbid EU companies from complying with the extraterritorial effects of U.S. sanctions, the commission said.

**■ 'EU adheres to its Iran deal-related commitments'**

European Union Energy Commissioner Miguel Arias Canete, who visited Tehran to present plans for continuing oil and gas purchases and protect European companies despite renewed U.S. sanctions on Iran, said that the EU adheres to its commitments under Iran's nuclear deal.

He made the remarks during a joint press conference with Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian in Tehran on May 19.

The EU commissioner said: "In case the U.S. intensifies the sanctions, we will not leave Iran alone and will take strategies to remove barriers in the way of investment making in Iran."

And in another joint press conference with Ali Akbar Salehi, director of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Canete, the first Western official to visit Iran since the U.S. decision, said: "For sure there are clear difficulties with the sanctions. We will have to ask for waivers, for carve outs for the companies that make investments".

**■ France wants EU to toughen its stance**

France, whose trade with Iran increased significantly after the nuclear deal, wants EU to toughen its stance to protect European companies against any U.S. sanctions, according to French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire.

On May 20, the minister said France is looking to see if the European Union could compensate European companies that might be facing sanctions by the United States for doing business with Iran, Reuters reported.

Le Maire referred to EU rules going back to 1996 which he said could allow the EU to intervene in this manner to protect European companies against any U.S. sanctions, adding that France wanted the EU to toughen its stance in this area.

"Are we going to allow the United States to be the economic policeman of the world? The answer is no," he told C News



TV and Europe 1 radio.

Also on May 17, French President Emmanuel Macron said Europe would try to protect its companies doing business with Iran from U.S. sanctions.

Trade between Iran and France reached \$3.18 billion during January-October 2017, showing 112 percent rise compared to the same period of time in 2016. The annual trade between the two countries was near \$2 billion in 2016 and it is expected to reach \$4.8 billion in 2018, according to the Chairman of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafe'i.

**■ 'America First now means America Alone'**

"America First now increasingly means America Alone," Eric Schweitzer, the president of Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), told the RND group of newspapers, referring to the U.S. pulling out of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

In January Trump said he would always promote "America First", as he expected other world leaders to do on behalf of their own countries, but added: "America First does not mean America alone. When the United States grows so does the world."

Schweitzer called for the EU to take a tough line in the trade dispute with the United States, saying while it was important to remain in dialogue over difficult conflicts, "we're moving in the wrong direction if we automatically react to new unreasonable demands with concessions."

Nonetheless, a DIHK survey published earlier this month showed a record number of German companies believe economies in foreign markets where they do business will improve despite rising political and trade risks, Reuters reported on

UK financial sector wants global talent on tap after Brexit

Costs for hiring bankers, accountants and lawyers from outside Britain will soar after Brexit and threaten London's standing as a global financial centre unless the immigration system is urgently reformed, a report said on Monday.

The report from TheCityUK, which promotes Britain as a financial centre, and consultancy EY, said that attracting and retaining the best people is a top priority.

"Losing this could undermine Britain's position as the world's leading financial centre," TheCityUK's Chief Executive, Miles Celic, said in a statement.

The financial sector is quick to remind the government that it is Britain's biggest economic sector, raising more than 70 billion pounds annually in taxes.

Other sectors like health and agriculture are also calling for unhindered access to international hires after Brexit. The government is mind-

ful, however, that many of those who voted to leave the EU in Britain's 2016 referendum want tougher controls on immigration.

Across Britain 7.5 percent of banking and related professional staff are European citizens and 4.7 percent are from non-European countries, rising to 16.9 percent and 11.4 percent, respectively, in London where one in four staff in the sector are non-UK citizens.

Banks, insurers, asset managers, and the lawyers and accountants that support them, can currently hire from across EU states without visas, but must use the "Tier 2" work visa system for citizens from outside the bloc.

If Britain fails to secure a bilateral agreement with the EU on the movement of people, the sector will have to use the Tier 2 system for all non-British hires.

Applications for certain categories of Tier 2 visas are routinely oversubscribed and rejected

due to caps on numbers, the report said.

The resulting increase in visa applications, combined with planned hikes in visa application fees, would result in a 300 percent rise in costs for hiring international staff, the report said.

**■ Practical and doable**

Britain could adopt some of the report's recommendations unilaterally, though some speakers at Monday's launch cautioned that this could dent UK leverage in future trade talks.

The report calls for the British government to make the Tier 2 system more "dynamic" by introducing a "shortage occupation list" that reflects actual shortages being faced, including digital and cyber security skills.

Tim Loughton, a lawmaker on parliament's home affairs committee which scrutinises government immigration policy, said the recommendations were "practical and doable" and could feed into a committee report on post-Brexit

management burden on the government has been under the spotlight in Iran over the past decade.

The law on implementation of the general policies of the Article 44 of Iran's Constitution on privatizing state-owned companies was declared in 2006 in a bid to downsize the government and promote the private sector's role in the national economy.

The government envisioned a large privatization program in the Fifth Five-Year National Development Plan (2010-2015), aiming to privatize about 20 percent of the state-owned firms each year. Under the present interpretation of the Article 44, some state-owned companies have been privatized to reduce their financial burden on the country's budget and also increase their productivity.



May 20.

Since U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal, Iran has received the same protecting messages from other European partners.

In an Iran-Bulgaria Business Forum, which was held in Tehran on May 14, Bulgarian Minister of Economy Emil Karanikolov said his country and Europe are seriously determined to continue their economic cooperation with Iran.

"Iran is a strategic partner for the European Union and Bulgaria, which holds the presidency of the European Union Council. Bulgaria is taking necessary measures to expand economic ties with Iran," the visiting minister said in a meeting with Iranian Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Masoud Karbasian.

Also, Slovenian Ambassador in Tehran Kristina Radej has told Tasnim news agency in a Monday interview that her country and EU are exploring the ways to save their business with Iran.

"We are seeking a way to adapt ourselves to this condition and protect our companies' activities in Iran", she noted.

**■ Green light from other partners**

Iran has also got green light from other countries rather than EU members, for example from its neighbor Turkey which is one of the major trade partners of Iran. Turkish Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekci has said that Turkey has no plans to change its trading relationship with Iran.

Making the remarks in an interview with Turkish television channel CNN Turk the same day of Trump's decision on exiting the nuclear deal, the official said: "Iran is our neighbor. It is a very important trading partner."

Zeybekci made the remarks pointing out the importance of Iran to Turkey's energy supply and the \$20 billion trade balance between the two countries, Platts reported.

U.S. sanctions will definitely affect Iran's economic relations, but receiving all these supportive approaches from its major trade partners the Islamic Republic is strongly determined to tackle all threats.

The country's determination is strengthened by its experiences of the past sanctions and this claim is supported by many officials as Nasrollah Sardashti, the managing director of National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC) that transports Iranian crude, has said: "We have an experience of five-year activity under the sanctions and now relying on our fruitful experiences of those years we have made necessary planning for the possible re-imposition of the sanctions and are ready to operate under any condition."

immigration.

Fallout from Windrush, where immigrants invited to plug labour shortfalls after World War Two were wrongly branded illegal immigrants, showed how inflexible the system is, Loughton said.

As reported by Reuters, the report calls for a new short-term immigration category to allow international staff to work in Britain for up to six months without needing to apply for a visa first, similar to a system already used in Canada.

Anticipating accusations that bankers are asking for a special deal, TheCityUK says many of its recommendations are suitable for other sectors in the economy.

Meanwhile, banks and insurers are already starting to shift some staff and operations to the EU to be guaranteed of serving customer there after Britain's departure from the EU next March. *(Source: Reuters)*

This is the impact the Italian populist government could have on the euro

The resurgence of a populist government in Italy is unlikely to push the euro significantly higher amid concerns the country will be spending more than what its economy generates.

The euro has been on a sketchy patch since the start of the year — becoming stronger against the U.S. dollar, mainly in the first months of 2018, but seeing a reduction in strength against the greenback since late April.

Moves in the exchange rates are significant not only for currency traders, but also for equity and bond markets. This

is because currency fluctuations affect the level of imports and exports — which ultimately impacts companies' performances — and also the level of monetary intervention from central banks.

Analysts have raised concerns that the government accord between the Five Star Movement (5SM) and Lega will cause a fiscal slippage — in a country that has the second highest debt pile across the euro area, at about 130 percent of debt-to-gross domestic product (GDP). As a result, ac-

cording to some currency experts, such worries are unlikely to send the euro higher.

"The Italian headache is going to be with us for a while, and we won't see the euro bounce meaningfully until Italian credit stabilizes," Stephen Gallo, European head of foreign exchange strategy at Bank of Montreal, told CNBC via email. He expected the euro to rise slightly in the coming months to \$1.21 on the back of a lower dollar. *(Source: CNBC)*



# Oil rises as U.S. says trade war with China is ‘on hold’

Oil rose on Monday, lifted by a rally across stocks and other commodities, after the United States said it had put a possible trade war with China “on hold”.

Brent crude futures were up 35 cents at \$78.86 a barrel at 0845 GMT, having hit a high above \$80 last week, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures rose 29 cents to \$71.57 a barrel.

A possible U.S. trade war with China is “on hold” after the world’s largest economies agreed to drop their tariff threats while they work on a wider trade agreement, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Sunday, giving global markets a lift in early trading on Monday.

“That’s the main thing that’s driven oil and equity futures. It does for now, in terms of trade wars, put that risk away,” Petromatrix strategist Olivier Jakob said.

The energy ministers of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates last week voiced concern about recent oil market volatility and plan to meet Russian counterpart Alexander Novak in St Petersburg to continue consultations.

“It’s worth watching St Petersburg at the end of this week, that could provide the key input for the next few weeks,” Jakob said.



Saudi Arabian minister of energy Khalid al-Falih and the UAE’s Suhail al-Mazroui will attend the St Petersburg Economic Forum this week, along with OPEC Secretary General

Mohammad Barkindo and corporate heavyweights Bob Dudley and Ben van Beurden, the chief executives of BP and Royal Dutch Shell, respectively.

BP’s Dudley told Reuters he expected a flood of U.S. shale and a possible reopening of OPEC taps to cool oil markets after crude rose above \$80 a barrel last week.

Dudley said he saw oil prices falling to between \$50 and \$65 a barrel due to surging shale output and OPEC’s capacity to boost production to replace potential falls in Iranian supplies due to sanctions.

Oil prices are within sight of last week’s November 2014 highs, but many traders and analysts say they believe there is enough supply to meet demand despite ongoing production cuts led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), plunging output in crisis-struck Venezuela and looming U.S. sanctions against major oil producer Iran.

“Without a further escalation in geopolitical risk, oil might be due a pullback,” said Greg McKenna, chief market strategist at futures brokerage AxiTrader.

Fund managers cut their holdings of U.S. crude to the lowest level this year, according to the most recent data from the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission on Friday.

(Source: Reuters)

## Oil majors double down on refining

The oil majors are increasingly betting their futures on a mix of downstream enterprises. Refineries, processing, petrochemical facilities and retail gasoline stations are gaining in importance, while upstream spending stalls.

The WSJ reports that BP has plans to open 1,000 retail gasoline stations in Mexico and India over the next three years while ExxonMobil has massive investments tied up in refineries along the Gulf Coast. Other oil majors have similar plans, while also stepping up bets on renewable energy. The IEA estimates that the oil industry will add 7.7 million barrels per day of new refining capacity by 2023.

Refining is in some ways a safer bet than major outlays on upstream exploration. Spending tens or even hundreds of millions on exploring in deepwater could result in dry wells. Pouring that money into downstream ventures has a more certain payoff. Over the long-term, price volatility for crude adds risks to new upstream projects, but solid demand (for a while, at least) makes refining invest-

ments a little safer.

“Upstream at some point was not making money,” Tufan Erginbilgic, head of BP’s refining and retail unit, told the WSJ.

Global upstream spending peaked at \$900 billion in 2014, but the crash in oil prices cut that figure nearly in half by 2016. Spending has only rebounded a bit since then. Rystad Energy estimated that the oil industry would only be spending about \$510 billion in 2018.

Unsurprisingly, that translated into a record low volume of new oil discoveries last year at about 7 billion barrels of oil equivalent. In 2017, the global oil industry only discovered around 580 million barrels of oil equivalent on average each month, or a rate that was about 10 times smaller than it had been five years earlier.

Now, oil prices are at their highest level in years, opening up a lot more room for higher levels of spending. But most oil companies are approaching the upswing with more caution than they might have in previous cycles. Share-

holders are demanding spending restraint, forcing a strategy overhaul for many in the oil industry.

Companies that are returning cash to shareholders, such as Anadarko Petroleum, have been rewarded by Wall Street with higher share prices. On the other hand, companies looking to ramp up spending, such as ExxonMobil, have been beaten down over the past year (although higher oil prices are now boosting the entire industry).

Still, while ExxonMobil has big plans for spending on offshore drilling in Guyana and shale drilling in the Permian, a third plank of its core long-term strategy is downstream and petrochemicals.

The timing is opportune for such downstream investments, particularly along the Gulf Coast. The Permian basin is gushing new supply, which is growing with each passing day. That provides an abundant feedstock for refiners in Texas and Louisiana. The location along the coast also allows for products to be

exported abroad.

Sweetening the pot is the fact that WTI is suffering a steep discount relative to Brent, which fattens margins for refiners. They can buy up cheap WTI crude, process it, and export products that are priced closer to Brent. It all amounts to simple arbitrage.

In addition, there is going to be a need for new refining investment as refiners struggle to process the flood of light sweet oil coming from the Permian. “Our thesis is that the U.S. refining system is close to being maxed-out on the amount of shale oil it can process,” wrote Morgan Stanley equity analysts in April.

ExxonMobil said in March that it would spend billions on several refining upgrades along the Gulf Coast to scale up capacity to process light sweet oil from the shale patch. Overall, Exxon has plans to spend \$9 billion on six refinery projects around the world over the next eight years, investments that the company says will allow downstream earnings to grow by 20 percent. (Source: oilprice.com)

## Oil hit \$80 but OPEC isn’t about to start ramping up production

OPEC is not in a rush to start winding down the production cuts despite oil prices continuing their strong rally, with Brent briefly breaking above \$79 a barrel on Tuesday. The cartel sees the price spike as only a short-term rally driven by geopolitical concerns rather than the fundamentals of a much tighter oil market, OPEC delegates and sources have told Reuters.

Saudi Arabia, OPEC’s largest producer, views the temporary speculator-driven oil price rally as not enough to start raising production, according to an OPEC source familiar with Riyadh’s thinking.

Supply and demand data need to point to an impact on supply in order for OPEC to make a decision to start winding down the cuts, the source told Reuters.

Asked if \$79 oil is too high, one OPEC delegate told Reuters: “Not yet.”

OPEC’s original goal in the production cut pact was to bring oil inventories in developed economies down to their five-year average, and according to the cartel itself, as of March those stocks were just 9 million barrels over that level, and are probably below it by now.

Yet, OPEC—especially Saudi Arabia—is now trying to justify a prolonged period of cuts to tighten the market further, signaling that the five-year average metric would be revised and/or complemented by other data points, such as forward coverage, longer average periods to consider, or even investment in necessary new longer-term supply. (Source: Business Insider)

## India oil minister says considering steps to keep fuel prices in check

India is looking at ways to keep rising fuel prices in check, its oil minister said on Monday, with retail rates for diesel and petrol touching record highs in capital city New Delhi and financial hub Mumbai.

Prices at the pump have surged on the back of rallying international markets for crude oil, which last week hit their strongest since late-2014 amid ongoing production cuts led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

“Various alternatives are being looked at,” Dharmendra Pradhan said in a televised speech, adding that he would “work out something soon”. He did not give details.

Opposition leaders have criticized the government for failing to rein in rising fuel prices, a politically-sensitive issue in one of the world’s biggest economies.

India is particularly at risk from stronger global prices for crude oil as it is the No.3 importer of the commodity, buying about 80 percent of its oil needs.

On Monday, industry lobby group FICCI called for an immediate cut in the excise duty on oil imports. (Source: Reuters)

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AVENGER BANDIT



## Trump is proving to be the most predictable of presidents

By Fred Hiatt

With North Korea and other challenges, President Trump can succeed where others have failed, we are told, because he is so unpredictable.

In fact, he is proving to be the most predictable of presidents. He is predictable because he makes decisions based on instincts and biases, many acquired decades ago. Advisers can delay but not dislodge him from his ruts. He is proving impervious to fact, argument or new learning of any kind.

Since his prejudices are well-known, his decisions should not surprise.



What are these predispositions? Allied nations, and especially Japan, play the United States for a chump. Dictators are strong and decisive and therefore to be admired. Immigrants and people of color are suspect. Wealthy people usually know best, while intellectuals are not to be trusted. Trade deficits are the ultimate sign of national weakness, and manufacturing is the linchpin of any economy. Anything Barack Obama did should be undone.

That canon of gut feelings can explain most of what Trump has done — and predict what he will do.

He is most predictable when his biases push in the same direction, as with the Paris climate accord. It was a multilateral agreement, so probably other nations were taking advantage of the United States. Scientists believed it was important. Obama considered it a signal achievement. In Trump's world, the treaty did not have a chance.

The fact that it did not actually bind the United States to take any actions that Trump would not have wanted to take was not in dispute. The argument that pulling out would leave the United States isolated, dealing a major blow to U.S. leadership, was irrefutable. But the facts and arguments ran counter to Trump's preconceived notions, and so were irrelevant.

The reality-based arguments against withdrawing from the Iran nuclear accord were, if anything, even stronger. For a time, the president's senior advisers and his counterparts in Europe, wielding those arguments, managed to postpone the inevitable.

After all, Iran was honoring the deal; it was working. But staying in only made Trump grumpy, because again his preconceptions pushed the opposite way: It was a multilateral treaty; Obama took pride in it. Now the advisers who pushed against the inevitable are mostly gone, and Trump has pulled the United States out of the accord.

His prejudices in various combinations also can explain: A travel ban aimed at Muslims, though data showed no connection between terrorism in the United States and the countries targeted by the ban. A tax bill primarily benefiting businesses and the very rich, though Trump had campaigned on a promise to help the left-behind. A determination to destroy Obamacare, though it was helping many of those same left-behind voters. Abandonment of the mostly Hispanic "dreamers," despite grand promises to help them, while pining for more immigrants from Norway.

