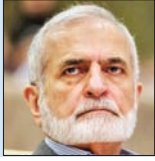




Our defense doctrine is to keep range of missiles to 2000km **2**



Europe has remained in nuclear deal for its own benefits **2**



Qatar down the UAE to secure a place in Asian Cup final **15**



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VP: West should thank forerunners in terror fight

Iran, Syria ink 11 long-term strategic co-op agreements **4**



© EPA-EFE

Iranian Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri (L) held talks with Syrian President Bashar Assad in Damascus on Tuesday, 29 January 2019.

See page 2

Araqchi says if JCPOA falls out of balance grave fallout will ensue

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has said the United States does not understand the situation in the Middle East, warning if the Iran nuclear deal falls flat, it will cause severe consequences.

He made the remarks on Tuesday in a meeting in Vienna with Andreas Schieder, the chairperson of the For-

eign Affairs Committee of the National Council of Austria.

Araqchi also thanked Austria for its constructive position towards the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (the official name for the nuclear deal), but rapped the European Union for delaying its actions to save the deal in face of exit from the deal. **→2**

Iran jumps to 47th in Bloomberg Innovation Index 2019

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Iran has moved up two points to 47th place on Bloomberg Innovation Index 2019 report which was published on January 22.

With the score of 52.06 out of 100, Iran claimed 47th place among 60 economies.

The 2019 ranking process began with more than 200 economies. Each was scored on a 0-100 scale based on seven equally weighted categories. Nations that didn't

report data for at least six categories were eliminated, trimming the total list to 95.

Bloomberg publishes the top 60 economies. Iran ranks 13 in Patent index. Its Tertiary Efficiency is 23 and its rank in both Manufacturing Value-Added and Productivity indexes is 48.

For its high-tech density, Iran stood at 40th place. Iran's rank for researcher concentration is 53 and for R&D intensity is 60. **→10**

Palestinian prime minister, government step down

Palestinian Prime Minister Rami al-Hamdallah has officially submitted his resignation and that of his unity government to President Mahmoud Abbas, casting doubt on the prospects of reconciliation efforts with the Islamic resistance movement, Hamas.

Palestine's official news agency

Wafa reported that 60-year-old Hamdallah tendered his resignation on Tuesday, but the government will continue to carry out its duties until a new one is formed.

Hamdallah expressed hope that consultations to establish a new government will bear fruit as soon as possible. **→13**

Netanyahu's reaction to Nasrallah's remarks to serve his election campaign: al-Zahar

By Mohammad Fatemizadeh

TEHRAN (MNA) — A senior Hamas member, Mahmoud al-Zahar, told MNA that if all the countries and powers occupied by the Israelis regime come together, a so-called 'Last Battle' will take place, which will put an end to the regime.

Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said in a televised interview with Lebanese Al Mayadeen TV on Saturday that at any moment a decision could be taken in Syria by Syrian leaders and the Resistance axis to confront the Israeli aggressions. In short,

the message that Netanyahu has to receive is to consider these variables and not to make a mistake in its assement, which could lead to war in the region.

On the other hand, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected Hassan Nasrallah's remarks, claiming Hezbollah was anxious and very confused.

According to Israeli media, Netanyahu said at a cabinet meeting that Hezbollah's leader broke his silence during a televised speech, because this 'militia' faces financial pressure from U.S. sanctions against Iran and that the recent Israeli

operation has destroyed Hezbollah tunnels in the north.

To shed further light on this, Mehr News conducted an interview with Mahmoud al-Zahar, co-founder of Hamas and a member of the Hamas leadership in the Gaza Strip, which is as follows:

■ In the past few days, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah broke his media silence after two months and took positions on the developments in the region with special Zionist threats. What impact did his recent remarks have on deterrence of the Israeli regime's authorities? **→7**

'The most influential intolerant governments of the 20th century were atheist'

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN — Over centuries, existence of God has attracted attention of philosophers and has as well formed a diverse family of arguments extending from some feature of morality or the moral life to the existence of God, usually understood as a morally good creator of the universe. It has such a key role in human thought that opposing debates and arguments have been continuing until now.

One famous argument against "Theism" is "problem of evil" which tries to question main monotheistic religions as how God could allow humans to do evil and to suffer.

Critics of "Theism" claim that if God is omnipotent and omniscient, so he must be able to prevent catastrophes while the world is replete with recurring evils. They take these examples

as proofs which reveal contradictions and infirmities of "Theism".

However, some philosophers of religions such as Professor Richard Swinburne, try to provide answers to these questions by forming a cumulative argument for the existence of God emphasizing that existence of consciousness - regardless of its material or immaterial nature - shows a Purposeful design.

In this regard, Professor Richard Swinburne says to Tehran Times that scientific and materialistic approaches are not able to discover nature of human consciousness in order to give reasonable and simple explanations. What follows is the full text of the interview with Richard Swinburne:

■ Which religions have impressed you in your researches and works particularly "The existence of God"? Or are your arguments just dependent on Christian theology?

A: The Existence of God argues from the most

general features of the world observable by anyone to the existence of God. I understand by God "a person without a body, who is necessarily eternal, perfectly free, omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good, and is the creator of all things" I call this doctrine "theism"; and I regard theism as the core belief of the creeds of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Only on three pages of a later chapter of this book do I allude to historical evidence favoring a specifically Christian doctrine. The two other books of the trilogy of which The Existence of God is the second volume, are also almost entirely concerned merely with theism. The first volume, The Coherence of Theism, spells out in detail the nature of the divine properties, for example it analyses what it is for God to be omnipotent or omniscient; and the third volume, Faith and Reason, considers the relevance of arguments for the existence of God to the practice of religious faith. **→7**



EDITORIAL

Mohammad Ghaderi
Tehran Times editor-in-chief
@ghaderi62

Paris is completing the U.S. puzzle against Iran

Although the French government insists on showing itself in this equation as an independent actor, the particular insistence of Paris to oppose Iran's missile program is in line with the interests of the Trump government.

In September (2017) and during the United Nations General Assembly in New York, extensive talks were held between U.S., British and French officials over the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Britain, as the United States traditional ally, and France as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, had a perfect deal with Washington in this regard.

Although Paris and London have repeatedly voiced their opposition to the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA and called for respecting the nuclear deal, in practice, we see France and Britain cooperation with the U.S. against Iran.

In this equation, France plays an important role. A review over the positions of the French President indicates the same point. on 2017, Emmanuel Macron, on the one hand, stated that the nuclear deal is unchangeable and, on the other hand, called for the completion of it, by including Iran's missile power and imposing permanent restrictions on Iran! Obviously, this contradictory approach is not acceptable at all.

Now the joint game of France and the U.S. has to be carefully scrutinized by our country's diplomacy apparatus and foreign policy system. It should not be forgotten that Washington and Paris are completing a common puzzle. In other words, we shouldn't see the games of Paris and Washington separate in this field. Speaking of France as a "medium player" or an "independent player" would be a mistake in our foreign policy.

Meanwhile, the soft literature of the French authorities shouldn't deceive us so that we may ignore the danger of a sudden change in this country's conduct. **→7**

Habibi, the Islamic Coalition Party chief, dies at 73

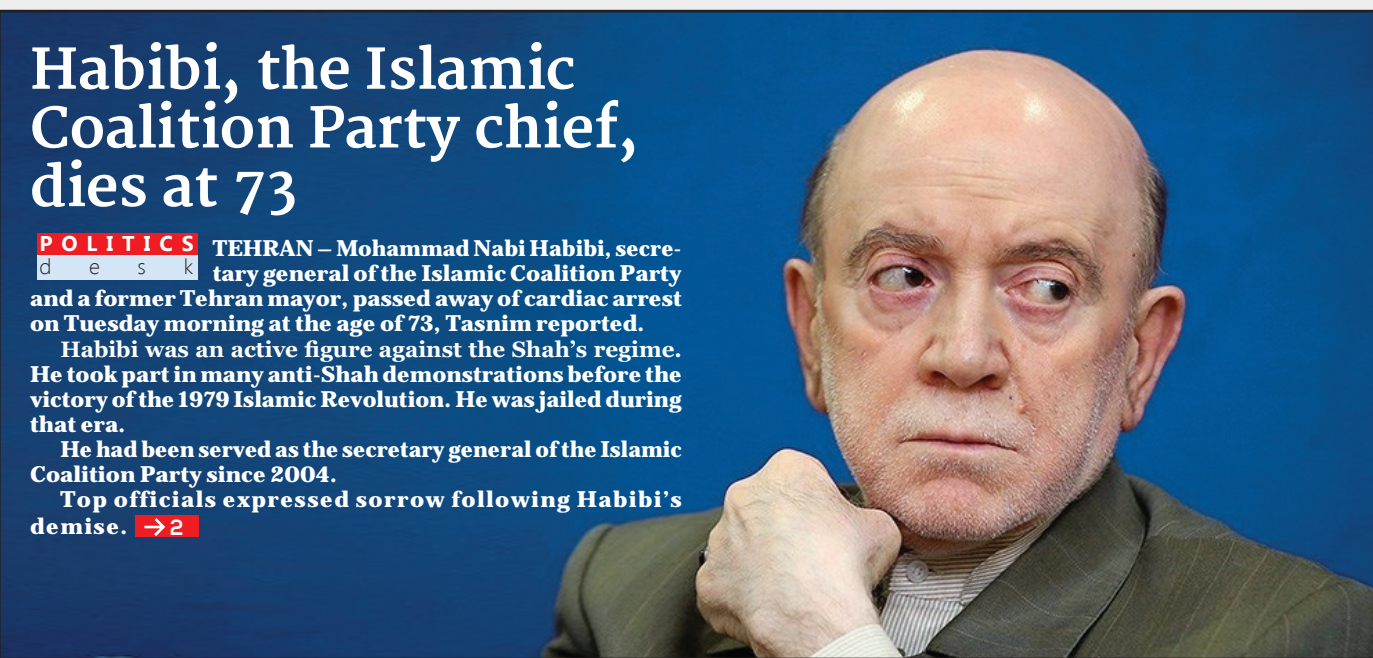
POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Mohammad Nabi Habibi, secretary general of the Islamic Coalition Party and a former Tehran mayor, passed away of cardiac arrest on Tuesday morning at the age of 73, Tasnim reported.

Habibi was an active figure against the Shah's regime. He took part in many anti-Shah demonstrations before the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. He was jailed during that era.

He had been served as the secretary general of the Islamic Coalition Party since 2004.

Top officials expressed sorrow following Habibi's demise. **→2**

© File photo



ARTICLE

Maryam Qarehgozlou
Head of the Tehran Times
Social Desk

The generous sky has opened; is the dry spell over in Iran?

Since the beginning of autumn Iran has seen a great increase in precipitation amounts but endless speculations are running rampant as to whether the dry spell is over in the country or not.

The data released on Monday by the National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center stated that the whole country received 120.2 millimeters of rain since the beginning of autumn which almost triples last year's precipitation and also indicate a 17-millimeter increase compared to long-term averages. Except for provinces of Fars, Hormozgan, Sistan and Baluchestan, Kerman, Yazd, South Khorasan and Ardebil all other provinces nationwide have experienced a rise in precipitation amounts from September 23 to January 28 compared to long-term precipitation mean in the corresponding period.

The data also shows that provinces of Ilam with 506.9 millimeters of rain, Gilan with 479.4 millimeters of rain, and Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad with 456.9 millimeters of rain all set records high in the amount of precipitation they received in the same period.

The numbers appear to be in favor of Iran and it seems that the dry spell is over, however, on paper.

■ **'Precipitations projected to decrease'**

In an interview with Khabaronline published on Monday Director of National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center has said that over the first three decades of the past 50 years long-term precipitation means have remained almost unchanged varying from 240 to 270 millimeters.

However, a decreasing trend have started over the past two decades, Sadeq Ziaeian highlighted, adding that the drop could be due to climate change.

In general it is safe to say that over past 50 years the country has on average experienced a 1.2-millimeter decrease in precipitations annually, so that a 60-millimeter decline has occurred over past 50 years in Iran, he explained.

For an arid and semi-arid country like Iran the aforesaid decrease is pretty sharp, he regretted, stating that, additionally a 2-degree temperature rise in the same period accompanied with increased evaporation rate has negatively affected the current conditions as well. **→12**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



‘Those who competed to topple Assad now opening embassies in Syria’

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, the Iranian Armed Forces Chief of Staff, said on Tuesday the enemies know well that they would receive a crushing response from Iran in the event of taking military action against Iran.

Describing Iran as a regional and international power that behaves reasonably, Baqeri said the Islamic Republic's help for the other nations in fighting terrorism is a source of pride for Iran, Tasnim reported.

The general also said, “Today, Iraq has become a safe country and its leadership is looking for a way to drive the U.S. out. Also in Syria, where they (enemies) once competed to topple (Syrian President Bashar) al-Assad, they are now queuing up to reopen” their embassies.



Hatami: 751 defense products built in Iran

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Defense Minister Amir Hatami on Tuesday appreciated the efforts made by Iran's scientists, saying thanks to their efforts “we have 751 different defense products being produced.”

He said prior to the Islamic Revolution, Iran was able to produce only 31 defense products, which was done with total dependence on other countries, ISNA reported.

The minister also pointed to U.S. sanctions on Iran's oil exports, saying the sanctions aimed to create divisions between the people and the system.

The enemies were unaware of the fact that the insightful Iranian nation would never fall into their trap, the general added.



Tehran slams Manama for life sentence against opposition leaders

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Tuesday condemned the Bahraini regime for upholding life sentences against three opposition leaders, including top cleric Sheikh Ali Salman.

“Issuing cruel sentences against them on baseless accusations shows that the Bahrain regime, backed by some foreign countries, plans to silence any peaceful opposing voices in that country,” Qassemi said, Mehr reported.

Al-Wefaq secretary-general Salman and two other senior al-Wefaq leaders Sheikh Hassan Sultan and Ali Alaswad were sentenced to life imprisonment in November. The verdicts which were upheld on Monday are final and cannot be appealed.



Verdict on Saudi embassy attack carried out: prosecutor

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Tehran Prosecutor Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi says the verdict against the attackers of the Saudi embassy in Tehran has been carried out, the YJC reported on Tuesday.

Jafari Dolatabadi did not further elaborate on the issue. In January 2016, a group of protesters stormed the Saudi diplomatic missions in Tehran and Mashhad in protest to the execution of the pro-democracy cleric Nimr al-Nimr.

Saudi Arabia cut ties with Iran after the incident despite the condemnation of the move by the top Iranian leadership. Iranian police also arrested several individuals involved in the attacks.



Iran's foreign-based opposition groups are ‘rootless’: general

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) spokesman Ramazan Sharif said on Tuesday that opposition groups based in the West are “rootless”, adding that the Iranian nation's participation at the upcoming rallies marking the victory of the Islamic Revolution will foil the plots.

Brigadier General Sharif further said the rallies will once again disappoint the enemies while giving the youth hope for a bright future, ISNA reported.

He also said all indicators suggest the great progress of the Islamic Republic in all areas, especially science. “Iran's progress has been rapid and cannot be compared to other countries' progress.”



MP urges protection of journalists revealing corruption scandals

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Mahmoud Sadeqi, a reformist parliamentarian from Tehran, has called for measures to protect civic organizations and also journalists who disclose corruption scandals.

“In the anti-corruption law, improving the health of the administrative system is expected and the Interior Ministry is tasked with supporting the formation of civic organizations,” ILNA on Tuesday quoted Sadeqi as saying.

He added that such support should include judicial support, but “the civic organizations should not wait for such protections because the fight against corruption, like any other fight, needs audacity, courage and readiness to pay the price.”

VP: West should thank forerunners in terror fight

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri said on Tuesday that West should praise Syria and other countries which have been leading the war on terrorism.

Jahangiri made the remarks during a meeting with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus.

“If Daesh had formed a government in the region, the Westerners would have witnessed terrorism, violence and inhumane crimes in their countries. So, they should praise Syria and the countries which have been forerunners in fighting terrorism,” the vice president stated.

Jahangiri said that the Syrian war was not a war against the Syrian people and government but a war against regional security and the axis of resistance.

He added that it has become clear to everyone that the war in Syria broke out with an intervention by the U.S. and certain regional countries.

The vice president said the Iranian delegation's visit to Syria bears the message that the war has ended and it is the time to reconstruct Syria.



First VP Es'haq Jahangiri (L) in joint presser with Syrian Prime Minister Imad Khamis, January 28

Vice President Jahangiri says the Iranian delegation's visit to Syria bears the message that the war has ended and it is the time to reconstruct Syria.

Habibi, the Islamic Coalition Party chief, dies at 73

1 → President Hassan Rouhani, in a message, expressed his sympathies on the death of Habibi, describing him as an active figure in politics as well as in serving people.

“The revolutionary figure, while cooperating in the fight against the oppressive regime of Shah, served sincerely in different executive and charity-related positions since the victory of the revolution,” Rouhani wrote.

In another message, Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani expressed his condolences to Habibi's family, friends, and members of the Islamic Coalition Party.

He also recalled Habibi's decades-long

support for the Islamic Republic and his service to the country. Ali Akbar Velayati, a top foreign policy adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, said the death of the “devoted companion of Imam [Khomeini] and the Leader” brought him deep sorrow and pain.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote in a message that Habibi's sincere service in different positions provided the younger generations with a “precious experience”.

Seyed Hassan Khomeini, the grandson of Imam Khomeini, also expressed his condolences with Habibi's wife and his family and prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul.

Russian envoy deplores attempts to drive a wedge between Tehran, Moscow

Russia's ambassador to Tehran said Iran and Russia are “strategic partners”, noting that “our opponents” in the West are trying to drive a wedge between the two countries.

“We are not allies as there is no (military) treaty between Iran and Russia, but at the same time we are strategic partners,” Levan Dzhangaryan told Tasnim on Monday.

There is a difference between the concept of the words “ally” and “partner”, he added.

For example, NATO member states are considered allies based on the North Atlantic Treaty that was signed in 1949, Dzhangaryan explained.

The remarks came after Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov in an interview with CNN on Friday denied that Moscow was allied with Tehran in Syria.

“(The Iranians) were very helpful when we convened the National Congress of the people of Syria in Sochi, but we do not see at any given moment completely eye-to-eye on what happens,” he said.

Ryabkov said it was inaccurate to categorize Russia and Iran as allies, as the two countries only “worked together” in Syria.

Further explaining on the senior diplomat's comments, the Russian envoy to Tehran said, “We were really surprised by how Mr. Ryabkov's interview with CNN led to such a (media) hype as no changes have taken place in Iran-Russia strategic ties”.

Stressing that Moscow is “extremely pleased” with its cooperation with Tehran, particularly in the fight against terrorism, he said, “Our opponents are seeking to create divisions between Iran and Russia, but will not be successful”.

The envoy further accused media of “distorting” Ryabkov's remarks as “our opponents in the West” do not want Tehran and Moscow's “close” cooperation to continue.

Elsewhere in the interview, Dzhangaryan said the two countries are cooperating in many other fields, including the Caspian Sea, human rights issues, and legal-related matters.

Asked about Europe's failure to launch an alternative

Iran denies missile talks with France

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has denied any talks with France over Tehran's missile program, calling claim of missile talks an “absolute lie”.

“Missile program is an internal issue and we will not hold talks on it. The country's internal policies are set inside the country and we act based on these policies,” he said in an interview with the Young Journalists Club published on Tuesday.

Iran's position on its missile program is “clear” and “unchangeable”, he noted.

For his part, Assad said that Syria seeks to expand cooperation with Iran in various spheres in the reconstruction era.

He supported Iran's supports for Syria.

■ ‘Iran considers Syria's victory as its own’

In a joint press conference with Syrian Prime Minister Imad Khamis late on Monday, Jahangiri said Iran considers Syria's victory over terrorists as its own.

“Iran is honored that it has been forerunner in fighting terrorism and considers the victory of the Syrian government and people as its own,” the vice president noted.

Jahangiri added that Iran will stand beside Syria in the reconstruction era.

The two countries should facilitate banking relations and facilitate cooperation between the private sectors from the two countries, he suggested.

Khamis said that his country welcomes presence of Iranian corporations in Syria and called for expanding cooperation in banking and energy spheres.

He also praised Iran's supports for the Syrian government and people in hard times.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said on Friday that France was ready to impose further curbs if no progress was made in talks over the program, Reuters reported.

Qassemi said, “The French foreign minister may have meant the political talks that have being held every six months at the level of deputy foreign minister.”

“We talk about regional and political issues with France ... but our missile capability is not negotiable ... we have repeatedly said that during our political talks with France,” he said.

channel for business with Iran to sidestep U.S. sanctions against the country, the Russia diplomat said, “I hope that this mechanism will be established in the coming days”.

If Europeans fail to do so, Russia will act independently and continue its trade and cooperation with Iran based on its national interests, he said.

Envoys from EU members discussed Iran on Monday but didn't announce the completion the financial mechanism with Iran, known as SPV.

Senior EU officials have been saying for weeks that the financing mechanism would be up and running soon, but they have hesitated to provide details amid European concern that Trump would target the country where it is based and any others taking part.

The SPV is part of EU efforts to keep alive the 2015 nuclear agreement between Tehran and world powers.

The White House has been warning the Europeans that they could face stiff fines and penalties should they try to circumvent the sanctions.

Europe has remained in nuclear deal for its own benefits: Kharrazi

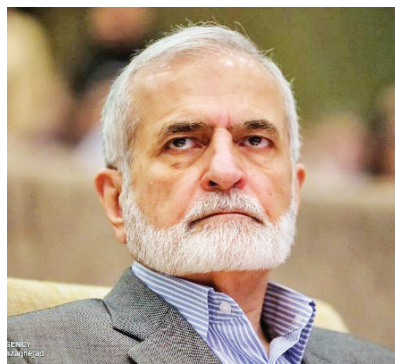
POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Kamal Kharrazi, head of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, said on Tuesday that Europe has remained in the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, for its own interests.

“If the Europeans have remained in the JCPOA and are against the U.S. withdrawal, it is in line with their own benefits. We should not have this wrong assumption that Europe will clash with the U.S. over our benefits,” he told IRIB in an interview.

He noted that Iran should rely on itself and take steps within the framework of its interests.

President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. unilaterally from the 2015 nuclear deal in May and ordered sanctions against Iran. The first round of sanctions went into force on August 6 and the second round, which targets Iran's oil exports and banks, were snapped back on November 4.

In an interview with the European Council on Foreign Relations published on January 11, Mogherini said that the United States cannot impose its policies on the 28-nation bloc's legitimate trade relations with Iran.



SPV is a European Union's initiative intended to protect trade with Iran against newly reimposed U.S. sanctions.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said on Monday that the EU is on the verge of launching an alternative channel to send money to Iran that would sidestep U.S. sanctions against the Islamic republic.

“As far as the special purpose vehicle is concerned: it will be registered, it has not yet been registered, but I would say that the implementation of our plan is imminent,” according to AP, he told reporters in Brussels.A

Our defense doctrine is to keep range of missiles to 2000km: Shamkhani

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — It is not part of Iran's defense doctrine to extend the range of its missiles from the current 2000 kilometers, Ali Shamkhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, said on Tuesday.

The top security official said Iran is focusing on promoting the precision of its missiles.

“Iran has no scientific limitation to extend the range of its military missiles. Iran simply has not the will to extend the range of missiles based on its defense doctrine, however, it constantly works to increase (their) precision,” Shamkhani said during a conference at Iran University of Science and Technology.

The security chief criticized the West which along with the Zionist regime have launched a propaganda campaign against Iran's satellite launch.

Linking Iran's satellite launch to missile program is an effort by Israel and the West to mislead the public opinion, he added.

Mohammad Ali Jafari, the commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), said in June 2018 that the range of Iranian missiles is 2000 kilometers and the country does not need to extend it.



