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A suggestion for responding Pompeo:

# Iran's 12 conditions for talks with U.S.

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## Iran rejects U.S. state secretary's lies, accusations

Iran's Foreign Ministry has taken a swipe at the new U.S. secretary of state for the meddlesome comments he made against Tehran in the so-called new U.S. strategy. In a Monday statement, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said the cheap, baseless, insulting and interventionist remarks made by Mike Pompeo and the accusations he levelled against the great and civilized Iranian nation are indicative of U.S. officials' despair and desperation in

the face of the Iranian nation. According to the statement, Pompeo's remarks are also regarded as a cowardly attempt to deflect the world public opinion from Washington's illegal move (its unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA) and its breach of obligations under the nuclear deal, which is in contravention of international regulations and the UN resolution proposed by the U.S. and adopted unanimously. ➔2

## Why Riyadh, allies worry over Yemeni ballistic missiles

By Farzad Farhadi

**TEHRAN** — The Saudi-led war against Yemen continues. The topic that has kept analysts occupied involves Yemeni missiles and their high precision in striking their targets.

The Yemeni army and popular committees' fighters continue firing missiles at Jizan, Asir, Najran and Riyadh. This has

forced the Saudis to appeal to members of the so-called U.S. Army Green Berets. According to U.S. media reports, their mission is to track down and destroy these missiles because they are a source of concern for Saudi officials.

The Saudis, weakened by Yemeni missile attacks, have turned to propaganda claiming that the missiles are Iranian. ➔7

## Iran's non-oil exports up 28.5% in 2 months yr/yr

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Government spokesman Mohammad Baqer Nobakht announced that Iran's non-oil exports during the two months from March 21 to May 21 rose 28.5 percent from the figure of the same time span in the past year. Iran exported \$7.49 billion of non-oil products in the mentioned two months of this year, while the figure was \$5.826 billion in the same period of time

in the past year, the official said.

He put the value of the two-month imports of non-oil commodities at \$6 billion in this year and at \$6.105 billion in last year, with 1.7 percent fall year on year.

The official also announced that the country's oil income during the first month of this Iranian calendar year (March 21-April 20) has risen 99 percent compared to the same month in the past year.



## ARTICLE

**Martin Love**  
Political analyst from North Carolina

## Who does Pompeo think he is kidding?

Mike Pompeo, the new U.S. Secretary of State in the Trump administration, has this week made radical demands upon the sovereign and significant and thousands of year old state of Iran (or Persia, as you will) and its 90 or so million people that, in effect, can either make a sane and reasonable person do one of two things, or both: Be rolled with uncontrollable laughter and/or curled up into a ball of lachrymose despair. And I alone, as a U.S. citizen, am not alone in thinking so inside the U.S.

What Pompeo's recent speech literally reflects is just about every dangerous ailment of disposition and judgment that has infected U.S. policy since perhaps the Vietnam War and as well led to untold and tragic military aggressions outside the U.S. upon other peoples and countries. There are many adjectives to characterize the essential nature of Pompeo's pronouncement on May 21, but the one that comes most readily to mind literally fits Pompeo's name: Pompous. And even if the Islamic Republic fulfilled all the weird demands, some of which are completely uninformed and senseless, what does it get in return? Not much: A new agreement or treaty or something like JCPOA Iteration Two around any and all development of nuclear expertise in Iran. Pompeo offered nothing else such as, for examples, bilateral diplomatic relations with the U.S., respect and friendship, a complete evisceration of sanctions, economic aid and trade. Let's take a look at the various demands.

■ Declare to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) a full account of the prior military dimensions of its nuclear program and permanently and verifiably abandon such work in perpetuity.

■ Stop enrichment and never pursue plutonium reprocessing, including closing its heavy water reactor.

■ Provide the IAEA with unqualified access to all sites throughout the entire country.

■ End its proliferation of ballistic missiles and halt further launching or development of nuclear-capable missile systems.

■ Release all U.S. citizens as well as citizens of U.S. partners and allies. ➔7

## There are various means for EU to undermine U.S. sanctions: Nephew

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**  
By Javad Heirannia

**TEHRAN** — Richard Nephew, who served as the lead sanctions expert for the U.S. team negotiating with Iran, is of the opinion that "There are various means for the EU to undermine U.S. sanctions and thereby provide assurance to business, but they require a confrontation with Iran."

The fellow at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, says, "Whether the EU wishes to do this is what we shall soon see."

Following is the text of the interview:

■ The U.S. violated the JCPOA. What are the reasons behind this unilateral revocation?

A: I think that different parts of the U.S. government have different explanations. For Trump



and a few others, I think he earnestly believes that more pressure will yield a better deal via negotiations. For others, including the national security advisor, I believe he thinks that more pressure will yield either complete Iranian capitulation or collapse of the Iranian government. Either

way, the United States believes more pressure is necessary now.

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

A: Well, their responsibilities and obligations have not changed, as indeed they have said. They are now seeking ways of keeping within their obligations under the JCPOA.

■ 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: There are multiple issues at play here, not including bringing back the United States to reason. ➔7

## Russia military shoots down 'unknown drone' close to Syria's Khmeimim base

Russian's military has said that it shot down an "unknown drone" that came close to Khmeimim air base in Syria.

"There are neither casualties nor physical damage. Russia's Khmeimim air base is operating as normal," said the Russian Defense Ministry on Monday.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that explosions had been heard from the base's vicinity, which appeared to be from Russian air defenses.

In January, Russia said that its troops have successfully repelled multiple drone attacks launched by militants on its naval and air bases in Syria.

Russia has been conducting air raids against terrorist outfits in Syria at the Damascus govern-

ment's request since September 2015. Moscow has also maintained a naval group in the Mediterranean since the start of its anti-terror campaign in the war-ravaged Arab country.

■ **NATO-made arms cache in Syria shows U.S. support for terrorists**

A Russian lawmaker says the latest discovery of a considerable amount of NATO-made munitions left behind by Takfiri militants in western Syria proves they are being aided by the United States and its allies and reveals the true colors of the Washington-led military mission in the crisis-torn country.

"The detection of NATO weapons in the militants' warehouses once again confirms the true intentions of the U.S.-led counter-

terrorism coalition. There have already been a lot of cases of abetting terrorism on the part of the United States and their allies," Viktor Bondarev, chairman of the Defense and Security Committee at the upper house of Russia's parliament, said on Monday.

Bondarev said that Russia has aerial photographs of U.S. troops facilitating the withdrawal of militants from the Syrian city of Abu Kamal in exchange for them allowing free passage to American special forces through territories then controlled by the terrorists.

There have been many cases of U.S. forces directly delivering material and technical assistance, specifically shells and ammunition, to militants, he said. ➔13



## Everybody is invited: Communal Iftar meal in Tehran

Concurrent with the holy, fasting month of Ramadan, communal Iftar meal is being served at Tehran's Imam Hossein Square. Tehraners gather every day to recite verses of the Holy Quran, say prayer and then have Iftar.

A fasting day during Ramadan begins immediately after the meal of Suhur, served before the sunrise, and continues during the daylight hours, and ends with sunset with the evening meal of Iftar. Muslims break their fast at the time of the call to prayer for the evening prayer.



## ARTICLE

**Haniyeh Sadat Jafariyeh**  
Tehran Times Journalist

## Gas first – energy for peace

When history is written, then President Trump's decision on 8th May to abandon the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreement with Iran may well be seen as a historic turning point.

In fact the origins of President Donald Trump's aggressive stance against Iran may lie in his 'Energy Week' speech on June 29 which saw a historic change in U.S. foreign policy doctrine and language, when the world heard from President Trump for the first time in addition to America First, a new U.S. rhetoric of Energy Dominance.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday, May 21, threatened to place "the strongest sanctions in history" on Iran if its government doesn't comply with Trump Administration policies. He called for a new nuclear agreement with Iran following Trump's withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal. He said that the Trump administration prefers for it to be a treaty that is ratified by the U.S. Congress.

In response, Iran's foreign minister criticized the U.S. secretary of state, tweeting that he saw U.S. diplomacy as a "sham" that was "imprisoned by delusions & failed policies." Minister Zarif wrote: "It repeats the same wrong choices and will thus reap the same ill rewards."

An Iranian VIP delegation participated at the pre-eminent European annual Flame natural gas conference in Amsterdam last week, during which speakers and delegates from Mediterranean Sea to Iran, Korea to Kazakhstan (Caspian Sea) and the U.S. to Russia discussed gas market and infrastructure development while elsewhere, heads of state and diplomats were meeting to address the JCPOA fallout, called for depoliticizing the energy industry.

■ **Energy dominance & America first**

I asked Chris Cook from University College London who participated at the Flame as speaker about the U.S. new policy on Iran. He said: "I first analyzed the U.S. Energy Dominance doctrine announced by Trump on June 29, 2017 in an article published on August 2, 2017 and since then this U.S. strategy has become much clearer." ➔4



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



### VP: Pompeo lagging 40 years behind the time

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri said on Tuesday that U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is lagging 40 years behind the time, pointing to the 1979 Islamic Revolution as a backlash against foreign influence.

On Monday, Pompeo said the U.S. will aim to “crush” Iran with economic and military pressure unless it changes its behavior in the Middle East.

“The Iranian nation brought about the Revolution so that no one would tell them what to do and what not to do,” Jahangiri tweeted.

“One should speak with the Iranian nation with respect and logic not with threats,” the vice president added.



### Tehran says ready to speed up uranium enrichment

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) is ready to accelerate its uranium enrichment work, but hoping that such decision would not be necessary, AEOI chief Ali Akbar Salehi said on Tuesday.

“We have the capacity to restore [enrichment program] but hope we'll never reach that point, because the country's nuclear industry is moving toward its commercial purposes smoothly and without any problems,” Salehi said on Tuesday, Mehr reported.

Under the nuclear agreement, Iran stopped enriching uranium to the purity of 20 percent and gave up the majority of its fuel stockpile as part of the agreement.



### JCPOA talks ‘historic test’ for Europe: MP

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee chief Alaeddin Boroujerdi has said that talks with the European Union over the fate of the nuclear agreement (JCPOA) is an “important historical test” for the 28-nation bloc.

“They must decide in the coming weeks about the continuation of Barjam (a Persian acronym for the nuclear deal),” Boroujerdi told ISNA on Tuesday.

He also said unlike the beginning of the nuclear talks, there's no unity among other countries against Iran, pointing to U.S. economic war against China, Japan and South Korea as examples of Washington's fading power in the world.



### Amir Abdollahian meets Egyptian diplomat in Tehran

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the parliament speaker, met on Tuesday with chairman of the Egyptian interest section in Tehran Yasser Othman, where the two sides discussed the recent U.S. embassy move to al-Quds (Jerusalem).

The two sides exchanged views how Islamic countries can confront Israel's atrocities in the occupied lands and defend the rights of the Palestinian people, ICANA reported.

They also discussed bilateral ties, latest regional and international developments and the importance of parliamentary ties.



### No alternative to Iran deal: German FM

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said on Monday that he was not surprised by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's attack on the Iran nuclear deal, before adding, “We do not see at this time a better alternative.”

Maas also said he will travel to Washington to meet Pompeo to discuss Washington's stance on the nuclear agreement, also called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

“From here I will actually travel to Washington to have a meeting with Secretary Pompeo, and take advantage of that meeting to talk about this,” he told reporters in Buenos Aires at the end of a G20 meeting in the Argentine capital, Reuters reported.



### ‘Sadrist Movement has stable relations with Iran’

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Dhia al-Asadi, head of the political bureau of the Sadrist Movement, has said that the movement has stable relations with Iran.

Speaking with Al Mayadeen on Tuesday, al-Asadi also said, “We will never surrender to any foreign demands, whether from the United States or other countries,” ISNA reported.

He also said Muqtada al-Sadr has no secret contacts with Saudi Arabia.

On Saturday, Iraq's electoral commission announced al-Sadr's coalition of secularists and Communists, Alliance of Revolutionaries for Reform, as the winner of the country's parliamentary elections.

# Zarif: U.S. foreign policy ‘imprisoned by delusions and failed policies’

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that the United States' foreign policy is “imprisoned by delusions and failed policies”.

The remarks by Zarif came after U.S. Secretary of States Mike Pompeo in a detailed speech demanded that Iran halt all uranium enrichment, stop its ballistic-missile program and give nuclear inspectors access to the entire country.

The remarks by Pompeo came nearly two weeks after his boss Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 international nuclear deal. Trump's move came despite the fact that the UN's nuclear watchdog, in charge of monitoring Iran's compliance with the deal, has confirmed that Tehran has abided by the terms of the agreement.

“US diplomacy sham is merely a regression to old habits: imprisoned by delusions & failed policies—dictated by corrupt Special Interest—it repeats the same wrong choices and will thus reap the same ill rewards,” Foreign Minister Zarif tweeted.

Zarif said Iran “is working with partners for post-US JCPOA solutions”.

European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini also responded to Pompeo, saying there is “no alternative” to the nuclear



## Zarif says the U.S. “repeats the same wrong choices and will thus reap the same ill rewards.”

deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

In his speech at the Heritage Foundation,

Pompeo also said Washington would impose unprecedented sanctions against Tehran.

“Secretary Pompeo's speech has not demon-

and give nuclear inspectors access to the entire country.

In response, Shamkhani said a country which has the record of using nuclear weapons against the (Japanese) civilians and also equipping the “brutal and child killer” Zionist regime of Israel with sophisticated weapons “is not qualified” to make comments about Iran's nuclear program.

The top security official said the UN nuclear watchdog as the only international monitoring body has confirmed the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear activities.

Pompeo's speech came nearly two weeks after Trump withdrew from the 2015 international nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

## Pompeo's remarks are show of weakness: Shamkhani

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Secretary of Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani said on Tuesday that the U.S. “fruitless efforts” to restrict Iran's rising power and influence are sign of Washington's “weakness”.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said 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.

Shamkhani said Pompeo's remarks are a “proof of the Islamic Republic's generative power at home and abroad.”

The new U.S. secretary of state also demanded that Iran halt all uranium enrichment, stop its ballistic-missile program

## ‘No alternative’ to JCPOA, EU's Mogherini tells U.S.

**BRUSSELS** — European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini warned Monday there was “no alternative” to the Iran nuclear deal, after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo vowed unprecedented sanctions against Tehran following Washington's withdrawal from the pact.

Pompeo, a longtime Iran hawk and fierce opponent of the 2015 agreement, earlier outlined an aggressive series of “painful” measures designed to hurt Tehran, in his first key address since moving to the State Department from the CIA in April.

“Secretary Pompeo's speech has not demonstrated how walking away from the JCPOA (nuclear deal) has made or will make the region safer from the threat of nuclear proliferation or how it puts us in a better position to influence Iran's conduct in areas outside the scope of JCPOA,” Mogherini said.

In a statement, she stressed “there is no alternative” to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as the deal is officially known.

U.S. President Donald Trump sparked an international outcry earlier this month when

he announced his country would pull out of the landmark accord struck in July 2015 between Tehran and major world powers.

“Iran will never again have carte blanche to dominate the Middle East,” Pompeo said, outlining 12 tough conditions from Washington for any “new deal” with Tehran.

But Mogherini called on the U.S. to keep its commitments as part of the agreement signed under Trump's predecessor Barack Obama.

“The JCPOA is the result of more than a decade of complex and delicate negotiations, based on dual

strated how walking away from the JCPOA has made or will make the region safer from the threat of nuclear proliferation or how it puts us in a better position to influence Iran's conduct in areas outside the scope of JCPOA,” Mogherini said in a statement, according to AFP.

Mogherini called on the U.S. to keep its commitments as part of the agreement signed under Trump's predecessor Barack Obama.

“The JCPOA is the result of more than a decade of complex and delicate negotiations, based on dual track approach and therefore the best possible outcome, striking the right balance,” Mogherini said, according to AFP.

“This deal belongs to the international community, having been endorsed by the United Nations Security Council. The international community expects all sides to keep the commitments they made more than two years ago,” she added.

Mogherini stressed right after Trump withdrew from the agreement that the EU would remain in the agreement and will do so “as long as Iran continues to implement its nuclear related commitments, as it is doing so far.”

Last week she said that EU countries are “talking about solutions to keep the deal alive,” while adding that measures would seek to allow Iran to keep exporting oil and for European banks to continue to operate.

Shamkhani said the history has shown that “foreign threats” have intensified “consolidation” and “unity” among Iranians. The security chief added “empty threats” will also have no effect on the “will of people and officials for continuing the current dignified path.”

Shamkhani also said Pompeo's allegations of Tehran's support for terrorism are just a “psychological warfare”.

Shamkhani, a former defense minister, went on to say that it is “understandable” that the United States and its regional allies, which are the main creators and supporters of the Takfiri terrorism, are “angry” that Iran prevented Daesh (ISIL) to spread its domain of ruling in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and even Europe.

## Iran to U.S.: History will prove everything

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian government spokesman Mohammad Baqer Nobakht said on Tuesday that history has shown victory of the Iranian people for several times and will show it again.

Nobakht's remarks came in response to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo who on Monday said 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 Pompeo as saying in his speech at the Heritage Foundation.

The harsh remarks by Pompeo came nearly two weeks after Trump withdrew from the 2015 international nuclear deal.

“History has shown the Iranian nation's great victories for many times and will show again. We have never abandoned resisting against the wrong. They [the U.S. officials] do not understand this issue,” Nobakht told a regular press conference.

## Tehran rejects U.S. state secretary's lies, accusations

**I →** “Pompeo's remarks once again revealed the poor intelligence, weak oversight, analytical backwardness and confusion in decision-making processes in the United States, and showed radical and hawkish currents in the U.S. neither know history, nor can learn lessons from it,” said the statement.

“The American regime which, despite opposition by all countries in the world except a handful of small regimes, has reneged on all its political, legal and international obligations, is not in a position to set conditions for a major country like Iran, which has made good on its commitments,” the statement read.

“The American regime must know that the United States' evasion of law and violation of its commitments not only will not create any rights for that regime (the U.S.), but puts the international responsibility for the consequences of its breach of law on the shoulders of the officials of that regime as well as its corrupt and mafia-linked supporters both at home and abroad, and this is while a new scandal emerges every day before the world's public opinion,” the statement noted.

It also said that the United States is not entitled to tell Iran what policies it should or should not adopt in its own region as all

the problems facing the Middle East region, including those in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, the occupied Palestine, Yemen and Afghanistan, all emanate from the interference and encroachment of Washington and the medieval dictatorial governments of its allies.

“An inherent feature of the United States' colonialist regime is to support terrorism, especially state terrorism. Terror groups such Al-Qaeda, ISIS, the MKO, Jundallah and other Takfiri terrorist groups, which continue to survive with American taxpayers' money and with the support of incompetent systems in the Middle East, will inconceivably be defeated, and the U.S. government and its allies will be disgraced,” the statement read.

“The fathers of Al-Qaeda and hundreds of other terrorist groups which have jeopardized international peace and security,

are not in a position to distort the Islamic Republic of Iran's stabilizing and anti-terrorism measures in the region and in the whole world, and pursue its domineering illusions,” said the statement.

According to the statement, those plotting coups against legal governments, looting the riches of oppressed nations, massacring innocent and defenseless women and children, violating international agreements and resolutions, producing and using weapons of mass destruction, and violating the rights of humans and minorities and people of color in their countries, are in no position to threaten independent nations that are standing to all these crimes with glory and honor.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran is a system emanating from the Islamic Revolution of Iranian people, who have stood up to,

**“Pompeo's remarks once again revealed the poor intelligence, weak oversight, analytical backwardness and confusion in decision-making processes in the United States, and showed radical and hawkish currents in the U.S. neither know history, nor can learn lessons from it,” said the statement.**

## Official: Pompeo presented ‘neither strategy,’ ‘nor plan’

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Majid Takht-Ravanchi, deputy director of the presidential chief of staff for political affairs, has said that the U.S. government is under the influence of the Zionists and the terrorist groups.

In an interview with IRIB published on Tuesday, Takht-Ravanchi said that the U.S. secretary of state's remarks came from “delusion” of the U.S. government.

He described Pompeo's language as “obscene” and “rude”. “What Pompeo said last night was not strategy or plan, but it was remarks against the Iranian system and nation

which were completely wrong and indicated continuation of animosity towards the Islamic Republic,” he said.

Elsewhere, he said that the U.S. have become isolated at the international stage by pulling out of the 2015 nuclear deal.

“When the closest partner of the U.S. in Europe makes remarks contrary to the U.S. secretary of state's shows that the U.S. is isolated,” he added.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also said on Monday that the “sham” U.S. foreign policy is “merely a regression to old habits”

“US. diplomacy sham is merely a regression to old habits: imprisoned by delusions & failed policies—dictated by corrupt Special Interest—it repeats the same wrong choices and will thus reap the same ill rewards,” Zarif tweeted.

Pompeo's speech came nearly two weeks after Trump withdrew from the 2015 international nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini also issued a statement on Monday saying there is “no alternative” to the nuclear deal.



# Saudi royal urges coup to depose King Salman, protect kingdom from harm

An exiled Saudi prince has called for a coup by his influential uncles to depose King Salman and prevent the current ruling structure led by his son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, from doing more damage to the kingdom.