Many people were surprised that Trump pivoted toward talks with North Korea after months of insulting "little rocket man" Kim Jong Un.

In fact, though, he seems to admire Kim — that "pretty smart cookie" — more than he does South Korea's elected leader. Since Obama largely ignored North Korea, under the label of "strategic patience," striking a deal would fit Trump's inclination to be Obama's opposite in all things. Brushing aside the interests of our Japanese allies, if that's what a deal requires, also would mesh with his predilections.

Admittedly, this framework can't predict every decision. Because Trump refuses to release his tax returns or much information about his still-active enterprises, we can't know whether or how much business interests may motivate his official decisions and override his prejudices.

In addition, his gut feelings sometimes work at cross-purposes. He hates the North American Free Trade Agreement because it's a treaty, because he thinks it hurts U.S. manufacturers, because he has always hated NAFTA; on the other hand, a lot of wealthy American business and agricultural executives would be hurt if NAFTA blew up.

And even if Trump's thinking is not much influenced by evidence or experience, he is fenced in by reality in other ways; the courts and Congress and the states get a say, and like most politicians, he wants to be popular, admired and, presumably, reelected. So, for example, his gut instincts (and maybe his business interests, too) push him to be friends with Vladimir Putin, but that has yet to happen.

Still, for a man who ran for office saying, "We have to be unpredictable," Trump is proving not so hard to read. Look at whatever he has believed since the 1980s; ignore any evidence that has emerged since; and you can make a fairly educated guess where he will end up.

(Source: The Washington Post)

# Israel's new African friends will pay a price for this betrayal

There are now 15 African countries with permanent embassies in Israel, with four African embassies having opened up in Israel in the last three years alone

By Azad Essa

The split-screen juxtaposition had most of us trembling with anger. On the left, here was Ivanka Trump, the U.S. president's daughter, beaming at the inauguration plaque outside the new U.S. embassy in Jerusalem. On the right, Palestinians in Gaza were being pulled from the carnage of a bloodbath. At last count, at least 60 Palestinians were massacred. Another 2,700 injured by bullets and tear gas fumes. Gaza remains in trauma.

### ■ Without consequence

And while the usual tropes of Hamas involvement in inciting the protest movement have been spilling from American and Israeli mouthpieces - be they politicians, commentators or columnists - last week's devastating events left even the most neutral of observers stunned. How was it possible, in the 21st century, that such an atrocity could play out without consequence?

Multiple cameras, a soiree of international journalists and endless streams of social media had a massacre rolling in real time on our smartphones. Here we were: disoriented, helpless and useless.

While the imagery has left a powerful story about the indignity faced by Palestinians, and the impunity of Israeli aggression, the larger mainstream media, state and think tank machinery will find some reason or another to protect the perpetrators.

At the very least, each of the countries present at the U.S. embassy inauguration are complicit in the murders of Palestinians since 30 March. The events of this past week did not happen in a vacuum; the countries that attended knew what was coming. Altogether, 22 countries attended the opening ceremony.

With Myanmar, the Czech Republic and the Philippines also in attendance, Israel had essentially assembled an all-star cast of right-wing fascists at the event. But there were also 11 African countries at the opening of the embassy.

### ■ Israel's closest partners

Tanzania, Angola, Cameroon, Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Rwanda and Zambia all made the trip to Jerusalem to serenade the launch of the new embassy. For some, the attendance register came as quite a shock. For others, it was merely the returns for the efforts Israel has put into cultivating its relationships with Africans countries.

"It wasn't surprising that most of the countries were from East Africa, these are Israel's closest partners and where Israeli



## At the very least, each of the countries present at the U.S. embassy inauguration are complicit in the murders of Palestinians since 30 March.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has put into place his charm offensive," said Oumar Ba, an assistant professor of political science at Morehouse College in Atlanta.

But it wasn't long after the murders in Gaza that the African Union, of which these 11 countries are members, issued a statement condemning Israeli aggression. Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, "strongly condemns the disproportionate use of force by the Israeli army."

Mahamat also said the embassy's move can only "complicate the search for a lasting solution" and "reiterate[d] the solidarity of the African Union with the Palestinian people in their legitimate quest for an independent and sovereign state with East Jerusalem as its capital."

Mahamat is quite correct. The opening of the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem and the killings in Gaza are two ends of the same act. Both are a form of ethnic cleansing, a calculated attempt at elimination. Surely the African nations in attendance know that they cannot endorse one crime and condemn the other - all in the same breath?

But it seems they can.

It turns out that Israel is not in the least bothered by the diplomatic schizophrenia exhibited by its partners. Given Donald Trump's warning that aid will be cut to those nations who do not align with U.S. foreign policy, some countries, like Tanzania, may

have attended the embassy opening just to keep on the right side of American aid.

Israel has always found solace in building bilateral relations, establishing partnerships and sharing intelligence, over international public validation. A case in point: following the massacre on May 14, the South African government recalled its ambassador from Tel Aviv. A noble act it might be said, but South Africa and Israel enjoy an important strategic relationship which is unlikely to end overnight.

Israel is well aware that South Africa's pulling of its ambassador for the moment is a distraction from the real question: given everything that we know about apartheid Israel, why does South Africa still have an embassy in Tel Aviv in the first place?

### ■ Significant headway

Most African nations shunned Israel (publicly at least) for at least two decades following the Arab-Israeli war of 1973. However, Israel has, over the past decade in particular, managed to make significant headway among some African governments. With Persian Gulf countries, in particular Saudi Arabia and the UAE, now growing closer to Israel, some African governments are a lot more comfortable going public with their burgeoning relations too.

Israelis have also come bearing gifts: offering technological prowess, military training, riot and crowd control expertise, arms and

## Bashir is playing a dangerous game

The attempt of the Sudanese president to engage with rival regional interests in a bid to stay in power might fail

By Ahmed H Adam

Sudan's political crisis is sliding into a dangerous phase. Its economy is on the verge of collapse. The price of food and other basic commodities is rising by the day, worsening living conditions for ordinary Sudanese and stirring growing discontent in the country.

The economic problems are compounded by a severe fuel crisis that has nearly paralyzed the country and which the government is unable to solve. Some high-ranking officials have admitted that Sudan is virtually bankrupt. Many believe that, if the economic crisis continues on such a scale, the country will implode.

Amid this impending disaster, President Omar al-Bashir continues to insist on running again in the 2020 presidential elections, worried about his two arrest warrants from the International Criminal Court (ICC).

To ensure the survival of his presidency, he has been playing a complex foreign policy game, balancing between different regional interests and rivalries. There are indications, however, that pressure on him to choose sides is increasing, and his balancing act might fail.

### ■ Seeking a U.S. approval, playing the economic card

In October 2017, the U.S. lifted most of the economic sanctions that had been imposed on Sudan for nearly two decades. Sudan has been designated a state sponsor of "terrorism" since 1997.

Next month, Sudan and the U.S. will start the next phase of the five-track engagement plan that involves negotiations over the removal of Sudan from the U.S. list of state sponsors of "terrorism". Khartoum is hoping to get rid of the remaining U.S. sanctions, including the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act of 2006, as a prelude to seeking debt relief and fully normalizing relations with the U.S.

The European Union is also accelerating its rapprochement with the Sudanese regime. Sudan has received millions of euros from the EU to curb migration from Africa to Europe.

Nevertheless, al-Bashir appears to be very suspicious of U.S. intentions. Last year, reports circulated that the U.S. had sent a message to al-Bashir telling him not to run in the 2020 elections - something the Sudanese foreign ministry denied.

Al-Bashir was incensed when then-U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan did not meet him during his visit to Khartoum in mid-November 2017. Al-Bashir suspects that there is a clique within his regime that has reached an understanding with the U.S. regarding his future in power.

Consequently, he has taken steps to dismantle this so-called "U.S. clique" by removing his foreign minister, Ibrahim Ghandour, the director-general of the National Intelligence and Security, Mohamed Atta, and Army Chief of Staff, General Emad al-Din Adawi from their respective roles.

Al-Bashir has also recently replaced many senior officials



## The European Union is also accelerating its rapprochement with the Sudanese regime. Sudan has received millions of euros from the EU to curb migration from Africa to Europe.

in the ruling National Congress Party and has just reshuffled his cabinet to further consolidate his power before the 2020 elections.

Hoping to attract some attention in Washington, al-Bashir decided to pay a visit to Russia in December 2017. During his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, he expressed support for Russia's position in the Middle East, particularly in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, and denounced "U.S. interference" in the region.

Al-Bashir even asked Putin for protection against U.S. aggression and invited Russia to establish a military base on the Red Sea. His remarks, which came just weeks after the lifting of U.S. sanctions, were widely seen as a message of defiance to Washington.

At the regional level, Bashir is trying to manage a delicate balance in relations with competing regional players. When Turkish President Erdogan visited Sudan in January, he and Bashir signed more than a dozen agreements to boost bilateral economic ties, including a deal to lease the Red Sea island of Suakin to Turkey.

Ankara and Khartoum agreed that Turkish investors would rebuild Suakin's historical sites, develop the island as a tourist attraction and create a transit point for Muslim pilgrims crossing the Red Sea to reach the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

In March, Sudan signed a further \$4bn deal with Qatar

agricultural programs.

"There has been a push from Israelis to cultivate close relations with all these states, because right now, their traditional allies are speaking out against some Israeli policies, and Africa remains the place where they can still get some support and they need all the support they can get. Israel would go anywhere right now to find friends," Ba says.

In 2017, Togo was supposed to host the first Africa-Israel summit. It was postponed because of internal political strife in Togo, though some Palestinian activists claimed the decision came out of their efforts to deter African countries from attending.

But as evidenced by the events last week, the Israeli charm offensive on the continent is working.

There are now 15 African countries with permanent embassies in Israel, with four African embassies having opened up in Israel in the last three years alone.

### ■ Betraying the Palestinians

For the inauguration of the U.S. embassy, Tanzania sent its foreign minister, Augustine Philip Mahiga, the highest ranking official to visit Israel from that country.

Even African countries with sizeable Muslim populations, like Senegal, who might not have attended the opening of the embassy, their ties with Israel are still as close as they have ever been. In this case not attending the ceremony was a matter of prudence, given the possibility of a public backlash.

It's not as if the leaders of the African nations who travelled to Jerusalem aren't aware of Israel's occupation, and the tyranny it wields over Gaza. It is not as if these leaders are not aware of the 300 Palestinian children held in Israeli prisons or the obnoxious and dehumanizing treatment of African refugees living in Israel.

Until the end of April, the Israeli government was planning a mass deportation, to their partners Rwanda and Uganda; African leaders said little disparaging about the prospect.

Betraying the Palestinian people is neither new nor unique. It has become for all intents and purposes the standard. But the decision to attend, acknowledge and respect the illegal annexation of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel should set off the alarm bells over the character of these African states.

These are not governments interested in rule of law, international consensus or pluralistic democracy. And make no mistake, Israeli assistance will come at a high price; by betraying the Palestinians, these governments betray themselves.

(Source: The Middle East Eye)

to develop Suakin as Sudan's second biggest port on the Red Sea. Qatar's investment in Sudan already amounts to more than \$2bn and expected to rise in the near future.

These deals have sparked speculation about a potentially significant shift in Sudan's regional alliances. Al-Bashir's moves to bring Qatar and Turkey to the Red Sea are no doubt viewed with concern by the axis of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and others who accuse both Qatar and Turkey of sponsoring the Muslim Brotherhood.

Al-Bashir had previously sought to win over Saudi Arabia and the UAE for financial and diplomatic gains by moving quickly to sever diplomatic ties with Iran in early 2016 and sending thousands of Sudanese soldiers to fight with the Saudi-led coalition against the Houthis in Yemen.

When the Persian Gulf crisis broke out last year, Bashir tried to stay neutral, deciding not to back the Saudi-led blockade against Qatar. However, earlier this month, media reports circulated in Sudan that Saudi Arabia and the UAE had presented al-Bashir with a set of tough conditions for continuing their financial and diplomatic support, including severing ties with Turkey and Qatar. The government was quick to deny these rumors, saying that "no party is applying pressure on the government".

However, there have been other signs of tensions. On May 2, Sudan's defense minister told parliament that the government was re-evaluating its role in the war in Yemen, with a decision on Sudan's continued participation expected soon. There are reports that hundreds of Sudanese soldiers have died and thousands have been wounded in Yemen.

Khartoum's continued participation in the Yemeni war has been questioned by members of the Sudanese parliament, as well as pro-government newspapers and writers. There has also been growing criticism of Saudi Arabia and the UAE for not helping Sudan to resolve its acute fuel shortage.

Comparisons have been drawn with the substantial financial support given to Egypt by the two Persian Gulf countries despite the fact that Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has not sent troops to fight in Yemen.

Despite these criticisms, it is possible that the talk of withdrawal from Yemen is not genuine and is meant to pressure Saudi Arabia and the UAE into helping Sudan to resolve its economic crisis. Hence, Sudan is expected to keep its troops in Yemen for the time being to ensure continued leverage.

Whatever the case, it seems that al-Bashir's ability to play rival regional and international actors off against each other is diminishing, as some key players are telling Sudan "you are either with us or against us".

In the end, his tactics of manipulating competing regional and international alliances are actually damaging to Sudan's national interests. They are turning the country into a battlefield for rival powers.

(Source: Al Jazeera)



# European countries can save JCPOA: professor

**1 →** Domestically, U.S. Secretary of Defence James Mattis said that Iran had been abiding by the agreement. The former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had been a supporter of the deal. Even the new hard-line Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in his Senate hearing admitted that Iran had not violated the deal. Many officials in the U.S. national security establishment, and the vast majority of nuclear scientists and policy experts have also supported the deal. It is remarkable that despite extensive hostile propaganda, according to a recent poll the majority of Americans also support the deal.

■ What are President Trump's main objections to the deal?

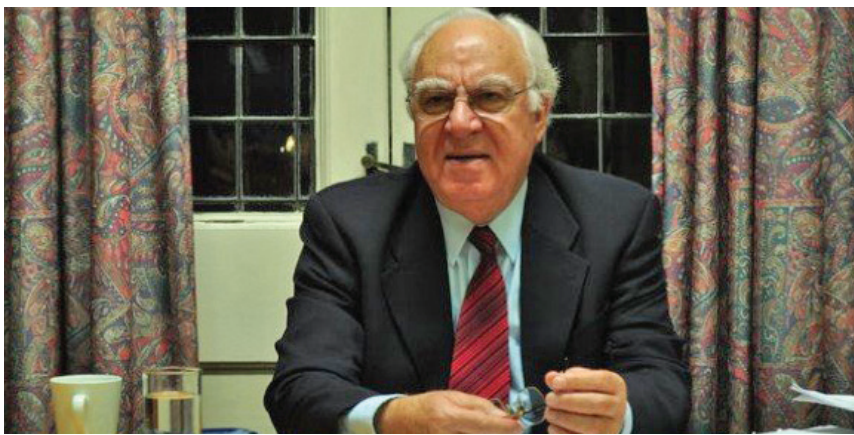
A: In the statement that he made while rescinding the agreement, he made a number of charges, which upon close examination seem very weak, and indeed mainly incorrect.

He accused Iran of having violated the deal, while the IAEA that is in charge of monitoring the deal has, on eleven separate occasions, certified that Iran has fully complied with the terms of the deal.

He said that IAEA inspectors were barred from visiting some sites. This is not true, because the IAEA has the right to inspect any suspicious sites, and has done so on many occasions.

He said that the so-called «sunset clauses» meant that Iran could rush to make a bomb after they expire. This is not true. Iran has been a member of the NPT and has also joined the «Additional Protocol», which requires continuous, unannounced inspections of all her nuclear sites, and she has also given an undertaking never to produce nuclear weapons. The prohibitions do not stop at the end of the «sunset clauses», but as an NPT member Iran is allowed to have a nuclear program for peaceful purposes, including the full range of enrichment cycle. President Trump accused Iran of building intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons. Iran does not have intercontinental ballistic missiles as it has limited the range of her missiles to 2,000 kilometres. They are not designed to carry nuclear weapons, and in any case Iran does not have nuclear warheads.

He said that Iran was spreading terrorism in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, etc. Iran has been fighting against ISIS and other terrorists in Iraq and Syria at the invitation of the governments of those countries. All experts agree that the mantra of «Iran-backed Houthis» is exagger-



ated propaganda, as Iran's contacts with the Houthis and influence over them is minimal. It is Saudi Arabia and members of her coalition who, with American support, have been bombing Yemen, killing and wounding tens of thousands of innocent people and creating the world's greatest humanitarian catastrophe there.

He accused Iran of supporting Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Iran was fighting against them and helped the United States to defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia and the UAE were the two countries that helped create the Taliban and were the only countries in the region to recognize it, apart from Pakistan.

So, most of his objections to the JCPOA are spurious.

■ What are the consequences of U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, and how does it affect other signatories to the deal?

A: The JCPOA was not a unilateral deal between the United States and Iran, and the whole deal does not collapse due to U.S. withdrawal, so long as other signatories to the deal continue to honour their commitments. Those who drew up the JCPOA did a very good job to give it international backing. It received the unanimous endorsement of the UN Security Council with Resolution 2231, which has given it the force of international law, and therefore its violation is a violation of international law. It also received the unanimous support of the IAEA's board of governors, and the endorsement of the European Union.

Therefore, U.S. withdrawal puts heavy responsibilities on the shoulders of other signatories. According to the EU, as well as Russia and

China, adherence to the deal is not just an issue of economic benefit, but they maintain that it is the most comprehensive non-proliferation agreement whose repudiation can have a very negative effect on other similar cases.

The withdrawal from the deal has been a slap in the face for European leaders who came to Washington to persuade Trump not to withdraw from the deal. It undermines international law and replaces it with the law of the jungle at a critical time in world history, when the role played by international organizations, such as the Security Council and the IAEA, is more crucial than ever before.

■ Will other countries dare oppose the United States?