Iran attempted on January 15 to launch Payam satellite into orbit but the rocket's third stage failed to provide enough speed to reach the orbit.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo claimed in a statement that Iran's failed attempt to launch the satellite demonstrates the Islamic Republic's intent to develop missiles able to reach as far as Europe.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that Iran's satellite launch was actually part of the country's attempt to develop intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Araqchi says if JCPOA falls out of balance grave fallouts will ensue

Iranian deputy FM: U.S. does not get it about Mideast situation

1 → On Monday, Araqchi also met with Austrian Foreign Minister Karin Kneissl, where he called for the immediate implementation of a special purpose vehicle (SPV) that the European Union has promised to put in action to save the nuclear deal.

The two diplomats also discussed the Middle East developments and the situation in Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Yemen, with Araqchi decrying the Israeli regime's destructive policies as the root cause of instability in the region.

Kneissl, for her part, highlighted the significance of Tehran-Vienna ties, calling for continued consultations with Iran to ensure peace and stability in the Middle East.

Earlier on Monday, Araqchi had a meeting with Austria's Deputy Foreign Minister Johannes Peterlik.

In that meeting, the Austrian diplomat voiced his country's support for the JCPOA and lauded Iran's decision to remain in the accord despite the U.S. withdrawal.

Peterlik also said that Austria's medium and small companies are eager to work with Iran.

Also on Monday, Araqchi held a meeting with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director-General Yukiya Amano in Vienna.

The Iranian deputy foreign minister urged the IAEA to remain neutral and professional in its verification practices

regarding Tehran's nuclear activities.

In the gathering, the two sides discussed the latest developments surrounding Iran-IAEA cooperation, including the UN agency's verification of Iran's commitment to the JCPOA.

The Iranian diplomat further reminded the European Union of its “historical duty” to guarantee Iran's interests under the JCPOA and restore the balance between the nuclear deal's costs and advantages for Iran “otherwise there will be no reason for the Islamic Republic of Iran to keep honoring its commitments.”

For his part, Amano expressed satisfaction with the status of cooperation between Iran and the IAEA in the course of implementing the JCPOA.

Russia and China condemn new U.S. sanctions on Venezuela

Russia and China strongly criticized U.S. sanctions placed on Venezuela, with the former pledging to support the beleaguered President Nicolas Maduro.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Tuesday the sanctions completely undermined confidence in an international financial system that is dominated by the U.S., Russian news agency Interfax reported.

"Russia is doing everything to support the lawful government of Maduro," Lavrov added, calling U.S. sanctions against Venezuelan state energy firm PDVSA "cynical." Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov added that the restrictions continue an "undisguised interference in its (Venezuela's) internal affairs," calling them "illegal."

The U.S. administration announced sanctions against the state's dominant energy firm PDVSA on Monday in a bid to damage the socialist dictator, President Nicolas Maduro, who is clinging to power amid a leadership battle.

Last week, the opposition leader of Venezuela's National Assembly, Juan Guaido, named himself interim president after street protests against Maduro. The U.S. recognized that claim and has been encouraging support for regime change in Venezuela, a country hit by the economic policies of Maduro.

■ 'They should bear responsibility'

Earlier on Tuesday, China also voiced its opposition to sanctions, saying the U.S. should bear responsibility for their consequences. Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said historical experience showed foreign interference "only makes situations more complicated," Reuters reported.

"The relevant country's sanctions on Venezuela will lead to the deterioration of conditions of people's lives," Geng told a regular news briefing in Beijing, referring to the United States.

■ Vested interests

Both China and Russia have vested interests in the stability and the status quo in Venezuela.

China has lent more than \$50 billion to Venezuela through oil-for-loan agreements



over the past decade, securing energy supplies for its fast-growing economy, Reuters noted. The news agency calculates that Russia too has lent Venezuela at least \$17 billion in loans and credit lines since 2006.

In November 2017, Russia agreed to restructure Venezuelan sovereign debt of \$3.15 billion, with repayments lasting 10 years. Although PDVSA's debts were not thought to be part of this deal. On Tuesday, Russia's finance ministry said Venezuela is due to pay Russia \$100 million in March and that debt servicing problems were possible, Interfax said.

Russia is also heavily involved in Venezuela's energy industry with Russian energy firm Rosneft holding a large stake in a subsidiary of PDVSA. PDVSA used 49.9 percent of its shares in its U.S. subsidiary Citgo as collateral for loan financing from Russia's majority state-owned Rosneft in 2016.

Russia thus stands to suffer from U.S. measures to freeze PDVSA's oil transactions and those of its U.S. asset Citgo (to which most of the Venezuela's exports destined for the U.S. go).

Citgo has already become a focus for Maduro's rival Guaido. Just ahead of U.S. sanctions Monday, the self-proclaimed in-

terim president ordered Congress to appoint new boards of directors to PDVSA and Citgo.

■ A new 'cold war'

Meanwhile, Helima Croft, the head of commodity strategy at RBC Capital Markets, told CNBC Tuesday that the U.S.'s decision to "finally pulling the trigger" with sanctions on Venezuela's energy firm was "a significant development."

"This will effectively amount to an embargo on PDVSA products into the U.S.," she told CNBC's Steve Sedgwick in Florence. "It's going to create a lot of confusion for foreign IOCs (international oil companies) and how they deal with a now-sanctioned entity."

As well as Russia and China's support, Maduro still has the support of the Venezuelan military which could prove vital to him holding on to power, although a high-profile Venezuelan diplomat to the U.S. defected at the weekend, encouraging others to do the same.

Croft was uncertain about how long the military would continue to support Maduro.

"The recovery of this country is going to be an enormous challenge and we're just not there yet. We keep saying, well will the military rise up against Maduro? Well, this is technically a military government ... So,

the question is, will these sanctions put so much pressure on the Venezuelan military that they finally turn on Maduro? It's a real open question," Croft said.

Maduro's hold on power also depended on whether he could get more financial backing from his international allies, she noted.

"Is anyone going to step up and provide new financing (to Venezuela)? So again, look to Russia, look to China, they are the ones who can determine how long Maduro stays in power. If they give him a lifeline, he may have some more time," she said.

■ 'The eighties are back'

Other geopolitical experts have likened the opposing U.S. and Russian stances on regime change to a return to the Cold War. "The eighties are back, in other words, the Cold War is back," Russ Dallen, managing partner of investment bank Caracas Capital Markets, told CNBC Tuesday.

"Russia and the U.S. are facing off in Latin America for a military dictatorship. We're using all the tools in the democratic arsenal, this oil embargo is perhaps one of the last of the economic tools we have before it requires armed intervention," he said.

Dallen, former head of the Latin American operations of Oppenheimer & Co., told CNBC's Brian Sullivan that Russia was "heavily involved" in Venezuela and that there could be a fight over Citgo.

"They (Russia) made a loan to Venezuela of \$1.5 billion ... and as collateral they (PDVSA) put up 49.9 percent of Citgo in the U.S. Now the U.S. is never going to let Russia have that and (Treasury Secretary) Steven Mnuchin has already said that. However, they do have rights to force the sale of the collateral which would then take it away from the opposition (in Venezuela)."

Dallen was uncertain whether U.S. sanctions would ultimately lead to Maduro's fall from power.

"Whether it's going to force him out (is uncertain). We've had a blockade on Cuba for 60 years and that hasn't worked so it will hurt them. But oil is a fungible commodity and they will be able to sell it elsewhere," he said. (Source: CNBC)

North Korea says it wants peace, relations with U.S.

North Korea said on Tuesday that relations with the United States will develop "wonderfully at a fast pace" if Washington responds to its efforts on denuclearization with trustworthy measures and practical actions.

North Korea's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Han Tae Song, told the UN-sponsored Conference on Disarmament that Pyongyang would continue working to establish a "permanent and durable peace mechanism on the Korean peninsula".

The landmark summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump last June produced a promise to work toward the complete denuclearization of the divided peninsula. Progress since then has been patchy.

Washington is demanding concrete action, such as a full disclosure of North Korea's nuclear and missile facilities, before agreeing to key goals of Pyongyang - easing interna-

tional sanctions and declaring an official end to the 1950-53 Korean War that ended with an armistice.

The summit had brought about a dramatic turn in relations that had been "the most hostile on earth" and contributed to ensuring peace and security on the peninsula, Han said..

He referred to the two leaders' joint statement issued after their meeting in Singapore and Kim's New Year's Address, adding:

"Accordingly we declared that we would neither make and test nuclear weapons any longer nor use and proliferate them and we have taken various practical measures.

"If the U.S. responds to our efforts with trustworthy measures and corresponding practical actions, bilateral relations will develop wonderfully at a fast pace through the process of taking more definite and epoch-making steps," he said.

Han told Reuters that he had no information on a pos-

sible second summit between Kim and Trump, which the White House has said would be held in late February without saying where.

"As we open a new year, we are determined to seize this hard-won unprecedented window of opportunity of diplomacy," South Korea's deputy ambassador Lee Jang-Keun told the Geneva forum on Tuesday.

"The recent announcement by the U.S. of holding a second U.S.-DPRK summit meeting in late February is another harbinger of hope," he said.

South Korea's foreign minister Kang Kyung-wha told Reuters at Davos last week that North Korea must make concrete pledges toward curbing its nuclear weapons program, such as dismantling its main nuclear complex and allowing international inspections to confirm the process, when leader Kim meets Trump as soon as next month. (Source: Reuters)

UK PM May asks lawmakers to send a message to Brussels on Brexit deal

British Prime Minister Theresa May will on Tuesday ask her Conservative lawmakers to send a message to Brussels that they would support her Brexit deal if a plan to avoid a hard border in Ireland is replaced.

Parliament will on Tuesday try to shape the future of the country's exit from the European Union by debating and voting on what changes they want May to seek to her Brexit deal.

With exactly two months until Britain is due to leave the EU on March 29, there is no agreement yet in London on how and even whether to leave the world's biggest trading bloc after May's plan was rejected by an overwhelming majority in Parliament.

On Tuesday, lawmakers will debate and vote on May's next steps, with some hoping to gauge the level of support for alternatives to her deal and others even seeking to wrestle control of the process from government.

It is not a rerun of the Jan. 15 vote on whether to approve May's Brexit deal, but a chance to discover what sort of changes would be required to win the support of Parliament, so the prime minister can try to renegotiate the agreement in Brussels.

At the center of many pro-Brexit lawmakers' concerns is the Irish "backstop", an insurance policy aimed at preventing a hard border between the Republic of Ireland and the British province of Northern Ireland. It would require EU rules to apply in Northern Ireland if no other solutions can be agreed.

Senior Conservative lawmaker Graham Brady has put forward a proposal, known as



an amendment, calling for the backstop to be removed and replaced with "alternative arrangements".

That has won the backing of May and some Brexit campaigners, but a new compromise proposal, led by both Conservative pro-EU and pro-Brexit lawmakers, to return to Brussels with two options is also gaining support.

It calls for the backstop to be renegotiated or if that fails to leave on World Trade Organization rules at the end of 2021.

On Monday, May told a private meeting of Conservative lawmakers that the government wanted them to support Brady's amendment, if it is chosen by the speaker of the House of

Commons to be put to a vote.

Strong support for the amendment will allow May to demonstrate to the EU that changes to the backstop could be enough to allow her to get parliamentary approval for a deal.

"If the prime minister indicates in the debate that she will be pressing Brussels to reopen the WA (Withdrawal Agreement) to make changes to the backstop, I will gladly support the Brady amendment," former foreign secretary and prominent Brexiter Boris Johnson said on Twitter.

"But what we need is to achieve something legally binding ... We need to go back into the text of the treaty and solve the problem."

The EU's deputy chief negotiator Sabine Weyand said Monday that the bloc was "open to alternative arrangements" on the Irish border but that Brady's proposal did not spell out what they were.

Brady's amendment is not certain to pass, as a group of prominent pro-Brexit Conservative lawmakers have said they are yet to decide whether they will support it.

The small Northern Irish Party which props up May's minority government but opposes her deal, said the contents of May's speech to lawmakers Tuesday will determine whether it will support the amendment.

Lawmakers have proposed more than 10 different amendments to be debated on Tuesday but only a small number are likely to be chosen to be voted on. Voting will begin at 1900 GMT.

Aside from Brady's proposal, the other key amendment expected to garner a large amount of support, possibly enough to be approved by Parliament, is one put forward by opposition Labour lawmaker Yvette Cooper.

Cooper's amendment seeks to shift control of Brexit from May's government to Parliament and if successful could have a profound effect, giving lawmakers who want to block, delay or renegotiate Brexit a possible legal route to do so.

If a subsequent piece of legislation is passed, it would give May until Feb. 26 to get a deal approved by Parliament or face a vote on whether to ask the EU to delay Britain's exit to avoid leaving without a deal on March 29. (Source: Reuters)

UN Khashoggi investigator says no approval yet from Saudis for meeting

The UN investigator leading the inquiry into the killing of Jamal Khashoggi said on Tuesday that Saudi Arabia had not yet approved a request for her to enter the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul and meet Saudi authorities.

Agnes Callamard, the UN special rapporteur on executions who is on a week-long mission to Turkey, briefly visited the Istanbul neighborhood where the Saudi consulate is located but did not enter the premises.

"We just wanted to have a sense of it," she told reporters.

Khashoggi, a Washington Post columnist living in the United States, was killed on Oct. 2 at the Saudi consulate, where he had gone to collect documents for his planned wedding.

Speaking outside the building, Callamard said she had requested access to the premises from the Saudi government and to meet Saudi authorities both in Turkey and in the kingdom.

"To be fair the request to them has come quite late, so we need to give them a bit more time to process our request," she said. "We are respectfully calling on the authorities to give us access at some stage while we are here."

U.S. intelligence agencies believe Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman ordered an operation to kill Khashoggi, a critic of the kingdom's de facto ruler, and say his body was dismembered and removed to a location still publicly unknown.

Riyadh denies that the prince had any involvement.

Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch, said on Monday that Callamard is investigating what evidence there is pointing to Prince Mohammed's responsibility. He also called for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to share its intercepted recordings of the crime.

Callamard met Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gul and the head of Turkey's National Intelligence Agency (MIT) separately on Monday. Turkish officials have not said what evidence they shared with her.

She is expected to meet the Istanbul chief prosecutor, who has headed the local investigation, later on Tuesday.

She said she could publish her report by late May although the date could change. (Source: Reuters)

UAE accuses Qatar of banning its products, files WTO complaint



The United Arab Emirates has filed a complaint against Qatar at the World Trade Organization saying Doha has imposed a ban on Emirati products, UAE state news agency WAM said Tuesday.

The UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt have imposed a diplomatic, trade and transport boycott of Qatar since June 2017 over allegations Doha supports terrorism, a charge Qatar denies.

Qatar filed in July 2017 a wide-ranging legal complaint at the WTO to challenge the trade boycott by the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. The case is still ongoing.

"The UAE's action comes after the Qatari ministry of economy banned the sale of consumer goods manufactured in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt," WAM reported.

The report did not state when the complaint was filed.

Qatari officials were not immediately available for comment on the complaint.

The UAE said Qatar had also removed the names of Emirati companies from the list of approved vendors for infrastructure projects and has maintained an "undeclared ban" on products coming from the Emirates.

Qatar banned products originating from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain, in May 2018. (Source: Daily Star)

Macron calls for inter-religious dialogue at end of Egypt visit

French President Emmanuel Macron met Tuesday with Egypt's top religious figures and called for inter-religious dialogue at the end of a three-day visit aimed at boosting ties while raising human rights concerns.

Macron and Pope Tawadros II stressed the need for "dialogue between religions" as he met with Pope Tawadros II at St. Mark's Cathedral, seat of Egypt's ancient Coptic Orthodox Church.

"I decided that a new conference will be held in Paris to see how to act more effectively," he said, without giving details.

A diplomatic source said the French capital would host a forum on religious minorities in the Middle East, but without giving a date. Macron visited the church adjacent to the cathedral that was the site of a December 2016 militant attack which killed 29 people. He also met in Cairo with Ahmed al-Tayeb, the grand imam of Al-Azhar, the most prestigious seat of Sunni Islamic learning in Egypt.

Their talks focused on "the training of imams [prayer leaders] in France and the fight against the misguided vision of religion", the French presidency said. On Monday, the human rights situation in Egypt was at the center of talks between Macron and Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi. (Source: AFP)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	160153.0
IFX	1914.94

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,018 rials
GBP	55,239 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$60.39/b
WTI	\$52.48/b
OPEC Basket	\$60.90/b
Gold	\$1,311.55 /oz
Silver	\$15.94/oz
Platinum	\$822.15/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Annual e-banking conference kicks off in Tehran

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Attended by senior banking and technology officials, the eighth annual conference on E-Banking and Payment Systems kicked off in Tehran on Tuesday, IRIB reported.

Iran's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) minister, deputy head of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and head of Monetary and Banking Research Institute were among the officials who attended the opening ceremony.

Blockchain technology and ledgers, cryptocurrencies, alternative payment systems, digital evolution as well as fraud, money laundering and ways to deal with them, were among the main subject lines of the conference.

The conference will wrap up today.



Tehran hosting 9th Iranian steel market conference

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The ninth edition of Iranian Steel Market Conference and Exhibition (ISMC) is being held during January 29-30 at IRIB Conference Center in Tehran, IRIB reported.

The conference focuses on a variety of areas including exploration, identification, tracking, geology, environment and investment on drilling operations, as well as the need to review and update the exploration strategies and moderate the exploration laws and conventions.

The conference is sponsored by the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade, Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (known as IMIDRO), Iran Minerals Production and Supply Company (IMPASCO), Iranian Mining Engineering Organization, Iran Mine House, the National Iranian Copper Company and Zarazma Company.



South Pars refineries account for refining 74% of Iran's gas

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — South Pars refineries account for refining 74 percent of gas produced in Iran, according to the managing director of South Pars Gas Company (SPGC).

Hadi Hashemzadeh Farhang mentioned development of technical services as one of the main strategies of his company, Tasnim news agency reported.

In a press conference last month, Mohammad Meshkinfam, the managing director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing South Pars gas field, put the current refining capacity of South Pars refineries at 2 billion cubic feet per day.

The huge offshore field, Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

Gold reaches seven-month high as stocks, dollar struggle

Gold climbed to a seven-month high on Tuesday as markets opted for caution before three major macro events and a blizzard of big tech company earnings in the coming days, starting with Apple later.

Despite the upcoming action - a key Brexit vote in the UK, Wednesday's U.S. Federal Reserve decision and Thursday's conclusion of the latest Sino-U.S. trade talks - European and Asian stocks held up relatively well.

London's FTSE rose 1 percent and Frankfurt and Paris both made some ground. Utilities and other safety plays benefited from a series of U.S. profit alerts, including from digger maker Caterpillar, overnight.

News that the U.S had leveled charges against China's telecom giant Huawei days before the next round of trade talks between Washington and Beijing knocked sentiment.

(Source: Reuters)

Over 40% of Iran's crude steel exported: IMIDRO head

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Over 40% of crude steel produced in Iran is exported to different markets worldwide, IRNA reported quoting Khodadad Gharibpour, the head of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), as saying on Tuesday.

Of the 1.79-billion tons of the world's annual crude steel production, some 30 percent is exported by the producing countries, so Iran's 40-percent share of export is higher than the global figure, the official noted.

A report released by the World Steel Organization (WSO) on Saturday indicated that Iran became the world's tenth largest



steel producer in 2018.

Iran which stood at the 13th place in 2017 could lag behind three major steel producers in the world, namely Italy, Taiwan, and Ukraine to stand at the 10th place in 2018, despite

the re-imposition of sanctions by the U.S.

According to the WSO's report, Iran produced 25 million tons of crude steel in 2018 which indicates 17.7 percent growth from 21.2 million tons in 2017.

Iran, Syria ink 11 long-term strategic co-op agreements

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran and Syria signed 11 long-term cooperation agreements during a two-day visit of a high-ranking Iranian delegation led by First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri to Syria.

The documents were inked during a meeting between Syrian Prime Minister Imad Khamis and Jahangiri in Damascus on Monday, the official portal of Iran Cham-

ber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) reported.

As reported, one of the signed documents is related to the 14th Iran-Syria high joint technical committee of economic cooperation.

The other documents were signed on combating money laundering and terrorism financing, coopera-

tion in housing and public services, railway cooperation, encouraging joint investments, and holding exhibitions; as well as those on geomatics, cinematic, and education cooperation.

ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie and a 25-member-delegation from ICCIMA accompanied Jahangiri in the trip to Syria.

The government shutdown cost the economy \$11b, including a permanent \$3b loss

The federal government shutdown cost the economy \$11 billion, according to a new analysis from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, reflecting lost output from federal workers, delayed government spending and reduced demand.

The report, which was released Monday, estimated a hit of \$3 billion, or 0.1 percent, to economic activity during the fourth quarter of 2018. The impact was projected to be greater during the first quarter of 2019: \$8 billion, or 0.2 percent of GDP.

Although most of the damage to the economy will be reversed as federal workers return to their jobs, the CBO estimated \$3 billion in economic activity is permanently lost after a quarter of the government was closed for nearly 35 days.

"Among those who experienced the largest and most direct negative effects are federal workers who faced delayed compensation and private-sector entities that lost business," the report said. "Some of those private-sector entities will never recoup that lost income."

The analysis does not incorporate some indirect effects of the shutdown, such as the halt in some federal permits and reduced access to loans.

However, the report suggests that businesses were beginning to postpone investment and hiring decisions as a result of the shutdown and warned that the risks were becoming "increasingly significant" as the impasse dragged on.

The CBO report was requested last week by Democratic Reps. John Yarmuth of Kentucky,

chairman of the budget committee, and Tom O'Halleran of Arizona, co-chairman of the moderate Blue Dog Coalition.

"I am hopeful that we have finally reached a turning point with these mindless shutdowns, but this CBO estimate serves as a stark warning to President Trump on the consequences of using American workers as a bargaining chip," Yarmuth said in a statement.

The CBO's annual report also looked at the impact of the Trump administration's trade policies on the economy. It estimates that new tariffs on imports and exports will shave an average of 0.1 percent from economic growth through 2029. It also forecast customs duties will rise from 0.2 percent of GDP in 2018 to 0.3 percent this year.

Overall, the CBO projected economic growth will slow this year to 2.3 percent, compared with the 3.1 percent rate last year, as the benefits of the new tax law begin to fade. Through 2023, growth is expected to average 1.7 percent, below the CBO's estimate of the economy's potential.

There was at least one silver lining in the report: the CBO pushed back its forecast for when the deficit would reach the \$1 trillion milestone by two years to 2022. The new timeline is driven by lower expected spending on disaster relief.

The CBO also projected interest rates would not rise as quickly as previously forecast. Interest rate payments are estimated to be \$255 billion less than projected last year.

(Source: CNBC)

Germany says EU soon to launch Iran funding scheme

The European Union is on the verge of launching an alternative channel to send money to Iran that would sidestep U.S. sanctions against the Islamic republic, Germany's foreign minister said Monday.



The "special purpose vehicle," or SPV, is part of EU efforts to keep alive an international agreement aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear program.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas told reporters in Brussels that "as far as the special purpose vehicle is concerned: it will be registered, it has not yet been registered, but I would say that the implementation of our plan is imminent."

Maas said the EU's aim is to ensure that "business not sanctioned by the U.S. can be upheld, and there is a suitable instrument for international payments." He said that Germany has been working notably with Britain and France but also other EU partners in recent months to set it up, without providing details.

EU member country envoys discussed Iran Monday, but didn't announce the SPV's completion. It is likely to be discussed when EU foreign ministers meet over two days in Romania from Thursday.

Senior EU officials have been saying for weeks that the financing mechanism would be up and running soon, but they have hesitated to provide details amid European concern that Trump would target the country where it is based and any others taking part.

The White House has been warning the Europeans that they could face stiff fines and penalties should they try to circumvent the sanctions.

Still, the EU insists that the nuclear deal is vital to regional and global security. The bloc has already introduced measures to stop European companies from complying with the U.S. sanctions without authorization from Brussels.

"We don't want Iran to leave this agreement and start the enrichment of uranium again," Maas said.

(Source: AP)

First Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 97/121-57/10

Tender Holder:
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Tender:
Purchasing of one set of Diesel Generator 1500 KAV and 26 sets of low power Pressure Plates and installation & Commissioning in accordance with the technical specifications and other terms and conditions mentioned in the tender documents.