Prince Khaled bin Farhan, who has been awarded asylum in Germany, made the call on Prince Ahmed bin Abdulaziz and Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz in comments to the Middle East Eye news portal published on Monday.

He asked the duo to use the influence they wield with their fellow royals as well as with the military to bring about the palace coup.

Such a change, bin Farhan asserted, was imperative to salvage the kingdom from Salman's "irrational, erratic, and stupid" tutelage.

Saudi King Salman appointed bin Salman as the first in line to the throne in a surprise move last June that saw the monarch ousting Crown Prince Muhammed bin Nayef, who had himself replaced Muqrin in 2015.

Calling bin Salman's meteoric rise to power into question, bin Farhan said, "If King Salman had been in a good state of health, things wouldn't have reached this stage. When we see public policy in Saudi Arabia, we can see that King Salman is completely absent from the screen or from the political scene in Saudi Arabia."

Bin Salman, also the country's defense minister, is seen as the all-powerful figure in Saudi Arabia, whose impulsive attitude towards domestic and regional affairs has fueled much unrest both inside and outside the kingdom. Late last year, he arrested hundreds of fellow princes and businessmen in what the young prince tried to portray as an "anti-corruption campaign," seizing a total of \$100 billion in exchange for their freedom.

He is also seen as the architect of the three-year-long Saudi-led invasion of neighboring Yemen, which has killed and displaced tens of thousands, and a key proponent of maximum regional and international pressure on regional powerhouse Iran.

Under bin Salman, the Saudi regime has also been rushing towards the normalization of ties with the regime in Tel Aviv at the expense of undermining the Palestinian cause.

Prince Khaled's comments come amid the Saudi crown prince's mysterious absence from the public eye since heavy gunfire and explosions were reported just outside the royal palace in Riyadh late last month.

Some sources claimed that the incidents on April 21 were part of a coup led by Saudi royals who are opposed to King Salman, while other reports suggested that the shooting



occurred when the palace guards targeted a small drone which approached Salman's residence.

## Royal scene pregnant with change?

Bin Farhan further explained that the arrest spree of the powerful figures by bin Salman has created much resentment within the royal family against the crown prince, noting, "The family feels it has been humiliated."

"There is so much anger within the royal family" to the point that a potential evolution in the country's ruling structure would be backed by "99 percent of the members of the royal family, the security services, and the army would stand behind them," bin Farhan said. "I have received a large number of emails from within the police and army in support of my call."

He referred to the April 21 alleged coup attempt in Riyadh as an instance of preparedness for action against the ultra-powerful in the kingdom.

Bin Farhan contested reports that the security forces had tried to shoot down a drone during the incident, saying destroying an aircraft like that would not require hours of exchange of fire.

He added, "It was a shock for the entire family because prominent figures in the family were detained, in a way that held a great

deal of humiliation. It was a shock for the entire family. The family is now facing the undermining of its standing in the eyes of the people. And this will inevitably undermine its legitimacy."

Even now, those freed are being kept on a short leash, with travel bans imposed upon them all, locators fitted onto their feet in most cases, and their contacts being closely monitored, he added.

The dissident royal also lashed out against a strict rule under which the ultimate power should solely rest in the hands of the king, warning about the consequences of such a one-man show for the kingdom.

"The make-up of the state will constantly change with the personality of the king," Prince Khaled said.

"Where is the strategic plan for the state? We need to have a clear goal that we're working towards. And it's the role of the king to come up with a tactical plan to help us enact these strategies," he said. "But, with the way we're going, our country will be late reaching them. We're already late. We use to think that we had financial assets and educated individuals, but unfortunately the situation right now is taking us back years."

## Bin Salman's 'psychological problems'

Speaking of bin Salman, bin Farhan said,

"At school, he had psychological problems and I'd rather not go into too much detail, but mental health can affect someone entirely, and I can see clearly that after he came into power and the way he deals in politics is reflective of his psychological problems."

Being treated as a non-significant ordinary prince has contributed to bin Salman's current state of mind, he analyzed.

## 'Bin Salman rule threatens world'

Bin Farhan warned that if MBS, as the crown prince is known, stayed in power, upheavals would follow.

"I would like to say to the Europeans that the situation in Saudi Arabia resembles a volcano that is about to erupt. If it erupts, it will affect not only the situation inside Saudi Arabia or in the Arab region but it will have an effect on you too," he said.

"We should not forget that there are terrorist sleeper cells within Saudi Arabia, and that Wahhabi ideology" serves as the basis for the ideology of the Takfiri terrorists that "Europeans and Americans are frightened most of."

"So, if Saudi Arabia descends into a state of chaos, there will be global chaos, and it (Saudi Arabia) will be a source of terrorism for the entire world as it will support and sustain international terrorism," said the royal.

(Source: Press TV)

## Palestine asks ICC to probe Israel rights violations



Palestine asks the International Criminal Court (ICC) to probe the human rights violations linked to the Israeli regime's illegal settlement activities on occupied Palestinian territories.

The request was submitted to The Hague-based court by Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki on Tuesday.

"The Referral covers past, present, and future Israeli actions to promote, expand, and entrench the settlement regime, perpetrated by, or with the assistance of, the government of Israel or its agents and accomplices in the occupied territory of the State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem," a Palestinian statement said.

According to the statement, the request underscores "that there is sufficient compelling evidence of the ongoing commission of grave crimes to warrant an immediate investigation."

Israel has been building settler units across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (al-Quds), since 1967, when it occupied the territory during an all-out war.

About 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements that are illegal under the international law, which prohibits construction on occupied land.

The tribunal has been conducting a preliminary probe into crimes in the Palestinian territories since 2015.

The probe covers Tel Aviv's actions during the regime full-scale war of 2014 against the Gaza Strip.

The Referral could speed up a decision on whether to open a full-blown investigation that could ultimately lead to the indictment of high-ranking Israelis, The Washington Post reported.

"While the ICC can indict suspects, it has no police force and has to rely on cooperation from member states to enforce arrest warrants," the paper added.

Leading Western states regularly visited by Israeli officials have so far strictly resisted calls by human rights groups to apprehend the officials over the regime's atrocities against Palestinians.

## UK to use U.S. embassy in Jerusalem al-Quds despite condemning move

British officials are reportedly set to maintain formal communications with the American embassy in Israeli-occupied Jerusalem al-Quds despite condemning its recent relocation, in what activists have denounced as a hypocritical approach adopted by London on Tel Aviv's occupation.

Last week, the UK, along with France, Germany and much of the international diplomatic corps, boycotted a ceremony held to inaugurate the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem al-Quds, which took place months after Washington announced it was recognizing the occupied city as the "capital" of Israel.

However, three days after the inauguration ceremony, UK Middle East Minister Alistair Burt rejected a call by the British Palestinian Policy Council for London to keep up the boycott and refuse to attend meetings in the embassy, the Middle East Eye news portal reported on Monday.

"When we asked him to confirm [that] UK officials would not attend meetings at the embassy going forward, as the UK does not recognize it, he was very clear that they would attend," according to participants in a meeting between representatives of the Council and Burt.

The UK Foreign Office has now confirmed that diplomats and other representatives would take part in meetings at the embassy.

London has censured Washington's controversial policy shift on Jerusalem al-Quds, with Prime Minister Theresa May saying back in December that such a decision would jeopardize the "prospects of peace" in the Middle East.

Earlier this month, the UK PM stressed that her country would not follow the U.S. in its decision to take the American mission from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem al-Quds.

(Source: agencies)

## Israeli parliament debates bill promoting Kurdish statehood

Israel's parliament (Knesset) has reportedly discussed a bill that explores ways through which the Tel Aviv regime can help the Kurds establish an independent state supportive of the regime within Syria, Iraq and Turkey, where anti-Israel sentiments run high.

The official Israeli radio reported that the proposal had been submitted to the legislature by two right-wing parties, Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu.

The radio also quoted lawmaker Yoav Kish as saying that in light of recent regional developments, recognizing an independent Kurdish state, which would support the regime in Tel Aviv, would be in Israel's interests.

"There is a Kurdish minority in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. All these countries are hostile to Israel, and certainly adding Iran, which also affects the region. That is why we need to strengthen the Kurds and lead a process that ultimately leads to the establishment of an independent Kurdish state that supports Israel," he said.

"There is a reason that Israel was the first to publicly congratulate moves toward Kurdish independence in northern Iraq," Kish added.

Kurdistan held a referendum on secession from Iraq in September 2017 in defiance of strong criticisms from the entire international community, particularly Iraq's neighbors, Iran and Turkey.

Israel became the only entity to support the Kurdish plebiscite. Israel became the only entity to support the Kurdish plebiscite.

In the lead-up to the vote, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Tel Aviv supports the "legitimate efforts of the Kurdish people to attain a state of its own."

Israel was reportedly the top buyer of crude oil from Iraqi Kurdistan in 2017. Israeli companies have also made investments in the semi-autonomous region especially in the fields of energy, construction, telecommunications, and security.

(Source: Press TV)

## South Korea's Moon visits U.S. ahead of Trump-Kim summit

### Foreign media arrive for North Korea nuke site closing

South Korean President Moon Jae-in is due to hold talks with Donald Trump as uncertainty looms over a planned summit next month between the U.S. president and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

Moon arrived in Washington, DC, ahead of the key White House meeting on Tuesday, three weeks before the Trump-Kim summit in Singapore scheduled for June 12.

"President Trump and President Moon will continue their close coordination on developments regarding the Korean Peninsula," a White House statement said earlier this month.

"The two leaders will also discuss President Trump's upcoming meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un," the statement added.

The U.S. is calling for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and a complete dismantling of North Korea's nuclear weapons programme.

Trump and Moon have already held two telephone conversations, including one on Sunday, since the historic inter-Korean summit last month, South Korea's official news agency, Yonhap, reported.

### Seoul mediation

The Moon-Trump meeting, a third between the two leaders, comes after North Korea threatened to pull out of the Singapore summit last week, unless the US offers something in return for the denuclearization demand.

"If the U.S. is trying to drive us into a corner to force our unilateral nuclear abandonment, we will no longer be interested in such dialogue and cannot but reconsider our proceeding to the ... summit," said a statement by Kim Kye-gwan, North Korea's first vice minister of foreign affairs.

For his part, Trump said North Korean officials are discussing logistical details about the meeting with the U.S. "as if nothing happened".



"I can only say our people are literally dealing with them right now in terms of making arrangements for the meeting," he told reporters after Pyongyang's threat.

North Korea also abruptly cancelled ministerial talks with Seoul last week, in response to the 'Max Thunder' joint military exercises between the U.S. and South Korea, which involves some 100 military aircraft.

South Korea has offered to mediate between the U.S. and North Korea, so the Trump-Kim summit takes place as planned.

Andreï Lankov, a specialist in Korean studies and director of NK News, said Seoul is looking to avoid escalation.

"He [Moon] will still try to persuade Donald Trump to accept some kind of compromise to go to the North Koreans to the negotiation table and negotiate some kind of compromise because right now, South Korea, above all, needs stability," Lankov told Al Jazeera.

Moon last met Trump in Seoul, when he visited the South Korean capital in November.

stringent safety regulations," read a ministry statement.

The British military usually transport Trident nuclear warheads at least six times a year between the Royal Naval Armaments Depot at Long Loch's Coulport Loch near Glasgow and the bomb factory at Burghfield in Berkshire, where they are stored.

The convoys are supposed to keep away from heavily populated areas but approach major cities such as Birmingham, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Manchester and Newcastle.

A 2016 YoGov poll found that some 64

percent of Britons didn't know that nuclear weapons are transported on Britain's public roads.

This is while, 47 percent of the respondents were concerned about the movements.

Known as the Trident program, Britain's nuclear deterrent has been a source of controversy over its costs.

While the Ministry of Defense refuses to disclose the overall cost of replacing the UK's ageing weapons, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has estimated that it would cost at least £205 billion.

(Source: Press TV)

The UK military experienced a record number of safety issues while transporting nuclear warheads and other critically sensitive equipment related to nuclear weapons last year, official records show.

In total, British nuclear motorcades moving across the country reported 44 safety instances that led to largely unscheduled stops for extra maintenance checks on the material, the UK Ministry of Defense said earlier this month when asked by lawmakers.

Of those, 24 issues were said to be operational while the other 20 stemmed from

engineering mishaps.

The figure has grown almost four-fold since 2008, when only 12 incidents took place.

The defense ministry said none of the incidents posed risks to the public but refused to go into details

Previous freedom of information act requests have shown that the motorcades, usually consisted of more than 20 vehicles, face common incidents such as equipment failures, collisions and breakdowns.

"The transportation of Defence Nuclear Material, including warheads, is carried out to the highest standard in accordance with



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	95229.9
IFX	1102.71

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,060 rials
EUR	49,568 rials
GBP	56,456 rials
AED	11,452 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	72.38/b
Brent	79.91/b
OPEC Basket	76.75/b
Gold	\$1,295.40 /oz
Silver	\$16.68/oz
Platinum	\$913.35/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Iran-Pakistan trade up 13.2 in a year

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The value of trade between Iran and Pakistan reached \$1.324 billion in the past Iranian calendar year of 1396 (March 2017-March 2018), a 13.2 percent rise compared to its preceding year.

According to IRNA, the trade between the two countries stood at \$1.160 billion in the Iranian calendar year of 1395.

The two countries trade jumped 42.3 percent in the past two years.



Exports of oil, gas condensate hit 2.75m bpd in a month

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Iran exported 2.75 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil and gas condensate averagely in the past Iranian calendar month (April 21-May 21), Shana news agency reported on Tuesday.

Oil accounted for 2.45 million bpd and gas condensate accounted for 300,000 bpd of the exports during the mentioned month.

Europe has been the export target of one third of the country's crude oil in the past month.

Italian companies to visit Iran next month for expanding renewable energy ties

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Italian Ambassador to Tehran Mauro Conciatori said that seven Italian large companies active in the field of renewable energies will visit Tehran next month to attend a conference with Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (known as SATBA) for exploring ways of mutual cooperation.



Italian Ambassador to Tehran Mauro Conciatori (L) and Farhad Yazdandoust, the advisor to Iranian energy minister in international affairs, in a meeting in Tehran

The envoy made the remarks in a meeting with Farhad Yazdandoust, the advisor to Iranian energy minister in international affairs, ILNA reported on Tuesday.

Conciatori said: "Energy is an important sector for cooperation between the two countries and Italy is willing to have long-term cooperation with Iran in this field. A memorandum of understanding has been previously signed in this area between the two sides and we intend that a deal will be signed and a task force will be set up to follow up its process."

Yazdandoust, for his part, referred to existence of different fields for cooperation in the water, electricity and renewable energy sectors between Iran and Italy and expressed hope that measures such holding the mentioned conference will pave the way for expansion of bilateral ties.

Trump wants more from EU to lift tariffs: EU trade chief

Europe's proposals to open its markets wider to U.S. products including cars appear not to have persuaded Washington to lift the threat of import tariffs on EU steel and aluminum, the bloc's trade chief said on Tuesday.

U.S. President Donald Trump has set tariffs of 25 percent on incoming steel and 10 percent on aluminum on grounds of national security but has granted EU producers an exemption until June 1 pending the outcome of talks.

(Source: Reuters)

Renovation of 360 small production units in 2 months

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Managing Director of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) Sadeqh Najafi announced that 360 small production units have been renovated during the two past months, IRIB reported on Tuesday.

The official also said that 31,500 small and medium-sized production units are planned to be renovated within the next three years.

Last week, Najafi said that 1,700 industrial units with inefficient production capacities are scheduled to be run at full capacity by the current Iranian calendar yearend (March 20, 2019).

"Among its top priorities, ISIPO has maximizing the production level of 15 industrial sectors and making 10 percent of the products of domestic small industries export-oriented by the said time," he told IRNA.

The official has announced that 740 trillion rials (about \$17.411 billion) of loans



will be paid to the production units in the country in the current calendar year.

He said some part of the mentioned loans is allocated as the governmental budget and the rest will be paid by the banks.

On May 6, Deputy Industry Minister Ali Rahmani announced that 28,602 production units received banking loans during the last year.

The allocated loans were at the value of 200 trillion rials (about \$4.705 billion), he said.

In late January, Najafi said during the next four years 161,000 new job opportunities will be created in 20,000 small industrial units across the country.

He noted that in this regard a program has been established for renewing and supporting the country's small industries.

According to the official, small industries account for 92 percent of the country's total industrial body and currently 85,000 of such units are active across the country, of them, 1,700 ones are large and industrial and the rest are medium and small-sized.

Gas first – energy for peace



Flame and in his first engagement since retiring as Senior Advisor to Petroleum Minister Bijan Zangeneh and Managing Director responsible for fuel efficiency together with his colleague Mahmood Khaghani outlined how Iran's strategic energy policy has long been to use natural gas to replace petroleum products wherever possible. Statistics show that as Iran's natural gas production has grown, it has almost entirely been used domestically, with relatively restricted exports to neighboring countries including Turkey, Armenia, and to Iraq.

As documented in the Tehran Times in the past, at a major conference in Ashgabat in December 2014, Mr. Ramazani, former Director at the NIGEC, gave an early insight into Iran's evolving energy strategy, as he pointed out that it made more economic sense for Turkmenistan to convert gas to power locally and dispatch electricity regionally in a new High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Caspian Energy Grid, than to export gas thousands of kilometers into Europe, as envisaged in the U.S. & EU sponsored Southern Corridor initiative which aimed to displace Russian and Iranian gas supply.

Iran has 3.5 million cars fuelled by compressed natural gas (CNG) as well as fleets of buses and commercial vehicles. Iran has also massively increased domestic use of natural gas instead of naphtha as a petrochemical feedstock. The original Iranian rationale for domestic use of gas was national security (oil product import substitution). However, as Mr. Cook suggests: "With oil prices at current levels it now makes commercial sense for CNG vehicles to displace diesel & gasoline fuelled vehicles. In fact this point was driven home at Flame by VW's Group Head of Strategy, Jasper Kemmeyer in his plenary presentation on VW's strategic move into what VW call CNG Mobility."

**■ America first or energy first?**

During a joint presentation at the Flame, Mr. Khaghani and Mr. Cook put this question at the Flame workshop. Mr. Khaghani began by outlining how during decades of high level experience in Iran's Petroleum Ministry he had developed what became known as Iran's energy diplomacy in the Caspian region.

In particular, he outlined innovative Iranian energy swaps, such as the Caspian Oil Swap of Turkmenistan, Russia, Kazakhstan and the Republic of Azerbaijan's oil into North Iran for Iranian Oil delivered out of the Persian Gulf. Perhaps his proudest achievements were the supply of gas to Armenia in exchange for power to Iran, and the supply of gas to Nakhchivan which was termed Energy for Peace.

While historically producers of upstream oil and gas compete for sales, Mr. Khaghani and Mr. Cook proposed in respect of downstream heat/cooling, mobility & power that is in the interests of all to cooperate in respect of costs. They brought to the attention of the Flame participants that Western energy infrastructure and commodity markets in oil and gas which are capital intensive are now evolving into smart markets in energy services based on intellectual capital rather than finance capital.

**■ GasCoins?**

Three weeks earlier in Moscow at the invitation of Russia's Deputy Energy Minister for Oil & Gas, H.E. Mr. Kirill Molodtsov, and Mr. Cook outlined how generic swaps of gas flow may be combined with issuance of simple credits (GasCoins) by gas producers as financing instruments returnable in payment for gas supplied.

Following an article published in Tehran Times, the GasCoin concept has attracted a great deal of attention in Iran

**1 →** He added: " Firstly, the oil price has been re-inflated from around \$45/bbl (Brent) & \$42/bbl (WTI) to over \$80/bbl & \$75/bbl respectively as so-called 'funds' crowded in, buying over one million barrels of oil futures contracts of 1,000 barrels each. The outcome for China – who historically overtook the U.S. as the greatest global net buyer – is that they are now paying an additional \$30/bbl for 8m barrels per day of imports....this represents an astonishing \$250m per day or \$7.5bn per month to producers, and this massive cost has recently placed China in a trade deficit for the first time.

Secondly, just weeks after Gary Cohn (the architect of Energy Dominance) and Rex Tillerson left office within a week of each other, a fundamental shift in the foundations of global markets took place, on or around April 18, 2018. At this point unprecedented changes took place in the oil market 'curve' (forward pricing structure) while oil and the dollar began to rise together, which is extremely unusual. Meanwhile, the currencies of many emerging and developing nations, including Iran, have fallen dramatically against the U.S. dollar."

**■ Oil prices and U.S. dollar?**

Mr. Cook is correct since while historically, crude oil prices have had an inverse relationship with the U.S. dollar the recent trends has seen crude oil prices increasing as the U.S. dollar rallied along with it. In fact, by looking at the U.S. dollar rate against other currencies and the crude oil prices, it can be seen that the rally in crude oil prices over the last year has mostly coincided with a decline in the U.S. dollar. But, over the last six weeks, oil prices and the U.S. dollar are rallying in the same cycle: this coincidence has only occurred 11 times since 1983 and is drawing the attention of market commentators & analysts such as Mr. Cook.