A: In addition to strong statements by Russia and China about their adherence to the deal, we have seen an unprecedented rift developing between the United States and her closest European allies. The British, German and French leaders issued a joint statement saying that they would honour the deal. After meeting with Foreign Minister Zarif, the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini said that EU trade with Iran would continue to grow. She announced a nine-point plan to ensure the continuation of Iran's oil and gas sales and access to international finance. She said the work would cover: The continued sale of Iran's oil and gas products effective banking transactions with Iran continued sea, land, air and rail transportation relations new EU investments in Iran financial banking, insurance and trade a blocking mechanism aimed at nullifying U.S. sanctions on EU firms EU President Donald

Tusk condemned the Trump administration in the harshest terms, and said that Washington could no longer be relied upon. At the start of an EU summit in Bulgaria, he offered a withering condemnation of Trump's White House. He said: «We are witnessing today a new phenomenon: the capricious assertiveness of the American administration. Looking at the latest decisions of President Trump, some could even think, 'With friends like that, who needs enemies?'» He continued: «I have no doubt that in the new global game, Europe will either be one of the major players, or a pawn.» He added: «The deal is good for European and global security, which is why we must maintain it.»

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said: «As the European Commission, we have the duty to protect European companies. We now need to act and this is why we are launching the process to activate the 'blocking statute' from 1996.»

This degree of blunt criticism of the U.S. decision is unprecedented and very damaging for U.S.-EU relations.

■ How should Iran respond to U.S. withdrawal from the deal and what should be Iran's redlines?

A: I believe that Iran's best option would be to stay in the deal and to persuade other signatories to the deal to honour their commitments. It seems that there is a momentum for other countries staying in the deal.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel met with President Putin and both leaders stressed the importance of continuing with the deal. The French president said that Europe would attempt to protect companies from U.S. sanctions. It seems that a combination of legal, financial and political steps by European countries could allow them to extend Iran the benefits of the deal.

Iran signed the deal to prove to the world that she was not trying to acquire nuclear weapons in return for economic benefits. So far, crippling UN sanctions have been lifted, Iranian oil sales have reached the pre-sanctions levels, and Iran has resumed economic contacts with the rest of the world. So long as Iran enjoys these benefits, there will be no reason for her to leave the deal. Meanwhile, she should try to strengthen relations with allies and reduce causes of friction with her opponents. A clear declaration of peaceful policies by Iran would reassure the rest of the world to remain in the deal.

## For U.S. and Saudi, Yemen war is a luxury they can afford

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Yemen is still suffering under the U.S.-backed, Saudi-led war of aggression and deceit, and the world community is not doing anything about it.

With the illegal war in its fourth year, Yemen's economy is on the verge of collapse, infectious disease is rampant, and the Saudi-led invading forces pose an existential threat to the country. The regime-change war has left Yemen in what some are calling the world's «largest humanitarian crisis to date.»

To put this situation into further perspective, consider that Yemen has a population of 27 million people. Approximately 18.8 million - 69 percent of the country's population - is in need of immediate humanitarian assistance. The illegal blockade, airstrikes, instability, war, security threats, and a lack of basic infrastructure have prevented aid organizations from helping. To make matters worse, just like Saudi Arabia, the United States has no interest in helping to mitigate this humanitarian crisis. Quite the opposite, it prevents a political settlement to end the war - even though this could negatively affect regional stability and be disastrous for U.S. interests.

And no, the fighting between the Houthi Ansarullah and the Saudi-led forces is not symbolic of a much larger struggle between Iran and Saudi Arabia. There are no Iranian forces there to undermine Saudi influence in the Arab world and increase Tehran's own. It's a myth that feeds the Irano-phobia flames and misreads the events in the country and

throughout the region.

Yemen's only sin is that it has geo-strategic importance. The country borders two U.S. allies and sits at the convergence point of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, overlooking the Bab el Mandab Strait - a key trade route, particularly for oil. A daily 4.7 million barrels of oil are transported through that strait. At its most narrow point, the Bab el Mandab is only 18 miles wide, meaning that ships must pass closely together, usually only two at a time. Serious disruptions of this route could constrict the flow of Persian Gulf oil to Europe and the western hemisphere and raise world oil prices.

The Saudis claim as the war continues and Iranian influence grows, Tehran may seek to expand its leverage by escalating the potential threat to ships passing through the waterways. Again, this is rubbish. It is the Saudi-led war that has been devastating for Yemen's civilians and regional stability. Iran has always been trying to encourage a political settlement. It is Saudi Arabia and the United States who are not willing to see it into fruition. To prove the claim, it would be enough to note that the Gulf of Aden was an insecure waterway and ships came under attack by the Somali pirates on a daily basis. But since Iran's naval forces deployed in there, they have secured voyage not just for Iranian vessels, but also for all cargo ships and oil tankers of the world countries. A major part of the several thousand anti-piracy missions conducted by the Iranian Navy has been for the rescue of

foreign ships. In one of such cases, they rescued a Chinese vessel that later brought Beijing's official appreciation and admiration for the brave mission.

Any settlement will be impossible until Saudis stop stoking the fire with their indiscriminate airstrikes. Without a solution to end the airstrikes, Yemen's humanitarian crisis will only get worse. It gets worse. With the U.S. military already fueling Saudi jets, the White House is escalating the conflict, from sending troops to the border regions to further intelligence sharing and direct U.S. military intervention in the war. The United Nations can stop the U.S. from fueling the bloodshed. But it is doing nothing even though there's an American imprint on every civilian life lost there.

This conflict is not complex and multi-faceted. On the surface, it is a power struggle among the political elite, but it is in fact driven by long-term American-Israeli-Saudi designs for the region at the expense and marginalization of the majority of the Yemeni population. Their gambit to control the region has helped fuel the ongoing war, and must be addressed to bring lasting peace.

More than three years of UN-led negotiations to end Yemen's war have failed. This failure is a result of American-Saudi dominated process at the Human Rights Council unwilling to take responsibility for the bloodshed and stop the conflict. Peace talks have failed because the U.S. insists they should also include negotiations on the division of Yemen.

It was a campaign promise. Given his base, he wants to do what he said he would do no matter if it hurts or helps the U.S.

The Israeli lobby in the U.S. and Israel see Iran, not Arabs, as the threat to Israel's future. They have been joined by Mohammad bin Salman. With Trump sympathetic to their cause, they have pulled out all the stops to isolate Iran and engineer regime change.

Trump and Jared Kushner have signed on the Saudi agenda to overthrow the regime in Tehran. Why? I think that they have been led to believe that they would receive significant future financial rewards if they did Saudi Arabia's bidding.

■ Finally, what advice do you have for Iran?

A: Iran must be realistic. They need the other signatories to make the declaration I have stated above. But Iran must also stop making enemies for no reason. There is no benefit for Iran to burn the U.S. flag. It does not serve Iran's interest. Iran must say little but make its demands crystal clear to the other signatories and tell them if they do not deliver, the inspectors will be expelled immediately. If they do not deliver, Iran should 'quietly' expel the IAEA. There is no need to have demonstrations and shouts against the U.S. Iran should also prepare for U.S., Israeli and Saudi aerial attacks. Even if Trump does not initiate an attack, Saudi Arabia, the UAE or Israel may instigate a conflict in order to get the U.S. involved. We live in dangerous times.

## Trump's deceiving Macron once again



By Marzieh Salehi

**TEHRAN** — While the Islamic Republic of Iran and the European troika held talks on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and how to provide solid assurances by the European Union to maintain the nuclear deal, French President Emanuel Macron once again raised the issue of «changing the JCPOA». This position, in the midst of the talks between Iran and the European troika, indicates the purposeful plan that Macron has in mind in confrontation with Iran. Obviously the navigator of this game shouldn't be sought inside Europe. A simple decoding of the French President recent statements suggests that once again, the «two sides of the Atlantic» are cooperating to stand against Iran.

Emmanuel Macron, made remarkable speeches in opposition to the Islamic Republic of Iran after his recent meeting with his German and English counterparts. These remarks were reflected in the European media and news sources.

In his remarks, Macron has pointed out that France is trying to move all parties to negotiate for reaching a broader deal, something that according to the French President will be inevitable. He mentioned «defending peace» and establishing stability in the region as his main priority. He said that Europe has been united about Iran since the beginning, and that they have only one will, which includes establishing peace and stability in the Middle East. «I defended this position at the United Nations General Assembly in last September. The 2015 nuclear deal is a very important element for creating balance, and that's why we support it. We will work collectively on a broader framework, covering nuclear activity, the post-2025 period, ballistic activity, and stability in the Middle-East, notably Syria, Yemen, and Iraq,» he added.

The fact is, about 48 hours after the official announcement of the US withdrawal from the nuclear deal, secret talks have started between the White House and European officials (notably the three countries of Germany, Britain and France). US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the White House is holding talks with European authorities on the fate of the JCPOA (after the US withdrawal). Other news sources inside the United States have also said that talks between American and European officials have continued over the past few days. One may think that in these negotiations, the main concern of Europeans was to persuade the United States not to impose sanctions on European companies and enterprises which are going to have business relations with Iran. But this is not true.

Macron's remarks clearly show that the European authorities are highly concerned on the «expansion of the nuclear accord», and «change of the JCPOA». In this equation, Emmanuel Macron once again plays a pioneering role. It should not be forgotten that it was Macron who for the first time mentioned the issue of negotiating with Iran over limiting and controlling Iran's missile capabilities, and continuing Iran's nuclear restrictions (after 2025). Macron promised Trump and Netanyahu to include all their demands, terms and conditions in the nuclear deal, and thus turn it to an agreement which perfectly favors Washington and Tel Aviv.

It should be admitted that Macron did his best in this regard. He even urged German Chancellor Angela Merkel to accompany Paris and London along the way. But the results of Macron's play on Trump's ground wasn't what the young and inexperienced president of France expected.

The objections made by the President of the French National Front, «Marine Le Pen on Emmanuel Macron's approach towards the JCPOA were truly important. Le Pen has correctly accused Macron of strengthening Trump's illusions on changing the JCPOA. The President of the French National Front said:

«I resolutely condemn the position of Donald Trump and also that of the French diplomacy which, in its attempts to be even more neo-Conservative than [US national security adviser] John Bolton, has found itself without US patronage and no alternative way to go, ... He [Macron] finally refused to go to Tehran to defend the national interests [of France] and to listen to the position of the regime. He was only interested in the American-Israeli-Saudi axis.»

Le Pen's remarks shows well that Macron is to blame for strengthening Trump's illusions on changing the nuclear deal. However, Macron eventually realized that the US President had already made his decision to walk out of the JCPOA, and Trump's secret or open consultations with him were only in the direction of «deceiving Europe».

Now once again, the French President is taking positions under the influence of Trump, Mike Pompeo and John Bolton, and on behalf of US government (which is no longer part of the nuclear deal), plans to change the JCPOA, and impose broader restrictions on our country.

These positions show that White House officials and the US State Department continue to count on Emmanuel Macron to advance their plans against Iran, and the French President continues to play on the White House ground with closed eyes. This time, Trump and Pompeo have made certain promises to the Macron, which, of course, is not going to be fulfilled. One of those promises is about the upcoming «tariffs on the imported steel and aluminum» from Europe. No doubt, this time Macron will pay heavy expenses for playing on the US ground, expenses that will be even higher and heavier than those of previous times.

**1 →** If I am right, Iranian negotiators must get an answer to my question and if the answer is that the others will not sanction U.S. banks and firms in retaliation, then Iran should immediately set about planning for the abrogation of JCPOA and make its preparations. There would be no time to waste.

■ In a tactful reaction to Trump's Betrayal of Nuclear Deal, Iran said the survival of JCPOA highly depends on firm European guarantees. Since the EU's leverage is not strong enough to bring the U.S. back to reason, shall Iran count on their guarantees?

A: I am sorry to disagree with this Iranian position. It may be tactful but what does it mean? Guarantees of what? The only guarantee that matters is for the other signatories to announce to the U.S. and the world that they would impose sanctions on U.S. entities IF the U.S. imposes secondary sanctions on non-U.S. institutions doing business with Iran.

I believe if this was said, the U.S. would have little choice but to back down on its threat. For if the U.S. did not do this in the face of such a declaration by the other signatories, it would plunge the world into a trade war that no one wants. It is a poker game! Are the other signatories willing to play it to save the JCPOA? If they don't, then Iran would get no significant sanction relief.

■ Will EU dare to invest or have economic engagement with Iran in a situation where the U.S. nuclear related sanctions are back again



and the foreign companies face U.S. penalties?

A: I think I have answered this. The answer is an absolute no. Financial and non-financial institutions would be scared to be cut out of the U.S. market and be exposed to heavy fines. They would want to know that the other signatories would retaliate against U.S. entities. This would give them added assurance that the U.S. would in all likelihood back down.

■ Returning which kind of the sanctions are red line for Iran that will danger its national interest?

A: There are two red lines. Any and all U.S. secondary sanctions is the principal red line. But there is also a secondary red line that deals with the U.S. cutting off Iranian financial institutions

from the dollar market and SWIFT. The other signatories could accommodate Iran in Euro and Sterling denominated transactions. But Iran needs this access and accommodation if the U.S. cuts Iran off the dollar market. Unlike its earlier negotiations in the JCPOA, Iran would be well served to have an expert on economic sanctions and international financial transactions on its team. The Iranian delegation has been weak on this account.

■ Why did Trump pull out of the agreement?

A: I don't think that it was one thing but a combination of many reasons. Let me just list them.

He wants to undo everything that Obama did—as if Obama was never President!



# Enough is enough

By Charles M. Blow

The school shooting has become an American motif, a previously unthinkable option for the odd, the alienated and the spurned, a way to find voice through violence.

We had yet another one last week in Santa Fe, Texas, where a student killed 10 people and injured 13 others. After the shooting, Paige Curry, a student at the school, offered a chilling assessment of our current predication.

A television news reporter asked: "Was there a part of you that was like, 'This isn't real, this would not happen at my school?'"

Paige responded, shaking her head, an uncomfortable, reflexive smile on her face that mocked the naïveté of the question: "No, there wasn't."

The reporter pressed: "Why so?"

Paige continued: "It's been happening everywhere. I've always kind of felt like eventually it was going to happen here, too."

Schools across the country are preparing for this morbid eventuality. According to a 2015-16

Crime and Safety Survey by the National Center for Education Statistics, 92 percent of public schools have a written plan describing procedures to be performed in the event of a shooter.

"Since Columbine, 32 states have passed laws requiring schools to conduct lockdown drills or some form of emergency drill to keep students safe from intruders. Some states went even further after 20 children died in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012. Now, six states require specific 'active shooter' drills each year."

## ■ This is all insanity

These preparations — sheltering in place, ducking for cover, running for your life — have become a routine part of our children's educational experience. This is not normal and must never be accepted as such. Neither are these shootings normal. This is all insanity.

We have too many guns in this country, including too many based on combat weapons, and as a result we have too many shootings and deaths. Many of us know this. We also know that leg-

islators in Washington, as well as Donald Trump himself, are so beholden to the National Rifle Association that little to nothing will be done to stem the real problem: Guns and their availability.

Instead, politicians talk about tangential issues like the mentally ill, the "hardening" of soft targets like schools, and putting even more guns in people's hands, like the lunacy of arming teachers.

A main facet of Trump's campaign was the condemnation of violence in Chicago and what that said about the culture there.

As The Washington Post pointed out, Trump promised in his inauguration speech to end this "American carnage," but "gun deaths are up over 12 percent year-over-year. Firearm injuries are up nearly 8 percent. The number of children under the age of 12 shot by a gun has increased by 16 percent, while instances of defensive gun use are up nearly 30 percent."

Yes, gun violence is actually on the rise.

As Time magazine pointed out in November, "Firearm-related deaths rose for the second-straight

year in 2016." The magazine continued:

"In 2016, there were more than 38,000 gun-related deaths in the U.S. — 4,000 more than 2015, the new CDC report on preliminary mortality data shows. Most gun-related deaths — about two-thirds — in America are suicides, but an Associated Press analysis of FBI data shows there were about 11,000 gun-related homicides in 2016, up from 9,600 in 2015. The increase in gun-related deaths follows a nearly 15-year period of relative stasis."

Furthermore, according to an April FBI report: "The FBI has designated 50 shootings in 2016 and 2017 as active shooter incidents. Twenty incidents occurred in 2016, while 30 incidents occurred in 2017." The state with the largest number of those shooters — six — was, you guessed it, Texas.

## ■ The gun issue still unaddressed

But as politicians in Washington have made clear that they have no desire to address this issue, no desire to stand up to the NRA, no desire to stop treating these deaths as collateral damage, those seeking change must change tactics.

People seeking common sense gun control must become single-issue voters on gun control. Support for more restrictions may not be the only reason to vote for a candidate, but it must be sufficient to vote against one.

We have to stop waiting for politicians to display courage and instead start to instill fear in them.

As an individual voter, you don't need to have a slate of reforms in mind, you only have to vote consistently for candidates who are committed to reviewing the issue and advancing smart, effective policy.

This is now about the long game. The NRA didn't amass its clout overnight, and the building of a contingent of politicians committed to gun control also won't come overnight. But it can, and indeed must, be done.

Students like Paige shouldn't simply assume that one day a fellow student will show up with a gun and an appetite for death, and that there is nothing Washington is willing to do to prevent it. Enough is enough!

(Source: [www.wral.com](http://www.wral.com))

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## Role of museums in improving efficiency of historical buildings

By Parham Janfeshan

The International Museum Day, May 18, is an important event and a reminder of the 5th statement of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) general assembly, approved on May 28, 1977 in Moscow.

This year, the International Museum Day is concurrent with unprecedented Louvre exhibit in the National Museum of Iran in collaboration with the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization.



Parham Janfeshan in an undated photo

Given the popularity of the museum among Iranians, this date can be a turning point in interactions between Iranian and foreign parties in booming the industry in Iran.

On the other hand, on such an important day, the unique capacity of historical monuments in deepening and extending the culture of museum-going and museum management must be taken into consideration with greater diligence.