Deadline and How to Receive the Tender Documents:
From **02nd Feb. 2019 (1397/11/13)** by **4 p.m.** on **Tuesday 07th Feb. 2019 (1397/11/18)** with presentation of introductory letter by company or its representative and the receipt of paying the documents fee.

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

The Fee of the Tender Documents and How to Deposit it:
Submission of payment receipt for the amount of 2,000,000 Rials to Account No. 4101029171204273 (IBAN: IR310100004101029171204273) with CENTRAL BANK OF IRAN in the name of IRIB.

Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participation to Tender:
The amount of deposit for participant in tender is **USD 30,000** fixed or its equivalent in 2,900,000,000 Rials which should be in the form of Bank Guarantee.

Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:
The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted no later than **10 a.m.** on **Sunday 10th Mar. 2019 (1397/12/19)** and at the address mentioned in the 4th clause.

Time and Place of Opening Envelopes:
The date of opening the envelopes A&B is on **Sunday 10th Mar. 2019 (1397/12/19)** at **3 p.m.** in the office of Financial Vice President and opening of envelope C will be after technical evaluation.

For more information, please see:
www.iriboffice.ir/tenders and http://iets.mporg.ir/

Tel: 00982122167463

Purchasing (Kala) Dept. of IRIB

Saudis pledge even deeper oil cuts in February under OPEC+ deal

Saudi Arabia expects to reduce oil output once again in February and pump for six months at levels "well below" the production limit it accepted under OPEC's oil-cuts accord, Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said.

The world's biggest exporter targeted production of 10.2 million barrels a day in January and is aiming to pump about 10.1 million in February, he said. Saudi Arabia's voluntary limit under the December cuts deal with Russia and other producers was 10.33 million barrels a day.

"Saudi Arabia will be well below the voluntary cap that we agreed to" and will pump beneath its ceiling "for the full six months" of the December cuts accord, he said in a Bloomberg Television interview in Riyadh.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia agreed to pare production starting this month in an effort to buttress sagging crude prices. Benchmark Brent has gained this year as Saudi Arabia leads the way in curbing output amid a surge in U.S. shale-oil supplies.



"Demand will start picking up at the end of the first quarter and into the second quarter,"

Al-Falih said. The impact of OPEC+ output reductions "will trickle down into the global

markets over the next few weeks."

■ U.S. oversupply

The U.S. is currently "way oversupplied" with its own output and with oil from other Western hemisphere producers, Al-Falih said.

"So, as we look at the oil market, and we see it in the price differentials, it's really not rewarding us to export a lot of oil to the U.S. And as a result, as we make adjustments, it makes commercial sense that that's the market that gets the majority of our cuts."

Saudi Arabia and like-minded countries are determined to drive inventories below the five-year historical average, he said. "We're going to do it by ensuring that supply is below demand for 2019."

It's still unclear what effect political turmoil in Venezuela will have on crude markets, Al-Falih said. Output from the South American OPEC member has languished amid escalating tensions between forces loyal to President Nicolas Maduro and those supporting opposition National Assembly leader Juan Guaido.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Natural gas continues to bounce around while LNG's bullish trend remains strong



So far in 2019, the price of February natural gas futures traded in a range from \$2.878 to \$3.722 per MMBtu. The year began near the low, and a cold blast of weather across vast areas of the United States caused a significant rally that took the price of the energy commodity over 29% higher from its January 3 low in under two weeks.

Wild volatility in the natural gas futures market began in early November when the price moved to the highest level since 2014 at \$4.929 per MMBtu on the continuous futures contract and \$4.8490 on the February futures in mid-November.

Natural gas exploded to the upside on a combination of the lowest inventory levels in years going into the winter season and cold weather conditions at the very start of the peak season of demand each year fostered the rally. However, the price turned lower as temperatures warmed and natural gas was again below \$3 on the final trading session in 2018 and early 2019.

The natural gas market has grown

dramatically over recent years. Discoveries of massive reserves in the Marcellus and Utica shale regions of the US caused an expansion of the supply side of the fundamental equation for the energy commodity. On the demand side, coal replaced natural gas in many areas when it comes to power generation.

Additionally, technological advances caused the flow of natural gas in liquid form to areas of the world where the price is higher opening a new export market for US gas. Power generation and LNG increased the demand side of the equation for the natural gas market. The growth of the market has caused increased liquidity in the energy commodity and the futures that trade on the NYMEX division of the CME.

At the same time, Cheniere Energy (LNG) has been a primary beneficiary of the liquid natural gas export business which has grown in Louisiana and Texas, and its shares have been making higher lows and higher highs since early 2016.

(Source: Seeking Alpha)

India's Adani plans world's largest solar-wind hybrid park



One of India's leading renewable energy power generation companies, Adani Green Energy, has announced plans to set up the world's largest solar-wind hybrid park in the country's western state of Gujarat.

According to media reports, Adani Green Energy has announced plans to expand the Khavda solar-wind farm into the world's largest hybrid park over the next five years. The announcement was made at the Vibrant Gujarat Investor Summit. Investment for the hybrid park will be part of the Rs 55,000 crore (\$7.7 billion) investment announced by the Adani Group in the state over the next five years.

Apart from the planned expansion of the hybrid park, Adani will also invest in the expansion of solar photovoltaic production capacity, setting up a one million ton copper smelting and refining project, and a cement and clinker manufacturing unit.

Adani Green Energy is believed to be already working on setting up large-scale solar and wind energy projects at the Khavda hybrid park. According to government reports, the company has asked for access to

the transmission network to feed power from 1.5 gigawatts of wind and 750 megawatts of solar power capacity to be commissioned at Khavda. These project may not be part of any recent auctions conducted by the state or central government.

It may be the case that Adani Group owns land at Khavda and plans to set up projects secured in auctions conducted by state and central governments. Adani remains a major participant in solar power auctions across the country. Since February 2017, when wind energy auctions were first introduced in India, Adani Green Energy has secured rights to develop 1,025 megawatts of capacity.

Adani has signed similar investment agreements with the neighboring state of Rajasthan, which is rich in solar power resources. In 2015, the company entered an agreement with the government of Rajasthan to set up 10 gigawatts of solar power capacity across the state. The Adani Renewable Energy Park Rajasthan is a joint venture between the Government of Rajasthan and Adani Group.

(Source: cleantechnica.com)

Venezuela's crisis has had no impact on oil market, Saudi says

The political crisis in Venezuela has not had an impact on the oil market and there is no need for any additional measures, Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih told Russian news agency RIA Novosti in an interview on Monday.

Al-Falih said he had not discussed the turmoil in Venezuela with his colleagues at OPEC.

No one has proposed the holding of an extraordinary meeting of OPEC and its non-OPEC partners over the chaos in OPEC member Venezuela, Alexander Novak, the energy minister of the non-OPEC leader

Russia, said last week.

Venezuela's opposition leader Juan Guaidó, the president of the National Assembly, declared himself interim president last Wednesday, and the United States supported him against Nicolas Maduro, whom the U.S. Administration declared a "usurper" with no legitimacy to the presidency.

Countries around the world have started to take sides, backing one of the two leaders claiming to be president of the crisis-stricken Latin American nation that holds the world's largest crude oil reserves.

The European Union "strongly calls for the urgent holding of free, transparent and credible presidential elections in accordance with internationally democratic standards and the Venezuelan constitutional order," the EU said on Saturday. "In the absence of an announcement on the organization of fresh elections with the necessary guarantees over the next days, the EU will take further actions, including on the issue of recognition of the country's leadership in line with article 233 of the Venezuelan constitution," the EU warned.

Germany, Spain, and France gave Maduro

eight days to call elections, otherwise they would recognize Guaidó as president.

Maduro on Sunday rejected the ultimatum.

While Saudi Arabia's al-Falih sees no need for market intervention, analysts told CNBC on Monday that Venezuela is back in the spotlight of the oil market.

"Oil's ticking time bomb is sure to detonate at some point and the price reaction will be anything but muted," CNBC quoted Stephen Brennock, oil analyst at PVM Oil Associates, said in a research note published on Monday.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Here's the most important thing going on in the oil market

The most important trend happening in the oil market has to do with China, oil guru and RBN Energy President and Principal Energy Markets Consultant Rusty Braziel tells CNBC's Jim Cramer.

Braziel, a frequent "Mad Money" guest who has correctly predicted several oil price collapses in recent years, referenced the commodity's price drop in October of last year. After starting the month near four-year highs, crude oil prices saw their biggest monthly drop in over two years.

Since October, oil prices have been trading lower, a trend some have connected to incipient economic weakness in China. While Cramer wasn't convinced by that line of thinking, Braziel said in a Monday interview that it actually had merit.

"If demand in China is down, if the economy in China is down, that means the total demand for crude oil is going to be down. If crude oil demand drops, then total demand drops, then ... crude oil prices are likely to decline, too," Braziel



said. "As a matter of fact, that's really the most important thing that's going on right now, and it's what happened back in 2014."

In the fourth quarter of 2014, crude oil prices saw a steep decline during a worldwide oil glut, in which global production exceeded demand. From their

highs in June to their troughs in December, they lost over 40 percent in market value.

"In 2014, the economy got weaker, and when that happened, the market lost confidence in its ability to absorb incremental production of crude oil from the United States," Braziel explained. "That's exactly what happened in October."

As for where oil's going next, Braziel's answer wasn't quite as colorful, but it could come as a relief to energy market-watchers.

"The market has recognized that it was never going to be \$70," he said, pointing to the oil futures curve. "It was never going to be \$40, \$42. It's going to be bouncing back and forth between some number around \$55 or \$60."

U.S. crude prices fell Monday amid worries about a global economic slowdown. West Texas Intermediate crude shed 3.2 percent, settling at \$51.99 a barrel. Brent crude, the international benchmark, lost 2.8 percent, ending the day at \$59.93.

(Source: CNBC)

Oil gains as U.S. imposes sanctions on Venezuela, global supplies weigh

Oil prices rose on Tuesday after Washington imposed sanctions on Venezuelan state-owned oil firm PDVSA in a move that may curb the OPEC member's crude exports, but price rises were capped by ample global supply and signs of a slowing Asian economy.

International Brent crude oil futures were up 61 cents at \$60.54 per barrel by 0941 GMT.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were up 48 cents at \$52.47 per barrel.

Venezuela has the world's biggest proven oil reserves, but its potential has not been realized due to a lack of investment. The country is also a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, which is implementing a supply cut deal.

"The Latin American country is predominantly the producer of heavier crude, exactly what (U.S. Gulf) refiners are thirsty for," PVM said in a note.

"They will now have to turn elsewhere (possibly to Mexico, Saudi Arabia and Iraq) to satisfy their needs for this type of crude, which would inevitably lead to a price spike."

Venezuela's exports fell to little more than 1 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2018 from 1.6 million bpd in 2017, according to Refinitiv ship tracking data and trade sources.

The United States has been the biggest buyer of Venezuelan oil despite their political differences, taking around half of the country's export volumes, followed by India and China.

While news of the sanctions against Venezuela grabbed headlines, analysts said the fundamental issue for global oil trade remained plentiful supply.

Global oil supply remains high largely due to a more than 2 million bpd increase in U.S. crude oil production last year, to a record 11.9 million bpd.

"(The) focus will be intensifying on the U.S. inventory data tomorrow, with expectations of a further build in stocks - a larger build will likely see crude taking a further step downwards," Cantor Fitzgerald Europe said in a note.

There are also concerns in the oil industry that crude demand could stutter amid an economic slowdown.

Activity in China's vast manufacturing sector likely shrank for the second straight month in January, a Reuters poll showed, heightening concerns over the risks the Chinese slowdown poses to the global economy.

Warnings from Caterpillar and Nvidia on Monday about weakening demand from China have concerned investors, who could see more profit shortfalls from U.S. companies that count on the world's No. 2 economy for a big portion of their business.

(Source: Reuters)

Libya banks on \$50-bil budget to boost beleaguered oil sector

Libya's state-owned National Oil Corporation has set aside a budget of around \$50 billion for 2019 to develop its oil and gas sector, as it strives to reach a pre-2011 output level of around 1.6 million bpd by the end of this year, a senior Libyan industry official told S&P Global Platts.

"Fifty billion dollars is the budget for this year to improve oil and gas production and to improve downstream [operations] but most of this is for crude oil," Chairman of Ras Lanuf Oil & Gas Processing Co. Shaaban Bsebsu, said in an interview on the sidelines of the 37th JCCP International Symposium in Tokyo last week.

Bsebsu added that Libya was currently producing around 1 million bpd of crude but that it aimed to boost its output to around 1.6 million bpd this year after overcoming technical and security challenges.

"[We] try to do this but we have a lot of security problems we face, and we try to sort out conditions [to] be better," Bsebsu said. "[We] have a plan to reach more than 2 million [bpd] in 2020," he added.

Ras Lanuf Oil & Gas Processing Co. is a subsidiary of NOC. NOC receives its budget from the Central Bank of Libya, which is authorized by the internationally recognized government in Tripoli.

NOC chairman Mustafa Sanalla has previously complained that it has not always received the entire capital spending allocation from Tripoli in the last two years.

Libyan crude output has risen sharply in the past two years, but security and political challenges continue to impede the oil sector.

Despite expectations that production will average just over 1 million bpd this year, the risk of conflict is unlikely to fall anytime soon.

Areas like the southwest of the country where the Sharara and El Feel oil fields are located remain particularly prone to outages caused by chronic fuel shortages and security problems.

Production averaged 948,333 bpd last year, its highest annual average since 2012 when it produced 1.40 million bpd, according to Platts OPEC Survey data. Before the civil war that started in 2011, the country could produce some 1.6 million bpd.

Libya's largest field, the 350,000 bpd Sharara in the southwest, remains shut-in since early-December, after armed groups occupied the site.

The situation is expected to remain tense as forces loyal to Libya National Army led by General Khalifa Haftar are on their way to secure the field.

"We have a lot of challenge from the technical side point of view, and we need more investment to upgrade the older system," Bsebsu said. "We have many issues -- this is security side" to raise oil production, Bsebsu added.

Last week, Sanalla reaffirmed that NOC would remain independent and wanted to detach itself from "political or military bargaining."

"Efforts to politicize our work are not in the interest of the Libyan people. NOC reaffirms its call for the immediate and unconditional restoration of security at Sharara. We reject any type of blackmail and intimidation, as we work to improve the lives of every Libyan," he said in a statement.

Regions such as the southwest where the Sharara and El Feel oil fields are located remain particularly prone to outages caused by chronic fuel shortages and security problems.

With presidential and legislative elections due this year, various groups will increasingly focus on controlling the oil infrastructure. That means a very high risk of an armed attack on key pipelines and production facilities.

(Source: Platts)

France's gilets jaunes used to cause chaos. Right now they're just chaotic



By Pauline Bock

The art of the street demo has a long and venerable tradition in France, but the era of the color wars may be only just beginning. What started with guerrilla blockades of roundabouts by the gilets jaunes (yellow vests) in opposition to French president Emmanuel Macron's new fuel tax has led to weekly marches in Paris and across France, some ending in violent stand-offs between protesters and the police. On Saturday, for "Act XI" (the rather portentous title given to the 11th protest) the yellow vests numbered 69,000 across France and 4,500 in Paris. Although down from the previous week, with 84,000 nationwide, the figures were higher than in December.

The next day, it was the turn of the foulards rouges, or red scarves. Their "Republican march for the liberties" drew about 10,000 people on to the Parisian streets. The choice of red had nothing to do with the French left. Many scarf-wearers complained that the activities of the gilets jaunes prevented them from enjoying a Saturday outside or doing their shopping. Their chants were pro-police and pro-Macron. When the gilets jaunes were outnumbered on the streets of the capital by an unofficial "leave us in peace" brigade, it was a sign that the movement which started with roundabouts was at a crossroads. What were they for, what should their tactics be, and how could they keep up the levels of popular support that placed Macron so firmly on the back foot?

A crunch moment is coming. Last week, controversially, a branch of the gilets jaunes announced it would run for the European elections under the label "citizen-led rally". A list of 79 candidates will be published by mid-February.

The age and professions of the 10 known candidates vary widely. They are small business owners, drivers, stay-at-home parents and civil servants. They range from 29 to 53 years old. For now they have no clear program, but the mood music is more of the left than the right. Le Pen-style anti-immigration rhetoric is not part of their anti-elite pitch.

"The citizen social movement born on 17 November shows the necessity to turn anger into a humane political project that will bring answers to the French people," read one statement. "We, French citizens, do not want to endure the decisions of European institutions and diktats of technocrats and financial castes, who have forgotten the human factor, solidarity and the planet."

Top of the candidates' list is Ingrid Levavasseur, a nursing assistant and single mother from Normandy. Levavasseur became a well-known gilets jaunes spokesperson after a TV show in which she detailed her everyday financial difficulties and found she had touched a chord: "I thought I was an isolated case, but I see how everyone suffers. The nurses, the sick, the unemployed, the hauliers..." She is not the only one to be enthusiastic about entering politics: Jacline Mouraud, whose Facebook video condemning the fuel tax went viral in November, is launching a party too. It won't run for the European elections, but she has hopes for the 2020 local elections.

But the would-be political wing is viewed with contempt by the gilets jaunes radicals, who remain devotees of a more grassroots democratic style combined with new types of protest designed to capture the imagination, such as the first "yellow night" at the weekend (a sit-in on Paris's Place de la République).

As the various factions contend, the danger is that the organized chaos of the early protests becomes just, well, chaos. Since the New Year, the gilets jaunes have developed wildly divergent strategies. Some weekly marches are declared while others happen on the spot. Unions have joined in, and are calling for a general strike starting on 5 February. The gilets jaunes have successfully shaken things up, but disarray is spreading among them too. Prominent figures are starting to organize independently. Eric Drouet, a radical who has pledged to keep the struggle on the streets, organized the "yellow night"; while Priscillia Ludosky, who has stopped working with Drouet, calls instead for peaceful marches and female-only events.

In Commercy, eastern France, an "assembly of local assemblies" met up last weekend. They signed a common declaration of their values: a platform that was "neither racist, nor sexist or homophobic", aimed at coordinating the movement democratically, and, pointedly, said they had no wish to run for office.

The disagreements are undoubtedly endangering the movement's momentum, which has also been damaged by occasional outbreaks of violence. Macron and others have denounced the violence of gilets jaunes "hooligans" at protests, while ignoring that inflicted by police on the protestors. Dozens of yellow vests have been injured. On Saturday, Jérôme Rodrigues, an ally of Drouet, was injured by an object allegedly thrown from police lines. In response, Drouet posted an online call for "an unprecedented uprising by all necessary means".

Huge political opportunities remain. The "great national debate", launched by Macron to engage with the gilets jaunes, has been a damp squib, with the president even drawing red lines around topics he didn't wish to see debated, among them the possible reintroduction of a wealth tax. The French national debate committee, designated to arbitrate the "great debate", quit because the government did not want to play by the rules.

As spring comes, the movement, which has remained vibrant throughout the winter cold, may bring greater numbers to marches. But as some of the gilets jaunes decide to pursue more orthodox political routes and the radicals fight to keep the movement non-hierarchical, decentralized and on the streets, a battle for the soul of the gilets jaunes is on the cards. Who wins it will be crucial, and not only for a movement which came out of nowhere to frighten the life out of the occupant of the Elysée. It will also decide the future course of anti-establishment politics in France. And it's time for the gilets jaunes to decide who and what they want to be.

(Source: The Guardian)

Netanyahu's scramble for Africa to escape its international isolation

By Ramzy Baroud

Forget the hype. Israel's "security technology" has nothing to do with why some African countries are eager to normalize relations with Israel.

What is it that Israel is able to offer in the technology sector to Chad, Mali and others that the United States, the European Union, China, Russia, India, Brazil, South Africa and others cannot?

The answer is "nil", and the moment we accept such a truth is the moment we start to truly understand why Chad, a Muslim-majority country, has just renewed its diplomatic ties with Israel. And, by extension, the same logic applies to Mali, another Muslim-majority country that is ready to normalize with Israel.

Chadian President, Idriss Deby, was in Israel last November, a trip that was touted as another Benjamin Netanyahu-engineered breakthrough by the Israeli regim and its allied media.

In return, Israeli Prime Minister, Netanyahu, paid Deby a visit to N'djamena where they agreed to resume diplomatic ties. In their joint press conference, Deby spoke of "deals" signed between Chad and Israel, but failed to provide more details.

Israel may try to present itself as the savior of Africa, but no matter how comparatively strong the Israeli economy is, Tel Aviv will hardly have the keys to solving the woes of Chad, Mali or any other country on the African continent.

Israeli media is actively contributing to the fanfare that has accompanied Netanyahu's "scramble for Africa", and is now turning its focus to preparations under way for another "historic visit", that of Malian President, Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga, to Israel in the "coming weeks".

Netanyahu is keen to schedule Maiga's trip just before the 9 April date, when Israelis go to the polls to vote in the country's early general elections.

Israel's motives to normalize with Africa are inspired by the same reasoning behind Netanyahu's international outreach to South America and other regions in the global South.

Despite the Trump-Netanyahu love affair at the moment, Israel has no faith in the future of the U.S. in the Middle East region. The current



Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno (R) with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Despite the Trump-Netanyahu love affair at the moment, Israel has no faith in the future of the U.S. in the Middle East region.

Donald Trump administration, as the previous Barack Obama administration, has made clear and calculated moves to slowly deploy out of the region and "pivot" elsewhere.

This has alerted Netanyahu to the fact that Israel would have to diversify its alliances as an American veto at the United Nations Security Council is no longer a guarantor to Israel's regional dominance.

For years, Netanyahu has pursued an alternative course, which has become the only path for Israel to escape its international isolation. Unfortunately for Palestinians, Israel's new strategy, of seeking separate alliances with UN General Assembly members seems to be paying dividends. Israel now hopes that other countries that have historically stood on the side of Palestinians – voting for Palestinian rights as a bloc at the UN – will follow the Chad and Mali examples.

The struggle between Israel and Arab countries in Africa, according to Dan Avni – a top Israeli Foreign Ministry official during the

1950s and '60s – is "a fight of life and death for us." That statement was made during a time that the U.S. had not fully and ardently committed to the Israeli colonial project, and Israel was in a desperate need to break away from its isolation.

Following the expansion of the Israeli colonial project in Palestine and other Arab countries after the 1967 war, the U.S. unconditional political, economic and military support for Israel has addressed many of Israel's perceived vulnerabilities, empowering it to become the uncontested bully of the whole region. At the time, neither Africa mattered, nor did the rest of the international community.

But now, a new Great Game is changing the rules once more. Not only is the U.S. losing its grip in the Middle East and Africa, Washington is also busy elsewhere, desperate to sustain its dwindling global hegemony for a bit longer.

Although ties between Washington and

A plank for peace in Afghanistan

Even a tentative agreement on two points between the U.S. and the Taliban can allow for more trust-building and for new ideas to emerge and help end a 17-year war.

It may be only a small reed of trust for a possible peace in Afghanistan. Yet, after four rounds of face-to-face talks, the Taliban and the United States have finally agreed on something. That alone could help shorten the fears that drive America's longest war and that have kept Afghanistan at the center of the global war on terror.

Last week during negotiations in Qatar, the two sides agreed in principle to a "framework" for a grand bargain: The U.S. would declare a timetable for withdrawing its troops while the Taliban pledged not to allow Afghanistan to again be used as a launching ground for attacks on the U.S.

This public commitment to two shared goals, even if they are far from reality, is an essential step for further talks. Negotiations are not always a process of compromise or

probing weaknesses. They also allow better understanding of the other side's perspective.

In these talks, it is now clear the U.S., and the Taliban, as well as the Afghan people, are weary of conflict and eager to end decades of foreign meddling.

Merely acknowledging such points across a chasm of distrust can provide the first plank for bridge-building.

Such a bridge is still far from complete. It is not clear how the Taliban foresees its role in Afghanistan's democracy or in its treatment of women based on its harsh rule from 1996 to 2001. And the elected government in Kabul is still not directly involved in the talks. Its positions may change after a presidential election slated for July. It also is unclear if President Trump plans to withdraw some or all of the 14,000 U.S. troops without first assuring there is a stable government in Kabul in command of a cohesive army.