Mr. Cook says: "In my analysis, this sudden shift is a result of a new direct linkage of the dollar to the oil price through opaque Enron-style tripartite 'prepay' funding of U.S. shale oil reserves. If I am correct (and I invite your readers to bear witness to my forecast) then when (not if) oil prices fall the U.S. dollar will fall with it."

He continues: "In that context, I do not expect major consumer nations such as China and India to continue to accept market prices set by producers indefinitely. China launched a new physically delivered Shanghai crude oil contract on 26th March 2018 and has accumulated over 700m barrels of strategic oil reserves in the last three years. If I were in China's position as the largest buyer of oil in the market, I would switch my purchases to Shanghai; invite producers and traders to sell priced against the benchmark contract I had created; and in the event that producers refused to sell, simply draw upon my reserves until they capitulate."

**■ Declaring war on Iran?**

By what the U.S. foreign minister declared on 21st May there is no doubt that the U.S. Iran strategy is to weaponise the dollar by using access to the dollar clearing system to coerce compliance by any country with U.S. secondary sanctions. The effect was evident at Flame, as Total announced they could not risk sanctions, and would have to pull out of Iran's South Pars natural gas Phase 11 project unless they receive a U.S. exemption, which U.S. foreign minister announced on May 21 that will not be granted.

Meanwhile, discussions continue at the EU Central Bank level as to how Iran may access the euro clearing system. But European companies operating internationally, particularly those who operate in the U.S., point out that simply obtaining Euro payments and finance would not resolve their problems in relation to U.S. control of a dollar system on which they largely rely, and access to U.S. markets.

**■ Russian reaction?**

Whereas the relationship between Russia and Turkey has long been strategic, Russia's relationship with Iran has tended to be tactical, due to competition in respect of gas supply where Russia zealously protects its market in Europe. However, the recent evolution of energy markets suggests that this relationship may be changing in important respects from competition to cooperation.

Dr Ali Vakili – who recently retired from Ministry of Petroleum as a senior, highly experienced and influential Iranian energy official – was among the Iranian VIP delegation to

tariffs.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Sunday that the administration's plan to impose tariffs had been suspended, and Trump said on Twitter on Monday that the Chinese had agreed to purchase unspecified amounts of American farm products. Some of his loyalists led by former chief strategist Steven Bannon criticized the deal as a capitulation.

The agreement at least delays a trade war between the world's two largest economies, a prospect that has rattled financial markets

for months. But many U.S. concerns about China's economic practices remain unresolved: its acquisition of American technologies; the country's plans to subsidize the growth of advanced domestic industries such as artificial intelligence and clean energy; and U.S. companies' access to China's markets.

Bannon blamed Mnuchin. Trump "changed the dynamic regarding China but in one weekend Secretary Mnuchin has given it away," he said in an interview. "Mnuchin has completely misread the geopolitical, military, and historical

precedents, and what President Trump had done was finally put the Chinese on their back heels."

Some White House officials blame poor coordination among the warring factions in Trump's economic team for the retreat, according to several people briefed on the matter. Within the administration, divisions are raw between free-trade supporters such as Mnuchin and White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow and China hawks led by White House trade adviser Peter Navarro.

(Source: Bloomberg)



# Oil prices firm with Brent nearing \$80 on supply worries

Oil prices rose on Tuesday, with Brent edging closer to \$80 per barrel, on concerns that Venezuela's crude output could drop further following a disputed presidential election and potential U.S. sanctions on the OPEC-member.

The United States also toughened its stance on Iran and made a list of sweeping demands, which could further curb the country's crude oil exports and boost oil prices.

Brent crude futures were at \$79.37 per barrel at 0632 GMT, up 15 cents, or 0.2 percent, from their last close. Brent broke through \$80 for the first time since November 2014 last week.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$72.45 a barrel, up 21 cents, or nearly 0.3 percent.

"(Oil inventory) is tight and the U.S. will probably tighten sanctions on Venezuela which will make the Venezuela situation worse and which means we can expect continued falling Venezuelan production," said Tony Nunan, oil risk manager at Mitsubishi Corp in Tokyo.

"Combined with expectations for falling Iranian production as the U.S. pressures allies to reduce their imports, this will push crude oil



prices up to \$80 a barrel and we think it can go higher."

Venezuela's socialist President Nicolas Maduro faced widespread international condemnation on Monday after his re-election in a weekend vote his critics denounced as a farce cementing

autocracy in the crisis-stricken oil producer.

The United States is actively considering oil sanctions on Venezuela, where output has dropped by a third in two years to its lowest in decades.

"Tightening the economic screws will severely

cripple ... Venezuela's ability to export while making it virtually impossible for the country to acquire dollars," said Stephen Innes, head of trading for Asia-Pacific at futures brokerage OANDA in Singapore.

Concerns that looming U.S. sanctions on Iran will curb that country's crude exports have also been boosting oil prices in recent weeks.

The United States on Monday demanded Iran make sweeping changes - from dropping its nuclear program to pulling out of the Syrian civil war - or face severe economic sanctions as the Trump administration hardened its approach to Tehran.

This could reduce Iranian oil exports by 200,000 barrels-per-day by the fourth quarter, Mitsubishi Corp's Nunan estimated.

Elsewhere, Washington and Beijing both claimed victory on Monday as the world's two largest economies stepped back from the brink of a global trade war and agreed to hold further talks to boost U.S. exports to China.

Growing production of shale oil could curb oil prices eventually and widen the price spread between WTI and Brent crude oil, said Nunan.

(Source: Reuters)

## Oil price has sector's investors eyeing a windfall

Investors in the world's largest oil and gas companies are eyeing a windfall from rising crude prices as the sector heads towards its strongest financial performance in a decade, while keeping a tight rein on spending.

Companies including Total and BP have already launched share buyback programs, and Royal Dutch Shell is preparing to follow suit in a sign of the industry pushing to improve investor returns as it bounces back from a long downturn.

U.S. groups, such as ExxonMobil and Chevron, are also benefiting from this year's faster-than-expected upturn in oil prices because of rising global demand, supply disruptions in Venezuela and political tensions in the Middle East.

Brent crude, the international benchmark, hit \$80 per barrel last week for the first time since 2014.

Many oil producers are generating more free cash at current prices than they did at \$100 per barrel before the market crashed

four years ago.

This is because of deep cost cuts during the downturn, with average operating expenses per barrel down a third and development costs halved by the same measure since 2014.

Most oil majors can now cover dividends and capital expenditure at prices around \$50 per barrel, meaning that, at \$80, they make a healthy surplus.

Having spent the downturn battling to balance the books, oil executives are adjusting to a new environment in which they face choices over how to use spare cash.

The message from most has been consistent: there will be no return to the runaway spending of the \$100 oil era. Instead, companies are focusing on debt reduction and shareholder returns.

Debts rose sharply during the downturn as companies borrowed to avoid cutting dividends and leverage remains high. Shell, for example, has trimmed net debt by \$10bn in the past year but still owes \$66bn, a debt-to-cap-

ital ratio of 25 percent.

Jessica Uhl, Shell chief financial officer, indicated last month that she wanted gearing closer to 20 percent before launching a promised \$25bn share buy-back program.

The recent surge in oil prices has increased investor expectations that this will happen in the second half of this year.

BP said this month that it, too, was prioritizing debt reduction after announcing a 71 percent increase in first-quarter earnings.

But Brian Gilvary, chief financial officer, said the group would start looking at options for further share buybacks or a dividend increase as the balance sheet improved in the second half.

Gilvary said that BP remained intent on reducing its break-even point further to below \$40 per barrel by 2021. Equinor, the Norwegian group previously known as Statoil, gave a similar commitment.

"Costs are coming down and efficiency is going up in all parts of our business and we

have been able to sustain that," Eldar Saetne, chief executive, told the Financial Times.

Increased spending by national oil companies in Asia and the Middle East is forecast to lift industry-wide capital expenditure by 11.5 percent this year, according to BMI Research.

Yet the listed international oil groups (IOCs) such as Shell and BP are on course to buck this trend with a combined 1.1 percent decrease.

This reflects an increasingly selective approach to new projects, with only the most profitable going ahead and only then after costs have been squeezed.

Shell, for example, halved the budget for its Kaikias development in the Gulf of Mexico before giving it a green light last year, by simplifying designs and haggling with suppliers.

"The industry has gone through a significant mindset shift," said Andrew Smart, managing director of Accenture's energy practice.

(Source: Financial Times)

## OPEC looking closely at Venezuelan oil output drop: sources

OPEC is looking closely at a drop in oil output from Venezuela to see if the loss of supply from the member state warrants action by the group, sources familiar with the matter said.

This marks a shift from earlier this year, when OPEC officials downplayed the drop in Venezuelan production. And it follows a rise in prices and a decline in global inventories that is making tighter supply more significant.

Falling Venezuelan output due to an economic crisis has helped the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries deliver a bigger cut than intended under its pact with Russia and other producers to curb supplies and remove a global glut.

The pact, which began in January 2017 and runs to the end of 2018, will be reviewed when OPEC meets on June 22 to review policy. OPEC's compliance with the deal reached an unprecedented 166 percent in April, meaning it has cut well above its target.

"Maybe, if the market is tight, there will be a need to make some adjustment," one OPEC delegate who declined to be identified said, referring to the June meeting.

Global inventories have eased back close to their five-year average, the measure originally targeted by OPEC and its allies.

The output reductions combined with worries about supply disruptions due to U.S. sanctions on Iran pushed oil prices above \$80 a barrel last week, the highest since November 2014.

Brent crude, the global benchmark, was trading at \$78.33 on Monday.

Iranian supply has not yet been affected by the U.S. decision to withdraw from an international nuclear deal and its warning of that it would impose new sanctions.

The energy minister for the United Arab Emirates, which currently holds the OPEC presidency, said last week that OPEC had more significant issues to deal with than Iran. He cited Venezuela.

Before ministers from OPEC and its allies meet, Venezuelan output will feature in technical meetings including the Joint Technical Committee, which meets in Jeddah on Tuesday and Wednesday, as well as other such meetings expected in June.

Oil output in Venezuela hit a long-term low of 1.505 million barrels per day in April, almost 500,000 bpd below its OPEC output target. Venezuela's leftist leader Nicolas Maduro won a new, six-year term on Sunday.

"It will be discussed at the next meeting, for sure," a second OPEC delegate said of Venezuelan production.

OPEC is looking more closely at Venezuelan output as global inventories approach the supply cut deal's original target.

Oil inventories in OECD industrialized nations in March fell to 9 million barrels above the five-year average, down from 340 million barrels above the average in January 2017, according to OPEC figures.

Drawing stocks back to that average was the supply deals main goal, but officials have since said other metrics, such as oil industry investment, need to be considered.

When inventories were higher earlier this year, officials had downplayed lower Venezuelan output. In January, a senior OPEC source ruled out raising output "even if there was a supply disruption" from Iran or Venezuela.

(Source: Reuters)

Elegance is an attitude

*Simon Baker*  
Simon Baker

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## Indonesia's human rights after 20 years of Reformasi

By Usman Hamid

The end of military-backed autocratic rule on May 20, 1998, opened the way for greater respect for human rights in Indonesia. How far has the human rights agenda in the country progressed as the reform era (Reformasi) marks its 20th anniversary?

Reformasi has seen significant reforms in terms of politics and civil liberties as well as the separation of the army and the police, but, practically, human rights are still under threat in the country. Violations continue to take place in new forms.

The birth of Reformasi did not necessarily address human rights violations that took place during the military rule of Suharto. High ranking government officials and military generals remain above the law. Reformasi takes impunity for granted and former military generals, including some who are still on duty and who must be brought to justice for past human rights violations, still hold strategic positions in governments of post-Suharto regime.

As of today, there have been five administrations since Reformasi was born. Each of them had a human rights agenda but unfortunately their work remained unfinished.

Suharto's successor BJ Habibie, a nonmilitary figure but seen as very close to Suharto, started the reform era by releasing all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, allowing people to establish many political parties to contest in the general elections in 1999. However, he did not attempt to seek justice for the past abuses by the military.

The next president, Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid, another nonmilitary figure, moved forward with his progressive human rights agenda: separating the police and the military and establishing the law on Human Rights Court in order to be able to try serious human rights violations in the past such as mass killings in Tanjung Priok 1984. Unfortunately, his human rights agenda was stalled after he was later impeached due to a highly questionable graft accusation.

Despite the Gus Dur government's move to amend the constitution to better define articles on human rights, the military, which still had political influence in the parliament, managed to insert an article endorsing the legal principle of nonretroactive law enforcement, in a move to prevent future administrations from punishing the military for its past human rights violations — especially the killings of around 500,000 accused communist supporters in 1965, around 200,000 people in East Timor from 1975 and 1999, thousands of people in Aceh between 1989 and 1993 and hundreds of people in Papua since the 1980s. This was where Reformasi also officially gave birth to impunity.

Gus Dur limited the power of the military in his government but the latter regained its power under the rule of his successor, Megawati Sukarnoputri, also a political but nonmilitary figure. Megawati in 2003 took a more repressive approach in responding to independence movement in Aceh and Papua by bringing more soldiers to the two contested regions and restricting access for journalists and human rights defenders.

The regime of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), Megawati's successor, was seen as the return of the military to the presidency, due to his status a military general from the Suharto's era. After 10 years of ruling the country, SBY failed to live up to his promises to solve past human rights cases and the 2004 murder of human rights defender Munir Said Thalib, which implicated senior officials in the State Intelligence Agency (BIN).

After SBY, Indonesians returned the presidency to non-military leadership by electing Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, a former mayor and businessman, as the country's seventh president. Jokowi made a big promise to solve past human rights violations that cheered human rights defenders and family members of victims.

However, as he is being challenged by a political opposition power led by a strong former military general Prabowo Subianto, a former son-in-law of Suharto, Jokowi finally resorted to pragmatism. The president has embraced former police and military generals to serve in his government and Cabinet in what many see as a bid to contain Prabowo's opposition leadership. Some of the ten former military generals, including Wiranto and Hendropriyono, who are members of Jokowi's inner circle and Cabinet, were allegedly implicated in human rights violations cases such as the killings in East Timor.

Reformasi has failed on human rights in Indonesia because despite status of the government, whether military or not, former police and military generals implicated in past human rights violations have continued to hold power in the past 20 years.

As a result, human rights are still at risk in Indonesia despite people enjoying greater civil liberty and political participation.

Security forces in Papua, the restive and eastern most region of Indonesia, frequently apply unnecessary force when dealing with peaceful demonstrations that usually end up with extrajudicial killings. After East Timor, now Timor-Leste, became an independent country through a referendum in 1999 and Aceh secured a peace agreement with the central government in 2005 to end its struggle for independence, Papua is the only region in Indonesia today that still has both armed and peaceful independence movements, making the province the country's hotbed for human rights violations in what security forces called 'fighting against separatists.'

### Despite progress, human rights are still under threat.

In the past 20 years, although Indonesia no longer had violent conflicts both in Maluku and Central Sulawesi, the country still saw ethnic and religious tensions and violence, resulting from divisive and scapegoating politics by the elites. Draconian laws have been reappointed to restrict civil liberties and activism deemed as anti-Pancasila, separatist, or communist. Also, minority groups such as Ahmadiyah, Syiah, Christians, followers of native faiths, human rights defenders, journalists, as well as LGBT people frequently suffer discrimination and attacks from both state and nonstate actors without any serious efforts to bring those suspected of criminal responsibility to justice.

This culture of impunity goes back to the fact that none of the administrations from 1998 to 2018 managed to bring to justice those responsible for killing students in Trisakti University in Jakarta and in the Semanggi Tragedy, as well as the disappearance of students who fought for Reformasi in 1998. It is clear that Reformasi still has an unpaid debt to the killed and disappeared students who fought to defend the reform movement.

(Source: The Diplomat)

# Iraq needs a majority government that will actually govern



## What should be avoided during government formation is a return to the old failed ethno-sectarian politics that Abadi and Sadr routinely criticized and vowed to dismantle.

theme that dominated the election rhetoric, reflecting a popular mood for change, was partially borne out by the results.

Iraqis also voted for ideas as much as for identity, usefully weakening the hold that sectarian identity had on voter choices in previous elections. One telling surprise is that the Shia-dominated electoral list of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi came first in Nineveh, whose capital is Mosul, the most populous Sunni province in Iraq. Abadi's Victory Alliance could not achieve a similar result in any of the Shia-dominated provinces, and came second in Salahuddin province, another Sunni stronghold.

The Shia vote was the most surprising of all. Muqtada Al-Sadr's list, a pro-reform alliance of moderate Iraqi nationalists composed

of Sadrist and seculars, came first with 54 seats. It was followed by its ideological foe, conservative Islamist alliance championing the cause of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs) as Iraq's recent liberator and future defender. It picked up 47 seats.

The universally anticipated front-runner, Abadi's list, which had the widest national appeal in the pre-election period as well as a proven success record, unexpectedly came third with 42 seats. A parliamentary coalition of at least 165 members is needed to nominate the prime minister and form the government. This means many rounds of negotiations among several lists are expected in order to put together this coalition.

■ **Ethno-sectarian acceptability**  
Despite the fact that his list came third,

## “Be realistic, demand the impossible!”

### How the events of 1968 transformed French society



A Factory Occupation in May 1968.

at Nanterre University, against restrictions that prevented male students from visiting female colleagues at their dorm.

A series of events that followed in the first months of 1968, including the arrest of several students over the explosion of an American Express office in central Paris, helped to further radicalize the youth. The protests spread to other universities after Nanterre University was shut down by its dean in a desperate attempt to prevent the further escalation of protests.

When the Sorbonne was also closed following clashes between students and police, a major march was scheduled for May 10 which led to the Night of the Barricades.

What followed is well-traversed territory by journalists and historians alike.

Thousands of students clashed in the early hours of May 11, with hundreds of riot police who used tear gas and beat students with truncheons. By the time the sun came up, hundreds of students had been hospitalized and some 500 had been arrested.

By then, the battle was not merely over sexual repression and educational reform. It was about a demand for deep social transformation and that demand was accompanied by inexorable anger over the hypocrisy of a conservative, authoritarian system, the legacy of the Algerian independence war, and, yes, even the legacy of collaboration with the Nazis during World War II.

The French student protests of May 1968 were indeed about producing a national catharsis in the context of a rapidly changing world.

As such, the slogan that best captures the spirit of the May 1968 protests was the one that first appeared mainly

## Italy's populist path ahead

### The new government will need to check its ambitions for lavish spending

Two and a half months after an inconclusive general election, Italy looks as if it will soon have a government — a populist coalition between two anti-establishment parties, the Five Star Movement and the League. Having won a clear popular mandate, the two parties must be given a chance to govern. But the program they have in mind is extravagantly expensive. If they stick with it, Italy stands to suffer — and to run into conflict with Europe.

The coalition's many pledges, ranging from steep income tax cuts to a generous income support scheme for the poor, add up to more than 100 billion euros in new spending, according to an independent estimate. And the coalition has given no sign of how it might pay for its plans. Note that Italy already holds one of the largest public debts in the world.

The lavish spending Five Star and League envision could violate the Italian constitution, which compels the government to balance its budget taking into account the economic cycle. And it would make a mockery of the euro-zone budget rules. At the moment, Italy is enjoying a modest recovery from a double-dip recession between 2008 and 2013. EU rules say Rome should spend this time reducing its deficit and debt, not adding to it.

Yet it remains unclear exactly what steps the new government will actually take. The

parties have not yet named a prime minister, or met with President Sergio Mattarella to receive their mandate to govern. Even then, their small majority in parliament will make it very difficult to pass controversial legislation. And Mattarella will be able to veto any measures that breach the Italian constitution.

And Europe? Authorities in Brussels are left to see whether the new government will go ahead with its spending plans. The European Central Bank, for its part, will have noticed how the Italian coalition has already spooked the bond market, with the yield on Italy's benchmark 10-year bond hitting a 10-month high. There may be a hope within the new

government that at some stage the ECB might come to the rescue. The ECB should resist being distracted by the political developments in Italy, and set its monetary policy as it sees fit for the euro-zone economy as a whole.

Clearly, the League and Five Star Movement face a steep learning curve. Their leaders have no experience at governing, or even working with each other. Yet they have raised voters' expectations high. For the sake of Italy and Europe, one can only hope they trim their most exorbitant ambitions, keep Italy on the road to recovery, and allow Europe to breathe a sigh of relief.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Abadi has a clear advantage: he is a tried-and-true prime minister. One challenge in successfully nominating a new prime minister is that they should meet Iraq's high standards of ethno-sectarian acceptability, together with positive name recognition and the absence of Iranian and American vetoes. Few Shia politicians can meet this high mark.

This election's most important lesson is that Iraqi voters wanted new blood in the political machine and, for the most part, got it. Beyond changing representation, the results dealt a potentially serious blow to the catastrophic identity-driven consociational politics that have dominated Iraq since 2003.

A very daunting task, this essentially means undoing the politics of consensus and ethno-sectarian power-sharing that have dominated the country since 2003.

■ **Return to ethno-sectarian politics**

This scenario includes Abadi as a second-term prime minister. But with 95 seats combined, the two lists need to get other partners who are ready to forsake divvying up state resources for a say in decision-making.