Nowadays, local and domestic museums, depicting some brilliant parts of Iran's history and culture, are developing in revived historical buildings. No one can ignore the bond between historical buildings and the old pieces of history. These historical buildings, as ancient bodies, enclose a collection of invaluable pieces from the past, which can create an attractive convergence for domestic as well as foreign tourists. When the attraction of a piece of historic value is echoed in the popular framework of these intra-generation valuable heritages, the stream of life – as the main factor in preserving and reviving the historic buildings – flows inside the veins of these monuments.

In this regard, increasing the interaction of the cultural body of local societies (and more generally, collectors and museum-holders) and historical building beneficiaries in order to open local museums can be a medium-term and long-term strategy for developing museums inside historical buildings. In the current status of Iran, this strategy can help the tourism industry and lead to employment, cultural and economic mobility, human-oriented development, and preserve and introduce valuable social and cultural components.

In reviving historical buildings, museums can be important index for increasing practical aspects of the mentioned buildings. On the one hand, this can preserve the dignity of historical buildings, without imposing any damage to them, on the other hand, provides the background for familiarizing the tourists with the cultural properties of different parts of Iran.

So, the Revival Fund, which is legally responsible for defining the function of historical buildings, embraces such approaches and tries to develop the aforementioned interactions and is ready for providing the required infrastructures (just as what has been implemented in some historical buildings such as Mostofi House in Shushtar, southwestern Iran.)

We hope that this effective bond between historical buildings and local museums will preserve the valuable heritages against the fast track of the recent changes resulted from unsustainable and one-dimensional definitions of development, and help to introduce the rich culture of the people of this ancient land to the world. (Parham Janfeshan is the CEO of the CHHTO Revival Fund for Cultural and Historic Sites)

## 38 historical relics seized in Ardebil



**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — Iranian authorities have recently confiscated 38 historical objects from smugglers in Meshgin Shahr, northwestern Ardebil province.

The objects have been assessed to date from Parthian epoch (247 BC–224 CE) and the Islamic era, the report said, CHTN reported.

## Handcrafted leatherwear on display at CHHTO

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — A patchwork of handcrafted leatherwear has been put on show at the headquarters of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization in Tehran.

Iranian artisan Reza Dabir, who endeavors to revive traditional embossing on leather, has crafted the collection that includes wallets, purses and shoes, CHTN reported on Monday.

“All products are made of natural cow leather and hammer-stamped so that their prices depend on their production time and material,” Dabir said.

# Portuguese fort soaked in silence, history



people visit the centuries-old ruins of a Portuguese sea fort on Hormuz Island, southern Iran.

**HERITAGE** **d e s k** For visitors to a medieval sea fort on Hormuz Island it is not hard to vividly imagine the hustle and bustle of Portuguese military forces who once occupied the southern Iranian island in the early 16th and early 17th centuries.

A mostly barren and hilly island, Hormuz is situated some eight kilometers off the coast on the Strait of Hormuz.

The island remained occupied by the Portuguese from 1514 to 1622 when it was recaptured by joint Anglo-Persian forces.

Thick and muscular-looking walls, chambers and archways as well as sets of rusting cannons scatter across a courtyard still give the area a scenic beauty due to the fact that much of the original structure has crumbled into the sea over the past centuries.

A subterranean church featuring vaulted ceilings, a watchtower, and a submerged cistern are amongst other attractions of the site.

Crumbling upper levels of site also offers wonderful views of the island, its villages and its rugged mountains all surrounded by the blue waters of the Persian Gulf.

Probably the most impressive and ambitious colonial fortress built in Iran, the property is where visitors can soak up the silence and let their mind wander back a few hundred years.



## Rugs dedicated to FIFA World Cup unveiled

**HERITAGE** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Seven rolls of handwoven rugs dedicated to the 2018 FIFA World Cup were unveiled during a ceremony, which was held in the northwestern city of Tabriz on Saturday.

The magnificent rugs have been made under supervision of master Hossein Kazemi-Hamed in a span of six and a half months in a bid to convey messages of peace and friendship, IRNA reported.

They will be presented to the captains of Iran's rival teams, the Russian Football Union, and FIFA World Football Museum, the report said, adding another rug will be offered to the Astan Quds Razavi Central Museum in the northeastern holy city of Mashhad.

One of the rugs is reserved in case Iran's national team ascends to the next level of the tournament, Kazemi-Hamed said.

Tabriz has long been a center for weaving exquisite Persian carpets, with countless workshops scattered across the northwestern city and its outskirts.



## CHHTO breaks ground on anthropology museum

**HERITAGE** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization on Sunday broke ground on an archeology and anthropology museum in the city of Masal, northern Gilan province.

“A sum of three billion rials (some \$71,000) has been allocated for construction of the museum, which will be a two-story building in an area of 300 square meters,” CHTN quoted Reza Alizadeh, the provincial tourism chief, as saying.

Ancient Gilan was within the sphere of influence of the successive Achaemenian, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sassanian empires that ruled Iran until the 7th century CE.



# Forget Chinese tourist stereotypes, a new generation is reshaping overseas travel

By Prisca Ang

Mention Chinese tourists and what comes to mind are often images of flag-led assemblies piling out of coaches and clamoring for photo opportunities, shopping spoils and the best views of the surrounding attractions.

Subverting this stereotype, however, is a generation of Chinese travelers that is skipping cookie-cutter tour packages in favor of authentic experiences that fulfill individual needs.

Indicating the shift in travel preferences, most Chinese tourists now prefer to book trips over the internet rather than meet with travel agents. They also seek a balance between authentic local experiences and -- by being able to use their home language and familiar payment methods -- staying in their comfort zone.

In terms of travel frequency, Chinese travelers took an average of 2.5 foreign leisure trips over the past year, usually over China's Golden Week, a semi-annual week-long national holiday.

These findings were revealed in a new report by J. Walter Thompson Intelligence. JWT surveyed 1,500 adults in 16 Chinese cities who had recently traveled outside China.

The report says countries and businesses would benefit from studying the changing patterns in Chinese travel, which is booming more than ever.

China has held its position as the largest outbound travel

market since 2012. Its nationals made 130 million trips overseas last year, up 7% from 122 million in 2016, according to a joint report by Chinese online travel agency Ctrip and the China Tourism Academy. Their favorite destinations were Thailand and Japan. Chinese tourists were also increasingly visiting places like Morocco, Turkey and Tunisia.

The JWT report identified 12 emerging types of Chinese travelers. These include tourists traveling in multigenerational groups, foodies who enjoy trying novel cuisine, business people, young women who like to travel solo or with their friends, and adventurous, sporty travelers.

Chinese national Wenmin Ou, 33, and her husband Ethan Wang, 41, were among these travelers. The couple took a 14-month sabbatical from their jobs to visit all seven continents. Says Ou, a respondent in the JWT survey: “Traveling today is very easy -- if you speak English you have thousands of options. The biggest obstacle is that we never had enough time.”

Meanwhile, more Chinese travelers are couples planning destination weddings in places such as Bali and the Maldives, in a bid to differentiate their big day from the traditional Chinese banquet hall affair. They usually opt for culturally hybrid ceremonies that combine the Chinese tea ceremony with the marriage customs of their wedding location or a Western-style wedding.

Other key travelers are people interested in spiritual

## Blackstone to buy LaSalle Hotel for \$3.7 billion

Private equity firm Blackstone Group LP (BX.N) said on Monday it would buy U.S. hotel owner LaSalle Hotel Properties (LHO.N) for \$3.7 billion, topping a rival bid from Pebblebrook Hotel Trust (PEB.N) in April for \$3.5 billion.

The deal values LaSalle at \$33.50 per share compared with Pebblebrook's offer of \$31.75 per share and represents a premium of 5 percent to LaSalle's closing price on Friday.

Pebblebrook raised its offer in April after LaSalle rejected it a previous bid, saying it undervalued the owner of high-end locations including “W” Los Angeles. (Source: Reuters)



**HERITAGE** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A patchwork of handcrafted leatherwear has been put on show at the headquarters of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization in Tehran.

Iranian artisan Reza Dabir, who endeavors to revive traditional embossing on leather, has crafted the collection that includes wallets, purses and shoes, CHTN reported on Monday.

“All products are made of natural cow leather and hammer-stamped so that their prices depend on their production time and material,” Dabir said.

The UNESCO-registered The Lamu Old Town is the oldest and best preserved example of Swahili settlement in East Africa.

The property is located on an island known by the same name on the coast of East Africa some 350km north of Mombasa, Kenya.

With a core comprising a collection of

buildings on 16 ha, Lamu has maintained its social and cultural integrity, as well as retaining its authentic building fabric up to the present day. Once the most important trade center in East Africa, Lamu has exercised an important influence in the entire region in religious, cultural as well as in technological expertise. A conservative and close-knit society, Lamu

has retained its important status as a significant center for education in Islamic and Swahili culture as illustrated by the annual Maulidi and cultural festivals.

The property is characterized by its unique Swahili architecture that is defined by spatial organization and narrow winding streets.

(Source: UNESCO)





# A disrupted sleeping pattern could increase risk of depression, research suggests

Our internal body clocks, or circadian rhythms, determine nearly every biological process in our bodies, including sleeping, eating, and our blood pressure.

It also determines your chronotype, which is how long you tend to sleep in any 24 hour day. People are generally divided into night owls and early birds.

Your body clock is inherently biological, which means you cannot change it. If you're a night owl, you'll probably be that way forever - you just have to learn how to best manage it.

This also means disrupting your natural rhythm can be really bad for you.

For example, you will probably feel groggy and unmotivated in the short term, and in the long term, some research suggests you could increase your risk of diseases like Alzheimer's.

■ **Increasing risk of depression**

According to a new study, published in The Lancet Psychiatry, an interrupted body clock can also increase the risk of depression, bipolar disorder, and other mood disorders.

Researchers from the University of Glasgow recruited 91,105 people in the UK to wear activity monitors for a week to see how disrupted their body clocks were.

If they were highly active at late hours, or inactive during the day, this was classed as a disruption.

Those with more disruption were between 6 and 10 percent more likely to have been



diagnosed with a mood disorder than people who had a more typical day - active in the day, sleeping at night. Circadian disruption was also associated

**Circadian disruption was also associated with lower well-being, higher neuroticism, increased loneliness, less happiness and health satisfaction, more mood swings, and a slower reaction time.**

with lower well-being, higher neuroticism, increased loneliness, less happiness and health satisfaction, more mood swings, and a slower reaction time.

Laura Lyall, the lead author of the study, said this was the largest study of its type ever conducted to identify an association between disrupted body clocks and mood disorders.

■ **Causing mental illness**

However, the results do not reveal whether the disruption causes mental illness, or if it's a symptom of it, as shifts in energy levels and sleep disturbances are common with a diagnosis of depression or bipolar disorder. But it is an area of research the scientists can look into.

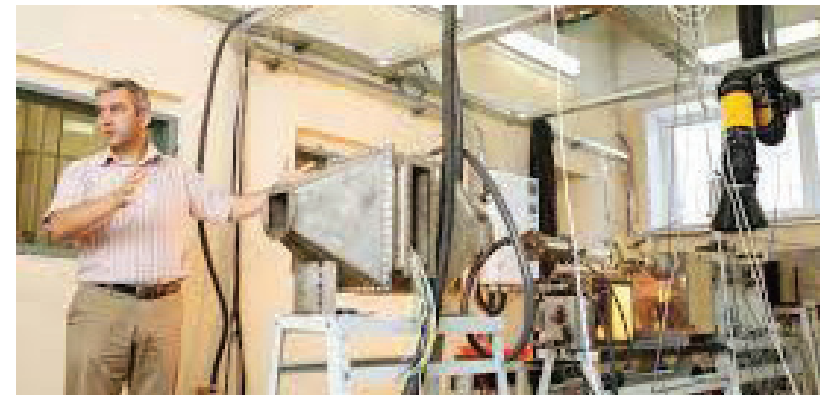
The "next step will be to identify the mechanisms by which genetic and environmental causes of circadian disruption interact to increase an individual's risk of depression and bipolar disorder," said Daniel Smith, a professor of psychiatry and senior author of the study.

"This is important globally because more and more people are living in urban environments that are known to increase risk of circadian disruption and, by extension, adverse mental health outcomes."

Circadian rhythms are a highly vital to life, because they have evolved over time to adapt to different phases of the day, regulating our hormones, behavior, sleep, body temperature, and metabolism to keep us in sync.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

## Scientists have deciphered the chemical reaction mechanism critical for cleaner combustion



The Journal of Physical Chemistry Letters, where original works in the field of chemistry and physics are published, has printed an article by an international team of scientists describing a discovery of the mechanism for the formation of the simplest polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH), naphthalene. The mechanism depicted by the scientists will help in creating physically based combustion models required for the development of fundamentally new ecologically friendly combustion chambers for gas turbine engines.

In Samara University, the research continues within the mega-grant allocated by the government of the Russian Federation. The works are conducted under the leadership of Professor of Florida International University Alexander Mebel. A scientific publication "VUV Photoionization Study of the Formation of the Simplest Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbon: Naphthalene (C10H8)" of a group of scientists from Samara University, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and Florida International University is an important link in the development of these studies.

"On the Earth polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons are harmful substances, formed due to incomplete combustion of fuel. They are carcinogenic, lead to the formation of soot, which pollutes the environment and contributes to global warming," - says Alexander Mebel. - At the same time in the interstellar space, PAHs are precursors of biochemical molecules and an important factor in the

chemical evolution in the Universe. For these reasons, a detailed understanding of PAH formation and growth mechanisms is important, both for the development of environmentally friendly combustion technologies, and for answering the eternal question of the origin of life. "

■ **Conditions of flames**

In the article published in the Journal of Physical Chemistry Letters, a chemical reaction is described for the formation of a polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (naphthalene) from the phenyl and vinylacetylene at elevated temperatures corresponding to the conditions of flames or circumstellar envelopes.

The scientists from the Samara University - Doctor of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, Professor Marsel Zagidullin and Chief Researcher of the Research and Education Centre for Physics of Open Nonequilibrium Systems (REC PhNOS-73), Professor Valeriy Azyazov calculated this chemical reaction using theoretical modeling. Their colleagues - chemists from Florida International University, University of Hawaii at Manoa and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, confirmed the results of the theoretical calculations in the laboratory experiment in a vacuum chamber with a microreactor.

"This work allowed us to understand the details of the synthesis of the simplest PAH prototypes and to develop a physically based and quantitatively accurate model of this process," - concluded Alexander Mebel.

(Source: eurekaalert.org)

## Making electricity consumes a lot of water. What's the best way to fix that?



It's been nine months since Hurricane Harvey's record rainfall wreaked havoc on the state of Texas, and now much of the state is in drought. At the same time, more than 15 percent of the Western United States is in extreme drought, up from practically zero percent a year ago. Around the world, many regions are experiencing drought, groundwater depletion, and municipal water shortages.

Dealing with these challenges will require investment in technology and infrastructure to conserve water and augment conventional water supplies. One obvious target for water conservation is the electric power sector, which consumes trillions of gallons of water per year. The question is whether we should focus on reducing the amount of water power plants consume or use the electricity they generate to produce freshwater through desalination instead. Let's dig in to find out how these two strategies really compare.

■ **Electric power generation**

According to one estimate, electric power generation consumes more than three trillion gallons of water globally per year. Why are power plants so thirsty? Most power plants use a steam turbine to generate electricity. The steam coming out of the turbine has to be cooled, condensed back into water, and recycled through the system as shown in the illustration below. This cooling process is where most of the water is consumed at power plants.

According to the U.S. Energy

Information Administration (EIA), the majority of power plants in the United States use "closed-cycle" or "recirculating" cooling systems. An illustration of a recirculating cooling system is shown below. In recirculating cooling systems, a separate stream of water is used to cool and condense the steam coming out of the turbine. This process heats up the cooling water, which is then sprayed into a cooling tower. Some of these hot water droplets evaporate and float out of the cooling tower, which is how heat exits the cooling system. The water lost to evaporation is the water "consumed" by the power plant. "Consumption" doesn't mean the water is gone forever, as it eventually re-enters the water system through rainfall, but the water is no longer available locally after it evaporates.

The majority of power plants in the United States have recirculating cooling systems that use evaporative cooling to condense steam from the outlet of a steam turbine.

With so much concern about power plant water consumption, you might be asking "why not just take water out of the equation and use a big fan to cool the steam coming out of the turbine?" Such "dry cooling" systems do exist and have been deployed in water-scarce regions around the world including parts of South Africa, China, and the United States. Unfortunately, dry cooling systems tend to reduce power plant efficiency.

(Source: scientificamerican.com)

## NASA exoplanet hunter TESS takes test image as it gets gravity boost from the moon

NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) took its first photo which shows over 200,000 in our galaxy as it made its way past the moon. The image is a two-second exposure using one of the four onboard cameras.

TESS captured the image on May 17 as it flew around 5,000 miles away from the moon. TESS was getting a gravity assist from the moon as it made its way to its final orbit. No spacecraft has occupied the orbit that TESS will take once it completes its final thruster burn.

The image centered on the southern constellation of Centaurus. In the upper right corner of the image contains the edge of the Coalsack Nebula and the bright star on the lower left side is the Beta Centauri. TESS is expected to cover 400 times more of the sky than what is shown in the image during its first two years searching for exoplanets.

On May 30, TESS will perform one final thruster burn to enter its science orbit around Earth. This orbit is highly elliptical and will allow TESS to cover the maximum amount of sky that it can photograph. TESS will reach its science orbit around mid-June after completing camera calibrations.

TESS images will help scientists by monitoring the brightness of stars. Researchers are looking for drops in the amount of light due to the exoplanets crossing the star. NASA's Kepler space telescope uses this same technique to detect exoplanet. It has discovered 70 percent of the 3,700 exoplanets discovered so far. This technique is called the transit method.

TESS's field of view will include around 20 million stars that have the possibility of having exoplanets orbiting them.

(Source: Tech Times)

## Can lifestyle changes remove plaques in arteries?

The notion of plaque reduction, known medically as regression of atherosclerosis, arose from a fortuitous observation during World War II. Norwegian scientists noticed that the scarcity of food — particularly the scarcity of high-fat foods like milk, cream, butter and cheese — was associated with a decreased risk of death from heart disease.