Besides these uncertainties, all sides have shown a patience

to fill in the details. This initial agreement is not final until many other points are agreed, such as Taliban respect for the Afghan Constitution. One idea being proposed is that the Taliban be allowed to run for office in local rural areas while having only a limited role in the national government.

As trust is built in further talks, a cease-fire may become possible. Last June, the Taliban did participate in a first-ever three-day cease-fire. New ideas for a peace pact may emerge. And other outside powers, such as Pakistan, might better provide fresh security guarantees.

The search for a viable peace process has taken an important step. Like negotiations that led to agreements in Northern Ireland and Colombia, Afghanistan needs to find common ground among the competing sides. The initial trust is developing. As it is built on a shared desire for peace, then peace is possible.

(Source: The SCM)

Top U.S. thinktank no longer accepts UAE funding over human rights issues: report

The Washington-based Center for American Progress (CAP), a public policy research and advocacy organization with a declared goal of presenting a liberal viewpoint on economic and social issues, further said it sought to distinguish itself from the "authoritarian regimes" around the globe, the UAE included, with which U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has developed a close bond, The Guardian newspaper said in a report on Friday.

"With a rising undemocratic tide around the world, and serious questions about which side of that struggle our own president stands on, it seemed clear that all Americans should take extra steps and leave no doubt where they stand," The Guardian quoted a CAP spokesperson as saying.

According to the report, CAP's move came amid heightened public scrutiny over the financial support Washington-based thinktanks receive from authoritarian regimes. It also cited a detailed funding list the organization previously released showing that it had obtained between \$500,000 and \$1 million from the UAE embassy in the U.S. capital.

The considerable Emirati-provided financial support, overseen by CAP's foreign policy team, placed the Arab country in the upper echelon of the group's donors, fueling speculation that the organization's policies, in a way or another, are shaped by the wealthy donor, a conjecture strongly denied by the group.

"This funding never impacted any CAP position or policy, but everybody here agrees it's just the right thing to do," the spokesperson was further quoted as saying.



Earlier this month, The Intercept, an online news publication, claimed that CAP was shaping its policies under the influence of the UAE, alleging that the group fired two of its staffers suspected of being involved in leaking an email exchange that the pair thought reflected improper influence by the Emirati government within the organization.

CAP, however, rejected the claim, saying that the two staffers had not been fired "for leaking or whistle blowing."

The report further suspected that the content of the email exchange revolved around an internal debate over how to frame CAP's response to the brutal murder of Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in early October last year. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has concluded that Saudi Crown Prince

Mohammed bin Salman had ordered the gruesome murder, which triggered a global outcry.

The report alleged that CAP's initial draft statement denounced the killing and Saudi Arabia's role in it, calling for "specific consequences." However, the publicly-released statement, purportedly under the influence of the UAE, which is a close ally of Saudi Arabia, dropped the specifics and confined itself with merely calling to "take additional steps to reassess" the Washington-Riyadh relationship.

CAP, however, strongly disputed the Intercept's characterization of events.

Furthermore, The Guardian said in its Friday report that after reviewing a number of documents it came to the conclusion that CAP's refusal to accept funding from the UAE started in June last year, well before the Saudi journo's murder, adding that the decision,

Tel Aviv are still strong. Israeli leaders are aware of a vastly changing political landscape. According to Israeli calculation, the "fight of life and death" is drawing near, once again.

The answer? Enticing poor countries, in Africa and elsewhere, with political support and economic promises so that they would deny Palestinians a vote at the UN.

It is no surprise that the governments of Chad and Mali are struggling, not only economically, but also in terms of political legitimacy as well. Torn in the global struggle for dominance between the U.S. and China, they feel pressed to make significant choices that could make the difference between their survival or demise in future upheavals.

For these countries, an alliance with Israel is a sure ticket to the Washington political club. Such membership could prove significant in terms of economic aid, political validation and, more importantly, an immunity against pesky military coups.

Considering this, those who are stuck discussing the Israeli "charm offensive" in Africa based on the claim of Israel's technological advancement and hyped water technology are missing the forest for the trees.

It is important to note that it is not the road to Tel Aviv that N'Djamena and Bamako are seeking, but rather the road to Washington itself. In Africa, as in other parts of the global South, it is often the U.S., not the UN that bestows and denies political legitimacy. For African leaders who enjoy no democratic credence, a handshake with Netanyahu could be equivalent to a political life insurance.

So, for now, Israel will continue to walk this fine line, usurping American resources and political support as always, while learning how to walk on its own, by developing a foreign policy that it hopes will spare it further isolation in the future.

It is yet to dawn on Israeli leaders that, perhaps, a shortcut to breaking its isolation can be achieved through respecting international law, the rights of the Palestinian people and the territorial sovereignty of its neighbors.

Diplomatic ties with Chad and Mali may garner Netanyahu a few more votes in April, but they will also contribute to the Israeli illusion that it can be an international darling and an Apartheid regime, simultaneously.

(Source: Middle East Monitor)

however, was finalized in December. The Guardian went on to say that other top thinktanks in the U.S. capital had also drawn criticism for receiving financial support from the Emirati government and maintaining close ties with the Emirati Ambassador to the U.S. Yousef al-Otaiba, who allegedly acts as the go-between for Emirati money flowing into the U.S. capital and who has cultivated a reputation as an influential figure inside capital Abu Dhabi.

Al-Otaiba is also known to have played a particularly key role in championing the Saudi crown prince.

The report added that the main source of criticism against leading American thinktanks is obtaining funding from the dictatorship regime in the UAE that launches crack-down on human rights while at the same time maintaining a close partnership with Saudi Arabia and the two regimes' role in a nearly four-year-long brutal war against Yemen, creating a humanitarian crisis that experts believe could soon leave 14 million Yemenis on the brink of starvation.

The Saudi-led war has reportedly claimed the lives of around 56,000 Yemenis since its onset in March 2015.

Critics have already called on the U.S. thinktanks and universities to take a "democracy pledge" by rejecting both Saudi and Emirati money.

Furthermore, the Emirati government is known for its purposeful spending in the U.S. capital, in pursuit of creating a friendly environment while pushing forward its own strategic goals, The Guardian added.

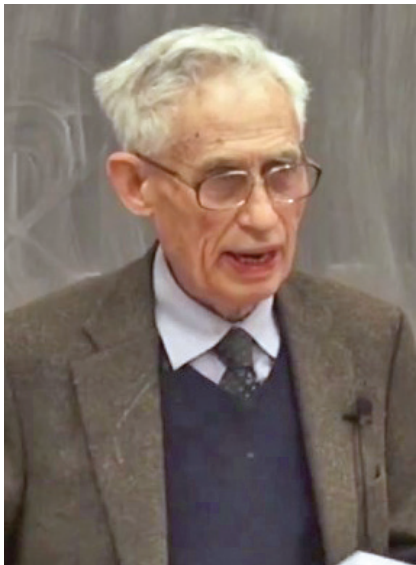
(Source: Yemen Press)

'The most influential intolerant governments of the 20th century were atheist'

1 → I have however argued in favor of particular Christian doctrines in other books. The observed phenomena which I regard as my evidence for the existence of God, are the very existence of a physical universe, its conformity to simple intelligible laws of nature (of the kind discoverable by scientists), those laws being such as to lead to the evolution of humans, and humans being conscious. A scientific theory is probably true in so far as it leads us to expect observed phenomena which would not otherwise be expected, and in so far as it is a simple theory. I claim that these same criteria show theism to be probably true – it is a theory, simple in postulating just one God, whose nature leads us to expect that he will bring about a physical universe governed by simple intelligible laws of nature and inhabited by conscious humans. Just as particular scientific theories explain certain kinds of phenomena, theism explains why those theories operate, and so explains the most general features of all kinds of phenomena.

■ What is the basis of your argument for using human consciousness as the reason for the existence of God? Why is science not able to explain human consciousness?

A: My arguments for the existence of God taken together form one cumulative argument. Thus, the existence of the physical universe gives some degree of probability to the existence of God, the operation of simple intelligible laws of nature increases that probability, those laws being such as to lead to the evolution of humans increases that probability further, and those humans being conscious increases that probability yet further. If science is to explain the occurrence of consciousness, there must be laws of nature connecting brain states with conscious states; for example there must be a law that if the brain of some human is in a certain particular state, that human will have a thought "today is Thursday"; and if the brain of that human is in a certain different



state, that human will have a red after-image. And so on and so on. No laws of nature of the kind that physics currently postulates could possibly explain these phenomena, because today's physics is not concerned with conscious phenomena – it is concerned only with publicly observable phenomena. It is just possible that physics could be expanded so as to deal with conscious phenomena. This would require physics to postulate an enormous number of extra laws, in view of the enormous number of different kinds of conscious states (not analysable in terms of common elements in the way in which material bodies can be analysed in terms of their constituent atoms) which humans can have. If science could be so expanded, then (with a qualification which I will make in answer to question 4) science could explain consciousness. But then the question would arise why there is such an enormous number of laws of nature of a kind utterly different from the laws which govern physical objects, as there would need to be in order to explain consciousness. Unless someone has designed them for that purpose, there is not the slightest reason to expect that there would be such an enormous number of inter-connected complicated laws. But God has good reason to bring about human beings, because humans have a unique kind of goodness, the goodness of being able to choose between good and evil (a choice which God who is perfectly good cannot make himself). So, since the great value of humans lies in their conscious life, including the conscious choices which they can make, God has a good reason to bring about those laws; and so it is probable that that there will be those laws if there is a God who makes them operate. Hence the operation of laws connecting brain states and conscious states adds to the probability that there is a God. So if science can explain consciousness, God explains why science can explain consciousness; and if science cannot explain consciousness, we must suppose that God acts outside the laws of nature, if we are to have an explanation of why humans are conscious.

■ What is your opinion about love-based arguments for existence of God? In Islamic



tradition the believers of this argument try to deny and reject the rational arguments for existence of God.

A: I regret that I am not familiar with love-based arguments of the Islamic tradition for the existence of God. But I certainly think that only some people need arguments of the kind which I am giving in order to believe that there is a God. Some people have deep religious experiences of the presence of God; and it is always rational to believe that things are as they seem to be – in the absence of counter-evidence. For example, it is rational to believe that you are looking at a tree, if it seems to you that you are looking at a tree – unless someone can show you that it is only an illusion that there is a tree there. Similarly, it is rational to believe that God is talking to you if it seems to you that God is talking to you – unless you have reason to suppose that you are subject to a hallucination. Also, it is rational to believe what you are told by someone, unless you have counter-evidence, that is unless you have some reason to suppose that your informant has not had the experience or qualification to know what he is talking about, or unless you know on other grounds that what he says is false. So it is rational for someone in a mediaeval village in Iran or England to believe what the priest or imam tells them – for example, that there is a God – unless they have reason to believe that the priest or imam are in no position to know whether or not there is a God, or unless they have any other evidence that there is no God. However in our modern international scientifically-orientated culture, most people are well aware of arguments against the existence of God, and so are aware of counter-evidence to the reliability of their religious experiences or so to what their priest or imam tell them. So in our modern culture, in order rationally to believe that there is a God, many people need positive arguments for the existence of God, as well as arguments which show that the counter-arguments provided by atheists are not cogent.

■ In an interview published in May 2011 by The Guardian, Stephen Hawking compared the brain to a computer, noting it stops working once all the components fail. "There is no heaven or afterlife for broken down computers; that is a fairy story for people afraid of the dark," he said. What is your answer to this claim?

A: Human beings are conscious beings; we have sensations, thoughts, and intentions of which we are conscious when we have them, and also beliefs and desires of which we can become conscious when we choose. We are conscious because our brains give rise to consciousness. Computers are machines designed by humans to do things when instructed by humans, including to produce answers to questions set by humans. But I see no reason at all to believe that any current computer is in any way conscious. Such computers are like humans on auto-pilot; they do things without in any way being conscious that they are doing them. It is just possible that some future highly sophisticated computer might be conscious, but we could never know whether or not it is conscious. We reasonably suppose that the higher animals, such as cats and dogs, are conscious (although their consciousness is of a much simpler kind than ours); but we suppose this because their brains are very similar to our brains, not merely in their architecture (that is, the ways in which the different parts of their brain are inter-connected), but in the organic material out of which they are made. But I see no good reason to suppose that the mere similarity of its architecture to that of our brains would be enough to make a computer constructed of silicon chips to be conscious.

However, humans are not merely things with brains, which as well as having electrochemical properties have conscious properties such as thoughts and feelings. In my view, each human being consists of a body and soul, and it is the soul that makes that human the human he or she is. Here is one

argument for this. Each human brain has (as well as a cerebellum and brain stem) two cerebral hemispheres on which their consciousness depends, and recent neuroscience has shown that a human can continue to exist and have many of the same memories and beliefs even if one hemisphere is removed. (Sometimes one of someone's hemispheres is removed to prevent the spread of epilepsy from that hemisphere to the rest of their brain by a procedure called an "anatomical hemispherectomy".) Neuroscience is also well on the way to becoming able to join severed nerves, including even spinal nerves and neurons (that is, brain nerves). So one day it would be possible for one hemisphere to be removed from a certain person's brain (I'll call that person "P1"), and that hemisphere to be replaced by the hemisphere from the brain of some other person (whom I will call "P2"), and connected to the nerves of P1's brain. Then the resulting person would have one hemisphere on which the memories and beliefs of P1 depended, and also one hemisphere on which the memories and beliefs of P2 depended. The resulting person would therefore be confused about who he was, while being able to remember much of the previous lives of two different persons. Yet no person can be both P1 and P2. So it must be the case either that the resulting person is P1 who has survived the operation, or that the resulting person is P2, or that the resulting person is a new person (neither P1 nor P2). Yet no scientific observation or experiment could ever show which of these the resulting person is – since all that science could show would be how much of the brain of different previous persons a resulting person had and which memories and beliefs that person had. Any such evidence would be compatible with any of the three theories about who the resulting person was. So it cannot be brain matter or memories and beliefs which make a person who he or she is. So there must be some other non-physical part of a person, connected to their brain, which we call a person's "soul" which determines who or she is. A person goes where their soul goes; normally their soul goes where their brain goes but in abnormal circumstances (such as those which I have just described) we don't know and can't discover where it goes. It is just the fact that we can never discover whether a person has survived an operation such as I have described, and yet there must be a truth about whether the resulting person is the earlier person or not, which has the consequence that a person's identity must be carried by something non-physical. We do not know what happens to our soul in the abnormal circumstances of the death of our body. But clearly there is no contradiction in supposing that our soul continues to exist and is joined to another body in an after-life. Straight philosophical argument cannot show that that happens, but it is the teaching of both Christianity and Islam that this will happen, and insofar as there is good evidence that the teaching of the Christian church or alternatively the teaching of the Koran is teaching revealed by God, then we have good reason to believe in an after-life.

It is because a person's identity depends on their soul that I need to qualify what I said in answer to question 2. Science might be able to explain why whichever person who has a certain body (and so brain) has the conscious life (thoughts, feelings, and so on) which they do. But science could never explain why one soul rather than a different soul is connected to that body; and so, since who we are depends on our soul, science could never explain why one particular person rather than another has that body and the associated conscious life. For example, it could never explain why I have the body and the conscious life associated with it which I do, instead of someone else having that body and the conscious life associated with it. The reason why science could never explain this is because there would be no difference at all in the publicly observable phenomena (including what I or the person who occupies my body says) if someone else

had my body and the associated conscious life instead of me having that body and the associated conscious life. And yet of course there would be a big difference, knowable only by me! Science may be able to explain consciousness, but it could never explain who it is that is conscious.

■ What is your comment on John Leslie Mackie's argument on problem of evil which tries to question main monotheistic religions arguing that the idea of human free will is no defense for those who wish to believe in an omniscient being in the face of evil and suffering?

A: God is supposed to be omnipotent and perfectly good, and so inevitably the problem arises of how could God allow humans to do evil and to suffer. The "problem of evil" is the most important argument against the existence of God, and the theist needs a good answer to it. I believe that a good answer can be provided. Clearly God could, if he so chose, remove all the suffering in the world and stop people doing evil acts. So the question is why does he not do so. To answer that is to provide a "theodicy", and here is my theodicy. Human well-being does not consist solely or mainly in having an agreeable life without suffering. It consists also and even more importantly in having deep responsibility for ourselves and others and exercising that responsibility in the right way. That involves having free choices of whether to do good or evil actions. (If our choices were only between alternative good actions, we wouldn't have a very deep responsibility for ourselves or others.) We can choose either to benefit each other or to harm each other. One of the greatest goods for humans is to have responsibility for their own children; parents can choose to make their children happy and keen to benefit others, or bitter, resentful, and determined to hurt others. And we can form our own characters, because humans are so made that each time we do a good action it becomes easier to do a good action next time; and each time we do a bad action, it becomes easier to do a bad action next time. As well as much of the evil arising through human choices there is of course much suffering which arises through natural processes such as disease and accident and the infirmity of old age – which is called "natural evil", and it is to that that J.L. Mackie draws our attention. The point of natural evil is, I believe, to give us choices of kinds which we would not otherwise have. If I suffer from some disease, then I have a choice of whether to bear it patiently (and so begin to form a good character) or to be bitter (and so begin to form a bad character); and my friends have a choice of whether to care for me, or whether to ignore me. If the only suffering we had was suffering caused by the actions of other humans, the more fortunate of us would have little opportunity to cope with suffering. And so generally all "natural evils" provide us with opportunities to react to them in the right way and so to develop our characters for good or ill. God wants us to choose to be good people who have deep responsibility for each other, and not to have goodness forced upon us; and for that purpose he allows us to do harm to each other and provides suffering of different kinds in the face of which we can develop our characters. This kind of choice and the suffering necessary for it is merely a feature of our earthly existence of up to 80 or 90 years. In that time we have the opportunity of making ourselves and of helping others to make themselves people who are fitted as a result of their own choices for the everlasting heaven in which both Christianity and Islam believe.

■ Don't you think that monotheistic religions have paved the way to totalitarian views and policies in our world, while polytheist religions and beliefs are compatible with social and political pluralism?

A: Most governments in most centuries, whether inspired by a theistic religion or a polytheistic religion or a militant atheism, have been intolerant of views other than their own. Western medieval Christian governments (with some exceptions) were very intolerant; while medieval Islamic governments (for example, the Ottoman Empire) were fairly tolerant of Christians and Jews, although intolerant of some other religious groups. Today there are very few explicitly Christian governments, but there are some (but not all) explicitly Islamic governments who are intolerant of Christian or other minorities. Yet the most influential intolerant governments of the 20th century – the government of Nazi Germany and the government of Stalinist Soviet Union – were explicitly atheist governments. The polytheistic Roman Empire killed a large number of Christians in very cruel ways. Many Buddhists are in effect polytheists; and there are contemporary intolerant Buddhist governments, in particular the government of Myanmar which persecutes Muslims. So none of us have very good records in this respect. I think that all governments and all religious and nonreligious people should tolerate those with different religious, political or social views from their own, allowing them both to practice their own religion.

Paris is completing the U.S. puzzle against Iran



1 → We are currently in 2019. Although President Donald Trump has formally withdrawn from the nuclear deal (JCPOA), the common game of U.S. and France against Iran is still ongoing. Statements by members of the Emmanuel Macron government to negotiate about Iran's missile power and limiting the regional power of our country, reflects this fact. Undoubtedly, the direct game of the French government in the field of trump will continue.

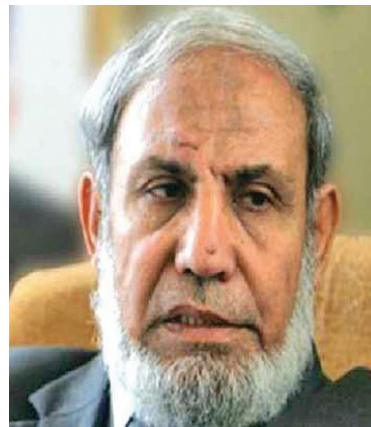
On the other hand, the French government has played a very important role in delaying the registration of the SPV. The fact remains that secretly and anti-Iranian negotiations between the U.S. Department of State and the French Foreign Ministry continue after the U.S. withdrawal of JCPOA.

Ultimately, the Iranian nation clearly sees and condemns the anti-Iranian behavior of the French government. Undoubtedly, people like Macron have no justification for this! French support for terrorist and anti-Iranian groups, helping Saddam during the war, imposing various economic sanctions against Iran, non-lifting of Iran's sanctions after a nuclear deal, and opposition to Iran's missile program, all indicate that the French government is the enemy of the Iranian nation.

Gets Undoubtedly, if the French do not retreat from the path and wrong behavior that they are taking against Iran, they will see more hatred of the Iranian public opinion towards themselves: The fact that Macron does not understand, like Sarkozy and Hollande (as the three impotent presidents in France).

Netanyahu's reaction to Nasrallah's remarks to serve his election campaign: al-Zahar

1 → A: First, Netanyahu claims in his remarks that Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah had been disappointed, one of his lies, and that the purpose of the plan was, on the one hand, to increase the morale of the Israeli side and, on the other, part of the campaign's pre-election propaganda, in particular after the issue of tunnels in southern Lebanon. As many sources stressed that there was no tunnel in that area, it was only



Netanyahu's trickery and deception on the Israeli community to frighten them from the resistance in the north of the occupied lands.

Netanyahu also claimed that the Resistance in the north and south failed to stabilize the spirit of the Israelis. Everyone knows that Nasrallah does not need these things and does not tremble with these words. Because people back him, and Resistance is with him and the great powers also support him.

■ Lebanese Hezbollah secretary general announces Lebanese resistance forces to enter Al-Jalil district in case of confrontation with the Zionists. How do you evaluate this capability?

A: There are powers that, if united and coordinated, are able to defeat the Zionist regime. First, a part of Lebanon's territory is occupied and Lebanon's Resistance has been able to strike Zionist enemy in some of these areas and it can complete this process; thus they can enter the occupied territories of northern Palestine. In the case of Syria, after retaking its lands completely, Damascus is able to attack Israel to reclaim its territory and end Israeli's occupation of northern Palestine.

On the other hand, the Palestinian Resistance can also strike the occupiers in southern regions, as it did in the past. Therefore, if all the countries and powers that occupied by Israelis are united, 'The Last Battle' will happen and this alien regime will be wipe off.

■ Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah maintained that discovery of Resistance tunnels after 13 years shows the weakness of Zionist intelligence. What is your analysis of the Israel's security situation?

A: Suppose that the Zionists discovered the tunnels. Is this a miracle? These are, in fact, fictitious victories, indicating that owners of occupied lands (Palestinians) may use invisible tools to gain victory. Palestinian Resistance also dig tunnels and discovering that is not a major achievement.

Because we do not talk about ghosts and shadows, but about the land and the land is also visible. There are plenty of ways to explore the tunnels, but the true desire of Resistance to use all of the ways, including the tunnel for the destruction of Israel, cannot be eliminated.

■ In general, is there any possibility of conflict between the Zionists and the Resistance Axis in the New Year? Which side is going to win?

A: Firstly, the issue of war is one of the Zionists' propaganda tool before the parliamentary elections. They believe that Gaza and the Palestinian Resistance group in the south of the occupied territories are weaker than Resistance group in the north, even in this situation, they cannot again defeat Palestinian Resistance. Netanyahu does not want to fail upcoming elections, and because of the defeat in the south, he is looking for victory in the north. The truth is that the "The Last Battle" is God's will to destroy Israel, and in spite of the normalization of relations with the Zionists, there is a power called Resistance in the region to destroy Israel and change the political geography of the region.

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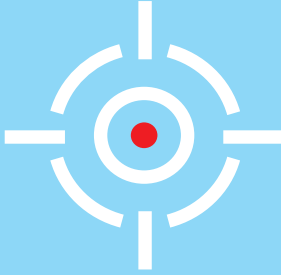
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Low prevalence of leprosy in Iran

HEALTH DESK **TEHRAN** — Leprosy prevalence is less than one in every 10,000 people in the country, announced the director of national program for prevention of tuberculosis and leprosy at the Ministry of Health.