Some have already done so, like Ammar Al-Hakim's "Wisdom" list, which has 20 seats. Sharing a similar reform agenda and having worked well together since 2014, Abadi and Sadr should reach out to Sunnis and Kurds by offering them the same deal: participation in decision-making with no state patronage.

What should be avoided is a government made up of all major lists, with cabinet members as political appointees picked by those same lists. That would be a return to the old failed ethno-sectarian politics that Abadi and Sadr routinely criticized and vowed to dismantle.

Iraq needs a majority government that has a clear state-building reform agenda, with an opposition that challenges the government by exposing its failures and proposing remedies. This is far better than the past model of spoils-sharing governments in the name of consociational democracy.

(Source: The Middle East Eye)

on the walls of Paris and read as follows: “Be realistic, demand the impossible.”

A few days after the Night of the Barricades, millions of workers walked off their job and joined the nation-wide strike. The French Communist Party and its allied labor union organization, the Confederation Generale du Travail, did their best to keep workers apart from students and to block any potential path to a revolution.

Indeed, like all potential revolutions, this one was also betrayed from within.

■ **Students protests fizzled out**

To the surprise of many at the time, the May 1968 protests ended in early June when the trade unions accepted a government deal which included generous wage hikes and a shorter work week. Soon afterwards, the student protests also fizzled out.

Nonetheless, the May 1968 protests changed France in fundamental ways.

For starters, the rage behind the protests led to an end of Gaullism, a highly conservative, state-oriented ideology, and converted the country into an open, tolerant and secular society.

Thanks to the spirit and the aims of the May '68 protests, women became socially liberated (before, French women could not even wear pants at work and had to have a husband's permission to open a bank account), while worker militancy secured better conditions of life and work.

It is of little surprise therefore that conservative political leaders in France (and elsewhere) continue to this day to blame the legacy of May 1968 for the overthrow of conservative norms and values.

This spirit of change and openness, however, has not really survived to present times. Today's France has turned inward, resisting change and embracing xenophobia. French democracy has plunged into crisis.

Students and workers remain politically active, but they lack the rage of their predecessors and are in need of a new vision for the future.

Does this mean then that the legacy of May 1968, like that of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, is now just a memory? Perhaps. But the course of history has fooled us before, and it can fool us again.

In a world of dire need for radical change and social justice, the May revolts of 1968 could still become a source of inspiration. All that it takes is a new generation of rebellious spirit, bold enough to say “Be realistic, demand the impossible!”

(Source: Al Jazeera)



# Who does Pompeo think he is kidding?

➔ End support to Middle East «terrorist» groups, including Hizballah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

■ Respect the sovereignty of the Iraqi government and permit the disarming, demobilization and reintegration of Shia militias.

■ End its military support for the Houthi rebels and work towards a peaceful, political settlement in Yemen.

■ Withdraw all forces under Iran's command throughout the entirety of Syria.

■ End support for the Taliban and other «terrorists» in Afghanistan and the region and cease harboring senior al-Qaeda leaders.

■ End the Islamic Revolutionary Guard corps-linked Quds Force's support for «terrorists» and «militant» partners around the world.

■ End threats against its neighbors, many of whom are U.S. allies, including its threats to destroy Israel and its firing of missiles at Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and threats to international shipping and destructive cyberattacks.

Comments in no particular order of importance.

It's never been actually and conclusively verified that Iran ever really had a "military dimension" to its nuclear research activities, unless one simply believes that any expertise at all in nuclear technology is by definition inclusive of a "military dimension". That, in essence, any country that simply has learned and mastered the various potentials and applications of nuclear technology "must" also be ineluctably and invariably involved in hostile military machinations. This makes no sense whatsoever.



Stopping uranium enrichment completely by Iran, even if it applies to some peaceful use of such in practice now or eventually, is unfair UNLESS the same demand in made of every other country on the planet, including the U.S. and Israel, to name just two. Reciprocity is critical IF the U.S., as it should, seriously desires to eliminate the threat of nuclear war across the globe. In my view, yes, Iran ought to agree to this stoppage but only if other countries, some of which like Israel have extant nuclear WMD, also verifiably dismantle their own centrifuges. No exceptions, including no exceptions for the country, the U.S., that has deemed itself "exceptional". IAEA inspections must similarly be applied across the board to those countries in possession of the expertise to make nuclear weapons.

Regarding the demand about Iran's ballistic missiles, such that they exist, it's obvious

that to whatever extent they have been developed at all, they comprise, or literally can only comprise, little but a purely defensive capability that every country is entitled to, particularly when any country has been so threatened by military attack as Iran has been. I am sure Iran would eliminate its missiles if the U.S. and Israel, and any other hostile country, did so, too.

Pompeo is flatly mistaken, also, to suggest that a "heavy water reactor" is currently operable in Iran. Who did his prior research in preparation for his speech? Suggesting that Iran did not effectively destroy its alleged reactor, given reports by outsiders that it had, is nothing but propaganda designed to smear Iran.

Iran has long been the sworn enemy of al-Qaeda (and ISIS and an-Nusra and many other terrorists organizations, and was completely appalled and empathetic to the U.S.

when al-Qaeda was alleged to have been behind the 9/11 attack in New York. So I have no idea what to make of Pompeo's claim that Iran is harboring any al-Qaeda leader(s). Yes, Iran has been assisting Hizballah, which is a deep part of Lebanon's government, so is Pompeo also set to declare that Lebanon is a "terrorist" state? I think not if Americans want to maintain any presence in Lebanon at all.

As for Iranian presence in Iraq, and particularly in Syria, nothing needs be said but that the governments of both countries apparently invited the Iranian presence to assist in the eradication of truly terrorist entities such as ISIS. Also, I know of no instance where Iran has actually fired missiles at Saudi Arabia or the UAE. This claim by Pompeo seems to be another bit of misleading propaganda and indeed, if Iran had so fired missiles directly across the Persian Gulf, I daresay that Iran and these Arab countries would already have been engaged in full-scale war with Iran. Javad Zarif has, however, fired unqualified appeals for dialogue with the Saudis and the UAE.

It's difficult to imagine whom Pompeo thinks he is kidding. His address and demands are so bizarre, based on inaccurate information, and so completely Israeli-centric that you have to wonder that Netanyahu wrote the address, along with John Bolton. It is simply hoped by many that the other signatories to the JCPOA sees these demands for what they are, a clear attack on Iran's sovereignty and underneath, an attempt to foment chaos and "regime change" within Iran. Above all, the Iranian people must stand tall, stay cool and work with those countries who also don't buy Pompeo's, or Israel's, BS.

## Why Riyadh, allies worry over Yemeni ballistic missiles

➔ Muhammad Abbas al-Zalehi, a Yemeni analyst, says: "It is believed that the ballistic missiles that Houthis are firing into Saudi Arabia belong to Iran or have been sent from Iran in small pieces. This is a misconception and contrary to reason and logic. It is evident that a large number of these missiles are being shot by the Houthis alone a daily basis into Saudi Arabia.

Alheyad.net website has also reported on missile launches in Yemen; "The source of Yemeni ballistic missiles should be searched in the 70s of the last century. Yemenis bought from the Soviet Union missiles such as Scud, Luna and Tuukka and they are Russian."

The Yemeni army began to develop its missiles in cooperation with Iraqi experts and rocket engineers from the former Soviet Union in 1998. Yemen has one of the largest ballistic missile arsenals in the Middle East in terms of quantity and range. More than 60 percent of the Yemeni missiles are exported from North Korea, Russia and China, and 40 percent are built by Yemen.

Concerns over the missiles of the army and popular committees of Yemen have also reached the Zionists.

The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (BESA Center) affiliated with the political science department at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, acknowledged in the research: "The ballistic missiles launched by the Houthis are extremely dangerous for the precise impact on the target and the development of its technology."

BESA Center has claimed that the Yemenis acquired these missiles from Iran and North Korea.

The BESA Center's study said Israel could play a role in the Saudi arms market and in equipping Riyadh with weapons systems to address the security challenges it faces.

■ **Saudis seem interested in purchasing Israel's anti-missile Iron Dome**

A study, conducted by Zionist scholar Delaney Nuchal, showed the desire of the Saudis to equip themselves with the Zionist missile defense system, in particular Israel's Iron Dome system. This interest has been described as a major development in relations between Tel Aviv and Riyadh.

In another study, published by the BESA Center, it has been emphasized that Saudi Arabia can be an area for testing the capabilities of air defense systems.

To strengthen the air defense system, King Salman went to Russia last October and signed a \$3 billion contract, over which Moscow is committed to equip Riyadh with the advanced S400 system. The aim to purchase weapons from Russia relates to Riyadh's desire to develop cooperation between Moscow and Riyadh in many areas, including the containment of regional crises. The Saudis want to use Russians to pressure Ansarullah.

According to this report, Saudis are now relying on the Patriot, U.S.-based anti-missile system to fight Yemenis. Apart from that, Saudis purchased the Thadd Air Defense System in 2015 at an estimated cost of \$15 billion.

In any case, it is evident that the Saudis are struggling to escape missile attacks by the military and popular committees of Yemen while the Yemenis continue to develop longer-range missiles.

## There are various means for EU to undermine U.S. sanctions: Nephew

➔ I think the most important issue for Iran and the EU both is whether they can provide sufficient assurances that the United States will not impose sanctions on specific companies for doing business with Iran so as to persuade those companies to keep doing business with Iran. This is the primary focus of EU efforts at present.

■ 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: Perhaps, depending on what the EU does. There are various means for the EU to undermine U.S. sanctions and thereby provide assurance to business, but they require a confrontation with Iran. Whether the EU wishes to do this is what we shall soon see.

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

A: Presumably, sanctions that undermine Iran's economic growth and ability to reduce unemployment and similar economic measures are those that the Iranian government will conclude are the most important to address. But, this is an issue really more for Iranian officials to answer than former U.S. officials.

### In 7th Public Relations and Industry Seminar:

## Esfahan Mobarakeh Steel Co.'s CEO Named Exemplary Public Relations Manager



Chief Executive of Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company (EMSC) Bahram Sobhani was introduced as exemplary manager in supporting public relations at 7th Public Relations and Industry Seminar.

For this purpose, CEO of the company was awarded with a Plaque of Honor and a Golden Medal as top and superior manager supporting public relations in the field of industry.

International Week of Communications and Public Relations and in 7th Public Relations and Industry Seminar was held in Tehran in the presence of Ms. Saeedi Representative of People of Mobarakeh and Head of Public Relations Fraction in the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Iranian Parliament also called Majlis), a number of veteran activists in the field of communications and public relations, managers and experts of Public Relations across the country as well as a number of managers of Public Relations Dept. of large industries of the country.

In this prestigious ceremony, Bahram Sobhani CEO of Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company was awarded with a Plaque of Honor

and golden Trophy. In the same direction, the company managed to win the highest score among other companies in the field of selection of exemplary manager supporting public relations in the field of industry.

■ **Winning Highest Score in Terms of Indexes by EMSC**

Head of Policymaking Council of Public Relations Week Gholam-Reza Kazemi Dinan pointed to organizing several specialized meetings in the presence of members of Policymaking Council and Scientific Committee of Public Relations and Industry Conference and added, "in the evaluation of backgrounds and study of performance of various companies, Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company managed to win the highest score of the desired indexes in the field of selection of exemplary manager supporting public relations in industrial sector.

He pointed to the role of social responsibilities as one of the main indexes of performance in the field of communications and public relations and added, "vastness of group of Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company, deployment of its industrial units across the country

and implementation of expansion projects as well as receiving prestigious national and international certificates especially Organizational Excellence Award and National Quality Award, etc. are of the main reasons behind selection of this company as exemplary industrial and production unit in the country."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Kazemin Dinan pointed to the fair interaction of CEO of the company Dr. Bahram Sobhani with media outlets and executive and service organizations in the country and said, "his belief in taking advantage of collective wisdom and establishing very close relationship between industry and scientific centers prompted the Headquarters to Organize Public Relations and Industry Seminar to select CEO of the company as top manager in the field of industry supporting communications and public relations."

Dynamic and powerful public relations should be able to disseminate accurate information timely, he concluded.

■ **Dynamic and Strong Public Relations Must Publish Accurate and Correct News**

Chief Executive of Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company (EMSC) Dr. Bahram Sobhani was the next speaker who pointed to the key role of public relations in organizational excellence and said, "Public Relations in any organization and company burdens great and heavy responsibility in line with materializing most objectives."

He further noted that Public Relations Department in any organization and company should be able to disseminate accurate and correct news in order to prevent rumors, adding, "when working in the field of industry and macroeconomics is raised, the key role and key responsibility of public relations is signified."

Delegation of power to the public relations without giving trust to this center will be impossible, he said, adding, "accordingly,

the key role of public relations should be taken into serious consideration seriously."

■ **Comprehensive Law to Support Public Relations is Under Compilation**

Zahra Saeedi Representative of people of Mobarakeh and Head of Public Relations Fraction in the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Iranian Parliament) was the next speaker who pointed to the actual role and status of communications and public relations of executive organizations and revealed the start of compilation of a comprehensive law to support public relations.

Organizing this Conference boosted credibility of the public relations, she maintained.

Head of Public Relations and Media Affairs of the Iranian Parliament said, "it is hoped that we will be able to compile a comprehensive law to support public relations deservedly, because, trust of society, as the largest and greatest social asset, will be preserved only with the help of activists

and experts in the field of public relations."

It should be kept in mind that social trust is annihilated easily and once this issue is happened, we should wait for the consequence of this issue, she concluded.

■ **'Social Responsibility', One of the Most Important Performance of Public Relations**

Amir-Abbas Taghipour Member of Policymaking Council of the Public Relations Week also expressed his satisfaction on the widespread presence of public relations activists in the course of organizing 13th Electronic Public Relations Seminar and 7th Public Relations and Industry Conference and said, "Commitment to the social responsibility in industries of the country is one of the most important performance and function of the public relations. Under such circumstances, dignity of human beings and citizens should be safeguarded deservedly."





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## Iranian researchers study nano-cellulose food packaging

**TECHNOLOGY** **TEHRAN** — Researchers at Shiraz University have studied gelatin and starch-based nano-composite films modified by nano-cellulose and chitosan for food packaging applications.

Mohammad Mehdi Zerafat, Samad Sabbaghi and Seyyed Majid Nurbakhsh Soltani were members of the research group.

In general, natural polymers is less resistance in comparison with synthetic polymers, however, it can be improved with nano-cellulose and clay nanoparticles in their production, Mohammad Mehdi Zerafat, told Mehr news agency.

"We assess the impact of nanoparticles on quality of packaging in our research," he said.



He also pointed to the benefit of nano products, which does not have any harm for environment.

According to safenano.org, nanomaterials are increasingly being used in the food packaging industry due to the range of advanced functional properties they can bring to packaging materials. Nanotechnology-enabled food packaging can generally be divided into three main categories; improved packaging, active packaging and smart packaging.

Improved packaging is whereby nanomaterials are mixed into the polymer matrix to improve the gas barrier properties, as well as temperature and humidity resistance of the packaging.

Active packaging is illustrated by the use of nanomaterials to interact directly with the food or the environment to allow better protection of the product. For example, silver nanoparticles and silver coatings can provide anti-microbial properties, with other materials being used as oxygen or UV scavengers.

Intelligent or smart packaging is designed for sensing biochemical or microbial changes in the food, for example detecting specific pathogens developing in the food, or specific gases from food spoiling. Some "smart" packaging has also been developed to be used as a tracking device for food safety or to avoid counterfeit.

## Camera billed as 'world's most advanced' could boost search for alien life

An international team of physicists and astronomers has created what's being billed as the world's most advanced camera.

Known as Darkness (for Dark-speckle Near-infrared Energy-resolved Superconducting Spectrophotometer), the suitcase-sized device is designed not for taking big panoramas or snapping selfies but for spotting planets around nearby stars — and enhancing the search for alien life.

It's proven hard for Earth-based observatories to detect exoplanets both because light from celestial objects becomes distorted as it passes through Earth's atmosphere and because the light that reaches us from exoplanets is extremely faint compared to that from their host stars. "It's technically very challenging, because the star is at least a million times brighter than the planet," said Benjamin Mazin, a physicist at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and the leader of the team that built the camera.

That bright starlight tends to wash out the light from exoplanets. "It's like trying to pick out a faint ember next to a brilliant searchlight from many miles away," said Ray Jayawardhana, a professor of physics and astronomy at York University in Toronto, Canada, who is not involved with the Darkness project.

Darkness gets around both problems by filtering out the light from individual stars and compensating for atmospheric distortion via a special mirror that changes shape thousands of times a second to correct the troublesome atmospheric "blurring."

"It's pretty impressive technology," said Bruce Macintosh, a Stanford physicist who isn't involved with the Darkness project. "What's powerful about directly detecting these planets is that we can measure their light and see the composition" of their atmospheres.

Given the challenges of detecting exoplanets with ground-based observatories, the search for exoplanets has relied mostly on space-based observatories like the Kepler Space Telescope and the newly launched Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS). These satellites detect exoplanets by scanning the cosmos for transits, which are periodic dips in a star's light that occur when a planet passes in front of it. But while the transit method has proven to be very effective at spotting exoplanets, it's of little value in determining the composition of exoplanet atmospheres.

The light from an exoplanet can help astronomers determine whether its atmosphere contains hydrogen, methane or other chemicals that suggest the planet might be able to sustain life — or actually harbor it.

In addition to helping astronomers see exoplanets, Darkness "offers the prospect of revealing whole new exoplanet populations that are normally beyond the reach of other detection techniques," Jayawardhana said.

Darkness was built for the Hale telescope at the Palomar Observatory near San Diego. Mazin said the camera is capable of detecting Jupiter-sized exoplanets, and he added that as the team hones the technology, the camera may eventually be able to spot alien planets as small as Earth.

The team's ultimate goal is to build an upgraded version of Darkness for the Thirty Meter Telescope, a huge observatory to be built atop Mauna Kea, a dormant volcano on the island of Hawaii. The \$1.4-billion observatory is expected to begin operation in 2027. (Source: nbnews.com)

# WIPO, Iran discuss ways to enhance cooperation

**TECHNOLOGY** **TEHRAN** — Iran and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) discussed ways to enhance cooperation in the near future.

Iran's vice president for science and technology Sourena Sattari and WIPO Director General Francis Gurry held a meeting in Tehran on Saturday.

Iran's knowledge economy is based on creative human resource who are mostly educated, Sattari said, the vice presidency's website reported.

There are several startups run by young entrepreneurs in different fields including IT and biotechnology, which had a good development during recent years, he said.

The Iranian young inventors achieve rapid growth in international patent register, Sattari added.

He urged WIPO to support Iranians in international process of patent register.

During the meeting, Gurry pointed to Iran's ranking on Global Innovation Index (GII) in 2017, which he said was not proportional to Iran's potentialities.

On Global Innovation Index GII 2017,



Iran's vice president for science and technology Sourena Sattari (R) and WIPO Director General Francis Gurry held a meeting in Tehran on Saturday

an annual ranking of countries by their capacity for, and success in, innovation,

which is published by WIPO and Cornell University, INSEAD, Iran ranks 75 amongst

127 countries.

He praised Iranian startups saying that Iran does its best in the field of innovation.

Iran needs educated experts for evaluation in the field of patent register to facilitate the process. However, one cannot undermine market demand as an important factor, he said.

Meanwhile, investors are not eager to provide finance for intangible properties and promoting venture capital is very difficult, he said.

Gurry said that the WIPO plans to hold workshops for investors in Iran to get acquainted with opportunities.

WIPO has previously held workshops in Iran. However, it is planned that Iran to host workshops for regional countries in the near future.

WIPO is the global forum for intellectual property services, policy, information and cooperation. It is a self-funding agency of the United Nations, with 191 member states.

It aims to lead the development of a balanced and effective international intellectual property system that enables innovation and creativity for the benefit of all.

## Iran to establish nano exports center in Indonesia



**TECHNOLOGY** **TEHRAN** — Iran will establish a center in Indonesia for promoting exports of nano products, an official with Iran Nanotechnology Initiative Council (INIC) has said.

Ali Beitollahi said that by establishing the center, Iran can export its high tech products.

Asian countries are Iran's target for export of nano products, he added. Iran has already exported nano products to over 45 countries, he said. "With expansion of export, we can

reach bigger market and this is possible through boosting cooperation with other countries," he said.

Nano industry should be an active part of Iran's economy in near future, he concluded.

According to Web of Science, Iran ranks fourth in nanotechnology in the world by publishing 8,791 articles.

As per the latest updates, Iran holds the fourth place above countries such as South Korea, Germany, Japan and France.

## Iranian, Austrian tech institutes plan to boost ties



From right to left, AIT scientists Josef Fröhlich, Marianne Hörlesberger and Iran's ESFRD Director Ali Vahdat held a meeting in Tehran on Monday.

**TECHNOLOGY** **TEHRAN** — The Austrian Institute of Technology (AIT) and the Electronic Support Fund for Research and Development (ESFRD) of Iran plan to boost bilateral ties.

AIT scientists Marianne Hörlesberger and Josef Fröhlich held a meeting with ESFRD officials in Tehran on Monday.

Iran's electronic industry has a great potential especially in expert human resources, ESFRD Director Ali Vahdat said.

The expansion of relation with international institution like AIT would lead to strengthen private sector in global level.