The first direct evidence of regression came in 1947. In performing autopsies on malnourished patients, an astute pathologist noted that plaques "usually, but not invariably, tend to undergo resorption."

But proof of regression in living patients would not come for another 40 years. In 1987, a study of diet and cholesterol-lowering drugs proved for the first time that regression was possible in humans. Three years later, the groundbreaking Lifestyle Heart Trial extended these findings by demonstrating that lifestyle changes alone, without cholesterol-lowering medications, could bring about regression, even in severely atherosclerotic arteries.

Adhering to the required lifestyle changes, however, was challenging. The diet was a whole food, vegetarian diet that restricted fat to no more than 10 percent of total calories. In addition, the subjects had to quit smoking, perform regular aerobic exercise and participate in group therapy stress reduction sessions.

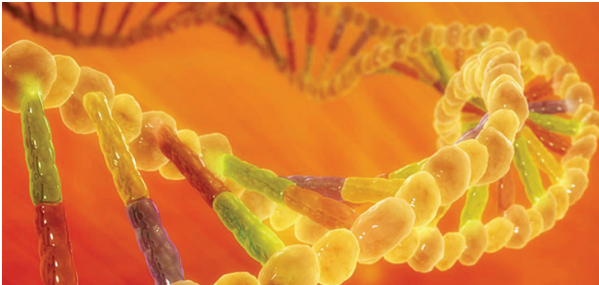
The Lifestyle Heart Trial, however, was small, involving only 28 men. But its findings were soon confirmed by larger studies, including a 2015 meta-analysis that combined data from all previously published trials and assessed the value of lifestyle modifications on more than 2,000 arterial plaques. The data provided conclusive proof that lifestyle modifications, albeit intensive ones, can decrease plaque.

Despite their proven benefits, diet and lifestyle modifications must be viewed as adjuncts to, rather than substitutes for, medication for many patients. Regression of atherosclerosis is maximized when all three are used together.

(Source: The NYT)

## Researchers identify gene that helps prevent brain disease

Scientists have identified a gene that helps prevent the harmful buildup of proteins that can lead to neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. The researchers found that the 'Ankrd16' gene acts like a failsafe in proofreading and correcting errors to avoid the abnormal production of improper proteins.



Scientists know that faulty proteins can cause harmful deposits or "aggregates" in neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. Although the causes of these protein deposits remain a mystery, it is known that abnormal aggregates can result when cells fail to transmit proper genetic information to proteins. University of California San Diego Professor Susan Ackerman and her colleagues first highlighted this cause of brain disease more than 10 years ago. Now, probing deeper into this research, she and colleagues have identified a gene, Ankrd16, that prevents the protein aggregates they originally observed.

Usually, the information transfer from gene to protein is carefully controlled -- biologically "proofread" and corrected -- to avoid the production of improper proteins. As part of their recent investigations, published May 16 in the journal Nature, Ackerman, Paul Schimmel (Scripps Research Institute) My-Nuong Vo (Scripps Research Institute) and Markus Terrey (UC San Diego) identified that Ankrd16 rescued specific neurons -- called Purkinje cells -- that die when proofreading fails.

"Simplified, you may think of Ankrd16 as acting like a sponge or a 'failsafe' that captures incorrectly activated serine and prevents this amino acid from being improperly incorporated into proteins, which is particularly helpful when the ability of nerve cells to proofread and correct mistakes declines," said Ackerman, the Stephen W. Kuffler Chair in Biology, who also holds positions in the UC San Diego School of Medicine and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

## BIM finances €130m for producing steel raw materials in Bandar Abbas

Construction operation of MAADKOUSH Steel Project is underway with the currency facilities of Bank of Industry and Mine (BIM), worth 130 million euro, out of financial resources of the National Development Fund of Iran (NDFI) in Bandar Abbas, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

With the implementation of the men-

tioned plan that proceeds the final stages of installation of equipment and machinery, it is expected that new employment opportunities will be generated for 360 job-seeking people, he maintained.

Moreover, 2.5 million tons of steel (conglomerate) will be produced in the country annually, he maintained.

Totally, €3.2 billion has been allocated by the Bank of Industry for launching 25 steel projects, the report added.

Once all these steel projects are put into operation, new employment opportunities will be generated for 9,900 job-seeking people.

The contract to finance €1.2 billion for

the electrification of Garmsar-Inchehboroun Railway was inked between Bank of Industry and Mine and a Russian Bank.

It should be noted that Bank of Industry and Mine also financed \$1.5 billion worth of credit for the construction operation of Tehran-Mashhad Railway, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank concluded.

## Bank Shahr establishes coop. with over 60 foreign brokerage banks

Bank Shahr established cooperation with more than 60 foreign brokerage banks in 30 countries, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Isa Ghahremani Deputy CEO of Bank Shahr for International and Foreign Exchange Affairs said, "all potentials and capabilities of the bank have been used for interacting and developing brokerage network system with the foreign banks."

Currently, the bank has acceptable rank in the country, he said, adding, "the management

of the company has planned comprehensive program for materializing its objectives by the yearend."

He pointed to the key role of the bank in comparison with other banks in the foreign exchange field and said, "the bank managed to receive the first foreign exchange license in July 2012."

Ghahremani reiterated, "benefitted from the most experienced and competent manpower, the Foreign Exchange Department of the bank has embarked on offering quality international

banking services to its dear customers in the best form possible."

Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the connection of his bank to SWIFT in 2013 and said, "despite sanctions imposed on the country, Bank Shahr managed to take advantage of its potentials suitably."

In conclusion, he said, "foreign exchange branches of the bank across the country are ready to purchase currency of tourists who visit Iran and pay its rials equivalency according to the rate set by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI)."





## 1,600 meritorious mothers to be honored

**W O M E N** **TEHRAN** — A number of 1,600 mothers from all over the country who are deserved to be honored have been identified, IRNA quoted Gholamreza Mohammadi, head of the cultural foundation of mother, an NGO based in the city of Shiraz, as saying on Friday.

These are mothers who have spent their whole life for the sake of their children to help them reach the highest position, Mohammadi said, adding the meritorious mothers are unknown champions who are identified when a successful person [their



children], in any field, is recognized.

A meritorious mother is a meritorious daughter for her parents, a sympathetic spouse and a capable mother for her children. She is a helpful citizen and a successful woman, he added.

In each city, a number of 10 meritorious mothers have been identified by the local cultural organizations and one of them was selected as the most deserved mothers of their area by the evaluation board, Mohammadi explained.

Making the society, especially the young generation, acquainted with the valuable position of mothers and reviving the sacred values of mothers is a necessity, he noted.

The cultural foundation of mother is an NGO belonging to the whole human being. Each NGO is formed for a special purpose, however, the subject of “mother and motherhood” belongs to the whole society far from any discrimination in color, race, tribe, language, religion, belief, and nationality, he concluded.

## RECIPE OF THE WEEK

### Upside down

“A Middle Eastern cauliflower and rice dish.”

#### Ingredients:



1 head cauliflower, broken into florets  
1 tablespoon olive oil, or as needed  
1 pound ground beef (optional)  
1 large onion, chopped  
4 cups water  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon ground black pepper  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano  
1/2 teaspoon curry powder  
1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric  
2 cloves garlic, chopped  
2 cups uncooked white rice

#### Directions:

Place the cauliflower florets onto a baking sheet, and brush with olive oil. Bake in the preheated oven until beginning to brown, about 30 minutes. Set aside.

While cauliflower is baking, place ground beef and onion into a large pot over medium heat, and cook and stir until the meat is browned, about 10 minutes. Break the meat apart into crumbles as it cooks. Remove from heat.

In a saucepan, bring the water to a boil, and stir in the salt, black pepper, cumin, oregano, curry powder, and turmeric.

Mix the cooked cauliflower and garlic into the ground beef and onion in the large pot, and stir in the white rice. Pour the spiced water into the pot over the rice, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer, and cover the pot; cook until the rice is tender and the water has absorbed, 15 to 20 minutes. Remove from heat, and allow to stand covered for 5 to 10 minutes to help dry out the rice.

To serve, place a large serving platter on top of the uncovered pot, and flip to turn out the contents onto the platter.

## LEARN ENGLISH

### Receptionist

A: Good afternoon. May I help you?

B: Yes, I'm here to see Joanna Stevens. I have an appointment at four.

A: **Certainly, may I take your name?** I'll let her know you've arrived.

B: Sure, it's Josh O'Neil.

A: Ms. Stevens will be with you **momentarily**. Can I offer you something to drink?

B: Yes, a coffee would be nice, thank you.

A: Here you are. Ms. Stevens is **ready for you** now. I'll **show you** to her office, **right this way**.

A: Just watch your step here...

#### Key vocabulary

**certainly**: without doubt; of course

**may I take your name**: polite way to ask for someone's name

**let (someone) know**: tell someone

**momentarily**: in a very short time

**be ready for you**: is prepared to meet with you

**show (someone) to**: show a person the way to a place

**right this way**: phrase you use to show someone the direction to walk

■ **Supplementary vocabulary**

**administrative assistant**: secretary

**lobby**: the waiting area of a building

**front desk**: the desk at the entrance of a building where the receptionist sits

**field calls**: receive and direct phone calls

**switchboard**: a system used to connect phone calls to many different phone lines within a building

(Source: irlanguage.com)

# Iran, Japan to boost cooperation in women's affairs

**W O M E N** **TEHRAN** — A joint working group from Iran and Japan is to be set up in order to study and evaluate the situation of entrepreneurship among women in both countries.

The Iranian entrepreneurship development foundation for women and youth, which is non-profit NGO, and the Japanese Sasakawa Peace Foundation are tasked to form the working group.

The decision was made in the international workshop of challenges and opportunities for women's entrepreneurship held in the National Library of Iran on May 14, Mehr news agency reported.

So far, some studies have been conducted in this regard by both countries and the results will be published in the future.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to help boost participation of women in the job market as part of the sixth five-year development plan,” said Gholam-Hossein Dehqani, the Iranian deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs.

Women play an important role in the global trade and there is no reason they cannot play the same role in Iran, Dehqani said.

The government is working to provide women with appropriate job opportunities, support equality in wages for men and women, protect security and health of women in the workplace, help them maintain life-work balance and set heavy punishment or those who harass female workers, he added.

Moreover, the official said the government is working to facilitate women's access to internet and technology, a report by women.gov.ir said.

Majlis (the Iranian parliament), has also enacted legislations aimed at empowering women, including a bill to protect women from violence, the deputy foreign minister said. Dehqani expressed hope Iran and Japan will expand cooperation on issues related to women's entrepreneurship and will be able to help boost the role of women in the society and family.

Speaking at the gathering, Masoumeh



Ebtekar, the vice-president for women and family affairs, said that the administration has put boosting women's entrepreneurship on its agenda, as Iranian women are highly educated and capable of participating in economic activities.

“A big part of Iranian women holds university degrees. Besides, the number of women studying at universities is more than men in all majors except for engineering ones,” she said.

However, Ebtekar said, women have less participation in the job market, a problem that needs to be fixed.

Ebtekar further hoped that the conference, aimed at exchanging experience between the

two countries on women's entrepreneurship, will help improve the situation of women in Iran and Japan.

Executive Director at the Sasakawa Peace Foundation Junko Chano said Iran and Japan will form a joint research team to explore and assess the situation of women entrepreneurship in Iran and Japan and come up with solutions to improve them.

The Sasakawa Peace Foundation, an affiliate of Nippon Foundation, is a public foundation corporation that conducts research activities, policy recommendations, and international collaboration aimed at the formation of a new governance system of human society that is more sustainable for

environment, oceans, and human welfare.

The foundation has been involved in several projects to promote mutual trust and understanding between Iran and Japan.

The two countries have held two rounds of a joint symposium in 2016 and 2017, which provide a platform for cooperation between the two nations in areas such as economic empowerment of women, introducing successful models of entrepreneurship and supportive government policies.

The workshop was coordinated by Iran's vice-presidency for women's and family affairs, Foreign Ministry, the National Library, and Japan's Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

## Iranian women's games should be broadcasted on TV: Ebtekar

**W O M E N** **TEHRAN** — Iranian women's sport tournaments, like men's events, should be broadcasted, Masoumeh Ebtekar, vice president for women's and family affairs, said, as the final match of the Asian Football Confederation Women's Futsal Championships between Iran and Japan on May 12 was not broadcasted live on the Iranian TV.

This issue raised the criticism of many sportsmen and sportswomen, government officials and MPs.

There has been some negotiations with IRIB Managing Director Abdol-Ali Ali-Asgari in order to come up with strategies to show women's games in national media, IRNA quoted Ebtekar as saying.

Once a woman brings honor to her country, it should be aired in the national media, Ebtekar believes.

Islamic Republic of Iran confirmed their status as the queens of Asian futsal, producing a dazzling five-goal second half to retain the AFC Women's Futsal Championship with a 5-2 win over Japan.

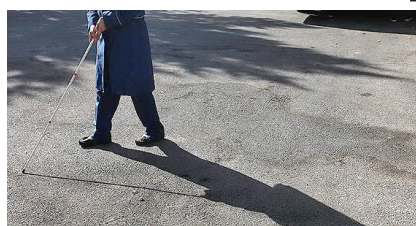


## Blind women to help detect breast cancer

**W O M E N** **TEHRAN** — A scheme with the aim of training blind women to help detect breast cancer has started in Iran.

According to the plan, Isfahan welfare organization trains blind women and recruits them to use their sensitive touch to help detect breast cancer as they can do it earlier and more precisely than sighted doctors.

So far, two to three doctors have expressed readiness to recruit such medical



tactile examiners to detect the slightest abnormality on a female breast, Mehr news agency quoted Marzieh Farshad, director

general of the organization, as saying.

Farshad went on to regret that, in general, people with disabilities find it much harder to land jobs and employers are reluctant to hire these group of people. “This entails implementation of effective measures to alleviate the widespread unemployment rate among people with disabilities,” she stated.

According to My Handicap website, Dr. Frank Hoffmann was the creator of the project idea “discovering hands”. The

gynecologist from the German town Duisburg wanted to improve the early diagnosis of any cancer-related changes like carcinomas by employing medical tactile examiners (MTUs).

“Discovering hands” was officially launched in 2006 as a pilot training. The first two MTUs graduated one year later. Since then, the cities of Düren, Mainz, Nuremberg and Halle (all in Germany) have been offering MTU training courses.

## Ramadan: The working woman



Ramadan is no doubt the holiest month in the Islamic Calendar. It is both a spiritual and festive season of the year for Muslims around the world.

It is a month when women are rigorously engaged in house chores. Besides participating in the fast, prayer and meditating the Holy Quran, the Muslim woman is well engaged in the preparation of the food among other things.

As far as family members are concerned, the person who generally contributes most in the running of the household in terms of preparing meals to be eaten in the morning (suhoor) and the evening meal, (Ifthar) is the woman of the house.

Whether she is the mother, the wife, the sister or the daughter, her work does not stop there. The additional work of Ramadan is stacked on top of her routine work.

Whether she is a working woman or a full-time housewife, the running of the house is in her care. It is against this background that, WO sampled the opinions of some Muslim women to feel their pulse.

Mrs Rafat, a self-employed lady in Jakande Estate area of Lagos said, a Muslim woman in her struggle to be the best provider for her family may lose out unknowingly, on her connection with Allah.

According to her, a woman fasts and performs all her obligatory prayers, and the study of the Quran.

“Aside the fact that she plays very important role in the holy month of Ramadan, the woman holds the kitchen for men and their children in terms of preparing food for the breaking of the fast.

“The role of a woman during Ramadan is no different from that of a man because the main purpose is for the woman to serve Allah.

“During the month of Ramadan the role of a woman is to fast from sunrise to sunset, abstaining from water, other drinks and from having intercourse with a man.

“Every woman must fast but in case of menstruation or child birth, the woman should not fast even if she wants to fast.

“A pregnant woman advised by her doctor not to fast must strictly adhere to instruction. For the suckling mother, there is need for her to have enough milk for her child as she is also not free to fast. But, she can pay back her debt fast in later days when she is able to do so”, she explained.

Another woman, Mrs Mosunmola told WO that the role of a woman during the month of Ramadan is to ensure that she keeps the month holy.

“Women must get up as early as 4:30 in the morning prepare some food; ensure that the family members eat when necessary”, she said.

While most women are playing their roles in the kitchen, she noted that the onus is on the woman to pray as she cannot do without fasting.

“It is important for the woman at home to monitor the activities of the children: which films they are watching or the kind of music they are listening to and make sure they listen to Quranic messages and pray.

“As a wife, she ensures that her husband is best cared for by giving him the best of service.

“As a daughter, she wakes up to assist her mother to do all the house chores. As a sister, she helps her sister or brother also during the season”, she continued.

The justification is that it is spiritually rewarding for women to cook for their families and care for the children.

It also demonstrates how we see women's roles: as cooks and child minders. If it were about spiritual benefits, then the role of women and her experience of Ramadan would be quite different.

(Source: Vanguard)



# Democrats pin hopes on 2018 midterms

Look closely enough at the United States 2018 midterms and you'll see the stirrings of a Democratic scramble to reclaim the White House from the U.S. President Donald Trump. The leading players – from established national figures such as former Vice President Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren to up-and-comers including California Sen. Kamala Harris – don't necessarily put it that way.

But the potential 2020 candidates are making the rounds, raising and distributing campaign cash among fellow Democrats, endorsing candidates and meeting political activists.

Their movements reflect competing strategies for establishing their reputations and shaping a party that lacks a clear leader and consistent message in the Trump era.

For senators trying to get better known, a primary goal is proving fundraising strength and party loyalty, without necessarily taking sides in the larger fight between the left and moderates who split on the minimum wage, health insurance and other issues.

"I just want to do whatever I can" to help Democrats win, Harris said at a recent stop in Georgia, where she was campaigning and raising money for Stacey Abrams' race for governor.

It is part of an aggressive effort for the freshman senator. She's raised \$3.5 million for her Senate colleagues and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, plus what she helps candidates such as Abrams raise directly when she appears with them, and at the end of April Harris had nearly a \$1 million balance in the political action committee that she uses to back other Democrats.