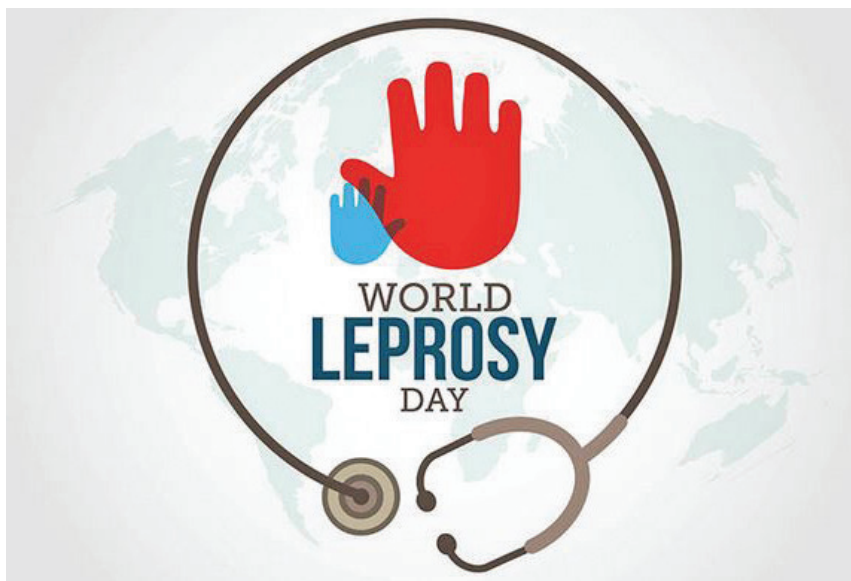
According to Dr. Mahshid Nasehi, the national campaign for eradication of leprosy started in 1992 after the World Health Organization (WHO) announced of its new target for "Elimination of Leprosy", ISNA reported on Tuesday.

She made the remarks on the occasion of World Leprosy Day, observed on the last Sunday of January. According to World Health Organization (WHO), leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is a chronic infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*. The disease mainly affects the skin, the peripheral nerves, mucosal surfaces of the upper respiratory tract and the eyes.

According to Nasehi, 32 cases of leprosy were diagnosed over the last Iranian calendar year (March 2017-March 2018), 28 of them were Iranians and the rest were foreign nationals; all of whom received free treatment according to the Health Ministry's policy for giving free treatment to people struggling with the disease regardless of their nationalities.

■ Leprosy still bears social stigma

According to Nasehi, since the discovery of the first case of leprosy in the country, a total of 11,856 people have been diagnosed with the disease. Out of this population, 9,039 patients were completely cured and 2,373 ones died due to other reasons such as old



age and the remaining 412 patients went missing who might have been cured or died. "Unfortunately, some of these missing people hadn't given an address to us because there is still a social stigma associated with leprosy," she regretted.

Nasehi further noted that the media should help in removing the social stigma attached to leprosy.

■ How contagious is leprosy?

"Many social beliefs about the leprosy are wrong. Against the common belief, leprosy

is actually not that contagious and 90 to 95 percent of people never catch the disease as they have innate immunity against its bacteria," said Nasehi.

According to WebMD, you catch leprosy only if you come into close and repeated contact with nose and mouth droplets from someone with untreated leprosy. Children are more likely to get leprosy than adults.

■ what are the symptoms?

Another wrong social belief, she added, that leprosy always lead to severe disabilities

or deep scars in face and other body parts.

However, she highlighted, such symptoms only occur if the disease is diagnosed too late. Usually, the clinical symptoms only include few spots on the body that don't cause any pain or scratchy sensation and the person contracted the disease may not even recognize they have it for years.

According to Nasehi, it usually takes about 3 to 5 years for symptoms to appear after coming into contact with the leprosy-causing bacteria. Some people do not develop symptoms until 20 years later.

"People should know that leprosy is completely treatable. Unfortunately, most people still hold the old wrong beliefs that leprosy is untreatable or highly contagious," she said.

■ Where should patients receive treatment?

After the introduction of multidrug therapy (MDT) for leprosy which affectively treated the disease, the world policy has been not to have separate sanatorium or hospitals for such patients because their disease is remotely contagious and especially after they receive the first dosage of their treatment, any chance that they might spread the disease will be completely removed, according to Nasehi.

"Unlike the past, we now believe that Leprosy patients must remain in their family and work settings and live their normal life, so the patients diagnosed with leprosy in recent decades have stayed in their original residence and received treatment from the closet health center or clinic by their choice," she concluded.

Iran medical device market growth above world average



HEALTH DESK **TEHRAN** — The growth of Iranian medical device market is estimated at around 9.1% while the global growth average is about 6%, said the head of medical equipment office at Ministry of Health.

According to Reza Masaeli, the global medical device market is expected to reach an estimated \$430 billion by 2020, while the share of Iran is predicted to be around \$7.2 billion, Mehr news agency reported on Wednesday.

Approximately, there are around 500,000 types of medical devices in the world; while there are around 280,000 types in Iran. Furthermore, there are 20,000 kinds of drugs in global market, while only 3,000 kinds are available in the country, said Masaeli.

According to Masaeli, out of the 280,000 types of medical devices in the country, 33,000 types are "in vitro diagnostic device (IVD)", 89% of which are imported into the country and the rest are homemade.

An IVD medical device is defined as a device which, whether used alone or in combination, is intended by the manufacturer for the in-vitro examination of specimens derived from the human body solely or principally to provide information for diagnostic, monitoring or compatibility purposes.

He added that there need to be more groups and companies specialized at IVD manufacturing in the country so that they can provide the industry with necessary scientific knowledge.

In October 2018, Masaeli announced that the country plans to increase its exports of medical equipment up to ten times to hit \$240 million by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

According to him, exports of medical equipment stood at \$24 million in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 20, 2018).

Iranian traditional medicine can expand globally: WHO

HEALTH DESK **TEHRAN** — the World Health Organization (WHO) representative in Iran announced that Iranian traditional medicine has the potential to gain international recognition and WHO must support its globalization.

Christoph Hamelmann made the remarks in a conference entitled "Iranian traditional medicine; a decade of academic work, exploring the past activities and future prospects".

The conference was held by the Health Ministry department of Iranian Traditional Medicine, Tasnim news agency reported on Monday.

Over the conference, Hamelmann said that every country's traditional medicine is part of its cultural heritage and should be preserved; especially Iranian traditional medicine that



dates back to very old times, even before the rise of Greek physicians such as Hippocrates.

According to Fars news agency, "The National Document of Iranian Traditional Medicine" was also presented to WHO representatives during the meeting. The document paints a general picture of Iranian traditional medicine by recounting its long history as well as describing its current status in country's health system. Submitting this document to WHO representatives will help further globalization of Iranian traditional medicine and will introduce its capacities to the world.

In mid-January, the president of Iran School of Traditional Medicine announced that twenty health centers offering Iranian traditional medicine are being constructed in 20 different areas across the country.

According to Hossein Rezaeizadeh, there are currently eight schools of Iranian traditional medicine in different universities across the country.

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Space technology makes us more aware of environment: minister

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Space technology helps us to have more knowledge about the environment, Information and Communication Technology Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi said on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

The space technology monitors many crises like water shortage and drought and help to manage natural resources, he said.



He made the remarks at the national conference on space technology and its application, which is currently underway at the Iran University of Science and Technology.

He highlighted the important role of space technology on conservation of environment saying that the Iranian Space Agency (ISA) with the help of prominent universities are now working on it.

“We have already monitor the area under cultivation for six strategic products and signed an agreement with the Department of Environment for controlling natural disasters like wildfires.

In mid-January, the Department of Environment and the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology inked a memorandum of understanding to contain natural disasters such as wildfires using modern technologies in Golestan National Park, northern Iran.

Azari Jahromi said that the ministry aims to develop infrastructures and centers for processing and analyzing data received from satellites in order to be applicable for environmental problems in future.

The ministry aims to develop space-based business with cooperation of the private sector, he said.

He named northern Mazandaran province as the pilot region for the first space-based business center.

In his speech, he also pointed to the Iran's manufacturing of satellites.

ISA has already manufacture Nahid 1 satellite, which will be sent into orbit in the near future.

Experts at the ISA is designing Nahid 2 satellite, which will be placed at the Low Earth Orbit as the first step of Iran toward the formation of satellite constellation, he said.

He expressed his hope over successful launching of Dousti satellite in the near future.

Iran jumps to 47th in Bloomberg Innovation Index 2019

1→ According to the Bloomberg website, South Korea retained the global crown in the 2019 Bloomberg Innovation Index, though improvements by Germany in research and education brought Europe's largest economy to near-parity in the annual ranking.

The U.S. moved up to eighth place, a year after cracks in education scores pushed it out of the top 10 for the first time.



The annual Bloomberg Innovation Index, in its seventh year, analyzes dozens of criteria using seven metrics, including research and development spending, manufacturing capability and concentration of high-tech public companies.

The ranking comes as global elites gather at this week's annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where they will discuss the future of globalization, the role of the state and how innovation propels countries forward.

Among 2019's ranked economies, the biggest losers were Tunisia and Ukraine, which both fell out of the top 50. Ten economies joined the ranking in 2019 as more reliable data became available.

The United Arab Emirates made the highest debut in 46th place. Brazil rejoined the index in the 45th spot after not being ranked last year. Also among the new entrants are some of the world's largest emerging economies: India, Mexico, Vietnam and Saudi Arabia. South Africa remains the only Sub-Saharan nation to be ranked.

Smart city, an approach for sustainable development of Tehran

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — In the past three decades, Tehran has improved in terms of urbanization and expansion of highways. Today, Tehran can be a better city with making its systems smart focusing on being a citizen-centric city.

Tehran is home to several highways, tunnels and skyscrapers, so the life of citizens and their facilities should be highlighted.

“We should know how you use our properties in the best way. Building bridges and highways do not improve life of citizens. Some smart measures would help people to run their errands without traveling through cities,” the member of smart city committee of Tehran City Council told IRNA.

Morteza Ahmadi said that citizens should be provided with facilities to use technology for their trips.

“This is the only way, which leads to a smart city and solves problems like air pollution,” he said.

World Health Organization (WHO) asserts that Tehran is one of the most air polluted cities in the world. Tehran is ranked 12th among 26 megacities in terms of ambient PM10 levels. After Cairo, Tehran is the most polluted non-Asian megacity. In 2016, the annual ambient level of PM10 was estimated at 77 micrograms per cubic meter. This is almost four times the WHO's recommended threshold of 20 micrograms per cubic meter.

Through making Tehran a smart city, its management becomes more affordable and the quality of life is improved, he said.

“However a smart city needs smart managers, who deal with incomes and costs. They should be decision makers who care about day to day improvement of the cities,” he explained.

Ahmadi called the development of data processing as one of the important factors, which manifest the importance of making a city smart. Data processing reveals some facts about urban management, which were not known before, he said.

“Sensors are the other factor, which is



Smart city is something more than information and communication technology. Although ICT is one of the main factors of the smart city transportation, building, economy, business and innovation are other important elements for a smart city.

the proprieties of smart cities in comparison with ordinary ones. Sensors can be applied on all gadgets and instruments we deal with during our daily life,” he said.

Sensors are all connected to a network, which make the urban management easy and is a crucial part of the smart city, he explained.

Smart city is more than ICT

Smart city is something more than information and communication technology. Although ICT is one of the main factors of the smart city transportation, building, economy, business and innovation are other important elements for a smart city.

“For example electric car is one of the elements that is used in some world cities for making them smart. However, we do

not have this technology in our country, which seems crucial due to air pollution we deal with,” he said.

Electronic identity and sign are other important factors we do need for making smart cities nationwide, he said.

“However, there is no system for electronic identity verification, which delayed making smart cities in Iran” he lamented.

The government can fulfill the electronic identity system through smart national ID cards, he said.

“Through the citizen-centric services, a citizen can run the errands through internet and follow up on them,” he said.

In this way, each citizen provides information and data through its interaction with municipalities and this way, a digital

character is formed for each citizen, he said.

Through these data, the municipality can provide services and facilities for different groups of citizens, he said.

He also pointed out to administrative integrity as one of the results of smart city system.

The smart system leads to transparency and this is great for administrative processes, he explained.

At the end, Ahmadi said that the sustainability of smart city is very important factor, which should be considered.

Smart cities - statistics & facts

According to statista, smart cities, also commonly known as cyberville, digital cities, intelligent cities, and wired cities, are urban areas that collect electronic data from citizens, devices, and assets to manage available resources more efficiently.

A wide range of information and communications technology (ICT) applications are executed to enhance, reduce costs and resource use, as well as increase the communication between government and citizens. Ideally, these applications can enhance knowledge and innovations, promote working environments, and connect technology and society. It also strives to embed a digital connection between government services and citizens to positively impact local communities.

There are dozens of ways to define a smart city based on the types of technology implemented and its goals.

For example, developments of ubiquitous cities (U-Cities) in South Korea has been notable; U-Cities aim to connect citizens to any service through any smart device.

Knowledge cities focus on the innovation of the knowledge economy and subsequently aim to increase its skilled workforce. A digital city is defined as a region that allows for increased interconnection and information sharing. Despite a wide range in the purposes behind smart cities, they generally promote the efficient use of physical infrastructure and act as a collaborative effort between locals and government to improve the city.

Knowledge-based firms meet 97% of pharmaceutical needs: VP

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian knowledge-based pharmaceutical companies almost meet 97 percent of the country's medicine demands, the vice president for science and technology Sourena Sattari said on Tuesday, Mehr reported.

Knowledge-based companies meet about 97 percent of the domestic market's need to medicine which saves \$550 million for the country, he said.

The remaining three percent of medicines will be domestically produced in coming two years, he explained.

However, according to the present law, the Iranian medicine can have up to 85 percent of market share, he lamented.

In this way, we should reform some rules in order to be more independent in different fields, he said.

Startups and knowledge-based firms provide new services and make a transformation in social view toward university, research and technology, he said.

Promoting knowledge-based economy is an important step to support knowledge-based firms, which is possible through reformation in structures and administrative bu-

reaucracy, he added.

Oil economy makes several problems for domestic businesses, he lamented.

“We try to create an ecosystem for knowledge-based companies and startups where innovative young people and entrepreneurs can develop their own business,” he said.

Iran boasts over 4000 startups with about 600 trillion rials (about \$14.3 billion) income, he said.

Iran urges infrastructures and young innovative human resources in order to progress in different fields, he concluded.

E-commerce technology trends that will take center stage in 2019

We are in 2019 and it's easier to set up a business now than ever before. This is thanks to the growth of e-commerce accentuated by an increasing internet penetration around the globe. According to statistics, total worldwide e-commerce sales will reach a whopping amount of \$3.3 trillion this year. With umpteen number of opportunities, e-commerce is all set to make the most of this year although the industry is counting on technology for its growth. Here's a list of trending technologies that will take center stage in 2019.

An Omnichannel experience is created by implementing a multi-channel approach to serving customers, selling and marketing in a way to have a unified and connected user experience across platforms no matter where or how a customer reaches out to the company. Most major brands are working on creating an Omnichannel experience for their customers. Unifying the brand image and ensuring your consumer receives a uniform experience will result in better sales for any e-commerce organization.

Social commerce – the meeting point

Social commerce is the imminent meeting point of social media and e-commerce. The latest social media trends suggest they have an impact on the customer's decision-making process. This is something which can be used in order to improve customer experience on the whole. With the introduction of shoppable posts and stories, buy buttons and native marketplaces on the leading social media platforms, social commerce will be the best option for brands to convert their social media engagement into direct business.

IoT – The Internet of Things

The maximum growth in the retail sector is seen in the digital space. In 2019, we can predict that physical devices will be taking center stage – be it through the implementation of smart buttons, or voice enables devices. IoT will lead technological advancements, by smoothening out services like inventory and supply chain



management.

Blockchain – designed for ecommerce

Blockchains are the natural fit for the industry, considering they were designed to store transactional data. Blockchains can be an alternative payment method for faster and more secure transactions or it can also improvise order fulfillment and shipment tracking. Industry leaders around the world are already working and experimenting with blockchain as a platform for future trade.

Artificial Intelligence – The learning machine

In present-day technologies, Artificial Intelligence has proven to be the trendiest of all. Artificial Intelligence is helping e-commerce companies with recommendation engines, chatbots, virtual assistants and warehouse automation. AI-driven tech is also able to understand consumer behavior and buying patterns. Being able to predict trends accurately will ensure that consumers needs are better met. Artificial Intelligence will provide a more personalized customer experience in the coming year.

Unmanned aerial vehicle – delivered by drone

The future of drones being commercially used for deliveries has already begun. As a matter of fact, Amazon made its first air delivery in December 2016 and other players in the game are expected to follow. Drones can be an alternative to local delivery as they are cost-efficient and faster in comparison to the traditional delivery model. In the near future, seeing delivery drones will be as regular as seeing delivery trucks.

(Source: entrepreneur.com)

This AI version of Salvador Dali is both surreal and creepy

Various artistic legends have been immortalized using artificial intelligence in recent years, from Amy Winehouse to Tupac, and now Salvador Dali. On Wednesday (January 23), the 30th anniversary of Dali's death, the Dali Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida, announced it will open Dali Lives in April. The exhibition will invite visitors to engage with digital renderings of the famous Surrealist artist.

Using machine learning and archival materials, the charismatic and eccentric master of Surrealism will be brought back to life – on screen at least. A creative ad agency based in San Francisco was brought on to work on the project. Together, Goodby Silverstein & Partners and the Dali Museum compiled footage, photographs, interviews featuring the late artist. This material along with new footage of a lookalike actor impersonating Dali's movements is being used to train an AI algorithm to learn the artist's facial expressions and characteristics.

While most of the words and phrases used by the AI are lifted from actual quotes the artist spoke during his lifetime, the recreations will also comment on current events, such as referencing local sports teams. Watch the trailer below to see Dali musing on the subject of death and his own immortality.

Hank Hine, the executive director of the Dali Museum, says the project was inspired by the artist's sense of “his own eternal significance.” Hine told artnet News “I think that the seeds of this project were sown by the artist himself.” He mused, “It's almost like, if he had left instructions for us, this project would have been among them.”

The museum has collaborated with Goodbye Silverstein & Partners previously on similarly innovative and groundbreaking exhibitions including “Gala Contemplating You” in 2014, for which the agency created a kiosk that turned visitors' selfies into replicas of a 1976 painting of the artist's wife. Again, in 2016, the two organisations developed “Dreams of Dali,” a virtual reality experience allowing viewers to step inside one of Dali's paintings.



These productions are in keeping with trends towards a more experiential museum experience, with recent polls conducted by the museum demonstrating that 97 per cent of guests were hungry for “more digital interactive experiences.” Hines explained how they are trying to make the work more digestible for a wider audience. “People who go to art school are taught to have a silent inquiry of a painting, to visually probe it and ask it questions about why it is the way it is. But that's an acquired skill, and without an entry to the works it's much more difficult. Drawing from Dali's own interest in media and the potential of new technologies, we have a commitment to find ways for our visitors to find delight and special kind of entry into Dali's spirit.”

Last year, a California-based museum dedicated to his life and work, Dali17, was sued by the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dali, which controls the artist's intellectual property rights for his home country of Spain. The foundation said the 500-piece museum – which houses etchings, writings, and artwork like the famous Mae West lip sofa – rejected the use of the artist's image in their logo and use of his name on their collection, merch and website, seemingly used without authorization. The Cali museum was asked to destroy its merchandise and promotional material bearing Dali's name and image, and to pay damages, as well as profits made and court fees.

Visual arts isn't the only industry utilizing artificial intelligence. AI is also being used by scientists to identify suicidal thoughts in brains, to improve personal wellness, and even to write poetry.

(Source: dazeddigital.com)

Scientists say cod could cope with constrained climate change

Polar bears and coral reefs are obvious victims of climate change. But a warming world will also challenge many other animals. For example, cod.

The fish play a critical role in marine ecosystems and human economies. Climate change could devastate Atlantic and polar cod.

A team of scientists wanted to find out how rising sea temperatures and ocean acidification might affect these fish populations.

"We went out with our research vessel into the Barents Sea, and caught Atlantic cod and polar cod, and brought them back alive into a research facility in Northern Norway," Flemming Dahlke, a marine biologist at the Alfred Wegener Institute in Germany.

■ The eggs and larvae

"And in this facility, we raised the eggs and larvae under different temperature and ocean acidification, mimicking the conditions expected for the next decades to come."

The researchers placed the eggs and larvae in various carbon dioxide concentrations, as well as three different temperature scenarios: one, the "business as usual" scenario, where humans continue to emit greenhouse gases as current rates and ocean waters increase 3 to 4 degrees Celsius. They also tested an intermediate scenario of a 2-degree Celsius rise, and a "best-case" scenario, where water temperatures rise only 1 degree. They

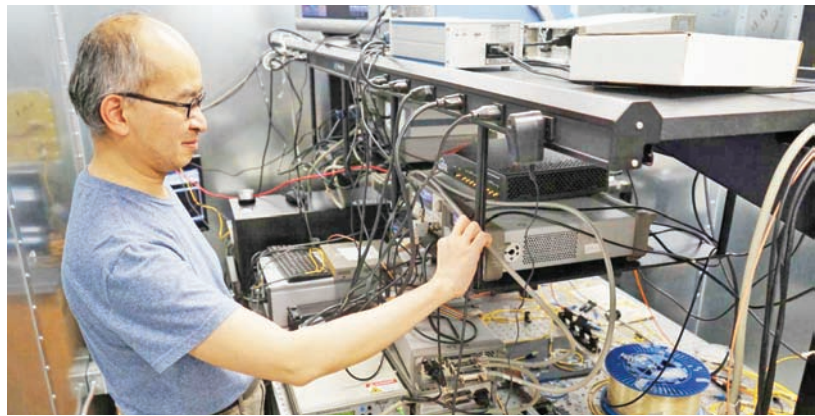


then recorded egg survival rates and larval development.

The "results were pretty clear. We found that with ocean acidification, the eggs become

Big changes in cod populations will likely have ripple effects: cod are food for many other animals, like birds and seals. And countries like Norway depend on the income that cod fisheries haul in. But the new research also offers a bit of good news.

Speed of light: Toward a future quantum internet



Engineering researchers have demonstrated proof-of-principle for a device that could serve as the backbone of a future quantum Internet. University of Toronto Engineering professor Hoi-Kwong Lo and his collaborators have developed a prototype for a key element for all-photon quantum repeaters, a critical step in long-distance quantum communication.

A quantum Internet is the 'Holy Grail' of quantum information processing, enabling many novel applications including information-theoretic secure communication. Today's Internet was not specifically designed for security, and it shows: hacking, break-ins and computer espionage are common challenges.

Nefarious hackers are constantly poking holes in sophisticated layers of defense erected by individuals, corporations and governments.

In light of this, researchers have proposed other ways of transmitting data that would leverage key features of quantum physics to provide virtually unbreakable encryption. One of the most promising technologies involves a technique known as quantum key distribution (QKD).

■ The simple act of sensing

QKD exploits the fact that the simple act of sensing or measuring the state of a quantum system disturbs that system. Because of this, any third-party eavesdropping would leave behind a clearly detectable trace, and the communication can be aborted before any sensitive information is lost.

Until now, this type of quantum security has been demonstrated in small-scale systems. Lo and his team are among a group of researchers around the world who are laying the groundwork for a future quantum

Internet by working to address some of the challenges in transmitting quantum information over great distances, using optical fiber communication.

Because light signals lose potency as they travel long distances through fiber-optic cables, devices called repeaters are inserted at regular intervals along the line. These repeaters boost and amplify the signals to help transmit the information along the line. But quantum information is different, and existing repeaters for quantum information are highly problematic. They require storage of the quantum state at the repeater sites, making the repeaters much more error prone, difficult to build, and very expensive because they often operate at cryogenic temperatures.