AIT can introduce some specific fields for further cooperation and ESFRD introduce Iranian companies, which can be good pairs, he said.

Mutual cooperation leads to technology transformation and updating as well as joint venture and formation of research centers, he said. Of course, some Iranian companies have the potentiality to have a market in European countries, he added.

He proposed formation of AIT and ESFRD joint working group to determine fields of cooperation and investment for further cooperation.

## Robots fight weeds in challenge to agrochemical giants

In a field of sugar beet in Switzerland, a solar-powered robot that looks like a table on wheels scans the rows of crops with its camera, identifies weeds and zaps them with jets of blue liquid from its mechanical tentacles.

Undergoing final tests before the liquid is replaced with weedkiller, the Swiss robot is one of new breed of AI weeders that investors say could disrupt the \$100 billion pesticides and seeds industry by reducing the need for universal herbicides and the genetically modified (GM) crops that tolerate them.

Dominated by companies such as Bayer, DowDuPont, BASF and Syngenta, the industry is bracing for the impact of digital agricultural technology and some firms are already adapting their business models.

The stakes are high. Herbicide sales are worth \$26 billion a year and account for 46 percent of pesticides revenue overall while 90 percent of GM seeds have some herbicide tolerance built in, according to market researcher Phillips McDougall.

"Some of the profit pools that are now in the hands of the big agrochemical companies will shift, partly to the farmer and partly to the equipment manufacturers," said Cedric Lecamp, who runs the \$1 billion Pictet-Nutrition fund that invests in companies along the food supply chain.

In response, producers such as Germany's Bayer have sought partners for their own precision spraying systems while ChemChina's Syngenta [CNNCC.UL], for example, is looking to develop crop protection products suited to the new equipment.

While still in its infancy, the plant-by-plant approach heralds a marked shift from standard methods of crop protection.

Now, non-selective weedkillers such as Monsanto's Roundup are sprayed on vast tracts of land planted with tolerant GM seeds, driving one of the most lucrative business models in the industry.

### ■ See and spray

But ecoRobotix, developer of the Swiss weeder, believes its design could reduce the amount of herbicide farmers use by 20 times. The company said it is close to signing a financing round with investors and is due to go on the market by early 2019.

Blue River, a Silicon Valley startup bought by U.S. tractor company Deere & Co. for \$305 million last year, has also developed a machine using on-board cameras to distinguish weeds from crops and only squirt herbicides where necessary.

Its "See and Spray" weed control machine, which has been tested in U.S. cotton fields, is towed by a tractor and the developers estimate it could cut herbicide use by 90 percent once crops have started growing.

ROBO Global [www.roboglobal.com/about-us](http://www.roboglobal.com/about-us), an advisory firm that runs a robotics and automation investment index tracked by funds worth a combined \$4 billion, be-



lieves plant-by-plant precision spraying will only gain in importance.

"A lot of the technology is already available. It's just a question of packaging it together at the right cost for the farmers," said Richard Lightbound, Robo's CEO for Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

"If you can reduce herbicides by the factor of 10 it becomes very compelling for the farmer in terms of productivity. It's also eco friendly and that's clearly going to be very popular, if not compulsory, at some stage," he said.

### ■ Pause for thought

While Blue River, based in Sunnyvale, California, is testing a product in cotton fields, it plans to branch into other major crops such as soy. It expects to make the product widely available to farmers in about four to five years, helped by Deere's vast network of equipment dealers.

ROBO's Lightbound and Pictet's Lecamp said they were excited by the project and Jeneiv Shah, deputy manager of the 152 million pound (\$212 million) Sarasin Food & Agriculture Opportunities fund, said the technology would put Bayer and Syngenta's crop businesses at risk while seed firms could be hit - albeit to a lesser extent.

"The fact that a tractor and row-crop oriented company such as John Deere did this means it won't be long before corn or soybean farmers in the U.S. Midwest will start using precision spraying," Shah said.

While the technology promises to save money, it could be a tough sell to some U.S. farmers as five years of bumper harvests have depressed prices for staples including corn and soybeans. U.S. farm incomes have dropped by more than half since 2013, reducing spending on equipment, seeds and fertilizer.

Still, the developments are giving investors in agrochemicals stocks pause for thought, according to Berenberg analyst Nick Anderson. And agrochemical giants are taking note.

Bayer, which will become the world's biggest seeds and pesticides producer when its acquisition of GM crop pioneer Monsanto completes, teamed up with Bosch in September

for a "smart spraying" research project.

The German partners plan to outpace rivals by using an on-board arsenal of up to six different herbicides and Bayer hopes the venture will prepare it for a new commercial model - rather than cannibalizing its current business.

"I would assume that within three years we would have a robust commercially feasible model," Liam Condon, the head of Bayer's crop science division said in February.

"I'm not concerned in terms of damping sales because we don't define ourselves as a volume seller. We rather offer a prescription for a weed-free field, and we get paid based on the quality of the outcome," he said.

Bayer agreed to sell its digital farming ventures, including the Bosch project, to German rival BASF as part of efforts to win antitrust approval to buy Monsanto. But BASF will grant Bayer an unspecified license to the digital assets and products.

BASF said the Bosch precision spraying collaboration was very interesting but it was too early to comment further as the transaction had not completed.

### ■ Part of the story

Syngenta, which was an investor in Blue River before Deere took over, said the advantages of the new technology outweighed any potential threats to its business model.

"We will be part of the story, by making formulations and new molecules that are developed specifically for this technology," said Renaud Deval, global head of weed control at Syngenta, which was bought by ChemChina last year.

While it has no plans to invest directly in engineering, Syngenta is looking into partnerships where it can contribute products and services, Deval said.

Still, Sarasin's Shah said the big agrochemical firms would need to accelerate spending on getting their businesses ready for new digital agricultural technology.

"The established players need to invest a lot more than they currently are to be positioned better in 10 years' time. The sense of urgency will increase as farmers start to adopt some of the more advanced kits that are coming out," he said.

Michael Underhill, chief investment officer at Capital Innovations, also said the major players may be underestimating the potential impact on their pesticides businesses.

"Precision leads to efficiency, efficiency leads to decreased usage, decreased usage leads to decreased margins or margin compression, and that will lead to companies getting leaner and meaner," said Underhill.

He said the GM seeds market would also take a hit if machine learning takes over the role genetic engineering has played so far in shielding crops from herbicides' friendly fire.

"Instead of buying the Cadillac of seeds or the Tesla of seeds, they may be buying the Chevy version," Underhill said.

The advent of precision weed killing also comes at a time blanket spraying of global blockbusters such as glyphosate is under fire from environmentalists and regulators alike. (Source: Reuters)



# Supernovae could be to blame for extinctions on Earth, study shows

Nothing lasts forever. If you look for it, mounting evidence of an impending mass extinction event is all around us, and the forces behind these epic die-offs could be greater than we ever knew.

New research into supernovae millions of years ago suggests dying stars exploding in sufficient proximity to Earth could help bring about changes in our atmosphere – including depleting our planet's protective ozone layer, which over time could drastically alter survival chances for species living on the planet.

"We are interested in how exploding stars affect life on Earth, and it turns out a few million years ago there were changes in the things that were living at the time," astrophysicist Brian Thomas from Washburn University in Kansas told Astrobiology Magazine.

## ■ Approximate distance

The supernovae Thomas investigated occurred about 2.5 and 8 million years ago at an approximate distance of about 50 parsecs (more than 160 light-years) away from our Solar System.

That might not sound too close, but in terms of the cosmic ray fallout from a supernova, it's plenty close enough, Thomas says.

He was part of a team that last year re-examined just how big the 'kill zone' of



a supernova's cosmic ray effects might be.

This time around, Thomas ran a series of models on how different kinds of cosmic rays generated by a supernova would interact with the layers of Earth's atmosphere.

Rather than unleashing some kind of

fast-acting death wave, Thomas says the high-energy particles from the supernova would hit our atmosphere over a time scale lasting hundreds or even thousands of years.

One of the most significant effects of this phenomenon – which is called radiative

**One of the most significant effects of this phenomenon – which is called radiative transfer – is the ozone in our atmosphere would get depleted, peaking at about 300 years after the particles first struck Earth.**

transfer – is the ozone in our atmosphere would get depleted, peaking at about 300 years after the particles first struck Earth.

## ■ Existing problems

This means, as we know full well given our existing problems with ozone depletion, that increased ultraviolet light reaches Earth's surface, and in Thomas's calculations, this ultraviolet B (UVB) irradiance could have increased by a factor of 1.1 to 2.8.

That's not necessarily the kind of thing that would create a mass extinction, but with enough time – and we're talking about effects lasting hundreds or thousands of years here – the resulting DNA damage caused to various life forms on the planet could hypothetically kill off or damage the survival prospects of various species.

"There were changes, especially in Africa, which went from being more forested to more grassland," he told Astrobiology Magazine.

As for whether mass extinctions could arise under these kinds of circumstances, the research isn't definitive – but it does look like Earth would have been affected, even if it took hundreds or thousands of years for the increased radiation to wreak havoc on the life forms below.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

# World Bee Day; what's the 'buzz' about?

By Marjohn Sheikhi

For the very first time ever, World Bee Day was observed on May 20 across the planet in a bid to draw attention to the role these buzzing pollinators play in food security. Tehran was also invited to celebrate the occasion at the Slovenian embassy – the country that proposed the proclamation of World Bee Day to the UN.

If you are a fan of the British science fiction anthology television series 'Black Mirror', the final episode of the series' third season 'Hated in the Nation' must have definitely been in your top five list. The episode depicts a period in time (probably, alarmingly, in the not too distant future) in which Britain's native honey bee population has died out, prompting the UK government to fund a project that develops robotic bees (or the Autonomous Drone Insects – or ADIs, as called in the episode) in a bid to help pollinate British flowers and crops. The downside of this cutting-edge technology, true to the series' form, is that the bee drones are hacked and reprogrammed to attack and kill specific people. The episode did nothing to assuage my apiphobia, but apart from its centerpiece warning against the consequences of cyber-bullying, it had one sobering prediction: a world without bees.

According to recent reports by major international organizations, the world's bee population is really in decline. The 2015 IUCN report notes that "nearly 10% of bees are facing extinction, and around 5% of them are probably endangered, while no data is available for nearly 57% of species."

Bees are responsible for the pollination of nearly three quarters of the plants that produce 90% of the world's food. A world without bees is a world losing a third of its food production. Food shortage on such a massive scale should remind you of desperate, starving survivors scavenging for food during a zombie apocalypse. That image is horrific enough to send everyone with even a smidgen of common sense into frenzy.

One way to save the earth from such a harrowing fate is to build robo-bees that would cost a fortune and probably kill you if they fall into the wrong hands. Another way, is to raise awareness, which is considerably cheaper and does not run the risk of killing you, intentionally or otherwise. And that is exactly what the Slovenian embassy in Tehran did on May 20 – the day registered at the United Nations as World Bee Day, on the initiative of the Republic of Slovenia.

The embassy held the first observance of World Bee day on Sunday to send the message that "we are all united in the care



and protection for bees ... to remind every single one of us how dependent and how interconnected are our lives with these incredible beings," as said by Slovenian Ambassador Kristina Radej in her opening speech at the event.

The place was jam-packed with a number of ambassadors and heads of various beekeeping associations, representatives from FAO and UNIC, journalists and some interested public, all gathered at the embassy building in the upper class neighborhood of northern Tehran to be informed about the significance of bees for food security and the sustainability of human life.

"We hope that [the observance of World Bee Day] will become an important tradition with which we will step up the necessary efforts for their preservation and thus continue to a more sustainable agriculture and global food security," said Ms. Radej of the importance of holding such events.

You may be wondering, 'why Slovenia?', and 'why May 20?'

"Slovenia ranks among the best in the world regarding the number of beekeepers per capita," said Ms. Radej. Indeed, with five beekeepers per 1,000 inhabitants, the country is at the very top of the list. Much like Iran, Slovenia has its own native bee species: The Carniolan honey bee, which is the only protected native honey bee at the EU due to its "non-aggressiveness, immunity to diseases, suitability for collecting forest honeydew" and many other qualities.

May has been picked as the month when development of bees in the Northern hemisphere is in full swing, and the 20th of May corresponds with the birthday of Anton Janša (1734-1773), the Carniolan apiarist credited as the pioneer of modern beekeeping in the world.

The ambassador went on to add, "World Bee Day is only the beginning of a challenging path to preserve pollinators. To achieve that, we first need to address the governments of all states, economists and non-governmental organizations; the voice on the urgency to preserve bees must reach every single person. We also need to perform concrete activities to enhance care for bees and the development of beekeeping."

The gathering at the event was invited to taste different Slovenian and Iranian honey set on the tables, and to take a look at the embassy's very own "Slovenian traditional urban beehome" in the terrace; a wooden house painted with colorful depictions of "everyday stories, superstitions, customs and love motifs", distinctive to Slovenian ethnographic identity.

"I believe that at the moment, we are the only embassy in Tehran with our own beehome," said Ms. Radej. "I would like to encourage my dear colleague ambassadors to follow us...to follow the bees and invite them to have their home at their embassies' gardens as well."

Also speaking at the event was FAO Representative ad interim to Iran, Mr. Rao Matta, who stressed that "bees are the sign of well-functioning ecosystems ... [and] the decline of pollinators is also a sign of the disruptions that global changes are causing to ecosystems of the world."

"Bees are increasingly endangered due to environmental threats ... shrinking habitat ... expanding monoculture areas ... [as well as] new bee diseases and pests," he said.

Mr. Matta referred to the "pollination crisis" – the continued decline in the population of pollinators in many ecosystems worldwide – saying FAO has coordinated the International Pollinator Initiative in order to

"support countries in monitoring pollinators and better understand threats, information needs and data gaps."

The FAO official then turned the topic to Iran, and the country's over two-thousand-year tradition of beekeeping.

"The number of beekeepers and the amount of honey produced [in Iran] are increasing year by year," he said. "In 2016, the country was the seventh biggest honey producer in the world, producing up to 77,000 tons of honey. Last year Iran increased its honey production to 88,000 tones and now after China and Turkey, is the third biggest producer in the world."

The figures are impressive when compared to Slovenia's annual honey production which stands at 2,500 tones. Iran also has the fifth largest number of colonies in the world, according to deputy minister of agriculture.

Mr. Matta further voiced FAO's intention to further its collaboration with the Iranian government in beekeeping sector to "contribute to global food security, eradication of hunger and malnutrition and preserving the environment from further losses in biodiversity".

Also present at the event was Maria Dotsenko, the UNIC Director in Tehran, who voiced her pleasure at seeing so many people involved or interested in the beekeeping sector at this special gathering.

For centuries bees are known to have benefited people, plants and the planet. By carrying pollen from one flower to another, bees, butterflies and other pollinators facilitate and improve food production, thus contributing to food security and nutrition," she said of the importance of bees. "Pollination also has a positive impact on the environment in general, helping to maintain biodiversity and a vibrant ecosystem upon which agriculture depends."

Talking about the importance of observing Bee Day, Ms. Dotsenko noted that observing this occasion each year will draw the attention to the roles bees and other pollinators play in people and the planet's health; "It provides the opportunity for governments, organizations, civil societies, and concerned citizens everywhere to promote actions that will protect and enhance pollinators and their habitats. It improves their diversity and supports the sustainable development of beekeeping," she said.

As Ms. Radej said, this is just the beginning. The population of pollinators worldwide are in danger, and many steps need to be taken to ensure their continued existence. Next time you are about to bite into a tasty apple, or munch on a delightful piece of chocolate, just remember that without bees, there would be no apple or chocolate to savor.

mechanism used in three different vertebrates – mice, frogs and zebrafish.

They also show the role this molecular machine plays in controlling factors that normally inhibit cell division, information that could have significant implications for cancer research.

(Source: medicalxpress.com)

## World's largest amphibian is heading for extinction: new study

Despite playing an important role in Chinese culture for centuries – it is thought that the animals even inspired the famous Taoist yin and yang symbol – the salamander has now been all but driven to extinction in the wild, according to a landmark new study published in the journal Current Biology.

The animals are under threat from habitat loss and human over-consumption: They are used in traditional Chinese medicine and have also become a highly coveted luxury food item in recent years. While they are routinely harvested by commercial breeding farms, demand for their parts is growing so fast that most giant salamanders end up being poached in the wild – despite this being forbidden under Chinese law – driving their decline.

Over the course of four years, researchers from global conservation charity ZSL (Zoological Society of London) and the Chinese Academy of Science's Kunming Institute of Zoology (KIZ) undertook possibly the most extensive wildlife survey in China to date to assess the precarious situation of the salamander, investigating 97 sites in 16 of the country's 23 provinces.

Their findings showed that populations of the animal, which were once widespread, are now significantly depleted or eradicated entirely, while illegal poaching has become widespread.

They are considered a "living fossil" because, in that time, they have changed relatively little and thus scientists consider them to be a global conservation priority.

Another related study, also published in Current Biology, found that Chinese giant salamanders aren't just one species, but five, and possibly as many as eight, some of which are now extremely rare and perhaps already extinct in the wild.

(Source: Newsweek)

## NASA creating coldest spot in the universe that is 10b times colder than vacuum of space

NASA launched a rocket that contains the materials to create the Cold Atom Laboratory on the International Space Station (ISS). The purpose of the experiment is to observe atoms by chilling them to temperatures just a bit above absolute zero.

NASA will be freezing atoms with lasers to about less than one-billionth of a degree above absolute zero on the ISS. It sent the Cold Atom Laboratory which is an instrument the size of a beer cooler to slow down atoms just enough to appear almost motionless. Once the atoms are slowed down, magnets are used to trap the atoms. This lets scientists observe how they move and how the atoms interact.

This experiment is being carried out on the ISS because gravity affects the atoms. When the experiment was done on Earth, scientists could only observe the slow-moving atoms for a second at a time. In the microgravity environment of the ISS, researchers are able to view the atoms for much longer.

Temperatures in space reach around -455° F (-270.55° C). Inside the Cold Atom Laboratory scientists are able to reach temperatures of just a little bit above absolute zero. Absolute zero is -459.67° F (-273.15° C). Scientists are hoping that this research could lead to improved technologies such as sensors, quantum computers, and atomic clocks used in spacecraft navigation.

A Bose-Einstein condensate in one of the five state of matter which wasn't discovered until the 1990s. It consists of a group of atoms that are almost cooled to absolute zero. It is what scientists are hoping to achieve with the Cold Atom Laboratory on the International Space Station. When all of the atoms are cooled to this state, they begin to act as a single atom.

(Source: Tech Times)

## Birds from different species recognize each other and cooperate

Cooperation among different species of birds is common. Some birds build their nests near those of larger, more aggressive species to deter predators, and flocks of mixed species forage for food and defend territories together in alliances that can last for years. In most cases, though, these partnerships are not between specific individuals of the other species -- any bird from the other species will do.



But in a new study published in the journal Behavioral Ecology, scientists from the University of Chicago and University of Nebraska show how two different species of Australian fairy-wrens not only recognize individual birds from other species, but also form long-term partnerships that help them forage and defend their shared space as a group.

"Finding that these two species associate was not surprising, as mixed species flocks of birds are observed all over the world," said Allison Johnson, Ph.D., a postdoctoral scholar at the University of Nebraska who conducted the study as part of her dissertation research at UChicago. "But when we realized they were sharing territories with specific individuals and responding aggressively only to unknown individuals, we knew this was really unique. It completely changed our research and we knew we had to investigate it."

Variegated fairy-wrens and splendid fairy-wrens are two small songbirds that live in Australia. The males of each species have striking, bright blue feathers that make them popular with bird watchers. Their behavior also makes them an appealing subject for biologists.

When these territories overlap, the two species interact with each other. They forage together, travel together, and seem to be aware of what the other species is doing. They also help each other defend their territory from rivals. Variegated fairy-wrens will defend their shared territory from both variegated and splendid outsiders; splendid fairy-wrens will do the same, while fending off unfamiliar birds from both species.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

## Team identifies new mechanism essential for eye lens development

If you want to take clear photographs, you don't use sandpaper to clear a smudge from your camera's lens. Similarly, if you want to see clearly, the lens of your eye has to be free of obstruction.

For that reason a curious thing happens during the development of eye lenses. Instead of closely guarding their nucleus and the DNA

it contains – which normal cells do – most lens cells do the exact opposite. They actually degrade their own nuclei and other cell parts. If they were left in place, they would block clear vision causing cataracts at birth. Cataract disease, commonly found in the elderly, is a leading cause of blindness in the world.

Until now, scientists did not understand much

about how these cells managed to do this – how they simultaneously pruned away obstructions without damaging proper development of the eye lens.

But now, in an article published in PLOS Genetics, University of Delaware biologist Salil Lachke and his collaborators show the protein (Celf1) is essential to this process and reveal the

up profoundly, at least twofold actual capacity of current iron ore will be added to the capacities of iron ore deposits of the country."

The country enjoys high capability in order to increase production volume of iron ore in the country considerably, he reiterated.

## Establishing security margin for steel sector with manufacturing graphite electrode plant

Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Mehdi Karbasian said, "taking advantage of world's most modern technology and technical knowhow in the production lines is constructive to reduce cost price and promote quality of new products."