Warren boasts that she's raised \$15 million for other Democrats since her 2013 election. The Massachusetts senator faces a re-election campaign this fall, but not as tough a race as 10 colleagues running in states where Trump won. Like Harris, Warren and New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker have aided those senators.

Warren is also helping other branches of the party: a transfer of money to House Democrats' campaign committee, \$5,000 for every state party and \$175,000 spread across state legislative campaigns in contested states.



Democratic and Republican campaign veterans say such contributions and fundraising trips aren't explicitly about future campaigns.

Harris' spokeswoman Lily Adams said: "We're not playing 3D chess," who describes the Harris' priority as "building our numbers in the Senate" for the last two years of Trump's term, while looking for strong women and minority candidates. Abrams would be the first female African-American governor in the U.S. history.

Operatives also insist there are no quid pro quos, though Republican presidential campaign veteran Rick Tyler says, "These guys are out there accumulating chits."

Tyler worked for Texas Sen. Ted Cruz's 2016 White House campaign. Cruz was among the conservatives who traveled the country before his campaign, endorsing like-minded conservatives and raising money.

Trump's improbable rise obliterated that groundwork, but Tyler said it's nonetheless a necessary part of a national campaign, because prospective presidents build their networks and test messages as they meet activists and voters beyond their personal bases.

Harris, for example, is noticeably avoiding most early presidential nominating states – no trips to Iowa or New Hampshire so far. Because 10 Senate

Democrats must seek re-election in states Trump won, her travels do put her in some of the pivotal states in the battle to control the Senate. She's been to Ohio five times for Sen. Sherrod Brown, twice to Michigan for Sen. Debbie Stabenow and once to Florida for Sen. Bill Nelson.

She has a June trip planned for Wisconsin Sen. Tammy Baldwin.

Warren has been to Ohio at least four times this campaign season and traveled to Michigan and Wisconsin, among others states. Those states helped give Trump the presidency. They also could prove important as primary states in an extended nominating fight that could materialize with a large field and Democrats' proportional distribution of nominating convention delegates.

Sanders, whose insurgent presidential campaign in 2016 emboldened the Democrats' left flank, is perhaps the most unabashed of the potential 2020 group about using this year's midterms to put his preferred policy stamp on the party. A prolific small-dollar fundraiser, the Vermont senator no longer has to prove he can raise money or draw a crowd.

"I have been very critical about the business model of the Democratic Party," Sanders told The Associated Press. He said his travel to 28 states since Trump took office and his endorsements in

federal and state races are part of his promised "political revolution" intended to advance ideas like a \$15 minimum wage, tuition-free college and universal health insurance.

Sanders bet on liberal challenger Marie Newman in her unsuccessful House Democratic primary battle against conservative Rep. Dan Lipinski in Illinois. But Sanders scored a notable win Tuesday in Pennsylvania when his pick for lieutenant governor, John Fetterman, finished with a surprise primary victory.

Biden is at the opposite end of Democrats' identity battle. His endorsement list and fundraising itinerary are replete with state party dinners, events for sitting Democratic senators and rallies for candidates running as moderates, at least in tone, if not in policy preference. "I love Bernie, but ... I don't think 500 billionaires are the reason we are in trouble," Biden said at a recent Brookings Institution speech about his priorities for the middle class.

Biden's aides say he's willing to help any Democrat get elected, but the native of Scranton, Pennsylvania, who loves to wax eloquent about his working-class upbringing is in demand to campaign for Democrats running in GOP-leaning places.

He headlined fundraisers and campaign rallies for first-year Alabama Sen. Doug Jones and new Pennsylvania Rep. Conor Lamb, who won among voters who had sided overwhelmingly with Trump in 2016.

Biden's next planned campaign venture is to North Carolina on behalf of Democrat Dan McCready, a veteran trying to win a suburban Charlotte House district that wasn't competitive two years ago.

Certainly, many Democratic hopefuls around the country are accepting help from multiple would-be presidents, and the alignments don't always follow cleanly along the party's philosophical battle lines.

Abrams has campaigned as a liberal, but her primary opponent has hammered her for cutting deals with Republicans in Georgia's General Assembly. Besides Harris, she's campaigned alongside Booker and gotten an endorsement from Sanders, who's offered to campaign for her.

When reporters tried to ask Harris and Abrams about 2020, they both smiled and walked away.

(Source: AP)

## Trump urges China to keep tight North Korea border



The United States President Donald Trump on Monday urged China to maintain tight control of its border with North Korea until he signs a denuclearization deal with Kim Jong Un.

Trump is scheduled to hold a landmark summit with the North Korean leader June 12 in Singapore, but Pyongyang recently has threatened to pull out over the U.S. demands for "unilateral nuclear abandonment."

"China must continue to be strong & tight on the Border of North Korea until a deal is made," Trump tweeted, suggesting China may have eased up on enforcing economic sanctions against Pyongyang.

"The word is that recently the Border has become much more porous and more has been filtering in," he wrote, adding he wants North Korea to be 'VERY successful,' but only once a deal has been reached on denuclearization, he said.

China is North Korea's biggest trade partner, and Trump has called on it repeatedly to press Pyongyang to rein in its nuclear and missile programs.

Besides protesting the U.S. disarmament demands, North Korea also angrily condemned joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises, and last week pulled out of planned inter-Korean talks.

Trump's National Security Advisor John Bolton also has drawn Pyongyang's ire by referring to Libya as a denuclearization model. After giving up Libya's nuclear program in 2003, leader Moammar Gaddafi was killed in a NATO-backed uprising in 2011.

North Korea's sudden shift in attitude followed a weeks-long charm offensive that saw Kim Jong Un hold a historic summit in the Demilitarized Zone with South Korean President Moon Jae-in, and meet twice with China's President Xi Jinping.

As prospects for the Singapore summit dimmed, Trump offered assurances that if the summit is successful, Kim "will get protections that will be very strong."

"He'd be in his country and running his country. His country would be very rich," he told reporters last week.

(Source: Reuters)

## Crane collapse in Mecca raises fresh safety worries



A winch crane has collapsed near the Grand Mosque in the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia and left one person injured, raising fresh worries about the safety of pilgrims who visit the site from around the world.

The incident on Sunday came during Ramadan, the most sacred month for Muslims, when the Grand Mosque is among the most crowded places in the world, with tens of thousands performing minor Umrah pilgrimage or praying there.

The Saudi regime Press Agency quoted officials as saying that the accident took place in a worksite in the mosque that was far away from the path of worshippers and visitors.

It cited overloading of the machinery as the cause of the incident in which the arm of the crane collapsed at the construction site.

The accident revived bitter memories of a crane collapse at the Grand Mosque in 2015, which left at least 107 pilgrims dead and more than 230 others injured. It forced the Saudi Binladen Group to

stop expansion projects in the mosque compound for two years.

That incident and a deadly human crush two weeks later brought diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia to a head, before Riyadh cut ties with Tehran following strong protests against the kingdom's execution of a prominent Shia cleric.

In the second incident, according to media tally, more than two thousand pilgrims lost their lives in Mina after two large masses converged at a crossroads during the symbolic stoning of Satan.

The House of Saud regime claims nearly 770 people were killed in the incident, but officials at Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization say about 4,700 people, including more than 460 Iranian pilgrims, lost their lives.

Those incidents as well as frequent fires at the tent camps of pilgrims have raised serious questions about the competence of Saudi authorities in charge of organizing annual Hajj rituals.

(Source: Press TV)

## U.S. to investigate 'FBI spying' on Trump campaign

The United States Department of Justice has said it will investigate whether the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) spied on Donald Trump's presidential campaign for political motives, following the U.S. president's call for an inquiry.

"If anyone did infiltrate or surveil participants in a presidential campaign for inappropriate purposes, we need to know about it and take appropriate action," Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein said in a statement late on Sunday.

Trump had demanded that the Justice Department look into possible infiltration or surveillance by the FBI or the DOJ itself of his 2016 campaign, stressing that it was essential to probe if someone from his predecessor Barack Obama's administration had ordered such a request.

"I hereby demand, and will do so officially tomorrow, that the Department of Justice look into whether or not the FBI/DOJ infiltrated or surveyed the Trump Campaign for Political Purposes - and if any such demands or requests were made by people within the Obama Administration!" the U.S. president said on Twitter on Sunday morning.

The probe comes amid an ongoing investigation, headed by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, into alleged collusion between the Russian government and Trump's 2016 election campaign.

In a series of tweets on Sunday, Trump criticized Mueller's investigation, calling it a "witch-hunt" and asserting that it had not found any collusion with Russia.

### No evidence

On May 17, Mueller was appointed by the U.S. Justice Department to look into possible Russian interference into the 2016 U.S. elections, which Trump won.

So far, the Mueller team has indicted a total of 22 people and companies.

Bruce Fein, a former U.S. associate deputy attorney general, says there are valid reasons for the Russian investigation as too many people from Trump's campaign team associated with foreign officials.

He told Al Jazeera that Trump's suggestion that the FBI "targeted his campaign because of hostility towards his political ambitions would be a real problem".

"We don't have any evidence at present that suggests that the FBI actually infiltrated the campaign under false pretenses, had somebody working for Trump and had access into getting confidential communication that wouldn't have been obtained if they weren't part of the campaign itself," said Fein, speaking from Washington, DC.

Last year, the Republican president also accused Obama of tapping his phones during the late stages of the election campaign but offered no evidence to support the allegation.

"He's so reckless in his allegations that you can't even sift the wheat from the chaff," said Fein.

In November 2016, Trump defeated rival Hillary Clinton in an election tainted by an email scandal, following claims that the Democratic candidate used her private server while she was secretary of state.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Turkey sentences 104 people to life in prison in post-coup case

A Turkish court on Monday sentenced 104 people to life in prison for involvement in a failed military coup in 2016, the Hurriyet newspaper said, in one of the heaviest penalties given since the attempt.

The court in the Aegean coastal town of Izmir handed 104 of 280 defendants "aggravated life" sentences, Hurriyet said, the harshest punishment possible under Turkish law as it raises the minimum time in jail required for parole.

Another 21 people were given 20 years in prison for insulting the president, while 31 others were sentenced to 10 years and six months for "membership of a terrorist organization", Hurriyet said.

More than 240 people, most of them unarmed civilians, were killed on the night of July 15, 2016, when a group of rogue soldiers commandeered tanks and warplanes in an attempt to attack parliament and overthrow President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The government blames the network of the U.S.-based preacher Fethullah Gulen, a former ally of Erdogan, for orchestrating the failed coup. Gulen, who has lived in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania since 1999, has denied involvement and condemned the putsch.

Since the coup attempt, authorities have detained 160,000 people and dismissed nearly the same number of civil servants as part of a sweeping crackdown, the United Nations human rights office said in March. Of that number, more than 50,000 have been formally charged and kept in jail pending trial.

The scale of the crackdown has alarmed rights groups and Turkey's Western allies, who fear the country is sliding further into authoritarianism under Erdogan and accuse the president of using the failed putsch as a pretext to quash dissent.

The government, however, says the measures are necessary, given the extent of the security threats it faces.

(Source: Daily Star)

## U.S.-EU possible soft tactic to contain Iran

➔ All facts on the ground imply that all EU measures and promises to keep the JCPOA alive will only result in remaining of some small European companies in Iran. Big companies that can invest and transfer technology to Iran will leave Iran to avoid the U.S. possible punishments. This possible soft and indirect U.S.-EU tactic can help the joint goal of the U.S. and EU to contain Iran.

By this tactic, firstly the EU can buy time and contain Iran so that not to leave the JCPOA. Secondly, the EU will pave the way for selling of its products and services in Iran's market without investment and transferring technology. Thirdly, Iran's incomes and revenues will be limited which Americans and the Europeans consider it as a good soft and indirect way to increase pressure on Iran to limit Iran's regional influence and missile capability.

## Kremlin hits back at Britain after 'dirty money' report

The Kremlin on Monday accused Britain of unprecedented "anti-Russian mania", warning such an attitude could backfire and scare off other foreign investors.

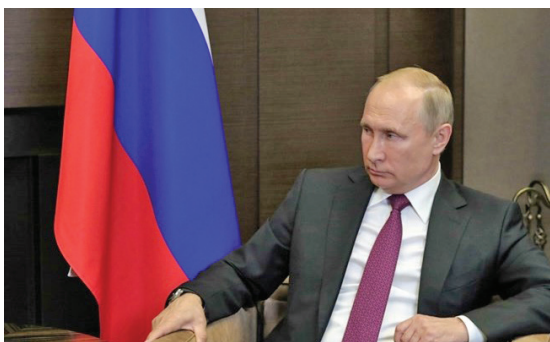
British MPs on Monday released a hard-hitting report accusing Russian President Vladimir Putin and his allies of "hiding and laundering their corrupt assets in London".

"We are witnessing Britain's rather unprecedented anti-Russian mania which is manifested in various ways," Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"I have no doubt that such actions won't go unnoticed by investors from other countries," he added.

"Many countries are working to improve their investment attractiveness and this I believe is a step in the opposite direction."

The House of Commons foreign affairs committee



urged the British government to clamp down on corrupt Russian money flowing through London and urged

Britain to encourage global action to tighten loopholes in the existing sanctions regime.

Recent media reports said Chelsea football club owner Roman Abramovich's British visa has run out and the application process for a new visa has been taking longer than usual.

Peskov said he was not aware of the issue but said many Russian businessmen were treated unfairly.

British Prime Minister Theresa May expelled diplomats and vowed new measures against human rights offenders after a nerve attack in Salisbury that London blamed on Moscow.

Moscow has furiously denied the claim, suggesting at various points it has been set up by British security services.

(Source: AFP)



## Raonic pulls out of French Open with knee injury

Milos Raonic has withdrawn from next week’s French Open with a knee injury and is targeting a return during the grass court season, the former world number three said on Sunday.

The Canadian has not played since losing to Denis Shapovalov in the round of 16 at the Madrid Open earlier this month and the world number 28 has seen his young compatriot rise two spots above him in the world rankings.

“It is with a heavy heart that I am withdrawing from Roland Garros. I have many great memories there, but I know I need to continue working hard to put myself in the best position when I step out on the court,” Raonic posted on Twitter.

“Thank you all for your support and see you soon on the grass,” the 27-year-old added.

Raonic, a French Open quarter-finalist in 2014, missed the back end of last season with the knee injury and made a first round exit at the Australian Open on his return in January.

He pulled out in the round of 16 at the Monte Carlo Masters in April after a recurrence of the problem, which has hampered his efforts to replicate the form that saw him finish runner-up at Wimbledon in 2016.

The French Open begins on May 27.

(Source: Euronews)

## Legia Warsaw win Polish Championship after game abandoned

Legia Warsaw have won the Polish Championship after their final game of the season at Lech Poznan was abandoned following crowd trouble and they were awarded a 3-0 walkover.

Lech fans threw flares and invaded the pitch after Legia went 2-0 ahead, causing the referee to stop the game in the 77th minute.

The Polish Ekstraklasa league commission later granted the walkover and Lech said they would not appeal.

It is Legia’s third consecutive title.

“As a result of this decision Legia Warsaw has 70 points and the title of Polish champion is assured. Lech Poznan has 60 points and third place on the podium,” the Ekstraklasa said in a statement.

A separate decision to take disciplinary action against Lech will be made on Thursday.

Jagiellonia, who won their final game of the season 2-1, finished second in the table, on 67 points.

(Source: BBC)

## New PSG boss Tuchel backs ‘artist’ Neymar to express himself

Brazilian forward Neymar is an “artist” and Paris St Germain need to build their team around the 26-year-old if they are to get the best out of him, the Ligue 1 club’s new manager Thomas Tuchel has said.

Neymar joined the French champions from Barcelona for a record 222 million euros (194 million pounds) last August but media reports have already linked him with a move back to Spain with Real Madrid.

“I met Neymar last Sunday. It was an important meeting. He’s an artist, one of the best players in the world, a key player to help us win our matches,” said Tuchel, who last week signed a two-year deal to replace Unai Emery.

“If we find a way to build a structure around him, so he can show all his talent on the pitch, I think we have a key player to win our games.”

Neymar has been out of action since fracturing the fifth metatarsal in his right foot on Feb. 25 and undergoing surgery in Brazil. He was, however, named in the Brazil squad for the June 14-July 15 World Cup finals in Russia.

“I met a very friendly, very open guy for the first time,” German Tuchel added.

“We started talking about soccer and I saw a smile on his face and that is what I want to see.”

(Source: Goal)

## Sporting Lisbon in shock cup final defeat, five days after players were attacked

Sporting Lisbon suffered a shock 2-1 defeat by Aves in the Portuguese Cup final, five days after players were attacked by fans.

A 50-strong group of hooded fans attacked players and officials at Sporting’s training base on Tuesday.

The club considered pulling out of the final, but the players decided to go ahead with the fixture.

However, they were beaten by Aves, a team who have spent only three years in the Portuguese top flight since 1930.

It was a first appearance in the final for Aves, who narrowly avoided relegation this season.

Alexandre Guedes scored the opening goal for Aves after 16 minutes in Oeiras and then edged them closer to the trophy with a second with 15 minutes left.

Sporting fans turned their backs on the match and walked out after Aves’ second goal and some were seen to clash with police.

Colombian substitute Fredy Montero pulled a goal back on 85 minutes, but it was too late for Sporting who were repeatedly denied by Aves’ 42-year-old former Portugal international goalkeeper Quim.

Sporting, who have not won the Portuguese title since 2002, finished third in the Primeira Liga following a defeat at Maritimo in their final game of the season and missed out on a place in the Champions League qualifying rounds.

(Source: BBC)

# Who can stop the ‘King of Clay’ at the French Open?

Perhaps the question heading into next week’s French Open should be: “Who can take a set off Rafael Nadal?” instead of “Who can beat Nadal?”

The Spaniard, dubbed the “King of Clay,” is the white-hot favorite to land a record-extending 11th title at Roland Garros.

And given he recently set the men’s record for most consecutive tennis sets won -- all on his beloved clay -- it would be some stretch to look elsewhere for a winner.