Lo and his team have proposed a different approach. They are working on the development of the next generation of repeaters, called all-photon quantum repeaters that would eliminate or reduce many of the shortcomings of standard quantum repeaters.

■ Proof-of-concept

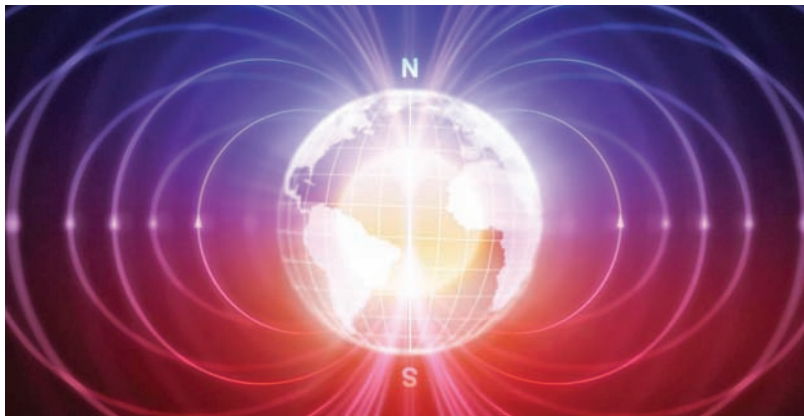
With collaborators at Osaka University, Toyama University and NTT Corporation in Japan, Lo and his team have demonstrated proof-of-concept of their work in a paper recently published in Nature Communications.

"We have developed all-photon repeaters that allow time-reversed adaptive Bell measurement," says Lo. "Because these repeaters are all-optical, they offer advantages that traditional -- quantum-memory-based matter -- repeaters do not. For example, this method could work at room temperature."

A quantum Internet could offer applications that are impossible to implement in the conventional Internet, such as impenetrable security and quantum teleportation.

(Source: eurekaalert.org)

Earth's magnetic field was on the brink of collapse 565 million years ago



About 565 million years ago, the strength of Earth's magnetic field dipped to its lowest point and almost collapsed completely, scientists have discovered. However, at this point, the planet's inner core started to solidify, providing a new energy source to drive the magnetic shield "just in the nick of time."

The discovery, published in Nature Geoscience, provides a new insight into the formation of Earth's core — a subject that has been debated for over 80 years.

Earth's magnetic field is thought to be generated deep down in the planet's core. This consists of a solid ball of iron surrounded by a liquid metal. As the planet rotates, the liquid iron moves, forming electric currents that produce the magnetic field.

Without a magnetic field, the planet would have had no protection from the solar wind—charged particles that flow from the sun and travel through the Solar System at around a million miles per hour. These particles could have interacted with Earth's atmosphere and slowly stripped it away, leaving the planet a barren landscape like the one we see on Mars today.

■ Analyzing rocks

In the latest paper, a team of researchers led by Richard Bono of the University of Rochester in New York, were looking to find out when Earth's core solidified by analyzing rocks that carry information about the geomagnetic field. "Unknowns in Earth's thermal evolution have led to a wide range of potential ages for the solid inner core," study co-author John Tarduno told Newsweek. "This range spans more than 2 billion years of Precambrian history.

"Numerical models predict that the mag-

netic field would be unstable at the onset of inner core growth. But the paleomagnetic record is relatively sparse, so this has led to debate," he said.

The solidification of Earth's core would have provided a boost of energy to the planet's geodynamo—the formation of the magnetic field in the liquid outer core. "Liquid iron in the outer core convects, carrying with it magnetic field lines that twist, continuously regenerating the field. Without the convection there would be no core magnetic field," Tarduno explained.

This boost should have left a mark in the rock record. After taking measurements from rock samples taken from Sept-Îles in Quebec, Canada, researchers found a prolonged period where Earth's magnetic field was very weak — about 10 times less intense than it is today. This period of weakness lasted for about 75,000 years—far longer than any changes that occur when the field flips or changes direction.

■ Driving convection gradually

The authors say the magnetic field intensity was so low that the geodynamo was on the verge of collapse. "As Earth evolved, the energy to drive convection gradually decreased, until a critical point 565 million years ago marked by the extremely low magnetic field intensity," Tarduno said.

The "growth on the inner core provided a new source to drive convection and the geodynamo."

Essentially, a big boost of energy was needed to drive the geodynamo and stop the magnetic field from collapsing — and the solidification of Earth's core would have done just that.

(Source: Newsweek)

Astronauts of Apollo 14 may have found piece of Earth lying on moon

The Apollo missions may have been launched as part of a Cold War-era race with the Soviet Union, but the geological knowledge we gleaned from them was considerable. Until Apollo, we didn't know that the Earth and the moon appear to have similar ratios of atomic isotopes locked within their respective rocks, suggesting they formed from the same base material.

But the Apollo 14 astronauts may have brought back something even more extraordinary than the lunar rocks they thought they were collecting. A new geological analysis, published in Earth and Planetary Science Letters, suggests that one of the lunar rock samples the astronauts returned contained a rock sample that originated on Earth.

This rock contains a 2-gram felsite clast (felsite is a very fine-grained volcanic rock) with quartz, feldspar, and zircon embedded within it. These are all uncommon elements in lunar rocks, but common in terrestrial samples. The chemical analysis of the fragment also appears to demonstrate that it formed under conditions analogous to those found on Earth rather than within the moon.

"What we did was use the composition of minerals in the fragment to show it formed under conditions that only occur on Earth," Robinson told Gizmodo. "For example, the composition of certain minerals are sensitive to temperature and pressure; they contain more or less of various elements if they crystallize in hot or cool, and/or deep or shallow environments.

Other minerals can indicate if the rock formed in the presence of lots of oxygen, or in a very oxygen-poor environment. Our data shows that this fragment formed in a higher-pressure, more oxygen-rich, and lower temperature environment than occurs on the moon. Essentially, it had to come from an Earth-like environment."

The paper lays this out in somewhat more detail, but the basic conclusion is the same. Either this fragment of rock formed under highly unusual conditions within the Moon, or it represents a bit of Earth flung heavenward as the result of a meteorite impact. Later lunar impacts and geological events resulted in a bit of Earth rock being embedded in a larger sample of a more typical moon rock

(Source: extremetech.com)

Climate change reshaping how heat moves around globe: new study

The Earth's atmosphere and oceans play important roles in moving heat from one part of the world to another, and new research is illuminating how those patterns are changing in the face of climate change.

The "greenhouse effect and carbon dioxide aren't the only issues to consider as the planet grows warmer -- they are just one part of the equation. The way that the atmosphere and oceans move heat around is changing, too, and this could have significant effects on temperatures around the world," said Zhengyu Liu, co-lead author of the study and professor of climate dynamics in the Department of Geography at The Ohio State University.

Liu and Chengfei He, a graduate student in Ohio State's atmospheric science program, analyzed model simulations to illustrate how heat is expected to be transferred by the oceans and atmosphere in the near future. The researchers compared the models with historical temperature data from the oceans themselves to paint a clearer picture of how climate change is shifting and will continue to shift these patterns in this century.

Without heat transfer, the world's hottest spots would be sizzling and the coolest spots would be even more frigid. Conditions in both hot and cold climates are affected by the movement of heat from the equator toward the poles in the atmosphere and oceans, He said.

As scientists look for a better understanding of all the factors contributing to climate change -- and for ways to ameliorate the problem -- these heat-transfer patterns are important to watch, He said.

This is the first study to examine current changes in heat transfer and to conclude that warming temperatures are driving increased heat transfer in the atmosphere, which is compensated by a reduced heat transfer in the ocean. The "ocean stores a lot of heat and in the last 50 years that has increased. And we can correlate that directly with increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide caused by human activity," Liu said. "Most studies like this have looked at future changes, hundreds of years from now. We examined the near-term differences of a warming climate."

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

Molecular analysis of anchiornis feather gives clues to origin of flight

An international team of researchers has performed molecular analysis on fossil feathers from a small, feathered dinosaur from the Jurassic. Their research could aid scientists in pinpointing when feathers evolved the capacity for flight during the dinosaur-bird transition.

Anchiornis was a small, feathered, four-winged dinosaur that lived in what is now China around 160 million years ago — almost 10 million years before Archaeopteryx, the first recognized bird. A team of researchers from the Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology, North Carolina State University, and the University of South Carolina analyzed Anchiornis feathers to see how they differed at the molecular level from those of younger fossil birds and modern birds.

"Modern bird feathers are composed primarily of beta-keratin (-keratin), a protein also found in skin, claws, and beaks of reptiles and birds. Feathers differ from these other -keratin containing tissues, because the feather protein is modified in a way that makes them more flexible," says Mary Schweitzer, professor of biological sciences at NC State with a joint appointment at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and co-author of a paper describing the research.

"At some point during the evolution of feathers, one of the -keratin genes underwent a deletion event, making the resultant protein slightly smaller. This deletion changed the biophysics of the feather to something more flexible — a requirement for flight. If we can pinpoint when, and in what organisms, that deletion event occurred, we will have a better grasp on when flight evolved during the transition from dinosaurs to birds."

(Source: phys.org)



Planetary collision that created the moon may have brought life to Earth

A collision between Earth and a Mars-sized object 4.4 billion years ago formed the moon. Researchers now propose this same event brought the ingredients of life on Earth.

Many of the theories on how life on Earth originated try to explain how the planet got its life-giving elements like carbon and nitrogen.

A popular theory suggests that meteorites brought these elements to Earth, but many scientists do not find the idea of Earth's volatile elements arriving on primitive space rocks completely satisfying.

The isotopic signatures of elements on our planet match up with those of the meteorites known as carbonaceous chondrites, but the ratio of carbon to nitrogen is out of whack.

Chondrites have 20 parts carbon for each part nitrogen, but Earth's non-core materials have a ratio of about 40-1, which is about 20 times greater than those found in carbonaceous chondrites.

Scientists now propose that the crucial elements may have been delivered by something else.



■ Mars-sized object

In a research published in Science Advances on Wednesday, researchers point at a violent collision between Earth and a Mars-sized object called Theia about 4.4 billion years ago.

The collision, which may have occurred while Earth was still forming, seeded the fledgling planet with the volatile

elements needed for life.

Study researcher Rajdeep Dasgupta, from Rice University, and colleagues simulated the collision based on experiments that tested the behavior of nitrogen, carbon, and sulfur during the core formation on a rocky planet.

They ended up with a geochemical simulation that accurately modeled the observations of volatile elements on Earth.

"Our simulation results suggested that the most probable scenario of the origin of carbon, nitrogen, and sulfur on the silicate portion of Earth is where these elements are brought by a Mars-sized (8-10 percent by mass of the present-day Earth) planet merging with the proto-Earth," Dasgupta said.

Researchers also said the scale of this ancient planetary collision suggests the impact is also the same event responsible for the formation of the moon.

"We connected the dots," Dasgupta said. "Given we are suggesting that carbon, nitrogen, sulfur were established through one of the last giant impacts, it makes sense if the same impact also likely formed the moon."

(Source: techtimes.com)

The generous sky has opened; is the dry spell over in Iran?

1 → Commenting on last year's lower-than-normal precipitation amounts (42.6 millimeters, showing a 23-percent decrease in precipitation levels) Ziaei explained that it is normal for a country to receive lower or higher amounts of precipitation.

Nevertheless, lower precipitation amounts are projected for the country in the decades to come, wet spells might occur as well for two or three consecutive years, however, dry spells will start again, he concluded.

■ A crisis looming on the horizon

In a recent report released by Majlis [Iranian parliament] research center on January 1 it is predicted that by the [Iranian calendar] year 1400 (March 2021-March 2022) more than 50 million Iranians, nearly 80 percent of the country's total population, will be affected by water shortages for drinking purposes.

The report stated that over the summer, due to decreased rainfalls and snowfalls in the past water year (September 2017-September 2018), some 36.8 million people constituting 46 percent of the country's total population had problems accessing drinking water.

Such challenges, the report warns, would contribute to social unrest which may become a security issue.

The report suggests that by setting up desalination plants, digging wells, renovating water supply infrastructure, improving water efficiency, reforming water consumption patterns as well as reforming tariffs, and enhancing water efficiency in agriculture sector alleviate the water stress in the country.

Providing drinking water must become a priority, the report says, adding that as renewable water resources are declining in the country focusing on desalinating sea water is of great importance.

■ What went wrong?

You open the sink faucet and water is flowing, you wash the dishes. You turn on the bathroom faucet and take a hot-water shower and don't think one day the water may not flow from the pipes anymore.

However, wetlands are drying up, ground water resources are depleting and land subsidence is in progress at a high rate.

Even with the beginning of a wet spell it takes years to compensate for the loss we have already inflicted upon water resources by unsustainable development and poor irrigation practices.

Years of shortsightedness and flawed policies coupled with natural forces such as climate change and accordingly temperature rise have exacerbated the conditions.

It takes years to put right what has gone wrong over these years and drastic, emergency actions should be taken soon enough.

“Nature trail” to be created in Tehran

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Tehran's longest walking trail, dubbed “nature trail”, will be developed in district 6, central Tehran, the district mayor has said.



The trail will start from Tehran international permanent fair-ground and will pass from Mallet Park to end in Pardisan Park, Tasnim news agency quoted Mohammad Reza Dehdaripour as saying on Monday.

Research works and the project designs will be completed and the project will be implemented in the district 6, he concluded.

LEARN ENGLISH

Happy New Year!

A: It's almost **midnight**! We are about to start a **brand new** year!
B: I know it's so exciting! A new year is always like a **clean slate**.
A: **fresh start** to **accomplish** any dreams, objectives and **goals**.

A: Do you have a New Year's **resolution**?

B: I was thinking about it, but I'm never able to keep my New Year's resolution. Last year for example I joined a gym and only went twice.

A: Yeah I know what you mean. That's why this year I am keeping things more simple. Maybe like getting together with friends I haven't seen in a long time, or doing some **volunteering work**.
B: That seems reasonable. We should get together and watch the ball drop in Times Square.

■ Key vocabulary

midnight: twelve AM

brand new: a completely new

clean slate: an opportunity to start fresh despite past mistakes or problems

fresh start: when you start something again in a completely new and different way after being unsuccessful

accomplish: to bring to its goal or conclusion

goal: the result or achievement toward which effort is directed

resolution: a formal document stating the wishes of someone

volunteering work: performing a service willingly and without pay

■ Supplementary vocabulary

evening: the latter part of the day and early part of the night

promise: a declaration that something will or will not be done

fireworks: combustible or explosive device for producing a striking display of light or a loud noise

(Source: irlanguage.com)



Yazd named world's capital of sustainable cities

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The city of Yazd, central Iran, was picked as the world's capital of sustainable cities at the International Conference of Sustainable Cities on January 28-29 for unique implementation of sustainability, Tasnim news agency reported.

The city played host to the 19th Energy Globe World Award as well as the International Conference of Sustainable Cities for two days.

The conference for sustainable cities and towns was organized for the first time. Partner of this conference in Yazd, the birth of sustainability, is the UN program “United Smart Cities”, with about 1000 participant's cities.

The two-day event has gathered the leading mayors and municipality experts from around the world to exchange and share their experiences and research results about all aspects of sustainable cities.

The event aimed at presenting the best practices and success stories of cities that have projects to achieve sustainability in the areas of “supplying and maintaining clean water resources, reducing air pollution, urban waste management and sustainable tourism development.”

By presenting this solutions on the base of “Best Practice”, cities and towns



A view of a badgir (wind catcher) in the city of Abarkuh in Yazd province

worldwide will be motivated for similar acting to save the world and to preserve a livable future for next generations.

A sum of 70 foreign guests from 25 countries, including Austria, Slovakia, Germany, Finland, Norway, the UK, Spain, Denmark, Sweden, the Czech Republic,

Nepal, Australia, Singapore, attended the conference.

■ Energy Globe World Award

According to the Energy Globe official website representatives of 16 outstanding environmental organizations from 15 countries just met in Yazd for the Energy

Majlis approves \$47m for releasing prisoners of unintentional crimes

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Iranian parliament, Majlis, has approved 2 trillion rials (nearly \$47 million) to be earmarked for releasing prisoners of unintentional crimes with the priority given to female prisoners, Mehr news agency reported on Tuesday.

Within the framework of the budget bill for the next fiscal year (starting on March 21) the budget which has seen 1 100-percent increase year-on-year will be allocated to freeing prisoners mostly jailed for unintentional financial crimes.

The number of prisoners who committed unintentional crimes has increased to 14,000 in the country.

Blood Money Organization's director Asadollah Jolaei said in late May 2018 that more than 113,000 prisoners who had committed unintentional crimes were released in the past Iranian calendar year (March 2017-March 2018).

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, he said.

Trump ridiculed after pleading for global warming to ‘come back fast’

Donald Trump has again appeared to fundamentally misunderstand climate change by suggesting extreme cold weather in the U.S. is evidence global warming does not exist.

“In the beautiful Midwest, wind chill temperatures are reaching minus 60 degrees, the coldest ever recorded,” Mr Trump tweeted late on Monday evening.

“In coming days, expected to get even colder. People can't last outside even for minutes. What the hell is going on with Global Warming (sic)? Please come back fast, we need you!” he added sarcastically.

It follows a number of recent tweets by the president expressing gleeful disregard for the scientific consensus that holds human carbon emissions responsible for recent global temperature increases.

Earlier this month, Mr Trump tweeted the U.S. would benefit from “a little of that

good old fashioned Global Warming right now” amid forecasts of snow, and he also made the same joke in November following a bout of cold weather.

Although it would appear Mr Trump believes the conspiracy theory of climate denial – he once claimed climate change was a Chinese hoax intended to hurt American exports – his repetition of the same gag suggests he is attempting to play to his base while also riling his political opponents.

His latest outburst is a reference to a polar vortex currently moving through the Midwest, blasting much of the country with sub-zero temperatures and arctic winds.

Chicago will take the main brunt of the super cold weather, the weather service said, with wind chills as low as -46C expected by Tuesday evening through to Thursday morning.

Lakes ‘skating on thin ice’ as warming limits freeze

Thousands of lakes across the Northern Hemisphere are set to lose their winter ice as global temperatures rise, say scientists.

Their new study suggests that, within a generation, over 35,000 lakes will lose their winter cover.

The researchers involved say the disappearance will have significant implications for millions of people living near these bodies of water.

It could also pose a threat to supplies of drinking water and to fish species.

Right now some 15,000 lakes in Canada, the US and

northern parts of Europe experience intermittent ice cover during the winter months. This means that they freeze in the colder winters but remain ice free when winters are warmer.

This is already posing problems for communities living in these regions who rely on ice roads that cross lakes for food supplies and social connection.

Lake ice is also seen by scientists as an important long-term indicator of climate change and one of the world's resources most threatened by rising temperatures.

Now, in what researchers believe is the most comprehensive analysis of lake ice loss, researchers say that many

Forecasters said “dangerous, life-threatening cold air” will hit Iowa from Tuesday morning through to Friday morning, with wind chill on Wednesday triggering temperatures as low as -48C across the northern part of the state.

Despite Mr Trump's skepticism, climate scientists say global warming makes extreme weather events of all kinds more likely.

Although there is no consensus if this year's polar vortex – caused by a sudden blast of warm air in the Arctic pushing chilly temperatures south - is directly caused by manmade climate change, it is not evidence against the phenomenon.

Responding to Mr Trump on Twitter, Jonathan Foley, an environmental scientist at the California Academy of Sciences, said: “You knew this was going to happen. It's cold in less than 1% of the planet for a few days, so

Globe Award ceremony, accompanied by a conference “Sustainable Town and Cities”.

The Energy Globe Award was founded in 1999 by the Austrian energy pioneer Wolfgang Neumann and is one of today's most prestigious environmental awards.

Goal of the Award is to present successful sustainable projects to a broad audience, for many of environmental problems already have good, feasible solutions. Projects which conserve and protect the resources or that employ renewable energy can participate.

The Award distinguishes the best projects in the five categories earth, fire, water, air and youth. International winners divide a prize pool of 10,000 euros. National (country) Energy Globe Awards also distinguish the best project submission from a country. National winners receive an ENERGY GLOBE Certificate which is presented by partner organization (if available) in the respective countries.

National Energy Globe Award of the Islamic Republic of Iran went to “upgrade of tailings disposal & water management system project” submitted by Kerman Copper Region.

Projects from Germany, Kenya, India, Afghanistan, and the U.S. came in first in categories of earth, fire, water, air, and youth respectively.



the long term warming and destabilization of a planet's entire climate system must not be true.

“In related news, Trump had a Big Mac today, so there is no such thing as global hunger.”

Of the polar vortex, Jennifer Francis, a climate scientist at the Woods Hole Research Center, said: “It's a complicated story that involves a hefty dose of chaos and an interplay among multiple influences, so extracting a clear signal of the Arctic's role is challenging.”

Several recent papers, however, have made the case for a connection, she added.

“This symptom of global warming is counterintuitive for those in the cross-hairs of these extreme cold spells. But these events provide an excellent opportunity to help the public understand some of the ‘interesting’ ways that climate change will unfold.”

(Source: The Independent)

more lakes are set to go ice free in winter.

If the world manages to keep the rise in global temperatures to 2C, the study suggests that the number of lakes experiencing intermittent ice will increase to over 35,000. This may have implications for 394 million people who live within an hour of their shores.

“We're not talking about lakes getting a little warmer. We are talking about lake ice being gone in the winter,” said Dr Catherine O'Reilly, a co-author on the study from Illinois State University.

(Source: BBC)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Earthquake risk high in 78% of cities in Iran, says IRCS

There are 120 active faults in Iran and about 78 percent of cities nationwide are located in earthquake prone regions, director of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) Rescue and Relief Organization, Morteza Salimi, said on Saturday.

Moreover, Salimi warned, the metropolis of Tehran, as the capital city of Iran, is also at risk for a big quake and has been awaiting a devastating earthquake measuring over 7 on the Richter scale for years.

Based on the studies and pervious quakes reported in Tehran the city is most likely to be stricken with a massive quake every 158 years, he said, adding that the risk is 70 percent, he explained.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ac”

■ **Meaning**: a word ending used to indicate a person or thing affected by the condition

■ **For example**: **Cardiac**yoga classes for heart patients have been highly recommended.

PHRASAL VERB

Tell against somebody

■ **Meaning**: to make someone less likely to succeed in achieving or winning something

■ **For example**: I badly wanted the job, but knew that my age would probably tell against me.

IDIOM

Castles in the sky

■ **Explanation**: dreams, hopes, or plans that are impossible, unrealistic, or have very little chance of succeeding

■ **For example**: He keeps talking about how he'll move to Los Angeles to be a famous actor, but it's just castles in the sky if you ask me.

Palestinian prime minister, government step down

➡ “The success of any government requires the confidence of the Palestinian citizens,” he said during a weekly cabinet meeting in the central West Bank city of Ramallah.

An unnamed Hamas official condemned the move as an attempt to marginalize and exclude the resistance group from the Palestinian politics.

Abbas has been facing pressure from his ruling Fatah movement over the past few weeks to remove Hamdallah from power, and establish a new government comprised of representatives from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) factions in addition to independent figures.

Hamdallah headed the Palestinian National Consensus Government, which was formed after Fatah and Hamas reached understandings in 2014.

Fatah leaders said there was no point in keeping the present government in power in the wake of the continued crisis between their faction and Hamas.

They also argue that since their faction



is the largest group in the PLO, it should have a strong presence in any government.

“Fatah’s call for forming a new govern-

ment consisting of PLO factions will solidify the split between the West Bank and Gaza Strip,” Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum

said on Monday.

He added, “Our people are in need of a national unity government that would represent all Palestinians.”

On Sunday, Sami Abu Zuhri, another Hamas spokesman, attacked plans for the establishment of a new Palestinian government.

“The formation of any government apart from a national consensus one is a continuation of the unilateral actions taken by Fatah. Such a government will enjoy no legitimacy,” he wrote on his official Twitter page.

Hamas and Fatah signed a reconciliation deal two years ago, which envisioned a plan for Abbas’s Palestinian Authority to resume governing in the Gaza Strip and control the coastal enclave’s crossing points into Egypt and the Israeli-occupied territories.