With defining various projects, steel industry of the country should be pro-

moted, he said, adding, "in addition, we should offer high quality products to the international markets with fair and reasonable price according to the demand at the market."

Moving towards deep exploration is significant for steel manufacturing industries, so that once exploration is followed



## 10 cases of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever reported in Iran

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Ten cases of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever have been reported since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21), director of the Health Ministry’s communicable diseases control department has said.

“Out of the 10 reported cases unfortunately one has passed away,” ISNA news agency quoted Mohammad Mehdi Gouya as saying on Tuesday.

The disease outbreak normally occur in spring and it becomes more severe with the beginning of the livestock breeding season, Gouya said, adding that every year some 100 to 150 cases of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever are reported in Iran.

The family members and healthcare providers are trained to avoid catching the virus, he concluded.

**Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever**  
According to World Health Organization (WHO) the Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF) is a widespread disease caused by a tick-borne virus.

CCHF is endemic in Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East and Asia, in countries south of the 50th parallel north. The CCHF virus causes severe viral haemorrhagic fever outbreaks, with a case fatality rate of 10–40%. There is no vaccine available for either people or animals.

The hosts of the CCHF virus include a wide range of wild and domestic animals such as cattle, sheep and goats. The CCHF virus is transmitted to people either by tick bites or through contact with infected animal blood or tissues during and immediately after slaughter. The majority of cases have occurred in people involved in the livestock industry, such as agricultural workers, slaughterhouse workers and veterinarians.

Human-to-human transmission can occur resulting from close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected persons. Hospital-acquired infections can also occur due to improper sterilization of medical equipment, reuse of needles and contamination of medical supplies.

**Symptoms**  
Onset of symptoms is sudden, with fever, myalgia, (muscle ache), dizziness, neck pain and stiffness, backache, headache, sore eyes and photophobia (sensitivity to light). There may also be nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain and sore throat early on, followed by sharp mood swings and confusion.

**Reducing the risks of infection in people**  
In the absence of a vaccine, the only way to reduce infection in people is by raising awareness of the risk factors and educating people about the measures they should take to reduce exposure to the virus, including ear protective clothing (long sleeves, long trousers); use approved repellent on the skin and clothing; avoid areas where ticks are abundant and seasons when they are most active; wear gloves and other protective clothing while handling animals or their tissues in endemic areas, notably during slaughtering, butchering and culling procedures in slaughterhouses or at home; avoid close physical contact with CCHF-infected people, and wear gloves and protective equipment when taking care of ill people.

# Intl. Day for Biological Diversity: Celebrating 25 years of action for biodiversity

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** — UN Secretary-General António Guterres has issued a message saying that the rich variety of life on Earth is essential for the welfare and prosperity of people today and for generations to come.

The message was published on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity, May 22, the Convention on Biological Diversity website reported.

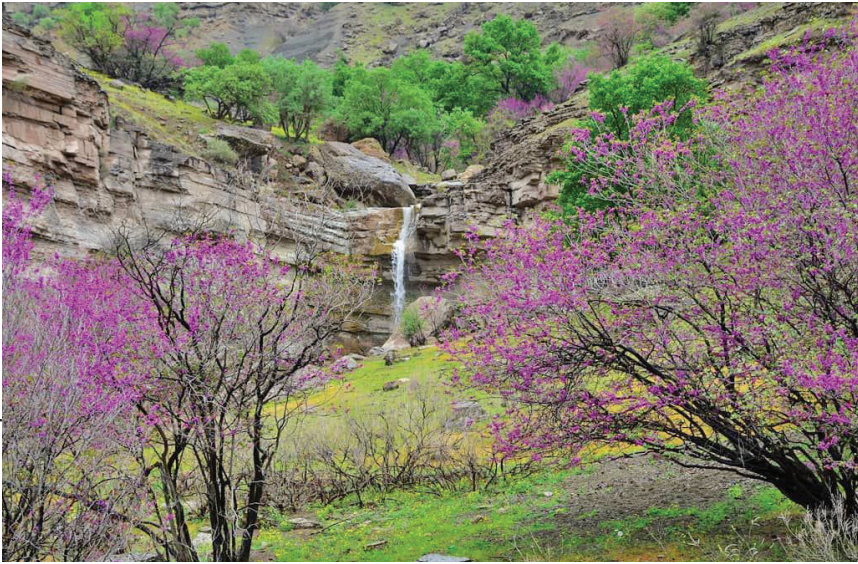
“That is why, 25 years ago, the world’s nations agreed on the Convention for Biological Diversity. The Convention has three goals: the global conservation of biodiversity, its sustainable use and the equitable sharing of its benefits.”

“Achieving these objectives is integral to meet our goals for sustainable development. Protecting and restoring ecosystems and ensuring access to ecosystem services are necessary for the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. Reducing deforestation and land degradation and enhancing carbon stocks in forests, drylands, rangelands and croplands are needed for mitigating climate change.”

“And protecting the biodiversity of forests and watersheds supports clean and plentiful water supplies. These are just some of the benefits of biodiversity. Yet, despite this understanding, biodiversity loss continues around the globe.”

“The answer is to intensify efforts and build on successes. This year, Parties to the Convention will begin work on a new action plan to ensure that, by 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used for the benefit of all people. The entire world needs to join this effort.”

“On this International Day for Biological Diversity, I urge governments, businesses and people everywhere to act to protect the



A waterfall in western province of Lorestan surrounded by Judas trees

nature that sustains us. Our collective future depends on it,” the secretary-general concluded.

**Biodiversity in Iran**  
According to Iran’s Fifth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity published on its website, Iran is located in West Asia and borders the Caspian Sea, Persian Gulf, and Gulf of Oman. The mountains enclose several broad basins, or plateaus, on which major agricultural and urban settlements are located. With an area of 1,648,000 square kilometers, Iran ranks eighteenth in size among the countries of the world.

Despite the fact that much of Iran is dry, the wetlands of Iran are globally significant; large populations of migratory birds winter at these wetlands or use them on their way.

of the country, it consists of 25 ecological types and units, in which the most important are coral reefs, bays and small islands.

**Threats to biodiversity**  
There are many ongoing conservation plans to protect Asiatic Cheetah, wetlands, Central Zagros Mountains, Caspian Hyrcanian Forest biodiversity from extinction and degradation either designed and put in motion nationally in collaboration with international entities.

However, water scarcity, land degradation and pollution are three main threats to Iran biodiversity. Iran faces serious water shortage caused by inadequate natural water supply resources and development of water infrastructures such as dams.

Soil loss is another threat to biodiversity brought about by salination, sedimentation, erosion, desertification, deforestation, inadequate land-use planning, and overgrazing.

In rapidly urbanized areas, air pollution originating from vehicle emissions and industrial effluents has become a serious environmental and public health hazard concern. The sand and dust storms in recent years has taken on new dimensions in Iran and has changed from a local problem to a national issue. The primary source of the dust storms that are regularly and negatively impacting Iran’s air quality lies in the neighboring countries as well as dried up wetlands inside the country.

**Biodiversity matters**  
The biodiversity is important for water resources, agricultural and aquaculture productivity and as a result the food security, human health, climate, and economy. Livelihoods of millions of people in Iran are completely dependent on biodiversity of their surroundings.

## Over 113,000 ‘unintentional crime’ prisoners released last year

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — More than 113,000 prisoners who had committed unintentional crimes were released in the past Iranian calendar year (March 2017-March 2018), IRNA news agency reported on Tuesday.

Total debt of prisoners added up to about 7 trillion rials (nearly \$166 million), however, some half of the debts were forgiven by the plaintiffs, Blood Money Organization’s director Asadollah Jolaei said.

Last year, charity fundraising events helped free more

than 10 thousand prisoners and contributions totaled nearly 5.7 trillion rials (nearly \$135 million), he explained.

He stated that every year, concurrent with the holy month of Ramadan, fundraising events will be held nationwide. This year some 375 fundraising events are planned to be held nationwide.

Every year concurrent with the holy month of Ramadan, which started on May 17 this year, Iranians make generous donations to help free prisoners.

Last year, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, President Hassan Rouhani, Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, and Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani made a total of 6.83 billion rials (nearly \$170,000) in contributions to free prisoners who had committed involuntary crimes.

This year, the Leader has made a contribution of 4 billion rials (nearly \$950,000) to help release prisoners who had committed involuntary crimes, YJC reported.

# IKCO’s Important Export Programs in Current Year

Iran Khodro Industrial Group (IKCO) has put various export programs in the current Iranian calendar year in 1397 (started March 21, 2018), the most important of which can be referred to the inauguration of Khazar Auto Mfg. Company in the beginning of this year.

Earlier, Khazar Auto Mfg. Company was inaugurated by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Azerbaijan Republic’s President Ilham Aliyev through video conference.

Khazar Auto Mfg. Company has been established between Iran Khodro Industrial Group (IKCO) and private sector of the Azerbaijan Republic with the aim of annual production of 10,000 passenger cars in five models.

With the expansion project of the company in three working shifts, 50,000 passenger cars will be manufactured per annum, the Public Relations Dept. of IKCO reported.

In the first phase of this giant project, it is expected that IKCO will manufacture Dena and Dena+ in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

IKCO’s products in the Republic of Azerbaijan’s site will be exported to the Commonwealth Independent States (CIS) within the framework of Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA). IKCO’s production line in the Republic of Azerbaijan has benefited from world’s most modern equipment and machinery.

Under the agreement, a joint venture company was set up between IKCO and private sector of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in which, Azeri



and Iranian side i.e. IKCO promised to provide 75 and 25 percent capital for launching this production line in Azerbaijan respectively.

IKCO also promised to export technical and engineering services to the Republic of Azerbaijan, the report added.

This giant production line has been spread on a land area as large as 68,000 square meters in coastal city of Neftçala in Azerbaijan in the vicinity of the Caspian Sea.

**IKCO Participates in Automechanika Istanbul Exhibition**

Iran Khodro Industrial Group (IKCO) participated in Automechanika Istanbul Exhibition with the aim of increasing export volume of parts, development of market, easy access to new customers and increase of

production basket of parts according to the orders of customers.

Given the advantages of export of car parts, Iran Khodro Industrial Group (IKCO) participated in this prestigious exhibition powerfully in line with taking advantage of capacities available in part manufacturing companies, affiliated to IKCO.

Presently, IKCO exports parts required by customers at the target markets in the form of Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) in various parts of die casting, pressing and machining.

Statistics showed that export volume of parts by IKCO in the past Iranian calendar year in 1396 (ended March 20, 2018) increased significantly as compared to a year earlier i.e. in 1395 (ended March 20, 2017).

Turkey and some European countries such as France, Italy and Spain are IKCO’s target markets in the field of export of car parts, so that IKCO managed to get lion’s share in car parts manufacturing market with the production of high quality parts observing requirements of international standards.

Also, Turkish and German industrialists and industrial activists along with Iran’s Economic Envoy in Turkey visited exposition booth of IKCO in this prestigious exhibition held in Istanbul, Turkey.

It should be noted that chairman of Turkish Trade Center, CEO of Frankfurt Exhibition, Director General of Automechanika Istanbul Exhibition also visited exposition booth of Iran Khodro Industrial Group (IKCO) and familiarized with the high capability and potential of Iranian automakers in manufacturing various types of car parts.

For his part, Ahmadi Iran Economic Envoy in Turkey welcomed participation of IKCO in Automechanika Istanbul Exhibition and said, “Iranian Embassy in Turkey is ready to cooperate with Iranian parts manufacturers for the promotion of export and their active presence in international markets.”

He termed performance of IKCO in manufacturing various types of car parts and exporting high quality parts to the international markets as ‘positive and important’ and said, “manufacturing high quality parts with fair and competitive price is the key to success in export markets.”

Automechanika Istanbul Exhibition is one of the most prestigious

and reliable international exhibitions which is held every year in important industrial cities around the world. In this prestigious exhibition, leading car and parts manufacturers showcase their latest achievements. This exhibition was held in Istanbul, Turkey on April 5-8, 2018.

Majid Kavyani Deputy CEO of IKCO for Export and International Affairs was the next speaker who revealed the export of 10,000 cars by IKCO in the current Iranian calendar year in 1397 (started March 21, 2018) and said, “Of total cars produced in IKCO, 75 percent of which will be exported to countries in the Middle east and North Africa (MENA) while 25 percent of which will be exported to CIS, Asian and Latin American countries.”

He also revealed the promotion and development of products for increasing export and said, “With the exertion of products’ new standards, export of car to many world countries will become possible.”

He pointed to taking advantage of political ties for the promotion of trade and business ties as one of the main factors for increasing export of products and said, “Participating in foreign exhibitions, introducing products, granting facilities, allocating research budget for the promotion of products, refunding customs duties, setting up banking relationship, participating in various economic contracts both in regional and international levels, etc. are considered as salient measures that the respected government should take them into serious consideration.”



# Latin American leaders recall ambassadors to Venezuela over vote

A bloc of countries from the Americas monitoring the political crisis in Venezuela has said that its 14 members would recall their ambassadors to protest against what it said was Venezuela's failure to hold a "free and fair" election.

In a statement, the Lima Group said the members' representatives in the Venezuelan capital, Caracas, would return to their respective countries for consultations.

The bloc consists of Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Saint Lucia.

Members have also summoned Venezuelan ambassadors to their countries and agreed to downgrade diplomatic relations with Maduro's government, the statement said.

US President Donald Trump also took action on Monday, signing an order restricting Maduro's government from selling off, or borrowing against, public assets.

"We call for the Maduro regime to restore democracy, hold free and fair elections, release all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally, and end the repression and economic deprivation of the Venezuelan people," Trump said in a statement.

**■ 'We are the force of history'**  
Maduro was re-elected as Venezuela's president on Sunday in an election marred by low turnout, a boycott by the main opposition and allegations from rival candidates of several voting irregularities.

The 55-year-old won 5.8 million votes in Sunday's election, 4 million more than second-placed Henri Falcon, an independent candidate.

Turnout for the single-round vote was about 46 percent, according to Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE), significantly lower than the 80 percent recorded during the country's last presidential election in 2013.

About 20 million people were eligible



to participate in the ballot.

Maduro hailed his win as a victory against "imperialism", accused rivals of "underestimating" him and said a presidential candidate had "never before ... taken 68 percent of the popular vote".

"We are the force of history turned into a permanent popular victory," he said on Sunday evening in the Venezuelan capital, Caracas, following the announcement of results.

**■ 'Voting irregularities'**  
But Falcon called for a new vote, alleging the election was illegitimate.

"We do not recognize this electoral process as valid," he told local media. "There must be new elections in Venezuela."

Claudio Fermin, Falcon's campaign chief, said his team documented more than 900 cases of voting irregularities, including the widespread placement of pro-government stands outside polling stations.

Venezuela's main opposition coalition, the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD),

boycotted the election, while Maduro's two most popular rivals, Henrique Capriles and Leopoldo Lopez, were barred from running.

The country's opposition has appeared deeply divided in recent months, with fractures highlighted by members of the MUD accepting the results of regional elections in October last year, which resulted in Capriles breaking away from the coalition.

Many MUD supporters viewed the swearing-in of four coalition politicians as state governors within the Constituent Assembly as being contrary to MUD's denial of the body's legitimacy.

**■ 'Deepening political crisis'**  
Sunday's vote came against the backdrop of a political and financial crisis, with more than 100 people killed in protests throughout 2017 amid growing discontent over biting hyperinflation and food and medicine shortages.

In its statement, the Lima Group said Venezuela's electoral process had not

complied with "international standards" and expressed concern over the "deepening political, economic, social and humanitarian crisis" unfolding in the country.

"[This crisis] is reflected in the massive migration of Venezuelans who arrive in our countries in difficult conditions and in the loss of democratic institutions, the rule of law and the lack of guarantees and political freedoms of citizens," the group's statement said.

The number of Venezuelan nationals abroad increased from almost 700,000 to more than 1.6 million between 2015 and 2017, according to the International Organization for Migration.

The Lima Group, which was formed in August 2017, will convene for a high-level meeting next month in Peru to address the migration issue.

**■ 'Sham election'**  
Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the "sham elections" had changed nothing in a post on Twitter on Sunday.

A senior U.S. official told The Associated Press on Sunday that Trump's administration was considering imposing crippling oil sanctions on Venezuela, potentially adding to the sweeping sanctions already imposed on the country by Washington.

Oil revenues account for about 95 percent of Venezuela's export earnings, according to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

Maduro has accused the U.S. and its allies of waging "economic war" on Venezuela, saying the measures imposed by Washington were an attempt to force Venezuela to default on its debt.

The country's gross domestic product (GDP) has dropped by 45 percent since Maduro took office, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Taliban launches attacks in Ghazni, 14 policemen killed

### Minibus bomb explodes in Kandahar city, six dead

The Taliban has launched a series of attacks in Afghanistan's Ghazni province, killing police officers, including a district police chief and a reserve unit's commander, Afghan officials have said.

The deadly attacks that claimed the lives of at least 14 policemen comes days after the armed group announced conditional amnesty to Afghan security forces.

Taliban fighters stormed several security checkpoints in Dih Yak and Jaghatu district of the Ghazni province late on Monday setting off a battle with the security forces that continued through Tuesday.

Seven police officers were killed in Dih Yak, including the district police chief Faizullah Toofan and reserve commander Haji Baraket. Seven others policemen were killed in Jaghatu district.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for the attacks in a statement to the media. He claimed the Jaghatu district headquarters was captured as well as several police checkpoints in Dih Yak.

The Taliban also issued a statement warning residents of the capital, Kabul, to avoid military and intelligence centers as they planned to target those as part of their spring offensive.

Since announcing their offensive in April, Taliban fighters



have stepped up attacks across the country against Afghan security forces and government officials. In a recent statement, the Taliban offered amnesty to Afghan police and military in the country if they left "enemy ranks".

**■ Kandahar city hit by deadly minibus bomb explosion**

Meanwhile, at least six people were killed and dozens of others wounded when a minibus exploded on Tuesday near a security checkpoint in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar, officials said.

Daoud Ahmadi, a spokesman for the governor of Kan-

dahar province, told Al Jazeera that the minibus, packed with explosives, blew up in a mechanic's yard in the city's main market before it could be defused.

"Those killed are all civilians since the mechanic's shop is near a residential area," he said.

Nematullah Barak, head of Mirwais hospital in Kandahar, said several wounded children were also brought in to the hospital for treatment.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Hundreds of people have been killed in high-profile attacks carried out by the Taliban and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) group since the beginning of this year.

At least 11 Afghan schoolchildren were killed in Kandahar province last month when a suicide car bomber hit a convoy of Romanian troops patrolling the area as part of the U.S.-led NATO forces.

In one of the deadliest attacks, at least 29 people, including nine journalists, were killed after two explosions claimed by the ISIL hit the capital, Kabul, last month.

Increase in attacks have been observed ahead of the long-delayed parliamentary and district council elections scheduled for October 20 this year.

(Source: agencies)

## Italy to decide on new PM for Eurosceptic government

Italy's president was tasked Tuesday with deciding whether to approve little-known lawyer Giuseppe Conte as prime minister of a coalition government set up by anti-establishment and far-right groups.

The presentation of Conte, 54, for the post takes the parties a step closer to setting up a Eurosceptic, anti-austerity government in the Eurozone's third-biggest economy.

The anti-establishment Five Star Movement and the anti-immigrant League put his name forward late Monday in a bid to end two months of political deadlock.

President Sergio Mattarella hosted the speakers of the lower house and the Senate on Tuesday morning to discuss Conte's nomination.

He has to agree to the parties' candidate and ministerial team before they can seek approval for the new government in parliament.

A spokesman for the president said he would not announce a decision on Tuesday. Italian media said that he could make an announcement tomorrow.

Installing a prime minister is a key step

in Five Star leader Luigi Di Maio and League chief Matteo Salvini's efforts to set up a joint government.

The two groups unveiled their joint policy program on Friday.

As well as planning to speed up expulsion of illegal immigrants, it contains anti-austerity measures including drastic tax cuts, pension reform rollbacks and a monthly basic income.

European authorities warned them Tuesday morning to be "responsible" in their budget measures.

"The European Commission does not interfere with national policy on principle, but we view it as important that the Italian government remains on course in pursuing a responsible budget policy," Valdis Dombrovskis, the body's vice-president for the euro, was quoted as saying by the German business daily Handelsblatt.

Italy's 2.3 trillion euros of debt is 132 percent of its gross domestic product, the highest ratio in Europe apart from Greece. The EU forecasts that Italian public debt will remain at 130 percent of its GDP this

year - more than double the bloc's 60-percent ceiling.

"We can only advise it to stay on course in terms of economic and fiscal policies, to stimulate growth through structural reforms and to keep the budget deficit under control," said Dombrovskis.

Hit hard by the 2008 global financial crisis, Italy has one of the Eurozone's lowest growth rates.

On Tuesday morning, national statistics agency Istat announced a GDP growth forecast of 1.4 percent in 2018. At the end of April the outgoing government estimated 1.5 percent growth for the year.

Salvini said on Tuesday that the new government "wants to grow and relaunch Italy, respecting rules and commitments". But he has already reacted coldly to criticism from Brussels.