Take this stunning statistic: Nadal owns a 79-2 win-loss record at the French Open, where the best-of-five set format makes the 31-year-old even harder to defeat. He’s only lost to Sweden’s Robin Soderling in the fourth round in 2009 and Novak Djokovic in the quarterfinal in 2015.

Plus, Nadal has been busy adding to his trophy haul on clay in the buildup, triumphing in Monte Carlo, Barcelona and then the Italian Open in Rome Sunday.

“Rafa is for me a clear-cut favorite to win No. 11,” six-time grand slam winner Boris Becker, who was coaching Djokovic when the Serb downed Nadal in Paris three years ago, told CNN Sport. “He’s by far the favorite. There are a couple of others coming around the block, but I wouldn’t even name them because in my eyes if Rafa stays healthy, injury free, I don’t see anybody taking it but him.”

But if there is to be a monumental upset at the French Open, who might be on the other side of the net? Start with this quintet, which doesn’t include the absent Roger Federer.

### ■ Novak Djokovic

Djokovic isn’t the player he was in 2016, when he won the French Open to become the first man since Rod Laver in 1969 to land four consecutive majors. A loss of focus, intensity and an elbow injury that necessitated surgery this year have all contributed to -- by his standards -- a worrying slump.

However, Djokovic has been Nadal’s toughest opponent throughout his career -- still holding a winning head-to-head record and beating him seven times on clay. No one else comes close. And he was encouraged by his outing against Nadal in the Rome semifinals Saturday. Djokovic tested Nadal prior to succumbing 7-6 (7-4) 6-3. In an indication of the uneasiness Nadal feels when confronting Djokovic, he was



often passive and initially let slip a 5-2 lead in the first set.

If they do square off again at the French Open, 12-time grand slam winner Djokovic will surely have benefited from playing Nadal in the Eternal City, despite the end result. It was their first clash since Madrid last year, and the gap was much less than it has been at times.

Djokovic’s stint in Rome marked his first semifinal, too, since the Wimbledon warmup of Eastbourne last June. He has reunited with the most influential coach in his career, Marian Vajda, after splitting with tennis legend Andre Agassi and former top-10 pro Radek Stepanek.

But at this stage of his comeback, does Djokovic have it in him to beat Nadal over the best-of-five sets?

### ■ Dominic Thiem

Nadal has only lost 36 times on clay in a top-flight career

spanning about 13 years.

But Austria’s Thiem is one of three players to have bettered the Mallorcan on clay at least three times, following 2004 French Open winner Gaston Gaudio and Djokovic. It was Thiem who ended Nadal’s set streak in Madrid this month.

The 24-year-old Thiem is an electrifying shotmaker and clay gives him more time to take the bigger swings he employs. He has the power to rip through Nadal and moves brilliantly, especially on clay.

Yet the world No. 8 needs to progress smoothly in the first week to have any chance of ousting Nadal.

And note that about three weeks after Thiem conquered Nadal last year in Rome, Nadal crushed his younger rival in the French Open semifinals

(Source: CNN)

## Champions Barca bid Iniesta farewell after beating Sociedad



La Liga champions Barcelona ended their campaign with a 1-0 win at home to Real Sociedad on Sunday thanks to a sensational distance strike from Philippe Coutinho as the Nou Camp paid an emotional farewell to departing captain Andres Iniesta.

Coutinho drifted inside from the left and held off two defenders outside the area before rattling the ball in off the far post with a venomous shot, breaking the deadlock in the 57th minute.

The league’s top scorer Lionel Messi started the game on the bench but replaced Coutinho in the 67th minute. Iniesta was substituted in the 82nd, hugging most of his team mates as well as some Real Sociedad players and the referee as he left the Nou Camp pitch for the last time as a Barca player.

Barca’s fans held up a mosaic before the game reading “Infinite Iniesta.” They later revealed a banner saying “Thanks for so much” in tribute to a player who came through the club’s academy and spent 16 years pulling the strings in midfield, winning nine Liga titles, four Champions Leagues

and six domestic Cups.

They continued to sing Iniesta’s name long after he had gone off the pitch. The captain returned with his team mates after the final whistle to lift the club’s 25th Liga title and also show off the King’s Cup trophy which they won in April, beating Sevilla 5-0 in the final.

“Today is a difficult day. I have spent 22 marvellous years here and I’ve been so proud to defend and represent this badge, which for me is the best in the world,” Iniesta said, addressing the Barca fans from the pitch.

“Thanks to all our fans, for the support you’ve shown and the respect you have given me. I came here as a boy and I leave aged 34 as a man. I’ll always carry you in my heart.”

Barca end the season on 93 points, 14 more than second-placed Atletico Madrid and 17 above last year’s champions Real Madrid. Ernesto Valverde’s side lost only one Liga match, last week’s 5-4 defeat at Levante.

(Source: Eurosport)

## Nainggolan left out of Belgium World Cup squad



Belgium coach Roberto Martinez left AS Roma midfielder Radja Nainggolan out of his squad for next month’s World Cup in Russia, insisting on Monday it was a purely tactical move and not due to past clashes over discipline.

The Spaniard sprung a surprise by not naming his final 23-man squad as expected, instead listing 28 players who will be whittled down on June 4, two days after a friendly against fellow World Cup finalists Portugal in Brussels on June 2.

“We know that Radja has a very important role in his club and we cannot give him that role in our squad,” Martinez told a news conference, acknowledging Nainggolan’s key role in Roma’s run to the Champions League semi-finals, but saying he could not offer him a similar place in a “more offensive” Belgian side.

Coach and player had an “honest” discussion after Martinez flew to Rome on Sunday to break the news.

There was no doubt about the popularity of the 29-year-old Nainggolan among Belgian fans following his key role at Euro

2016, the manager said, but a coach must be ready to take hard decisions for the good of the team

“I don’t think Radja is a player to be used in a small role,” Martinez said when asked about Nainggolan’s reported willingness to go with the squad “even as a goalkeeper”.

“The reason that Radja’s not in the squad is purely a tactical decision,” Martinez told reporters, adding that giving himself an extra couple of weeks until FIFA’s final squad deadline would give the likes of experienced Barcelona defender Thomas Vermaelen time to prove his fitness.

Third in the world rankings and hungry for the success that has eluded them despite boasting some of Europe’s most gifted players, England’s Group G opponents head to Russia with Premier League stars including Chelsea forward Eden Hazard and midfielder Kevin De Bruyne from champions Manchester City.

Manchester United striker Romelu Lukaku also makes the preliminary squad despite recent injury issues, along with 32-year-old Manchester City skipper Vin-

## Russian agency offers fake restaurant reviews ahead of World Cup

A Russian marketing agency has offered to help restaurants in cities hosting the soccer World Cup use fake reviews to bump up ratings on review site TripAdvisor, the agency’s owner has confirmed.

Marketing company Bacon Agency says it can circumvent TripAdvisor’s algorithm for detecting fraudulent posts and publish reviews in foreign languages ahead of an influx of fans from abroad.

“What can you do if no Serbs and no Swedes have ever been to your venue and left a review?” Bacon Agency asks, in a brochure received by a restaurant in Yekaterinburg, which hosts Egypt and Uruguay in their first round matches. “You write it yourself!” the agency says.

For 35,000 rubles (\$570), the agency promises a spot in TripAdvisor’s top 10 list. “We are offering to help tourists find you, and to leave their money specifically with you,” it writes. “We oppose any attempt to manipulate a business’ ranking,” TripAdvisor said. “Our dedicated investigations team is proactive and extremely effective at catching those trying to solicit fake reviews for money.”

Fake reviews are widespread, but it is unusual for a company involved in the practice to discuss it so openly, or to link it explicitly to a sports event.

The World Cup has created lucrative opportunities for businesses in the 12 host cities hoping to benefit from well-to-do foreign fans at a time when Russians are feeling the pinch from a fragile economy and Western sanctions.

### ■ FAKE REVIEW INDUSTRY

Contacted by Reuters, Bacon Agency confirmed it had offered the service, but said it only wanted to act as the middleman between restaurants and freelancers posting



fake reviews. “We understand that all this is illegal in the sense that TripAdvisor is against it,” said Bacon Agency’s owner Roman Baldanov.

“We were just testing this niche, because we see high demand. It’s not because we’re bad guys who came in and said, look, you’ve got to start swindling ... All restaurants know that reviews are ordered, and many use this service,” Baldanov said.

He said nobody had yet taken up his offer. “The response we got was: thanks, but we are already doing this ourselves.”

### ■ Scale-up in scams

Reuters tracked restaurants in six World Cup host cities over two months, noting an uptick in suspicious-looking posts.

An event like the World Cup increases incentives to post such reviews, said Stanford University’s Jeff Hancock, an expert in detecting fake reviews.

“Any time you start seeing reviews come in all at once,

look sort of similar, have the same kind of language, then alarm bells should start going off,” Hancock said.

At least six restaurants in the TripAdvisor top 30 list for Kaliningrad, which will host Croatia and Nigeria, appeared to fit this description.

Peperonchino, a cafe serving Italian cuisine 20 minutes’ drive from the World Cup stadium, used to get around one review a week.

But two weeks ago reviews began to flood in - 45 in total - the majority from accounts with stock photos, created this year, and rating the cafe five stars. Peperonchino rose from 28th place to 2nd on TripAdvisor’s list.

Sister cafe Peperonchino 2 also received a flood of reviews in the past fortnight, also 45 in total, 32 from such accounts.

“All our reviews are real and are left by our customers,” Peperonchino said. “It’s just we have a big loyalty system, a mobile phone app, and so on.”

### ■ Avoiding the algorithm

In a strategy document seen by Reuters, Bacon Agency explains how to avoid detection by TripAdvisor.

“The issue is that TripAdvisor has developed algorithms which monitor user activity and when they spot an attempt to manipulate the numbers, they sanction the venue,” the agency writes.

To trick the algorithm, fake reviews are published using different IP addresses, devices, browsers and operating systems. Each account has a “back story” of earlier posts.

The reviews will be “full of real details about the menu and decor, as well as ‘real’ photographs, which we will ask you to take.”

(Source: Reuters)



# Queiroz defends his decisions about Team Melli’s squad

**S P O R T S** Iran national football team coach Carlos Queiroz **d e s k** has defended his 24-man squad selection for the 2018 World Cup.

Queiroz left Persepolis captain Jalal Hosseini and Esteghlal winger Vouria Ghaffouri out of his squad for next month’s World Cup in Russia, insisting before travel to Istanbul, that the decisions were purely tactical moves.

“Evan I myself criticize this 24-man list, but we could not do anything else because of the rules and logistical issues. We have to call only 23 players in our final list.” Queiroz told about criticism of his list and then talked about the important players who have no place in his squad.

Referring to Jalal Hosseini, Queiroz said: “I respect Jalal with all my heart, but this respect should be for the next generation of Iranian football as well. We cannot have a national team that is only in a state of recession, but we have to move forward. I emphasize that Seyyed Jalal will remain on our waiting list and will join Team Melli at any time necessary.”

When asked about Vouria Ghaffouri, the coach answered: “I emphasized to Vouria that I need a solid right fullback in the national team, but at Esteghlal team he was used as a right midfielder or winger, with the decision of head coach Winfried Schäfer. I have no idea why Mr. Schäfer was surprised by seeing Vouria is not in the squad. How does he become surprised when he does not believe in Vouria as a right back and he changed the player’s position?”

Team Melli travelled to Istanbul on Monday to hold a training camp in the European country. The Persians will face Turkey football team on May 29 in a friendly match as part of preparation for the 2018 World Cup.

Iran have been drawn in Group B of the 2018 World Cup along with Morocco, Spain and Portugal.



## Daniel Arzani: “I’ve just got to prove I’m invaluable”

New Socceroo Daniel Arzani is intent on using the pre-World Cup training camp in Antalya, Turkey, to prove he can be an asset to Bert van Marwijk and his side.

The 19-year-old whizkid was selected in van Marwijk’s initial 32-man squad and then survived the cull to be chosen in the 26-man pool for the camp.

It is the first taste of senior football at international level for Arzani, who on Sunday completed his first training session with his new teammates.

The Melbourne City winger plans to further solidify his name in van Marwijk’s plans simply by playing his own game.

“To be honest, it hasn’t actually hit me yet ... I haven’t had that overwhelming excitement yet but that will probably come in the next couple of days,” he said.

“For me, I’ve just got to prove I’m invaluable to the team and that I have something to add.

“And I think that will come with just doing my own thing and hopefully doing well.”

But pushing for a dream selection at the World Cup in Russia has not come without its fears.

“Coming into camp at first, it was a bit frightening because I don’t actually know anyone,” Arzani explained.

“Knowing that I’ve got Timmy – he’s a good friend of mine – is very helpful.

“Coming into camp as a young player, you’re kind of starting over again so I’ve got to prove my worth and maybe more so than anyone else as well.”

As Arzani burst onto the scene in the second half of the 2017-18 season with Melbourne City, his international



future became a hot topic in the press.

Born in Iran, Arzani is eligible to represent Team Meli, who will also feature in Russia next month.

And Iran were circling, with coach Carlos Queiroz admitting in an interview with Fox Sports Asia that he was watching Arzani with fondness.

But Arzani has since chosen Australia over his nation of birth.

Asked what wearing the Green and Gold would mean, Arzani replied: “It’d be a dream come true.

“Since I was young, I always dreamed of playing for Australia, playing for the Socceros and to think that that could be happening in the next couple of weeks is amazing.”

The Socceros will use the camp, as well as friendlies against Hungary and the Czech Republic, as preparation for the World Cup.

A final 23-man squad is due to be selected in early June.

(Source: Daily Football Show)

## Honda, Kagawa in Japan’s training squad

New Japan coach Akira Nishino has flagged his 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia hopes by turning to his big hitters for the home friendly with Ghana on May 30.

Talismanic Japan forward Keisuke Honda and playmaker Shinji Kagawa were included by Nishino among a group of 27 players.

Nishino, who took over from Vahid Halilhodzic after the latter’s firing last month, is scheduled to name his final 23-man World Cup squad on May 31.

“Of course I expect to pick the World Cup squad from these 27 players,” Nishino said.

“Honda and Kagawa have been core players of the national team and I’ve called them up in the hope that they will be able to contribute.”

Nishino called up 17 overseas-based players to face Ghana in Yokohama in Japan’s final home FIFA World Cup warm-up.

“Kagawa requires truly delicate thinking,” admitted Nishino.

“We have high hopes for him, and want to make a final decision during this training camp. Without doubt he is a player who can’t be replaced.”

Leicester City striker Shinji Okazaki and Galatasaray full-back Yuto Nagatomo, who have both won over 100 caps, were also among those selected.

Japan have been drawn alongside Colombia, Poland and Senegal in Group H at the FIFA World Cup.

Honda’s goals helped Japan reach the last 16 of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa but Japan crashed out of the 2014 Brazil tournament at the group stage.

### ■ Japan Squad

Goalkeepers: Eiji Kawashima (Football Club de Metz/France), Masaaki Higashiguchi (Gamba Osaka), Kosuke Nakamura (Kashiwa Reysol);

Defenders: Yuto Nagatomo (Galatasaray



S.K./Turkey), Tomoaki Makino (Urawa Reds), Maya Yoshida (Southampton FC/England), Hiroki Sakai (Olympique de Marseille/France), Gotoku Sakai (Hamburger SV/Germany), Gen Shoji (Kashima Antlers), Wataru Endo (Urawa Red Diamonds), Naomichi Ueda (Kashima Antlers);

Midfielders: Makoto Hasebe (Eintracht Frankfurt/Germany), Toshihiro Aoyama (Sanfrece Hiroshima), Keisuke Honda (CF Pachuca/Mexico), Takashi Inui (SD Eibar/Spain), Shinji Kagawa (Borussia Dortmund/Germany), Hotaru Yamaguchi (Cerezo Osaka), Genki Haraguchi (Fortuna Düsseldorf/Germany), Takashi Usami (Fortuna Düsseldorf/Germany), Gaku Shibasaki (Getafe C.F./Spain), Ryota Ohshima (Kawasaki Frontale), Kento Misao (Kashima Antlers), Yosuke Ideguchi (Cultural Leonesa/Spain);

Forwards: Shinji Okazaki (Leicester City Football Club/England), Yuya Osako (Werder Bremen/Germany), Yoshinori Muto (1.FSV Mainz 05/Germany), Takuma Asano (VfB Stuttgart/Germany).

(Source: AFP)

## Iran B team runner-up in FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tour

**PressTV—** The Iranian men’s national beach volleyball B team has finished as the vice champion of the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) Beach Volleyball World Tour in Turkey.

On Sunday, the Iranian duo of Rahman Raoufi and Hamed Mirzaali sustained a 1-2 defeat from their Serbian counterparts Stefan Basta and Lazar Kolaric at the end of the title match played in the southwestern Turkish city of Aydin.

The Iranians got off to a strong start, and mounted a string of attacks. They could take the first set 21-16.

Basta and Kolaric, however, did not to capitulate. They won the second and final sets 25-23 and 16-14 respectively.

Meanwhile, Russian Ruslan Bykanov and Maksim Hudyakov settled for a third-place finish after they notched up a 2-0 victory over Hasan Huseyin Mermer and Safa Urlu from Turkey.

The FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tour in Aydin, Turkey, kicked off on May 17, and wrapped up on May 20, 2018.

## Lopetegui blends youth and experience in Spain World Cup squad

Spain coach Julen Lopetegui named his 23-man World Cup squad on Monday with a rich blend of youth and experience, as well as some high-profile absentees.

Chelsea striker Alvaro Morata was left out after a disappointing season in England, as was his team mate Marcos Alonso, with Arsenal’s Nacho Monreal picked as back-up for left back Jordi Alba.

Lopetegui selected Atletico Madrid’s Diego Costa, Celta Vigo’s Iago Aspas and Valencia’s Rodrigo Moreno as his three centre forwards, all relatively untested.

Costa, who had a disappointing tournament in Brazil in 2014 as Spain were knocked out at the group stage, has scored seven goals in 18 internationals.

Versatile Barcelona midfielder Sergi Roberto was also omitted while veteran playmaker Andres Iniesta heads to his fourth World Cup along with captain Sergio Ramos.