Disputes over power-sharing and disagreements over the policy towards the Tel Aviv regime, however, have hindered the implementation of the deal.

(Source: Press TV)

Yemen’s rival parties must pull forces out of Hudaydah: UN envoy

The United Nations’ special envoy for Yemen has called on the country’s warring sides to pull their forces out of the Red Sea port city of Hudaydah as soon as possible under a recent UN-brokered ceasefire.

Martin Griffiths tweeted on Monday that the timelines set for the withdrawal of the Ansarullah (Houthi) Movement fighters and the Saudi regime-backed militants loyal to the ex-Yemeni government from Hudaydah had slipped.

Representatives from the Ansarullah movement and the Riyadh-sponsored government of ex-president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, reached the truce deal during UN-mediated peace talks in Sweden last month.

Under the deal, they agreed to the withdrawal of their troops and the deployment of UN monitors to the port city, a lifeline for millions of Yemenis.

However, the Ansarullah – who control Hudaydah -- have repeatedly complained that the Saudi regime-led coalition, which has been waging a deadly war on Yemen since March 2015, has been violating the ceasefire.

The two sides have also exchanged the names of some 16,000 prisoners, whose transfers were expected to begin on January 19.

“We have seen the timelines for implementation extended, both in Hudaydah, and the prisoner exchange agreement. Such changes in timelines are expected,” Griffiths said. “The initial timelines were rather ambitious. We are dealing with a complex situation on the ground.”

Separately on Monday, the UN envoy told London-based Asharq al-Awsat newspaper that he was optimistic about the resolution of the Yemen conflict.

“We have seen the two parties demonstrate remarkable political will, first to reach a ceasefire agreement, and then to abide by it. What we need to see now is the implementation of the provisions of the agreement, fully and rapidly,” he said.

The official further confirmed that retired Dutch General Patrick Cammaert, who has been leading an advance UN mission tasked with overseeing the Hudaydah truce, was stepping down. He, however, denied reports that disagreements had led to the resignation.

“There is no element of truth to such reports. As a matter of fact, General Cammaert and I have been working closely to close the gap between the two parties on the operational implementation of the Hudaydah Agreement,” Griffiths noted.

Earlier on Monday, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres notified the Security Council, in a letter seen by Reuters, that Cammaert would be replaced with Danish Lieutenant General Michael Anker Lollsgaard, who led a UN peacekeeping mission in Mali in 2015 and 2016.

Meanwhile, Ansarullah leader Abdul-Malik Badreddin sat down with Griffiths in the capital Sana’a on Monday.

During the meeting, Abdul-Malik Badreddin criticized the Saudi regime-led aggressors for maintaining the inhumane siege on Yemen, closing the Sana’a airport and taking unjust measures against Yemeni civilians.

Griffiths, for his part, vowed that he would take serious steps in the coming days regarding the implementation of the Hudaydah ceasefire and the planned prisoner swap.

■ Aid groups raise concerns

In another development on Monday, 14 international



aid agencies met in London, warning that conditions for thousands of starving Yemeni people were deteriorating fast.

“It is what I like to call a prison without walls for the people living in the country at the moment. It is a difficult situation where people are struggling to buy their daily rations to be able to feed their children,” said Yemeni Oxfam campaign manager Awssan Kamal.

Moreover, Isabelle Moussard Carlsen of Action Against Hunger underlined the need for a political solution to the conflict.

Kimberley Brown of the British Red Cross noted that an estimated 85,000 Yemeni children had lost their lives and malnutrition was taking its toll, warning, “The situation is absolutely deteriorating at the moment.”

(Source: Press TV)

Italy to open port only if Netherlands, Germany accept migrants

Italy’s Interior Minister Matteo Salvini said he’ll allow 49 migrants on board a rescue vessel into the country on condition they will immediately be transferred to the Netherlands.

“In Italy, we have already welcomed, and spent, too much [on migrants],” he said on Twitter on Tuesday.

The Sea-Watch 3, a Dutch-registered vessel run by the German non-governmental organization Sea-Watch, rescued the migrants north of the Libyan port of Zuwarah on January 19. It entered Italian waters on Friday to seek shelter from rough seas.

The Netherlands has turned down the

request to accept the migrants, as Dutch authorities said they do not think they are responsible.

Sea-Watch lodged a complaint before the European Court of Human Rights. The Italian prime minister’s office said on Monday it would argue before the court it is up to the Netherlands to deal with the NGO (non-governmental organizations) ship and its migrants.

Salvini is “taking the people on board as political hostages”, said Sea-Watch spokesman Ruben Neugebauer.

“They are trying to push it to the Netherlands,” he added, referring to Salvini’s

insistence the Netherlands or Germany take responsibility for the migrants.

Neugebauer stressed laws governing international waters are clear that ships in distress “must be brought to the nearest safe harbor”.

It was not the first time a vessel waits at sea to dock while European countries fight over who should take in the asylum seekers.

Last October, Salvini, leader of the far-right party Lega, for 10 days refused to allow in 177 migrants and refugees from the boat, Diciotti. The case drew attention from Sicilian prosecutors who are calling for an investigation into the interior minister for

kidnapping and illegal detention.

In a letter to the Corriere della Sera newspaper published on Tuesday, Salvini urged the upper house to reject the request.

“This is not about me ... Fighting illegal immigration is of pre-eminent public interest,” Salvini wrote. “I am convinced I acted in Italy’s best interests and in full respect of my mandate. I would do it again.”

His appeal is likely to cause tensions with his coalition partner, the Five Star Movement, which has presented a clean image and lambasted legislators who try to use parliamentary privilege to avoid legal action.

(Source: agencies)

Israeli PM plans to boot TIPH observers protecting Palestinians out of al-Khalil

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has decided to expel an international observer group tasked with safeguarding Palestinians in the flashpoint city of al-Khalil (Hebron), in the occupied West Bank, claiming the mission is working against Israel.

Netanyahu announced in a statement on Monday that the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (al-Khalil) would not be extended, saying, “We will not allow the continuation of an international force that acts against us.”

The Israeli premier did not give further details on the alleged misconduct of TIPH, nor did he specify a date for ejecting the international mission.

TIPH is an international civilian observer group that, according to its mandate, “assists in monitoring and reporting efforts to maintain normal life in the city of Hebron, thus creating a sense of security among the Palestinians in Hebron.”

It also reports alleged human rights abuses and violations of accords in the city between Israel and Palestinians. TIPH observers come from Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, and Turkey.

The mission was deployed in al-Khalil following an agreement reached between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1994, when an Israeli settler killed 29 Palestinian worshippers at the Ibrahim Mosque, which is revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims.

The group did not start its work in the city until 1998, after the Israeli military refused to leave al-Khalil following the establishment of an illegal Israeli settlement at the heart of the city.

TIPH’s mandate is renewed every six months. Its latest mandate is due to end on January 31.

■ Netanyahu’s decision ‘unacceptable’

Palestinians have denounced Netanyahu’s decision to expel the monitoring group as “unacceptable.”



The decision “means it has abandoned the implementation of agreements signed under international auspices, and given up its obligations under these agreements, which is rejected and is unacceptable,” Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said on Monday.

The official further called on “the countries sponsoring this agreement to take a clear stance” against Israel’s plan and “immediately act to pressure” the regime into respecting international law.

This is proof for the international community that Israel does not respect international resolutions and agreements, he added.

■ ‘Israel has made life intolerable for Palestinians’

Meanwhile, leading Israeli human rights group B’Tselem said Tel Aviv “has imposed physical and legal segregation between the hundreds of settlers and the thousands of Palestinian residents” in al-Khalil.

Bolton’s notes raise questions on U.S. military plans amid Venezuela tensions

White House national security adviser John Bolton raised questions about the United States’ intentions in Venezuela after he appeared at a briefing on Monday with a notepad containing the words “5,000 troops to Colombia,” which neighbors Venezuela.

It was not immediately clear what Bolton’s notes meant and whether President Donald Trump’s administration was seriously considering sending U.S. troops to Colombia.

It was also not clear if disclosure of the notes was intentional, and there was no indication that such a military option would be used any time soon.

Asked about a photograph depicting the notes, a White House spokesman said on Monday: “As the President has said, all options are on the table.”

Pentagon spokesman Colonel Rob Manning said the number of U.S. military personnel in Colombia remained unchanged as part of a pre-existing partnership.

A U.S. official, who asked not to be named, said they “have seen nothing to support” Bolton’s annotation.

Colombia’s Foreign Minister Carlos Holmes Trujillo, in a statement late on Monday, said: “We are not aware of the significance or the reason” for Bolton’s notes.

Colombia has coordinated its policy on Venezuela with the rest of the Lima Group of South and Central American nations and would keep doing so, he added.

Bolton held the notepad at a news briefing with reporters to unveil sweeping sanctions on Venezuelan state-owned oil firm PDVSA, Washington’s latest step to pressure Caracas’ socialist President Nicolas Maduro to leave office.

Sending U.S. military troops to Colombia would escalate tensions with Venezuela, even as its opposition leader Juan Guaido has said a peaceful transition of power is possible.

(Source: Reuters)

European Union denounces Bahrain ruling on Sheikh Salman

The European Union (EU) has censured a ruling by Bahrain’s Supreme Court to uphold a life sentence for prominent opposition figure Sheikh Ali Salman as “a further step against dissenting voices.”

Bahrain’s highest court on Monday upheld life sentences issued against Sheikh Ali Salman, who is the secretary general of the now-dissolved al-Wefaq movement, and two senior al-Wefaq leaders, Sheikh Hassan Sultan and Ali Alaswad, in November last year on charges of spying for Qatar.

The final “verdict marks a further step against dissenting voices and undermines the residual chances for an inclusive political dialogue in the Kingdom of Bahrain,” an EU spokesperson said in a statement on Monday.

Brussels also reiterated its “concerns over the increasingly limited political space in Bahrain.”

Human rights groups have frequently said cases against activists in Bahrain fail to meet the fundamental requirements of fair trials. “The European Union expects Bahrain to fulfill its international and national Human Rights obligations, including guaranteeing the right to a fair trial, in the interest of the long term stability of the country and its citizens,” the statement added.

The Monday ruling was also condemned by Amnesty International, which described the verdict as another blow to the freedom of expression in Bahrain.

Thousands of anti-regime protesters have regularly held demonstrations in Bahrain ever since a popular uprising began in the country in mid-February 2011.

They are demanding that the House of Khalifah relinquish power and allow a just system representing all Bahrainis to be established.

Manama has gone to great lengths to clamp down on any sign of dissent. In March 2011, troops from the House of Saud regime and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were deployed to assist Bahrain in its crackdown.

(Source: Press TV)

Pakistan court upholds Aasia Bibi’s blasphemy acquittal

Pakistan’s Supreme Court has upheld the acquittal of a Christian woman charged with blasphemy, standing by its earlier verdict that sparked days of protests, death threats and nationwide chaos.

The country’s top court in the capital, Islamabad, on Tuesday, dismissed the review petition against Aasia Bibi, who spent eight years on death row for blasphemy before being released last October.

The three-judge panel said arguments of the lawyer acting on behalf of the petitioners did not satisfy the judges.

“On merit, this petition is dismissed,” Chief Justice Asif Saeed Khosa said in court.

She is now free to leave the country. Unconfirmed Pakistani media reports said her two daughters have already gone to Canada, where they’ve been granted asylum.

Bibi is currently under guard at a secret location in Pakistan for her own safety.

“I am really gratefully to everybody. Now after nine years it is confirmed that I am free and I will be going to hug my daughters,” a friend quoted Bibi as saying to The Associated Press, on condition of anonymity fearing for his own safety.

Her lawyer, Saiful Malook, who returned to Islamabad after fleeing the country amid death threats, called the decision a victory for Pakistan’s constitution and rule of law.

Amnesty International (AI) issued a statement calling for her to be allowed to “reunite with her family and seek safety in a country of her choice.”

The 54-year old was arrested in 2009 after being accused of blasphemy following a quarrel with two female Muslim farm workers who refused to drink from a water container used by a Christian in a village in eastern Punjab province.

Bibi has always denied committing blasphemy. The case became emblematic of fair trial concerns around Pakistan’s strict blasphemy laws.

The far-right Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) threatened to hold protests if Bibi’s acquittal was not reversed.

Judge Khosa said in court that Bibi’s accusers were guilty of perjury, and if the case hadn’t been so sensitive, they should have been jailed for life.

(Source: agencies)

Chelsea to face Manchester United in FA Cup fifth round

Holders Chelsea have been drawn to face Manchester United in the FA Cup fifth round, a repeat of last year's final.

With Arsenal, Tottenham Hotspur and Liverpool already out of the competition, Monday's draw means that, at most, only two of the top six will progress to the quarter-finals.

Chelsea won last year's final at Wembley 1-0 thanks to an Eden Hazard penalty.

Giant-killers Newport County, who play in League Two (fourth tier), could face Premier League champions Manchester City if they can win their replay against Middlesbrough.

Newport, who have already knocked out top-flight Leicester City, drew 1-1 at Middlesbrough on Saturday and host the replay on Feb. 5.

Doncaster Rovers, who play in League One (third tier) and are in the fifth round for the first time in 63 years, will host Premier League Crystal Palace.

League One AFC Wimbledon, who knocked out top-flight West Ham United, take on Championship (second-tier) Millwall, who eliminated Everton in the fourth round.

(Source: Goal)

Italian coach banned for five months for head-butting rival

The coach of Italian Serie C team Lucchese has been given a five-month ban for head-butting a member of the opposing team's staff and telling a player to break an opponent's legs.

Footage of the match showed the shaven-headed Giancarlo Favarin made "blasphemous remarks" during the match and "invited his own player to 'break the legs' of an opponent."

He also "began a slanging match with a member of the opposing team's staff at the peak of which he hit the latter with a violent head butt, making him fall to the ground".

Mancino, meanwhile, was given a two-match ban for "offensive and provocative behaviour towards the coach of the rival team during the match."

(Source: Eurosport)

PSG complete signing of Argentina midfielder Paredes

Paris Saint-Germain have completed the signing of Argentina midfielder Leandro Paredes from Zenit Saint Petersburg on a four-and-a-half-year deal, the French champions announced on Tuesday. The 25-year-old put pen to paper on a contract until 2023 after completing a medical in Qatar. No transfer fee was disclosed, although press reports have put the fee at 47 million euros (\$54m).

"Leandro's arrival will keep the momentum, both on the pitch and among our supporters, ahead of the major events coming up. Exciting times lie ahead," PSG's Qatari president Nasser al-Khelaifi said in a club statement.

"After my previous experiences in Italy and Russia, I now have this fantastic opportunity, not only to discover a new league, but above all one to wear one the most prestigious club jerseys in the world," said Paredes, who will team up with compatriot Angel di Maria at the Parc des Princes.

The Ligue 1 leaders were looking to strengthen in midfield ahead of their Champions League last-16 tie against Manchester United, with Marco Verratti sidelined with an ankle injury and Adrien Rabiot frozen out after refusing to sign a new contract.

PSG go to Old Trafford for the first leg of that tie on February 12, and they are currently sweating on the fitness of Neymar, who suffered a metatarsal injury last week.

Paredes, who has won nine caps but was not part of Argentina's squad at last year's World Cup, has previously played for Boca Juniors and Roma. He moved to Zenit in 2017.

PSG may still look to add another midfielder before the January transfer window closes, having already had an offer rejected for Idrissa Gueye of Everton.

British Sky Sports reported late on Monday that the Senegal international, who used to play for Lille, had handed in a transfer request to try to force through a move back to France.

(Source: AFP)

Robben mulling Tokyo move after Bayern exit

Superstar Dutch winger Arjen Robben is lining up a move to J-League outfit FC Tokyo after he leaves Bundesliga giants Bayern Munich, local media reported on Tuesday.

The 35-year-old has already confirmed he is leaving Bayern at the end of the season after a glittering career that saw him win seven Bundesliga titles and nearly 100 caps for the Netherlands.

If confirmed, it would be the latest high-profile transfer to the Japanese league, after Spanish World Cup winner Andres Iniesta and German striker Lukas Podolski joined Vissel Kobe.

Iniesta's World Cup winning teammate Fernando Torres is also playing at J-League rival Sagan Tosu.

The Sports Nippon daily said there was a "rapidly emerging" chance of Robben playing in Japan next season.

"Robben's family, who are believed to have a big say (in his decision), seem positive about coming to Japan," it said.

"Several Japanese clubs are interested but FC Tokyo are close to clinching his signature," the paper quoted anonymous sources as saying. A spokesperson for the club declined to comment when contacted by AFP.

The 35-year-old, in his prime considered one of the world's best wingers, told German football magazine Kicker last month he had no plans beyond the end of this season.

(Source: France 24)

Has Jose Mourinho been left behind by modern football?

Having been told by executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward that his tenure at Manchester United was at an end, an unshaven Jose Mourinho spent around an hour and a half at the club's Carrington training base in an atmosphere described by some of those present as "awkward".

The Portuguese manager, surrounded by his assistants, decided against embarking on a painful tour of goodbyes, contenting himself with informing those who crossed his path on that final day.

The Mourinho seen coming out of Carrington was smiling, shaven, suddenly younger. Was it relief or just the wish to give the impression he was relieved?

You never fully know with Mourinho because with him you always get two people in one, the public image and the private persona - jovial and friendly or prickly and curt, but either way methodical in most of the things he does, especially when it involves an audience.

Those who have worked with him in the past few years, not only at Carrington, admit they were not sure which Mourinho they were going to encounter from one day to another. To me, the whole thing seems mostly an act.

So what's next for him?

Speaking to coaches and players who have worked under him, as well as rival managers, sports psychologists and insiders at the clubs where he has been - who, not surprisingly, prefer not to be quoted - the most common conclusion is that football has overtaken



Mourinho.

■ **Have his methods become outdated?**

Mourinho was an early adopter of a coaching methodology born in Portugal, called 'tactical periodisation'. Indeed, for many young coaches he would become its guru.

But the game evolves. In the past few years Mourinho has been trying to reproduce a way of working and thinking that many feel has already had its day. Despite the success - albeit perhaps below their elevated expectations - he enjoyed at Real Madrid, his philosophy had not fully worked there.

Real leaders need someone to tell them the truth, the things they cannot see. One

truth for Mourinho is that a charismatic, tough and brilliant manager has stopped bringing joy where he works

In Spain, players including Cristiano Ronaldo had begun to challenge him. The issues persisted in his second spell at Chelsea, where it is fair to say he left few friends behind when he was sacked in 2015. In fact, those who worked with him in his first period in London reckon he was a totally different man the second time around.

Players have changed significantly since Mourinho's successes in the early 2000s. It is difficult to find a Deco, John Terry, Frank Lampard or Ricardo Carvalho these days.

The best Mourinho teams won by defend-

ing in their box. Creating a chance against them was a minor miracle, and games were often won by his players appreciating the small details - set-pieces, counter-attacks, the need for discipline. But football has moved forward technically.

The new generation of players are better adapted to dominating games, rather than the approach proposed by Mourinho that requires a love of defending, a huge and constant commitment without the ball, and high levels of physical and mental strength.

Spanish coach Juanma Lillo, who now works in Japan but is the youngest person to manage in La Liga and is admired by Pep Guardiola, has said of some of his colleagues that their real problem is that they don't have 20 years' experience but merely repeat themselves every year for 20 years.

Some managers suggest that Mourinho's insistence on focusing the efforts of his teams on annihilating the rival has made him forget about the identity of his own sides.

But they all admire one thing: he still understands the game as a complex entity. Like all coaches, he searches for order but is capable of creating uncertainty for opponents too, finding ways of playing that are difficult to defend against.

At the top of his game, he can bring changes to a match (in terms of tactics and personnel) that disrupt what opponents were working towards. But perhaps, they admit, we have seen less of that recently.

(Source: BBC)

Chinese Olympic legend finds her calling on road to 2022



She was China's first Winter Games gold medalist, a two-time Olympic champion and regarded as one of the finest short-track speed skaters of all time.

Few know better than Yang Yang what it takes to succeed at the pinnacle of sport.

Now retired, the 42-year-old is harnessing that know-how to help China, already a force in the Summer Olympics, replicate that success on the snow and ice.

There is no time to waste -- Beijing hosts the 2022 Winter Olympics and embarrassment on home soil is unthinkable.

"Definitely, winter sports is not very big in China. There used to be only two provinces that played winter sports, in the northeast of China," Yang told AFP in Shanghai, where snow and ice are a rarity and summers fiercely hot.

"(But) the Olympics is not only Beijing, it's the whole of China," added Yang, who retired from skating after the 2006 Turin Olympics. Yang has fulfilled a decade-long dream with the temporary installation of what she said was Shanghai's first outdoor ice rink, with the city's Oriental Pearl Tower serving as a stunning backdrop.

Backed by private investment, it is her third rink in Shanghai, underlining her commitment to generating interest in ice sports among a broader swathe of China's 1.4 billion population.

Yang, who won short-track gold in the 500m and 1,000m at the 2002 Salt Lake City Games, has more than 1,000 budding athletes training in ice hockey, figure skating or speed skating. They age three and upwards and her programmer, which she started five years ago, is beginning to bear fruit with nine of them called up to China's junior team for short-track speed skating.

"I am the mother of two kids and I always encourage them to experience sports because I believe it is very important for kids growing up," said Yang.

"They learn how to face challenges, they learn how to fight, they learn how to follow the rules, they learn teamwork, leadership."

According to Yang, who was born in frigid far-northeast China, interest in her Shanghai club doubled as soon as Beijing was awarded the Games in 2015.

(Source: AFP)

Murray undergoes hip operation in London



Andy Murray has undergone hip resurfacing surgery in London.

The two-time Wimbledon champion was debating having the procedure, which involves putting a metal plate into the joint, in a final bid to prolong his career.

The 31-year-old had previously said ahead of the Australian Open earlier this month that he intended to retire after this year's Wimbledon.

Murray said on Instagram: "I underwent a hip resurfacing surgery in London yesterday morning ... feeling a bit battered and bruised just now but hopefully that will be the end of my hip pain."

The operation does not guarantee the Scot will be able to make a comeback, but will allow him to live a pain-free life.

Murray was set for a farewell six months after emotionally announcing he was in too much pain to carry on in the build-up to the first grand slam of the year.

But after a monumental five-set tussle with Roberto Bautista-Agut, where Murray showed he still has the ability and desire to compete at the top level, he said he would do everything he could to keep playing.

Having the surgery, which happened in London on Monday, means he might not be fit to take part at Wimbledon this summer, where he had planned to say goodbye to the sport.

And if it does not allow him to return to the court, he will have played the last match of his glittering career.

In the lead-up to his operation, he was in constant dialogue with American doubles specialist Bob Bryan, who has just returned to the game following the same procedure last summer.

It is the second round of surgery on the troublesome joint, 12 months after the first one, which did not solve the issue.

Murray made a long-awaited comeback at Queen's last summer but pulled out of Wimbledon and struggled to play matches.

It was hoped an extensive rehabilitation period in Philadelphia, followed by a gruelling pre-season stint in Miami might prove the answer, but Murray was still in significant pain on the court.

Murray will now undergo more rehabilitation to see if he can play again.

(Source: PA)

PSG and Brazil's Neymar facing second straight season-ending metatarsal injury

Paris Saint-Germain and Brazil superstar Neymar could have his second consecutive club football season ended by a metatarsal injury after a medical source close to the French champions confirmed that the 26-year-old may well require surgery to fix his latest right foot problem.

Neymar hobbled off in tears during the second half of last week's 2-0 Coupe de France round of 32 win over Strasbourg, and his availability to face Manchester United in the Champions League round of 16 next month has been a hot topic ever since.

According to the source, the former Barcelona man has fractured the same fifth metatarsal in his right foot as last year -- albeit in a different location -- and that it is almost impossible that he will recover in time for the trip to Old Trafford on Feb. 12.

With Brazil national team doctor Rodrigo Lasmar now in France at Neymar's behest and invited by PSG, attention has turned to this summer's Copa America in the €222 million man's native Brazil and the final two months of PSG's season more than the return leg against United at Parc des Princes.