On Monday conservative European People's Party leader Manfred Weber was quoted as saying by German news agency DPA that Italy was "playing with fire" with the coalition government program.

Salvini replied: "Let him think about

Germany, and we'll think about Italy".

Conte's CV boasts study and research positions at some of the world's most prestigious universities.

But some observers expressed concern that Conte would not have the necessary authority, within the government or in external relations.

"He's in a very difficult situation because he has to deal with two groups who have formed a difficult compromise," said Franco Pavanocello, a political scientist and president of Rome's John Cabot University.

"What remains to be seen is whether he's going to be able to control the various political directions in which this coalition was formed."

Di Maio and Salvini are tipped for key ministerial posts in the new cabinet.

Left-wing newspaper La Repubblica branded Conte "a prime minister who will not count".

"What authority will he have when he goes to meet Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron?" the paper said in an editorial.

(Source: Reuters)

## Russia military shoots down 'unknown drone' close to Syria's Khmeimim base

**➡** On Monday, the Russian Center for Syrian Reconciliation and the Syrian military found depots containing arms manufactured in NATO states as well as clandestine factories for producing explosive devices on territories cleared from militants in the eastern parts of Homs Province.

The discovery comes amid news about the elimination of the last ISIL (Daesh) stronghold in the capital, Damascus.

In a statement on Monday, the General Command of the Syrian Army and Armed Forces said complete security

had been restored to Damascus and its countryside after al-Hajar al-Aswad district and al-Yarmouk Camp were totally purged of terrorists.

Besides its unilateral military activities in Syria, Washington has also been leading a coalition of allies in an aerial campaign against what it claimed to be Daesh targets since 2014.

The mission, which does not have the Syrian government's approval or a UN mandate, is still underway despite the collapse of the terror group late last year. The strikes

have on many occasions resulted in civilian casualties and failed to fulfill their declared aim of countering terrorism.

The Russian military, which has been assisting Damascus in its counterterrorism efforts, has repeatedly reported suspicious activities in and around military bases controlled by the U.S. in support of Takfiri terrorists.

Damascus has on several occasions written to the UN, complaining that the U.S. was flagrantly violating its sovereignty.

(Source: agencies)

## A suggestion for responding Pompeo: Iran's 12 conditions for talks with U.S.

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Reaffirming the withdrawal of Trump's government from the nuclear deal with Iran, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo recently put forward conditions for concluding a "new agreement" with Iran at the Heritage Foundation. Apart from the widespread criticism that has been raised in Iran and the international system (and even among the United States' allies) against the Pompeo's remarks, "12 prerequisites" can be given to the United States and the Trump's government merely for letting them negotiate with Iranian authorities.

It is to be noted here that the following prerequisites shouldn't be taken as Iran's terms and conditions for reaching an "agreement with the United States", but those are merely preconditions for setting up a negotiating table with the United States and the Trump government:

1. Full nuclear disarmament of the United States, and the destruction of its nuclear weapons, with the presence of international supervisors.
2. Stopping the construction of intercontinental ballistic missiles by the United States, and the destruction of the available missile under the supervision of arm control experts.
- 3- Full recognition of 20% industrial Uranium enrichment in Iran
4. Agreeing with the Islamic Republic of Iran in the international circles for the full nuclear disarmament of the Zionist regime and the regime's join to the NPT
5. U.S. thorough withdrawal from the Persian Gulf and the closure of U.S. military bases in the region.
6. The closure of all U.S. military bases in the neighboring countries of Iran, and the withdrawal of U.S. troops from West Asia, Afghanistan and the Indian subcontinent
- Note: The U.S. diplomatic presence in neighboring countries of Iran is subject to the lack of interference in the internal affairs of Iran.
7. The release of all blocked property and confiscated property of Iran in the United States, with full payout of their maintenance since 1977
8. Official apologizing the Iranian people for the coup of August 19, 1953, and paying for the 25-year presence of the Pahlavi regime since then (by forming a joint committee between Iran and the United States)
9. Admitting full responsibility for supporting Saddam Hussein during the imposed war on Iran, apologizing the Iranian people and calculating and paying for the losses incurred by the imposed war on the Islamic Republic of Iran.
10. Accepting full legal responsibility for the shot down of Iran's civilian passenger flight from Tehran to Dubai, number 655, by an SM-2MR surface-to-air missile fired from USS Vincennes, a guided missile cruiser of the United States Navy (which took place on July 3, 1988), providing compensation to its survivors, and apologizing the Iranian nation (in the form of a Declaration read by the President and U.S. Secretary of State)
11. Official recognition of the responsibility for the creation of ISIS and al-Qaeda in West Asia and the Indian subcontinent, and providing practical guarantees to Iran and other independent states of the region to compensate for the losses caused by the creation of terrorist and Takfiri groups.
12. Closing the media, satellite, and political databases of counter- Islamic Revolution currents in the United States and stop funding them.

In case "all" these preconditions were realized, the United States can make its formal request to negotiate with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and, if approved by the diplomatic and military apparatus of our country, begin to talk with the Iranian representatives.

## Russian adopts bill threatening cooperation with U.S.

Russia's parliament has adopted a wide-ranging bill that could freeze crucial exports to the United States and imports to Russia from the U.S. and other countries.

The bill, drafted by leading lawmakers at the State Duma in response to the latest round of U.S. sanctions, lays out a wide range of restrictions for U.S. businesses in Russia and for cooperation with the U.S. Among other things, the bill allows the Russian president to "ban or suspend cooperation with a hostile state" and ban imports of goods from unnamed countries.

The original bill proposed specific restrictions to U.S. imports including drugs as well as banning crucial exports, such as titanium, to the U.S. But lawmakers toned it down to get rid of references to specific restrictions before adopting the bill.

(Source: AP)

## German court rejects call for Puigdemont to be rearrested

A German court Tuesday rejected a request from prosecutors to take former Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont back into custody pending a decision on whether he can be extradited to Spain.

Puigdemont was detained by German police March 25 after crossing the border from Denmark - charges that stem from an unauthorized referendum last year on Catalonia's independence from Spain.

He was released April 6 after a German court said it appeared he can't be extradited for rebellion, the more serious of the two charges. But prosecutors in the northern town of Schleswig argued that new information provided by Spanish authorities suggests that would be possible.

They cited videos showing violence against Spanish police and said in a statement that "the disturbances were on such a scale that prosecutors believe that he should also be extradited over the accusation of rebellion." The prosecutors argued that the charge is comparable to two offenses under German law - treason and breaching the peace.

They said that Puigdemont would pose a flight risk and called for him to be taken back into custody. The state court in Schleswig disagreed and rejected the request.

Puigdemont remains free with certain conditions, including reporting to police once a week.

The separatist politician has been living in Berlin, frequently receiving political allies from Catalonia including his newly elected successor as regional president, Quim Torra.

The Schleswig court said it is "still open" when a final decision will be made on whether Puigdemont can be extradited. It said that the prosecutors have yet to submit a formal application to examine whether an extradition is possible.

(Source: AP)



## Favre returns to Bundesliga to take over Dortmund



Swiss coach Lucien Favre took charge of Borussia Dortmund on Tuesday, signing a two year-deal that club bosses hope will mark a change in fortunes for the former Bundesliga champions.

Dortmund parted ways with coach Peter Stoeger at the end of the season after the club finished fourth in the Bundesliga and only narrowly made the Champions League spot on the last match day.

Stoeger's departure capped an inconsistent campaign that began with Dutchman Peter Bosz at the helm before he was sacked midway through the season.

The 60-year-old Favre, nicknamed 'the Brain' for his tactical acumen, left French club Nice two days ago and will return to the Bundesliga following successful spells at Hertha Berlin and Borussia Moenchengladbach.

He led Hertha to a fourth place finish in 2009 and then took Gladbach from the brink of relegation to fourth spot in 2012.

"Signing Lucien Favre as coach is an important part of our sporting new start," said Dortmund sports director Michael Zorc in a statement.

"He is well-respected for his qualities which he has impressively proven at Hertha, Gladbach and recently Nice."

Dortmund, champions in 2011 and 2012 and Champions League finalists in 2013, had expected to once again be title contenders this season but instead saw Bayern Munich race away with the title.

"To coach Borussia Dortmund is an attractive task that I am very happy to take on," Favre, who is fluent in German, said. "Now we will start working on the new team."

(Source: Mirror)

## Serena could get Wimbledon seeding, despite French snub

Serena Williams could still be seeded at this year's Wimbledon championships despite being snubbed by French Open organisers, the All England Club said on Tuesday.

The American is expected to play at Roland Garros next week, where she has won the title three times, but without being seeded she could conceivably meet champion Jelena Ostapenko in the first round.

The French Tennis Federation (FFT) confirmed on Tuesday that its seedings would be based on the latest WTA rankings.

Williams, who has won 23 grand slam singles titles, is ranked a lowly 453rd after returning to action this year following the birth of her daughter last September.

She has not played a tournament since Miami in March and pulled out of the clay court events in Madrid and Rome.

While the French Open sticks rigidly to rankings, Wimbledon's tennis sub-committee allows itself some wiggle room.

The men's seedings is usually based on ATP rankings in conjunction with a formula based on grasscourt results over the previous two years. In contrast, the women's seedings usually follow the WTA rankings list but can be tweaked by the All England Club in special circumstances.

"The seeding order follows the WTA ranking list, except where in the opinion of the committee, a change is necessary to produce a balanced draw," is the All England Club's official line on its website.

Williams has already benefited from this rule in the past as in 2011 she was ranked 25th before the start of Wimbledon but seeded seventh for the championships.

The Wimbledon seedings committee will meet to discuss the order of the 32 seeds on June 26.

The tournament begins on July 2.

Williams has won Wimbledon seven times but missed last year's tournament while she was on maternity leave.

(Source: Reuters)

## Olympic swimmer sues over alleged cover-up

Olympic swimmer Ariana Kukors Smith sued USA Swimming on Monday, alleging the sport's national governing body knew her former coach, Sean Hutchinson, had sexually abused her as a minor and covered it up.

Kukors Smith accused Hutchinson, her coach at swim club in Seattle, of grooming her for sexual abuse when she was 13, touching and kissing her when she was 16, and engaging in sexual activity with her when she was 17.

"USA Swimming officials secretly agreed Hutchinson should be specifically protected from the background check process due to the fact that pervasive rumors of his inappropriate sexually motivated behavior towards minors such as the plaintiff would inevitably surface through contacts with prior employers," Kukors Smith, now 28, said in her lawsuit, which she filed in the Orange County Superior Court near Los Angeles.

"This lawsuit is about holding people accountable who should have protected a 15-year-old girl," she told reporters after filing the suit. "I needed help and there were people in positions of power that could have helped me."

She added that "by doing nothing," USA Swimming "enabled Sean Hutchinson to abuse me for a decade."

She is also suing longtime Olympic coach Mark Schubert, saying he failed to report "a reasonable suspicion of child abuse or endangerment."

(Source: DW)

# Astronomical Champions League final costs 'a tax on passion and loyalty'

The road to Kiev is set to be a weird but not so wonderful one for thousands of Liverpool and Real Madrid fans attending Saturday's Champions League final in Ukraine.

Astronomical costs of flights, accommodation and tickets have forced some to conjure creative ways to get to Kiev this weekend and though it will be an adventure for many, they are far from happy.

For Gareth Roberts, editor of the Liverpool fanzine the Anfield Wrap, this will be a two-day journey driving through five countries -- France, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany and Poland -- in a coach to reach the Ukrainian capital in time for European football's showpiece event, which starts at 19:45 BST on May 26.

Comfort and personal hygiene, he jokes, must be sacrificed to witness the English Premier League side attempt to win a sixth European title.

Yet even this cheaper option will set the 41-year-old back £1,000 (\$1,345). "The whole thing has been an absolute joke," the Liverpoolian tells CNN Sport.

"We're leaving Liverpool at 2am Thursday, driving down to Kent, getting on the Eurostar, getting over to France, then it's through Belgium, Holland, Germany -- stopping in Berlin -- and through Poland into Ukraine.

"We'll stop somewhere else in Ukraine, about 100 miles from Kiev, stay at a hostel, have four hours' sleep, get a shower, then get back and carry on. We think we'll arrive at 8am on the day of the match and the driver wants to be turning around again at 3am."

### ■ An issue for Britain's Parliament

Fans of both clubs have been critical of UEFA, European football's governing body, for allocating 16,626 tickets to each club for an event being held in the 63,000-capacity NSC Olimpiyskiy Stadium, while airlines and hotels have also come under fire for raising the cost of flights and accommodation.

The issue has even been raised in Britain's Parliament, with Liverpool season-ticket holder and lawmaker Derek Twigg describing the situation as "appalling."

As of May 21 on Booking.com, a room for one adult at Hotel Verhovina on May 26 was £859 (\$1,155), while staying a night in the same hotel on June 2 would set guests back just £16 (\$21).

On the same website, a guesthouse apartment for one



person for May 26 was £4,226 (\$5,686). Rooms were unavailable at the time of searching in one of Kiev's plushest establishments, the InterContinental Kiev.

So expensive is the accommodation that generous Kiev residents have mobilized on social media to offer spare rooms and sofas to fans for free.

Meanwhile, a flight to Kiev from London Gatwick on May 25, returning on Sunday May 27, was £1,214 (\$1633) when searching SkyScanner on Monday. Flying to Kiev from Gatwick on June 2 and returning June 3 was £267 (\$359).

### ■ 'A tax on loyalty and passion'

"To have two clubs the size of Liverpool and Real Madrid in the Champions League should be a special moment as a football supporter and what you've got is loyal supporters

being frozen out," added Roberts, a regular at Liverpool matches for 28 years. Liverpool had to organize a ballot to allocate tickets to fans.

"It all feels unfair that they (a) can't put it in a bigger venue and (b) in a city that's got better infrastructure to cope.

"There's been rooms advertised on the internet for £10,000 (\$13,473). Going in the van is the only way we can do it.

"You only have to go online and type in Champions League tickets and you find them from anything from £500 (\$672) to £4,000 (\$5382).

"Even through UEFA, they were selling tickets for £394 (\$530). That's ridiculous. That's not fair pricing. That's a tax on loyalty, a tax on passion for your football team."

(Source: CNN)

## Pellegrini returns to England as West Ham manager



West Ham United have appointed former Manchester City boss Manuel Pellegrini as their new manager on a three-year deal, the Premier League club announced on Tuesday. The 64-year-old Chilean left Chinese Super League outfit Hebei China Fortune on Saturday and replaces David Moyes, who left the club last week after guiding them to a 13th-placed finish in the league.

"I am excited about this project... West Ham had a difficult season and I hope next season we are going to play football that will delight the fans," Pellegrini told West Ham's website here

"I know that this league is very good and it's not easy to do it, but I think that working together with the owners, the technical staff and the fans, we have an important power and can think about reaching important targets."

West Ham joint-chairman David Sullivan said in a statement here that the club was looking forward to working with one of the "most respected" coaches in the world.

"It was important that we appointed someone with knowledge and experience of the Premier League, who already has an

understanding... of West Ham United and our ambitions."

Former Villarreal, Real Madrid and Malaga boss Pellegrini returns to England two years after leaving City, who he led to the Premier League title and a League Cup triumph in 2014.

Sullivan said the appointment was made bearing in mind the demands of supporters for attacking football. Under Pellegrini, City scored an English record 151 goals in all competitions in his debut campaign in 2013-14.

"Manuel brings a reputation for attacking football and getting the best out of his players," Sullivan added. "We believe he will attract new talent to the London Stadium as well as improving the current squad."

Pellegrini led City to another League Cup triumph in 2016 before making way for current boss Pep Guardiola.

One of Pellegrini's challenges at West Ham will be to deliver the sort of football that will keep fans happy at London Stadium, the club's unpopular home since they left Upton Park in 2016.

(Source: Guardian)

## Kane named England captain for World Cup



Striker Harry Kane will wear the captain's armband for England at next month's World Cup, ending speculation about who would lead Gareth Southgate's squad in Russia.

The announcement was made in a video published on Twitter in which Southgate said Tottenham Hotspur's Kane had "outstanding leadership" qualities.

England's last full-time captain was Wayne Rooney but the armband has been worn by several players since the former Manchester United forward lost his place in the squad.

Southgate has often played down the significance of the position, preferring to nurture a collective leadership within the team, but Kane will be the figurehead as England go into their 15th World Cup.

Kane, who scored 30 Premier League goals for Tottenham this past season, has 23 caps for England and netted 12 times.

"For me the key for a captain is that you set the tone every day in everything that we do, the way we train, the way we prepare and the professionalism towards the task," Southgate said.

"Harry is an exemplary model of that.

He is a meticulous professional and is prepared to challenge people.

"Now is a moment in his life where he is prepared to bring that into the team environment."

Kane, who first captained England in a World Cup qualifier against Scotland last year, said it was a "massive honour".

"I'm very excited for the World Cup, can't wait," he said. "Leading the lads out is going to be special."

England face Tunisia, Panama and Belgium at the World Cup in which they will send their third-youngest squad to a major tournament, with an average age of 26.

He will have some experience around him, however, such as Liverpool skipper Jordan Henderson and Chelsea's Gary Cahill

"Harry will need the support of the other good leaders we've got around him," Southgate said.

"You don't become a top team by just having a good captain with good values. That has to spread right throughout the group but I think he's the one ready to take that challenge on."

(Source: Eurosport)

## LeBron James scores 44 as Cavaliers even series with Celtics



get much better than that," Stevens said in his postgame press conference. "Ultimately, anybody that didn't think this was going to be tough — I mean, everything is tough. In this deal, it's a blast to have to grit your teeth, get up off the mat and go after it again. That's part of what makes these guys on both sides special."

Cleveland shot 50.6 from the field on Monday and had a 47-37 rebounding edge. Boston shot 41.2 percent from

the floor.

Hill's basket gave the Cavaliers a 96-81 lead with 9:53 remaining in the contest before the Celtics rattled off eight straight points. Love and James responded with back-to-back baskets to increase the Cleveland margin to 100-89.

Boston again was within seven after Marcus Smart's bucket with 4:29 left, but Thompson and James scored consecutive baskets to again push the Cavaliers' lead to 11. Hill followed with a 12-foot floater to give Cleveland a 106-93 advantage with 2:36 left.

James drained a 3-pointer with 1:43 left to record his sixth 40-point outing of this postseason and give the Cavaliers a 109-95 lead. Philadelphia's Allen Iverson (2001) is the most recent player to have six 40-point performances in a single playoff year.

"I put the work in day in and day out on my body, working on my game every day to try to put myself in the best condition I can be in the postseason," James told ESPN afterward. "My teammates, my coaching staff allow me to go out and do the things to try to help us win and trust me.

"And besides the seven turnovers tonight, I think I earned their trust a little bit more."

James scored 22 points in the first half as the Cavaliers led 68-53 at the break.

(Source: Reuters)



# Katayoun Khosrowyar shortlisted for WSU Coach Award

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iranian football coach Katayoun Khosrowyar has been shortlisted for World Soccer United (WSU) Coach Award.

Khosrowyar will vie with Anouk Bruil and Liga Patupa for the award.

Katayoun Khosrowyar grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma. As an Iranian-American she has been able to bring her own “revolution” to Iran. It’s a beautiful story that has allowed her to shape the national landscape of Iranian women’s football, womensoccerunited.com reported.

She has empowered Iranian women in football. In 2014, she was the first Iranian woman to have earned a FIFA/AFC “A” license. At such a young age, she has been able to inspire many girls to pursue their dream of playing football.

Kat has opened up many doors for future generation of girls through her tenacity and persistent. Few of her girls have received offers from Europe.

In addition, Kat not only manages the U-19 side of Iran’s women’s national team, but advises the U-16/U-14 side as well. She is doing the job of three or more people simply because she believes she can create a pathway for a better future for these girls.

Furthermore, she has built communications and bridges with other nations to empower more women in various other countries. This lady single-handedly has been able to build a better relationship with the United States through football. This by itself is great for diplomacy.



## Kia Football Academy U13 win Cordial Cup



**S P O R T S** **Kia Football Academy** U13 claimed the title of the 2018 Cordial Cup.

KIA defeated VfB Stuttgart U13 1-0 in the final match and lifted the trophy.

FC Nürnberg came third beating FC Augsburg.

A total of 48 teams took part in the U13 tournament.

Moreover, Kia FC U15 finished third after beating FC St. Gallen.

SpVgg Unterhaching won the title in U15 section after beating FSV Mainz 05.

The Cordial Cup is the best supported youth football tournament in Europe. Over

3000 players in 164 teams competed for the coveted trophy from 18 to 21 May 2018.

Top European clubs like Bayern Munich, Spartak Moscow or Bayer Leverkusen have all played in Kitzbuehel, Austria.

The KIA Football Academy is an Iranian youth football academy based in Tehran. The academy was established in April 2015 by former Iran national team captain Mehdi Mahdavi and long-time youth coach Ali Doustmehr.

The academy owns practice facilities in District 15 in the south of the capital, Tehran.

## Youngster Azmoun carries the hopes of a nation



From the moment Sardar Azmoun arrived on the international stage and Iran manager Carlos Queiroz compared him to Ruud van Nistelrooy, the pressure has been on the young striker to carry the hopes of the Persian Gulf nation into uncharted territory.