Isco, Marco Asensio, Nacho Fernandez, Dani Carvajal and Lucas Vazquez are going to the tournament for the first time along with their Real Madrid team mate Ramos.

Only four Barcelona players are in the Spain squad, down from seven in Brazil four years ago.

The 2010 world champions face Switzerland on June 3 and Tunisia on June 9 in friendlies before their World Cup campaign begins against Portugal on June 15.

Squad:

Goalkeepers: David de Gea (Manchester United), Pepe Reina (Napoli), Kepa Arrizabalaga (Athletic Bilbao).

Defenders: Jordi Alba (Barcelona), Nacho Monreal (Arsenal), Alvaro Odriozola (Real Sociedad), Nacho Fernandez (Real Madrid), Dani Carvajal (Real Madrid), Gerard Pique (Barcelona), Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid), Cesar Azpilicueta (Chelsea).

Midfielders: Sergio Busquets (Barcelona), Isco (Real Madrid), Thiago Alcantara (Bayern Munich), David Silva (Manchester City), Andres Iniesta (Barcelona), Saul Niguez (Atletico Madrid), Koke (Atletico Madrid).

Forwards: Marco Asensio (Real Madrid), Iago Aspas (Celta Vigo), Diego Costa (Atletico Madrid), Rodrigo Moreno (Valencia), Lucas Vazquez (Real Madrid).

(Source: Reuters)

## Iran stands 2nd at CFA International Youth football tournament

**PressTV—** The Iran national under-17 football team, domestically commonly known as Nojavanan, has ended its commendable campaign at the Chinese Football Association (CFA) International Youth (U17) football tournament, and claimed the second spot at the conclusion of the sports event.

The Iranian side defeated Kyrgyzstan 3-1 in its last match of the tournament in China’s eastern-central coastal city of Jiangyin on Sunday.

Iran started the match in a fairly dominant fashion, and took the lead in the 12th minute when Amirhossein Azizi buried the ball in the back of the net.

Nojavanan doubled its advantage three minutes later, when Azizi took up a fine opportunity to put his team 2-0 in front.

Kyrgyz footballers mounted pressure after the break in the hope of narrowing the deficit, and could eventually pull a goal back.

In the 87th minute, Iran’s Amir Ja’afari received a great pass from Mehdi Seyyedi, and sent a cool finish into the net to make it 3-1.

Nojavanan finished as the vice champion of the competitions with six points out of three matches.

Japan was crowned the champion with seven points, while China stood third with four points.

## Farewell ceremony held for Iran national football team

**PLDC—** A farewell celebration was held in Tehran’s Vahdat Hall for leaving Iran national football team Sunday night.

The ceremony was attended by Iran football officials, national team players, coaching staff, some Iranian artists and also football fans.

Team Melli went to Istanbul on Monday to hold a training camp in Turkey.

Carlos Queiroz’s men will play Turkey in a friendly match next week as part of preparation for the 2018 World Cup.

Iran has been drawn in Group B along with Morocco, Spain and Portugal.

Team Melli will open the competition with a match against Morocco on June 15.

Iran will face Spain in Kazan on 20 June before meeting Cristiano Ronaldo’s Portugal in Saransk five days later.

The matches of the 2018 World Cup will be held between June 14 and July 15 at 12 stadiums.

## Last glimpse of legends at Russia 2018

So often, when caught up in the fervour of a FIFA World Cup™, you don’t get a chance to take a step back and consider what you’re seeing. Some players we will have spent hours of our lives with, watching them at work, entertaining fans around the world.

However, all good things must come to an end. Ahead of the 2018 edition, FIFA.com looks at four players who have left an indelible mark on the World Cup and will be taking their final bow on the global stage in Russia.

### ■ Rafael Marquez, 39 ● Mexico

Having retired from club football in April, bowing out at Atlas where he begun his professional career 22 years ago, Russia 2018 will truly be the final chance to enjoy the man known as El Kaiser. Marquez will equal the all-time record of appearing at five World Cups should he play, matching compatriot Antonio Carbajal and Germany’s Lothar Matthaus.

In truth, he could have been setting a new record, having already made his debut in 1997, only to miss out on France 1998 as a 19-year-old. However, when he did belatedly make his arrival he was sporting the captain’s armband at Korea/Japan 2002, leading him to become the first player to skipper his team at four consecutive World Cups.

World Cup debut: Mexico 1-0 Croatia, 3 June 2002

Tournaments: 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014

Appearances so far: 16

### ■ Andres Iniesta, 34 ● Spain

10:37pm local time, Soccer City, Johannesburg. This was when Iniesta’s prominent place in World Cup history was secured forever. While future generations may well remember him most for his extra-time volley against the Netherlands, he is rightly regarded as a player who could turn the game into an interpretive art performance.

Having earned his Spain debut just a fortnight before Germany 2006 kicked off, he has been a central figure ever



since. Now, after playing his final game for Barcelona to end a two-decade long association, he is set to pull on the national team shirt for the last time. It will cap an emotional couple of months for El Ilusionista (The Illusionist).

World Cup debut: Saudi Arabia 0-1 Spain, 23 June 2006

Tournaments: 2006, 2010, 2014

Appearances so far: 10

### ■ Tim Cahill, 38 ● Australia

The only consistent figure across Australia’s modern World Cup era, Cahill wasted little time in making himself a hero, earning them their first ever win at the global finals with a late brace against Japan in their first game of Germany 2006. The Socceros have never won without him on the scoresheet.

He has five goals to his name so far, with his strike against Chile in Brazil 2014 making him the first Australian to score in three World Cups. He could also add to his accolade as the nation’s top scorer by becoming their record caps-holder in Russia.

World Cup debut: Australia 3-1 Japan, 12 June 2006

Tournaments: 2006, 2010, 2014

Appearances so far: 8

### ■ Javier Mascherano, 33 ● Argentina

While some people may overlook the value of Mascherano, the fact that he has played every minute of Argentina’s last three World Cups proves that, inside La Albiceleste’s camp, he has never been taken for granted. Prior to coaching them in South Africa, Diego Maradona described Argentina as “Mascherano and ten more”, later making the defensive midfielder his captain.

Coming so close to taking the title four years ago, before being beaten in extra-time by Mario Gotze’s winner for Germany, will no doubt always feel like a missed opportunity. However, he has one last chance to live out his dream with Argentina in Russia.

World Cup debut: Argentina 2-1 Cote d’Ivoire, 10 June 2006

Tournaments: 2006, 2010, 2014

Appearances so far: 16

(Source: FIFA)



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Docufiction spotlights Iranian traditional bull contest

**A R T** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Iranian filmmaker Mahnaz Sabur has recently made a docufiction that puts its spotlight on a traditional style of bull contest common to the rural societies in Gilan Province.



A scene from “Varza Contest” by Mahnaz Sabur

Sabur spent two years making the film “Varza Contest”, she said in a press release on Monday.

Iranian people in the regions of Gilan, Mazandaran and Lorestan call a strong bull used in traditional agriculture a varza. “Varza Contest” is about a traditional ceremony, during which farmers in the Gilan province make the bulls fight. The ceremony is usually performed every year at the end of harvest time.

Unfortunately, the tradition has been led away from its past excellence and changed into a business.

Kobani child rescue subject of Iranian director’s new film

**A R T** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Iranian filmmaker Abedin Mahdavi plans to make his new film about a child rescue in Kobani, a town near the Turkish border that has witnessed months of heavy fighting between Daesh and Syrian Kurdish forces.



Abedin Mahdavi in an undated photo.

The film titled “Avina” is based on a true story, and filming will begin in Iran and will later continue in Kobani, Mahdavi announced in a press release on Monday.

Mahdavi is a filmmaker and photographer who has made over 40 films and documentaries on the impacts of wars on children in Afghanistan, Syria and several other countries.

Bill Gold, iconic master of the movie poster, dies at 97

**LOS ANGELES (Hollywood Reporter)** — Bill Gold, who revolutionized the art of the movie poster over a seven-decade career that began with “Casablanca” and included “A Clockwork Orange”, “The Exorcist” and dozens of Clint Eastwood films, has died. He was 97.

Gold died at his home in Old Greenwich, Connecticut, on Sunday, according to family spokeswoman Christine Gillow.

The Brooklyn native began at Warner Bros. in the early 1940s and had a hand in more than 2,000 posters during his iconic career, working on films for everyone from Alfred Hitchcock (1954’s Dial M for Murder), Elia Kazan (1955’s East of Eden) and Federico Fellini (1963’s 8 1/2) to Sam Peckinpah (1969’s The Wild Bunch), Robert Altman (1971’s McCabe & Mrs. Miller) and Martin Scorsese (1990’s GoodFellas).

Gold, who received a Lifetime Achievement Award from The Hollywood Reporter during its 1994 Key Art Awards ceremony, had a way of setting the mood for a movie using a less-is-more philosophy.

“We try not to tell the whole story,” he told CBS News in March. “We try to tell a minimum amount of a story, because anything more than that is confusing.”

Gold’s fruitful relationship with Eastwood began with “Dirty Harry” (1971), and he gave the actor a gun or a gritty countenance on posters for such films “The Enforcer” (1976), “The Outlaw Josey Wales” (1976), “The Gauntlet” (1977), “Pale Rider” (1985) and “Unforgiven” (1992).

Gold retired after working on the Eastwood-directed “Mystic River” (2003) but re-emerged to do the poster for the filmmaker’s J. Edgar (2011).

“With Bill, I knew he would bring great ideas, and the poster he created would be one less thing we had to think about,” Eastwood writes in the introduction to the 2010 book Bill Gold PosterWorks. “He respected the film, he respected the story, and he always respected what we were trying to accomplish.

Team Melli anthem “Eleven Stars” performed in Tehran

**A R T** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** – “Eleven Stars”, the official anthem of Team Melli, Iran’s national football team, was performed by an ensemble composed of musicians from the Tehran Symphony Orchestra and National Orchestra at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on Sunday evening.

Vocalist Salar Aqili performed the song, whose lyrics were composed by Ehsan Afshari while Babak Zarrin put them to music.

Addressing the national team, Tehran Symphony Orchestra conductor Shahrddad Rohani said that they should know the hearts of 80 million Iranians are with them.

The ceremony was followed by performances of several songs under the batons of the two conductors, Rohani and Fereidun Shabbazian, who is the conductor of the National Orchestra.

The Portuguese coach of Team Melli, Carlos Queiroz, was surprised to hear a composition performed by the orchestra from his homeland.

In his brief remarks, Queiroz proposed that Iranian legend striker Ali Daei, currently head coach of Saipa, and a member of Arminia Bielefeld in 1997, should become the permanent ambassador of Iran’s football.

“Victory of Sun” was another song performed by Aqili under the baton of Shabbazian.

The Tehran Symphony Orchestra and National Orchestra are scheduled to perform several concerts in honor of Team Melli in Russia during the FIFA World Cup soccer tournament in Russia.



Vocalist Salar Aqili acknowledges the audience before the performance of “Eleven Stars”, the official anthem of Team Melli, at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on May 20, 2018. (Mohammad Moheimani)

Papillon Association and Sadi Foundation sign MOU

**A R T** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The Papillon Association in Switzerland and the Sadi Foundation, a Tehran-based organization that provides Persian language educational services abroad, has recently signed a memorandum of understanding.

Based on the MOU, the association, which is involved in socio-cultural activities for migrants in Switzerland, will organize courses on the Persian language, the Sadi Foundation announced in a press release published on Monday.

The association has also agreed to use the educational sources prepared at the foundation and also to apply the same educational standards developed by the foundation in its courses.



Papillon Association co-founders Sahar Ghaleh Assadi, Soha Khoie and Farzaneh Piranviseh pose after accepting the Prix Salut l’étranger-era in 2016. (RTN)

Teachers of the association will also receive training at the Sadi Foundation if necessary.

The Sadi Foundation will send teachers to Switzerland to organize workshops on the Persian language. According to the MOU, the institutions will also collaborate on publishing a collection of educational books.

Sahar Ghaleh Assadi, Soha Khoie and Farzaneh Piranviseh, three Iranian women from the canton of Neuchâtel, cofounded the Papillon Association in 2015.

The association also organizes courses on the French language for Iranian and Afghan migrants.

In 2016, Papillon won the Prix Salut l’étranger-era that is presented by the History Museum, La Chaux-de-Fonds in Neuchâtel.

World game publishers to attend 2018 Tehran Game Convention

**CULTURE** **d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Representatives from dozens of international computer and mobile game publishers will be attending the Tehran Game Convention (TGC), an exhibition of computer games organized by Iran’s National Foundation for Computer Games (NFCG).

The second edition of the TGC will be organized at the IRIB International Conference Hall on July 5 and 6, the foundation announced in a press release on Monday.

Wargaming.net from Cyprus, and HeroCraft and Mail.Ru Group, both from Russia, will participate in the convention.

PlayAd Media Group, a pioneer in video advertising across the Nordic region, Inca Games, a producer and publisher of interactive content in Buenos Aires, Gamigo Group, a leading gaming business in Europe and North America, and XENDEX, a pioneer in mobile gaming in Vienna will also take part in the event.

The TGC will help provide an opportunity for Iranian game publishers to hold talks and introduce their latest productions.

Other companies are expected to be added to the list of TGC guests.



“Deadpool 2” propels to \$125 million opening



Actor Ryan Reynolds poses on the red carpet during the premiere of “Deadpool 2” in Manhattan, New York, U.S., May 14, 2018. (Reuters/Shannon Stapleton)

**LOS ANGELES (Variety.com)** — Deadpool might not consider himself a superhero, but its latest installment is off to a powerful start.

The Marvel Comics film from 20th Century Fox debuted in North America with \$125 million in 4,349 locations. That wasn’t enough to match the debut of its predecessor, 2016’s “Deadpool,” which had the biggest opening ever for an R-rated film with \$132.4 million. The Ryan Reynolds-starrer bowed overseas with \$176 million for a global weekend total of \$301 million.

Although it debuted under estimates, “Deadpool 2’s” launch was nothing to complain about. It still secured the second-best opening for an R-rated film, as well as the third-biggest debut of the year behind Marvel blockbusters “Avengers: Infinity War” and “Black Panther.” It also secured Fox its second-highest opening weekend in history.

The sequel is still boasting a promising critical consensus, with an 84 percent Rotten Tomatoes rating and an A CinemaScore.

“Deadpool 2’s” strong debut is a testament to Reynolds, according to Fox’s president of domestic distribution Chris Aronson.

“I just can’t say enough about him,” Aronson said. “Not just the character, but promoting it. I feel great about this opening.”

Its opening was enough to crush “Avengers: Infinity War’s” reign on the domestic box office. After securing the No. 1 spot for three weeks, the Disney and Marvel superhero tentpole dropped to second place. Its fourth weekend haul was still impressive, reeling in \$29 million from 4,002 screens. “Infinity War’s” domestic tally currently sits at \$595.4 million.

“Infinity War” was followed by Paramount Pictures’ new release, “Book Club”. The romantic comedy — starring Diane Keaton, Jane Fonda, Candice Bergen, and Mary Steenburgen — came in slightly ahead of expectations, earning \$12.3 million on 2,781 screens.

The weekend’s other newcomer, Global Road Entertainment’s “Show Dogs,” landed in sixth place, only digging up \$6 million from 3,212 locations. The family-friendly comedy garnered an A CinemaScore. Its Rotten Tomatoes critical score didn’t fare quite as well, averaging a 26 percent.

Rounding out the top five are two film’s sophomore frames. Warner Bros.’ “Life of the Party” rallied in \$7.5 million from 3,656 locations. Domestically, it has made \$30.9 million. Universal’s “Breaking In” secured \$6.5 million on 2,537 screens. In two weeks, it’s earned \$28.8 million.

In the specialty market, Focus Features’ “Pope Francis - A Man of His Word” opened with \$480,000 on 346 screens for a per screen average of \$1,389.

“Jurassic Park” dinosaur expert’s next big thing: Holograms



In this May 21, 2016, Jack Horner sits under Montana’s T-Rex in the Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman, Mont. (AP Photo/Matt Volz, File)

**HELENA, Mont. (AP)** — Forget the gray, green and brown dinosaurs in the “Jurassic Park” movies. Paleontologist Jack Horner wants to transport people back in time to see a feathered Tyrannosaurus rex colored bright red and blue triceratops with red fringe similar to a rooster’s comb.

Horner, who consulted with director Steven Spielberg on the “Jurassic Park” films, is developing a three-dimensional hologram exhibit that will showcase the latest theories on what dinosaurs looked like. He is working with entertainment company Base Hologram to create an exhibit that will let people feel as though they’re on an archaeological dig, inside a laboratory and surrounded by dinosaurs in the wild.

“I’m always trying to figure out a good way to get the science of paleontology across to the general public,” Horner said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. “Like taking them into the field or taking them into my laboratory and then using the technology that we have to show people what dinosaurs were really like.”

That understanding of what dinosaurs looked like has changed a lot since the original “Jurassic Park” in 1993. For example, researchers now believe dinosaurs were much more bird-like than lizard-like, and scientists studying dinosaur skulls have found keratin, a substance that gives birds their bright colors.

“We can see at least areas that could be vividly colored, very much like birds, and there’s no reason to make them different from birds,” Horner said.

Horner and Base Hologram workers have been developing the exhibit’s story line for a couple of months, with plans to have multiple traveling exhibits ready to launch by spring 2019. The company wants to place them in museums, science centers and other institutions where they might spur debate among scientists who don’t share the theory that dinosaurs were colorful, feathered creatures.

“The controversy is OK because it makes people talk,” said Base Hologram executive vice president Michael Swinney.

Live performances using holograms have gained attention in recent years, notably through concerts that feature likenesses of dead performers such as Michael Jackson and Tupac Shakur.

Until now, Base Hologram, a subsidiary of the live entertainment company Base Entertainment, has used the technology to put on concerts by late singers Roy Orbison and Marie Callas. As the field becomes more competitive, the company is seeking new areas to apply the technology, such as science, CEO Brian Becker said.

Horner previously worked with Microsoft to create his dinosaur holograms that can be used with virtual and augmented reality technologies.