Both the Ligue 1 giants and the Selecao Brasileira are yet to officially comment on the extent of Neymar's injury, and the source confirmed that the two parties are still debating whether surgery is the only option.

Brazil coach Tite, however, confirmed that Neymar would not be called up half-fit.

"We have touched base with Neymar and visited him. It



was a personal call, out of solidarity and very human. Any other information, Edu [Gaspar] and the medical team will pass on. My contact with Neymar was a human one. I know that you are all very interested, but I know when to stay in my place," Tite said.

"I understand the anxiety, but I do not speak in hypotheticals. I have also expressed my concern to the PSG coach [Thomas Tuchel], who is sad. I am also sad, but supportive too."

National teams director Gaspar said that Brazil officials would evaluate once the full report from Lasmar was available.

"Remember that Neymar is a PSG player," Gaspar said. "We must respect the decisions that the club makes. Rodrigo Lasmar, our doctor, will aid them. Then, after that, we

will think about technical decisions. PSG are being rather conservative. They invited Lasmar and other specialists to aid the eventual decision."

If Neymar has surgery, the source warned that his recovery time will be longer than it was last time and that it will almost certainly end his second season in Paris prematurely and seriously threaten his participation in this summer's Copa America with Brazil on home soil.

Brazilian boss Tite has already admitted in a hastily arranged news conference in France that he is unsure if he will be able to call Neymar up for March's friendly fixture against Czech Republic in Prague, while Tuchel conceded on Sunday after the 4-1 thrashing of Rennes in Ligue 1 that getting the No. 10 back for the trip to Manchester will be tough.

"It will be very difficult," the German tactician told Canal Plus. "As I explained on Saturday, it is too early to talk about a possible return date."

"To start with, we must wait at least one week -- this period and his reaction to the treatment will be important. Only then can we be more precise. That said, it is not a secret -- it will be very difficult."

An approximate best-case scenario for PSG, advised the source, is an April return, which could also jeopardise any potential Champions League quarterfinal appearance if Tuchel's men can dispose of United without him.

(Source: ESPN)

Zidane, Mourinho and Klinsmann candidates to coach Iran, sports ministry claims



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Zinedine Zidane, Jose Mourinho and Jurgen Klinsmann have been shortlisted to replace Carlos Queiroz at the helm, spokesman and head of public relations and information of the Iran's Ministry of Sports and Youth, Maziar Nazemi, said.

Iran failed to book a place at the 2019 AFC Asian Cup final after being defeated by Japan 3-0 on Monday at the Hazza bin Zayed Stadium in Al Ain.

Iran's dream of making it to their first AFC Asian Cup

final after 43 years was over after the heavy loss.

Shortly after, Carlos Queiroz announced his resignation as head coach of Iran national football team.

The 65-year-old coach decided to call time on his eight-year stint with the Iranians at the news conference in Al Ain.

Now, Nazemi, on behalf of the ministry, has claimed in an Instagram post they are going to hire a big name.

Zidane, Mourinho and Klinsmann have been nominated for Iran hot seat in this regard, according to him.

The post has been shared widely on social media but

big question is "why does the Iranian football federations remain silent on this issue?" because the issue has nothing to do with the sports ministry.

The football federation is responsible for signing a new coach and there has been no confirmation that the Portuguese coach has stepped down.

The Iran federation has just thanked Queiroz for his services and commitment in Team Mell.

FIFA has a zero tolerance policy over government interference with the nation's soccer association.

Carlos Queiroz quits as Iran coach

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Carlos Queiroz announced his resignation as head coach of Iran national football team after Team Melli failed to reach the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

The 65-year-old decided to call time on his eight-year stint with the Iranians at the news conference in Al Ain.

Iran suffered a heavy 3-0 defeat against Japan in the competition's semi-final.

Star-studded Team Melli failed to reach the Asian Cup final after 43 years.

Queiroz marked his 100th match as head coach of Iran national football team against Japan.

"There are no words to express my gratitude to this players, for everything they have done all over these years, for their effort, support and commitment.



It was an honor to be side by side with these great men, in this eight year journey, facing all the adversities, always and always with great character, the top character for which I believe they deserved to play the final.

Congratulations to Japan, the best team tonight, but honour to Team Melli, for what they built for their people, for the football they show to the World, and for the legacy they take to the future.

This was one of the best football families of my career and I wish all these players the best! Now the end is here. I did it my way, giving the very best of me, with the support of my staff – thank you guys! And gratitude you to all the Iranian fans," Queiroz posted on his Instagram account.

The Portuguese coach has been linked with a move to Colombia football team.

Ashkan Dejagah laments Iran's exit



Veteran Islamic Republic of Iran midfielder Ashkan Dejagah cut a disconsolate figure after his side were eliminated from AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 at the semi-final stage by a 3-0 defeat to Japan on Monday.

Appearing in the final four for the first time in 15 years, Team Melli held their own in a competitive first-half, but never recovered from the concession of Yuya Osako's opening goal, with Japan taking full control and ultimately cruising into Friday's final.

It was a forgettable conclusion to an Iranian campaign which had promised so much, but ended, once again, in knockout stage disappointment.

"I believe it was a good tournament for the players and, for the young players, it's been a good experience," said former Bundesliga and Premier League star Dejagah.

"We performed well until this game. Even in this game, before we conceded, the team was performing well.

"Obviously, Japan are a good team. They put pressure on us, they wanted to go to the final as well, but if we had a little luck, if Sardar (Azamoun's) opportunity was converted into a goal in the first half, maybe the outcome of the game would have changed.

"But this is football, unfortunately we couldn't do it today."

While Carlos Queiroz's side had a number of potent attacking weapons on the pitch at Hazza bin Zayed's Stadium, they missed the creativity of suspended forward Mehdi Taremi, and Dejagah conceded the Al Gharafa forward's absence had made life difficult.

"Well, we have good players. I believe the whole team can play well," said the Iranian skipper.

"However, obviously Taremi's absence affected us. He really helped us out in the last couple of games."

With four wins, no defeats and five clean sheets in their opening five matches, Iran were one of the AFC Asian Cup's form teams, leading many to fans to dream of an end to their 43-year Asian title drought.

But, with those dreams unfulfilled, Dejagah, who will be 36 when the next AFC Asian Cup is held in 2023, said the result would take time to get over.

"We win together and we lose together. Unfortunately, today we couldn't [win]. Nevertheless, thanks to the team for trying," he offered.

"It's hard to talk right now. I have nothing to say. Some time must pass, it's hard."

(Source: the-afc)

Japan coach Moriyasu praises Japan spirit



Hajime Moriyasu hailed his team's fighting spirit as Japan advanced to a fifth AFC Asian Cup final since 1992 on Monday with a 3-0 win over Islamic Republic of Iran at Hazza bin Zayed Stadium in Al Ain.

A brace from Yuya Osako and a late strike from Genki Haraguchi took the Japanese into the tournament decider, where they will face either the United Arab Emirates or Qatar at Zayed Sports City Stadium on Friday.

"Iran have had great results in the past and we knew they were going to be a very tough opponent, but the players had prepared well and they showed great fighting spirit," said Moriyasu, who also led Japan to the final of the Asian Games in Indonesia last summer.

"They didn't forget to have the mindset of challengers and that gave us the win. The atmosphere was like an away game for us, but there were many Japanese supporters and many people back home supporting us too.

"I'm happy the players could show the spirit to fight and to deliver a good result."

The win over Iran meant the Japanese maintained their perfect record at the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 having defeated Turkmenistan, Oman and Uzbekistan in the group phase before seeing off Saudi Arabia

and Vietnam in the knockout round.

While Moriyasu's team have not always displayed the fluent football for which the Samurai Blue are known, the Japanese impressed in the second half against an Iran side favored by many to advance to the final.

And the former Sanfrecce Hiroshima coach stressed he would look to tailor his preparations depending on the opposition his team face in the final.

"I don't think we have changed compared to how we have played in the previous matches, but what our players did today was, by respecting and knowing our opponent, they tried to perform to their best individually and as a team and play for the result," said Moriyasu.

"Knowing that Iran have a strong attack and are strong physically, the players were aggressive and showed a lot of fighting spirit, and that was the difference. We tried to win the second half and they were persistent."

"We knew it would be very hard to hold the ball, but the players tried hard and delivered the ball from the defensive line to the forwards and I think that was the good part," Moriyasu stated.

(Source: the-afc)

Qatar down UAE to secure a place in Asian Cup final

Qatar will play Japan in the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 final after Felix Sanchez's charges beat host nation the United Arab Emirates 4-0 on Tuesday in an absorbing last four encounter at the Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium.

A stirring first-half performance – which saw Boualem Khoukhi break the deadlock and Almoez Ali notch a record-equaling eighth goal of the tournament – laid the foundation for the victory which was rubberstamped by late strikes from Hassan Al Haydos and Hamid Ismaeil as Qatar progressed with relative ease to set up Friday's title showdown with the Japanese.

While Qatar's success saw them advance to their first-ever AFC Asian Cup final, it left the UAE to rue what could have been as they failed to emulate their run to the final in 1996.

After a somewhat cautious opening, Qatar finally issued their statement of intent when Salem Al Hajri's shot from distance forced UAE goalkeeper Khalid Eisa into a fine stop on 14 minutes.

With Abdelkarim Hassan and Assim Madibo returning from suspension, Qatar continued to look the more likely of the two sides, and they duly took the just eight minutes later.

Khoukhi's angled drive from 18 yards somehow finding its way under Eisa's despairing dive and into the net.

Clearly stunned by the opener, the UAE responded through an Ismail Al Hamadi header which was smartly saved by Saad Al Sheeb, and a similar effort from Ali Mabkhout that fizzed wide of the target shortly before the half-hour mark.

However, worse was to come for the Emiratis as Qatar doubled their lead in the 38th minute.

This time Akram Afif found Almoez Ali who advanced into the area before firing home via a post to equal Ali Daei's record for the most goals by a player at Asia's premier event.

With Ahmed Khalil and Ismaeil Matar both intro-

duced to the fray after the break, the UAE were quick to threaten as Al Sheeb superbly tipped over a Mabkhout piledriver and then defender Khoukhi blocked a Matar effort from close-range.

Al Sheeb was on hand once again to deny Khalil shortly after as the UAE's search for a way back into the game became more frantic as the minutes ticked by.

Despite being forced to defend deep in their own half for long periods, Qatar remained dangerous on the break and they duly added a third in the 81st minute when captain Hassan Al Haydos rounded off a delightful move by maneuvering past Bandar Mohammed and clipping the ball over Eisa.

After the UAE's Ismail Ahmed was shown a straight red card late on for dangerous play, substitute Ismaeil rounded off the scoring to emphatically confirm Qatar's place in the final.

(Source: the-afc)

Asian Cup: Qatari Almoez Ali draws level with Iran's Daei

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Qatar football forward Almoez Ali joined Iranian legendary striker Ali Daei who holds the record for the most goals in a single Asian Cup.

Qatar humiliated the UAE 4-0 in the Asian Cup semifinal on Tuesday.

Almoez Ali tied Daei's Asian Cup record of eight goals, while he has a chance to overtake the Iranian front man in the final match against Japan, scheduled for Friday.

Daei is the top scorer in the AFC Asian Cup history with 14 goals in the continental competition.

The record for most international goals also belongs to Daei, who hit 109 goals for Iran in 149 appearances between 1993 and 2006.

Sydney sign Ghoochannejhad on loan

Iranian Striker Reza Ghoochannejhad has joined A-League club Sydney FC on loan from APOEL.

Sydney FC have strengthened their attack by signing former Iran international Reza Ghoochannejhad on loan from APOEL until the end of the season.

Ghoochannejhad joined the Cypriot club ahead of the 2018-19 campaign and scored two goals in 15 games before his loan move.

The 31-year-old retired from international duty last year, having scored 17 goals in 44 appearances for Iran, including at the 2014 World Cup.

"I'm excited to be joining Sydney FC and looking forward to the challenge of the A-League and AFC Champions League," Ghoochannejhad said. "To be joining Australia's most successful club is a fantastic move for me, and to test myself against the best in Australia and Asia will be an unbelievable experience."

"Sydney FC's record in recent times is phenomenal and they have some fantastic players. "I can't wait to link up with my new team-mates, help them add to their success and bring more trophies to the club."

With 11 games to go in the regular season, the Sky Blues are third in the A-League table, five points behind leaders Perth Glory. The signing of Ghoochannejhad – who has previously played for the likes of Charlton Athletic and Heerenveen – is also a boost for Sydney ahead of the AFC Champions League, in which they will face Kawasaki Frontale, Shanghai SIPG and a play-off winner in Group H.

(Source: Four Four Two)

Bundesliga and Premier League show interest in Azmoun

Sardar Azmoun enjoyed an impressive AFC Asian Cup 2019 tournament and has reportedly attracted transfer interest from top European leagues as a result.

Bayer Leverkusen from Germany, Wolverhampton Wanderers from the English Premier League and Club Brugge from Belgium are all teams that are interested in signing Azmoun.

Azmoun, 24, plays his club football for Russian team Rubin Kazan and enjoyed a fine AFC Asian Cup showing on a personal level, notching up 4 goals in 6 games and leading Iran's attacking line commendably.

However, despite his best efforts, he couldn't prevent his team from crashing out of the competition in the semifinals by virtue of a 3-0 defeat to Japan.

The attacker has made 17 appearances for his club side this season, scoring 5 goals and setting up 4 more. He enjoys a much more prolific goal return for his National team, having scored 27 goals in 43 games.

It is reported that Rubin Kazan are willing to listen to any offers for the Iranian player, and will choose one that is financially most beneficial to them.

(Source: Sport24)

Alberto Simonelli breaks own world record

Alberto Simonelli's accuracy appears even sharper ahead of June's World Archery Para Championships in 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

The Italian Paralympic and Worlds medalist shot a new Para archery world record at the Nimes Archery Tournament held from 18-20 January in France. The tournament is the fourth stage of the 2019 Indoor Archery World Series, and Simonelli shot 594 out of a possible 600 points for the 60-arrow 18-metre ranking round. He had held the record at 590 points since February 2018.

"This record is repayment for a bit of a bad period," Simonelli said. "I've spent three months between home and hospital because of phlebitis in my leg and blood infection."

"After a long period without training, I shot 590 at two different events in Italy. I'm not at my best yet but after the first half [in Nimes], I said to myself, 'I'm still able to shoot.'"

The record score qualified him 19th in Nimes, where the compound men's top-32 cut hit 590 points for the first time in the event's 21-year history.

He was subsequently eliminated by David Houser, 148-144, in the first round.

Simonelli is a three-time Paralympian. He won silver medals in the compound open events at the Beijing 2008 and the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games.

The 51-year-old competed at the both the Para and able-bodied World Championships in 2017, and has been a member of Italy's Hyunday Archery World Cup squad for the past two seasons.

The 2019 World Archery Para Championships will take place from 3-9 June and is the first event where athletes can earn qualification slots toward the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

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■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari
■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450
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Zip Code: 1599814713



GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Be not ashamed of a small donations; for, despair is much less than that.

Imam Ali (AS)

“My Arms Flew” hailed at Jaipur film festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — “My Arms Flew” directed by Hossein Nuri from Iran has won an honorable mention at the 11th Jaipur International Film Festival (JIFF), the organizers have announced.



A poster for “My Arms Flew” directed by Hossein Nuri.

for his movie “Before I Forget”.

The festival took place in the northwestern Indian city of Jaipur from January 18 to 22.

The film narrates the story of Hossein Nuri who creates his paintings with his mouth. Nuri suffers a spinal cord injury due to the tortures he experienced by SAVAK, the Shah’s intelligence services.

In this movie filmed by Nuri’s son Mahmud, Hossein needs to create a number of paintings in a limited time for an exhibit in the United States in order to be able to go visit his son who is studying in the U.S.

Nuri’s wife Nadia Maftuni has also played in the movie.

Tiago Arakilian from Brazil won the award for best director

IIDCYA to unwrap “Mysterious Gift” for children

A R T **TEHRAN** — “Mysterious Gift”, a puppet show by director Meysam Yusefi, will be restaged at the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) in Tehran next week.



A poster for “Mysterious Gift” by Meysam Yusefi.

The play will have its first performance on February 3 at the IIDCYA, and will be running until the end of winter.

“Mysterious Gift” was staged in Tehran in spring 2018.

Frail at 130, Van Gogh’s ‘Sunflowers’ will stay home from now on

AMSTERDAM (Reuters) — At 130 years old, one of Vincent van Gogh’s famous paintings of sunflowers in a vase has become too delicate to keep touring the world and will have to stay at home in Amsterdam.

That’s one of the key findings of experts conducting a six-week assessment and restoration of “Sunflowers,” painted by the Dutch master in southern France in 1889.

“The base and paint layers are stable, but sensitive to vibrations and changes in air humidity and temperature,” said Van Gogh Museum director Axel Ruger.

“It is therefore important that the painting is moved as little as possible and that it is displayed in a stable environment,” he said.

In addition to the minor restoration, a team of experts has uncovered details about precisely what materials Van Gogh used, including the exact roll of linen its canvas was cut from.

They said they were now more confident Van Gogh, who painted the canvas in January of 1889, had based it on an earlier “Sunflowers” he painted in the summer of 1888, which now hangs in the National Gallery in London.

In the restoration, a layer of wax is being removed, but several varnishes applied over the years — and now dirty or discoloring — cannot be removed because they have bonded with the underlying paint.

Austrian-Iranian Symphonic Orchestra to perform at Fajr music festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Austrian-Iranian Symphonic Orchestra (AISO) will give a concert during the 34th Fajr Music Festival at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on February 18.

Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s operas, including “Don Giovanni”, “The Marriage of Figaro” and “The Magic Flute”, will be performed during the concert, conductor Maziar Yunesi announced in a press release on Tuesday.

The repertoire also includes “St Paul’s Suite” by English composer Gustav Holst as well as pieces by Austrian composer Johann Strauss.

An Austrian singer, whose name wasn’t



Maziar Yunesi conducts the Austro-Iranian Symphony Orchestra in an undated concert. (Honaronline/Mojtaba Arabzadeh)

mentioned, will accompany the orchestra during the concert.

The 34th Fajr Music Festival will take place in Tehran from February 13 to 19.

“The Little Black Fish” to go on stage in Toronto



A scene from “The Little Black Fish” directed by Mohammad Aqebati.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Mohammad Aqebati will perform a stage adaptation of famous Iranian writer Samad Behrangi’s short story “The Little Black Fish” during the Tirgan Nowruz Festival at the Toronto Centre for the Arts in Canada on March 9.

The play is about a fish that lives in a small stream and wants to live a life with aspirations and purpose. He embarks on an eye-opening journey with the spirit of a dreamer experiencing an awakening, but in

the process, the path leads him to wisdom, courage, awareness and study of complex social relations.

Peter Sullivan, Nika Nojumi and Luca Nojumi are the main members of the cast for the play, which will be performed in English.

“The Little Black Fish” won several awards, including best director, best set design and best actor at the 25th International Theater Festival for Children and Young Adults in Hamedan, Iran in November 2018.

“Blue Whale” director says home video network fills in blank for private TV in Iran

A R T **TEHRAN** — Director Fereidun Jeirani has said the home video network in Iran has taken the place of private TV channels as no organization or person are allowed to launch a private channel in the country.

“The home video network has taken the place of private TV channels in Iran,” he told the Persian service of ISNA on Monday following the premiere of his series “Blue Whale” at Tehran’s Book Garden Cineplex.

The series was also released in the Iranian home video network on Monday.

“If any private TV channels are allowed to work in Iran, the home video network will no longer exist in the country,” Jeirani said.

“The home video network currently works under the government, which wants to cover the stories that are not allowed to be recounted on the state-run TV,” he added.

He said that the home video network gives the Iranian filmmakers more freedom from the regular governmental controls.

However, he noted that filmmakers take a bit of a risk in working for the home video network.

At Baghdad workshop, the search for Iraq’s looted artifacts gets serious

BAGHDAD (Reuters) — Before ISIS were dislodged from Iraq in 2017, they stole thousands of ancient artifacts. Most are still missing, and an international team of archaeologists is turning detective to recover as many as possible.

In 2014 and 2015, during its occupation of most of the country, the jihadist group raided and wrecked historical sites on what UNESCO called an “industrial” scale, using the loot to fund its operations through a smuggling network extending through the Middle East and beyond.

“We’re trying to recover a lot of artifacts and need all local and international resources to work. Iraq cannot do this on its own,” said Bruno Deslandes, a conservation architect at the U.N. cultural agency.

He spoke at a workshop at Baghdad’s National Museum convened to coordinate international retrieval efforts.

Video that went viral after it was released by ISIS in 2014 showed militants using bulldozers and drills to tear down murals and statues the 3,000-year-old Assyrian site of Nimrud near Mosul. What they did not destroy they smuggled and traded.

Deslandes was the first international expert to access the site in early 2017 while ISIS was still being driven out.

With the battle raging just kilometers away, he and his team had to work quickly to assess damage to the site, using 3D scanning and satellite imagery. Within minutes, they gathered a trove of data he says will be critical in tracking lost items down.

“When an artifact has been taken, we can document the footprint left,” Deslandes said.



Participants in the Antiquities Protection Workshop look a King Shalmaneser III statue, while learning to counter heritage crimes and trafficking of artifacts, at the Iraqi National Museum in Baghdad, Iraq January 23, 2019. (Reuters/Khalid al-Mousily)

“We document this very precisely... so we can recover it... When we have an artifact in Europe or somewhere matching this specification we can... yes!” he added, clapping his hands together for emphasis.

The workshop, which brought together Iraqi and foreign police, customs officials and archeological experts, was the second in two years organized by the European Union Advisory Mission in Iraq.

Law enforcement officials said they can help Iraqi police track down the objects using databases of seizures and other information, including smuggling routes.

Mariya Polner of the World Customs Organization (WCO) said reports of cultural heritage seizures by customs officials worldwide were “only the tip of the iceberg”, and that better coordination between the WCO’s 183 members states had helped increase recoveries.

Michael Jackson’s family calls new documentary ‘public lynching’

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — The family of Michael Jackson on Monday described reaction to a new documentary about alleged child sex abuse by the late singer as a “public lynching” and said he was “100 percent innocent” of such accusations.

The statement followed the premiere at the Sundance film festival on Friday of “Leaving Neverland,” in which two men, now in their 30s, say they were befriended by the “Thriller” singer and abused by him starting from when they were 7 and 10 years old.

The documentary received a standing ovation at Sundance on Friday, Variety and other entertainment media reported. It will be shown on cable channel HBO and Britain’s Channel 4 television network this spring.

Jackson, who died in 2009, was acquitted at a 2005 criminal trial in California on charges of molesting a different, 13-year-old boy, at his Neverland ranch. The singer is survived by his mother Katherine and nine siblings, four of whom were members of pop group “The Jackson 5.”

Referring to Jackson as “our brother and son,” Monday’s statement said the family was “furious that the media, who without a shred of proof or single piece of physical evidence, chose to believe the word of two admitted liars over the word of hundreds of families and friends around the world who spent time with Michael, many at Neverland, and experienced his legendary kindness and global generosity.”

“We can’t just stand by while this public lynching goes on,” the statement added.



U.S. pop star Michael Jackson gestures during a news conference at the O2 Arena in London March 5, 2009. Jackson said he will hold a series of final concerts in Britain later in the year. (Reuters/Stefan Wermuth)

“Leaving Neverland” features on camera interviews with Wade Robson and James Safechuck, who describe their relationships with Jackson in graphic detail and said that as young boys they loved the singer.

Variety in its review called the four-hour documentary “devastating.” Rolling Stone said it left the audience at the Sundance festival in Utah “completely shellshocked.”

Both Robson and Safechuck filed lawsuits against the Jackson estate alleging sexual misconduct after the singer’s death and both cases were dismissed. Robson had testified at Jackson’s 2005 trial in the singer’s defense.

The Michael Jackson estate has also criticized “Leaving Neverland,” releasing a statement that called it “blatantly one-sided” and lacking independent voices.

Director Dan Reed has said he had no question about the validity of the stories of the two men.