Azmoun’s spinning turn and deft finish against Qatar in the group phase of the Asian Cup finals in Australia in 2015 came less than a year after he made his debut for Team Melli and prompted Queiroz to liken the then 20-year-old to the Dutch forward.

With Iran hoping for their first foray past the group stage of the World Cup in Russia after four previous unsuccessful tournament appearances, Azmoun is set to be the figurehead of their charge.

While seen as the long-term successor to Iran great Ali Daei, Azmoun’s hero is Zlatan Ibrahimovic. With 23 goals in 31 games for Iran to date, Azmoun is on track to match Daei’s scoring record, which helped the country to qualify for the 1998 and 2006 World Cup finals.

(Source: The Star Online)

# Australia edge Iran at Asian Women’s U17 Volleyball Championship

Australia defied against all odds to stun Iran in tie-breaker 22-25 20-25 25-19 25-21 15-9 and top Pool C at their last preliminary encounter in the 12th Asian Women’s U17 Volleyball Championship at the Nakhon Pathom Municipality Gymnasium on Tuesday.

Annelies Jones and Alisha Stevens similarly scored a match-high 16 points apiece for the winning team, while Alissa Kinkela added 13 points including 10 kills. Negar Salahshouri led Iran with 14 points and Zahra Rezaei contributed 12 points.

Australia, powered by hard-attacking Alisha Stevens, led initially 8-6 in the opening set before Iran gradually pulled their game together and hit back strongly to catch up with the Aussies at 10-all and widened the gap to 21-15. However, Stevens came up with an awesome form and a dominant force to be reckoned with when she served and attacked aggressively to help Australia win six straight points to meet the strong Iranians at 21-21. The Aussies’ fightback did not last long as Iran stormed on to win the thrilling set 25-22.

Confidence boosted after the first-set win, Iran continued their remarkable run in the second set which saw them lead from start to finish. Iran took the set 25-20.



In the third set, Iran raced to a 12-4 lead, but Australia played with nothing to lose. Putting up a brave fight, Australia attacked, served and boosted with all-out efforts to make a comeback. Their more determination bore fruits when they caught up with the Iranians 18-18 and surged ahead the formidable rivals to capture the 25-19 comeback win in the set.

Australia showed their superiority in the fourth set,

jumping to a 14-9 lead, thanks to the excellent offensive combinations between Jones and Stevens. After that, they stretched it to 20-16 and 24-20, allowing the Iranians only one more point to grab the set 25-21.

In the decider, Australia began encouragingly with aggression and consistency. Iran tried to make amends but their efforts were in vain. The Aussies went on the good show to beat the Iranians 15-9 for the eventual 3-2 win.

“It’s fantastic match. Wonderful to come out on top of the pool and the things we’re working on. It’s a long way to go and we have the changes. We have a wonderful job. We lost the first two sets because my girls just learned the pressure as they have never played international level like this before. We will next play the winners between Kazakhstan and India and I think it’s good to play them again as we played them (India) before in the “Princess Cup” South East Asian Championship, where we lost in straight sets to India. We’ll see what we have to improve from the last week,” Australia head coach Myles Roantree commented.

Australia now top Pool C with two straight wins, with Iran and New Zealand in second and third places respectively.

(Source: asianvolleyball.net)

# Iran primed for attempt to break group stage hoodoo



disparity in the fitness between those in his squad playing in Iran and those featuring overseas, with the country’s foreign-based players key to hopes of success.

Principal among the weapons at Quei-

roz’s disposal is Rubin Kazan striker Sardar Azmoun, a forward in the mould of Iranian great Ali Daei whose goals were instrumental in Iran becoming the first Asian nation to qualify for the finals.

Azmoun is backed up by the pace and trickery of Alireza Jahanbakhsh, who goes to Russia off the back of an impressive season for AZ Alkmaar in the Eredivisie, while Qatar-based striker Mehdi Taremi adds another dimension to the attack.

Iran qualified for the World Cup having conceded only twice in the final phase and both of those goals came against Syria after their spot in the finals had already been secured.

That 2-2 draw at the Azadi Stadium marked the first time Queiroz’s team had allowed the opposition to score in a competitive game since a 3-1 win over Turkmenistan in November 2015, a run stretching back 13 matches and almost 22 months.

Iran will need players such as central defensive pairing Jalal Hosseini and Morteza Pournazeri — with the assistance of highly-rated defensive midfielder Saeid Ezatolahi — to be at the top of their game if they are to achieve their dream.

## Jalal Hosseini left out of Team Melli in surprise move

**TEHRAN** — Iran coach Carlos Queiroz has reduced his 35-man provisional 2018 World Cup squad to 24, leaving out veteran defender Jalal Hosseini in a surprise move.

Hosseini has played over 100 times for Iran, featured in 11 World Cup qualifiers and was expected to go to Russia for Group B games against Morocco, Spain and Portugal.

The 36 year-old former captain has, however, been named as one of four standby players along with LA-based Steven Beitashour, Vouria Ghafouri as well as highly-rated Belgian-based striker Kaveh Rezaei.

Queiroz has taken his team, who is looking to reach the second round for the first time in five World Cup appearances, to Turkey for warm-up games with Turkey and Greece.

Iranian hopes are likely to fall on the shoulders of star attackers Alireza Jahanbakhsh, who finished top scorer of the Netherlands Eredivisie league, and Sardar Azmoun of Rubin Kazan in Russia. The deadline to name the final squad of 23 is June 4.

(Source: ESPN)

## Javad Nekounam to stay Nassaji coach

**PLDC** — Iran Professional League (IPL) debutants Nassaji Mazandaran will be headed by Javad Nekounam in the upcoming season.

Nekounam led the team to IPL for the first time and will continue his work in the Ghaemshahr-based team.

“Nekounam had a couple of better offers but decided to remain in our team. He has stayed in Nassaji because of the team’s fans,” Nassaji General Manager Ali Amiri told Varzesh3.com.

Nassaji Mazandaran defeated Rah Ahan 6-0 in Tehran’s Takhti Stadium in the last week of the Iran’s Azadegan League in late April and won a promotion to IPL thanks to a better goal difference than Khooneh be Khooneh.

## Futsal remain sixth in world rankings

**TASNIM** — The Iranian national futsal team remained unchanged in the latest world rankings published on Monday.

Team Melli sit sixth place with 1654 points and is also the best Asian team.

Brazil remain top in the world with 1935 points, followed by Spain (1845), Russia (1700), Portugal (1692) and Argentina (1691).

Japan and Thailand are second and third in Asia with 1358 and 1285 points, respectively in the ranking.

Iran finished at third place at the FIFA Futsal World Cup Colombia 2016 after a 4-3 penalty shootout win over Portugal following a 2-2 draw.

Iran also won the title of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Futsal Championship for the 12th time in February.

## Allahyar Sayyadmanesh reaches agreement with Esteghlal

**PLDC** — Iran U-17 football team striker Allahyar Sayyadmanesh has reached an agreement to join Iran’s Esteghlal.

The 17-year-old player, who currently plays in Iranian club Saipa, has reached a final agreement with the Blues for five years.

Sayyadmanesh had already been linked with a move to Galatasaray during the January transfer window.

Sayyadmanesh was a member of Iran U-17 football team who qualified for the 2017 FIFA U-17 World Cup quarter-final in India.

He scored three goals against Guinea, Germany and Mexico. Sayyadmanesh will reportedly ink his contract by the end of the day.

## Iran bag two medals at Hong Kong Barcelona Dragon Boat Festival

**PRESS TV** — The Iranian women’s Sokkan rowing team have put a convincing end to their campaign at the first edition of Hong Kong Barcelona Dragon Boat Festival in Spain, and clinched a silver medal at the prestigious international tournament.

The Iranian team took part in the 200m 10-seater senior women final in the northeastern Spanish city of Barcelona, and sat in the second place.

Earlier in the competitions, the Iranian men’s Sokkan rowing team vied against rivals in the 200m 10-seater senior men final, and stood on top of the podium.

The first edition of Hong Kong Barcelona Dragon Boat Festival started on May 19, and finished on May 20, 2018.

## Iran could spring surprise at World Cup

Well-drilled and growing in experience, Iran could spring a surprise against either Spain or Portugal if they gain that morale-boosting victory over Morocco.

Drawn in a challenging group with Morocco, Spain and Portugal, the Iranians will be looking to pick up a win in their opener against the Moroccans to ensure their quest for a first-ever place in the round of 16 stays alive until their final game, against the Portuguese.

Iran will be appearing at the World Cup finals for a fifth time, although qualification for Russia is the first time the country has booked a spot at successive tournaments having previously played in 1978, 1998, 2006 and 2014.

The Iranians are still looking to progress to the knockout rounds for the first time and have won just one match, against the United States, in France in 1998.

Former Real Madrid and Portugal coach Carlos Queiroz is leading the Iranians to the World Cup finals for the second time after also steering the country to Brazil in 2014.

The pragmatic Portuguese took over in April 2011 and has turned Iran into Asia’s number one team, with a focus on defensive discipline while harnessing some of the continent’s best attacking talent.

(Source: Reuters)



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## “Residents of Heart” coming to showcase wounds of war at Tehran gallery

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — An exhibition entitled “Residents of Heart” will open at Tehran’s Fereshteh Gallery on Friday to display photos by Saeid Sadeqi that recall the agonies of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

Sadeqi has recorded great moments of the war during his stay in the warfronts as a photojournalist.

He has so far held several solo and group exhibits with the central theme of war, children, today’s Iran and women of Iran.

The exhibit will be running until June 2 at the gallery located at 1671 near Sadr Bridge, Shariati Ave.

*A poster for photojournalist Saeid Sadeqi’s exhibition “Residents of Heart” at Fereshteh Gallery in Tehran*

## German artist Olaf Probst displays works in Iran

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Works by German artist Olaf Probst are on display at an exhibition in Tehran.

The exhibition entitled “Solar Drawings” opened at the Pure Drawing Museum on Tuesday.

A selection of his works is scheduled to be showcased in another exhibition titled “Catastrophes” at the DD Art and Cultural Center the northern Iranian town of Izadshahr.

Bavand Behparvar is the curator of the exhibitions. Probst and Behparvar are scheduled to deliver speeches at the opening ceremony of the Izadshahr exhibition on Thursday.

The exhibits will be running for one month.

*A poster for German artist Olaf Probst’s exhibitions in Iran*

## Despite Spotify change, R. Kelly’s streams still intact

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Streaming numbers for R. Kelly have remained intact a week after Spotify announced it had removed the R&B singer’s music from its playlists, citing its new policy on hate content and hateful conduct.

Spotify made the bold declaration on May 10, but R. Kelly’s streaming numbers are relatively the same with some small growth: Before the announcement, he averaged 6,584,000 weekly streams for the year. But from May 10 to May 16 he garnered 6,676,000 streams for the week, according to Nielsen Music.

R. Kelly’s streams have grown steadily in the last two years: His music averaged 4,709,000 weekly streams in 2016 and 5,666,000 weekly streams in 2017. So far for 2018, he is averaging 6,674,000 weekly streams. While R. Kelly’s streaming has grown, his numbers are small in comparison to Drake, 2017’s most streamed artist: He averaged 112,735,000 weekly streams last year.

Nielsen Music’s numbers are based on audio streams from Spotify, Apple Music, Pandora and other music platforms.

The embattled entertainer has been accused of sexual abuse of women though he faces no criminal charges. Spotify removed his music from their promoted playlists and algorithms following a campaign from #MuteRKelly and others to sanction R. Kelly. News outlets have reported that Apple and Pandora are also not promoting the singer’s music, though both companies haven’t officially made announcements like Spotify.

Shaunna Thomas, the co-founder and executive director of the women’s advocacy group UltraViolet, said the point is not to stop people from listening to his music, but for companies to stop promoting him.

“Frankly it’s not important in this context whether people are listening to his music or not, what’s important is that Spotify is holding itself to the standard that they themselves established and they live up to it,” Thomas said in an interview Monday.

Thomas wrote a letter to Spotify last week, commending the company for its new policy but also demanded that Spotify remove Chris Brown, Eminem, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and others from its playlists.

“This is really just about stepping into the role of champion, stepping into the role of setting the higher standard that I think they’ve put themselves on the track to do, and hopefully they’ll do the right thing,” Thomas said.

The Time’s Up campaign took aim at R. Kelly late last month over allegations that he has sexually abused women. The organization urged further investigation into the singer’s behavior, which has come under closer scrutiny over the last year in wake of the #MeToo movement.

# Iranian docufiction traces Hafez influence on Goethe

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian filmmaker Farshad Fereshteh-Hekmat has recently completed a docufiction that sheds light on great German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s inspiration from the Persian poet Hafez.

Veteran stage and screen actor Nasser Aqai portrays Goethe in the film titled “Hafez and Goethe”, Iran’s Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC) that sponsored the project announced on Tuesday.

The film has been shot on location in Hafez’s hometown Shiraz, which also houses his tomb, and Tehran. Last spring, Fereshteh-Hekmat and his crew also traveled to Frankfurt, where Goethe was born, and several other German cities such as Weimar, Berlin, Heidelberg and Leipzig to shoot scenes of the film.

“Hafez and Goethe” will have its premiere in Tehran in December during the Cinema Verite, Iran’s major international documentary festival that the DEFC organizes every year in December.

Goethe wrote “West-East Divan”, which contains his poems, notes and essays, under the influence of Hafez’s poetry.

He was familiar with Hafez and his works through his friendship with Austrian Orientalist Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall (1774-1856) who provided the first ever complete translation of the Divan of Hafez into a Western language.

“In fact, Hammer-Purgstall built a bridge between Goethe and Hafez,” Iranian scholar Kurosh Kamali Sarvestani once said.



Iranian actor Nasser Aqai portrays German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in the docufiction “Hafez and Goethe” by Farshad Fereshteh-Hekmat.

## “Are You Volleyball?” tops at BCN Sports Film Festival



*A scene from “Are You Volleyball?” by Iranian director Mohammad Bakhshi*

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Mohammad Bakhshi’s acclaimed fiction short film “Are You Volleyball?” has won the Amphora Barcelona City, the award for best film, at the 9th BCN Sports Film Festival in Spain.

Bakhshi could not attend the closing ceremony of the event held at the Olympic and Sports Museum Joan Antoni Samaranch on May 5, therefore, the film’s star Amir Azizi accepted the award from Marta Carranza, president of the Fundació Barcelona Olímpica and Sports Commissioner of the Barcelona’s City Council, the organizers announced.

The film tells the story of a group of Arabic-speaking asylum seekers who arrive at the border of an English-speaking country and can go no further. There are scuffles with the border guards every day until volleyball becomes the catalyst that improves relations.

The award for best documentary film went to “Into Twin Galaxies – A Greenland Epic” directed by Jochen Schmoll from Germany. Schmoll’s “Annapurna III – Unclimbed” also won the Álvaro Bultó – the award for best film of adventure sports.

“Game” by American director Jeannie Donohoe was named best fiction film while the award for best animated film went to “Dear Basketball” by American director Glen Keane.

## Barack and Michelle’s next act: TV deal with Netflix

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — Former U.S. president Barack Obama and his wife, Michelle Obama, have struck a deal to produce films and series for Netflix Inc, the streaming service said on Monday, giving the former first couple a powerful and unprecedented platform to shape their post-White House legacy.

Under the name Higher Ground Productions, the Obamas have the option to produce scripted and unscripted series, documentaries and feature films, Netflix said in a statement.

The Obamas will have hands-on involvement in producing content and will appear personally in some of the shows while curating others, said a person familiar with the deal.

Terms of the multi-year deal were not disclosed and the first of the programming is not expected to reach viewers until about May 2019, the person said.

The agreement between the Obamas and Netflix, which boasts some 125 million subscribers worldwide, is a first for any occupant of the White House.

The closest comparison is former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, whose global warming documentary “An Inconvenient Truth” won an Oscar in 2007. Gore also launched a youth-oriented cable TV network, Current TV, in 2005 but it was sold to Middle-East based Al Jazeera in 2013, which later shut it down.

The Obamas gave no details of the topics



*Former president Barack Obama waves with his wife Michelle as they board Special Air Mission 28000, a Boeing 747 which serves as Air Force One, at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, U.S. on January 20, 2017. (Reuters/Brendan McDermid)*

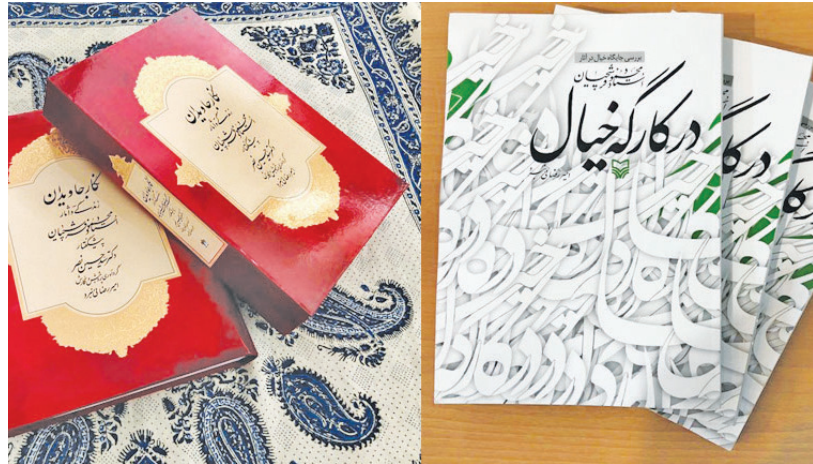
they planned to cover but the content is not expected to be directly political.

Barack Obama in a statement recalled the “fascinating people” from all walks of life that he had met during his eight years in office, ending in January 2017.

“We hope to cultivate and curate the talented, inspiring, creative voices who are able to promote greater empathy and understanding between peoples, and help them share their stories with the entire world,” he added.

Netflix chief content officer Ted Sarandos said in a statement that the Obamas are “uniquely positioned to discover and highlight stories of people who make a difference in their communities and strive to change the world for the better.”

## Books on master miniaturist Mahmud Farshchian published



*This combination photo shows the front covers of the books “Eternal Image” and “At Imagination Workshop” by Amir Rezainabard.*

**CULTURE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Two books on the life and works of master miniaturist Mahmud Farshchian compiled by Amir Rezainabard has recently been published in Tehran.

“Eternal Image: Life and Works of Mahmud Farshchian” as well as “At Imagination Workshop: Review of Imagination in the Works of Mahmud Farshchian” are the two books that are due to be introduced during a ceremony in the near future, Rezainabard announced in a press release on Tuesday.

He said that the two books contain fascinating material on Farshchian, which has been compiled over a decade. He also spent three years preparing the material for publication.

“Eternal Image” is one of the first and most comprehensive books of its kind about the life, thoughts and works of the master. The book has been illustrated by the master himself, while Islamic philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr has written a preface for the book,” Rezainabard stated.

The book has been published at the Mir-dashti Cultural Center Press.

“At Imagination Workshop” has been published by Sure-Mehr Publications and the book’s cover has also been inscribed by prominent Persian calligrapher Gholamhossein Amirkhani.

Farshchian was born in Isfahan, a city renowned for its art and skilled artists, and studied painting under the supervision of Haj Mirza Aqa Emami and Isa Bahadori.

His works are on display at major museums and art centers worldwide.

## Sony invests in image sensors, acquires more of EMI Music

**TOKYO (AP)** — Electronics and entertainment company Sony Corp. said Tuesday it plans to invest 1 trillion yen (\$9 billion) mostly in image sensors over the next three years, under a revamped strategy to strengthen both hardware and creative content.

Sony also plans to buy for \$2.3 billion a 60 percent stake in EMI Music Publishing, from Mubadala Investment Co. EMI has under its wing classics such as the Motown catalog and Queen, and contemporary artists like Kanye West, Alicia Keys and Pharrell Williams.

Sony already owns 30 percent of EMI so once the deal is finalized, it will own 90 percent of the company.

CEO Kenichiro Yoshida told reporters at Sony’s headquarters that the company’s lead in sensors is crucial for evolving technologies like self-driving cars and artificial intelligence.

The Tokyo-based maker of the Walkman portable player, Aibo entertainment robot and Bravia TVs has amassed know-how over the decades when it was leading in “analog technology,” said Yoshida, who was named president and chief executive in February. He said Sony’s CMOS image sensor excels in its speed, lighting range and absence of noise.

Yoshida said the company’s main theme was “getting closer to people,” by connecting consumer services and content throughout its sprawling operations, which include the



*Sony Corp. President Kenichiro Yoshida speaks as characters from Peanuts are shown at a press conference at the company’s headquarters Tuesday, May 22, 2018, in Tokyo. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)*

PlayStation game platform, music, films and home entertainment, still and video cameras, cellphones, computer chips and financial services.

Yoshida said the initiative to beef up Sony’s content was also behind a deal announced earlier this month to acquire a stake in Peanuts Holdings, the company behind Snoopy and Charlie Brown.

But Yoshida stopped short of giving numbers for profit goals, saying he was presenting a long-term vision rooted in Sony’s founding and ongoing philosophy of emotionally inspiring people.

One area where he is counting on growth is the company’s TV content business in India, where the population growth is rapid and TVs are still catching on, he said.