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Intl. expo on renewables to kick off in Tehran

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The 11th International Environment, Renewable Energy, Lighting & Energy Saving Exhibition is to be held at Tehran Permanent International Fair-ground on February 21-24, 2019, IRIB reported on Sunday.

According to the executive manager of the event, Sediqeh Babran, some 57 Iranian and foreign companies will take part in the exhibition.

The participating foreign companies, as she said, are from China, Austria, Ger-

many, the Netherlands, and Turkey.

The exhibition is an important event on promoting in two major issues of the day; efficient use of energy and environmental protection.

It will display the most innovative products and the most advanced technologies in this field and is an ideal opportunity for foreign businesses to develop and expand their activities in Iran.

The event is also a successful platform for exchanging information and experiences between participants.

Qatar thanks Iran for its supports

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani has thanked Iran for supports during the blockade of the Arab country.

"Iran is our neighbor. We share border with Iran. We share gas reserves with Iran. This is geography. We needed flight space and business route after blockade of Qatar and they [Iranians] opened their airspace to us and we thank them for that," ISNA quoted him as saying on Sunday during a

speech at the Munich Security Conference.

In June of 2017, Saudi Arabia along with Bahrain, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) abruptly cut off diplomatic relations with Qatar and closed land, sea and air routes to the country. The severing of relations also included withdrawing ambassadors and imposing trade and travel bans on Doha.

The Islamic republic opened its airspace to about 100 more Qatari flights a day during the blockade.

Assad: U.S. will sell out those relying on it

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad warned on Sunday the United States would not protect those depending on it, in reference to Kurdish fighters who control much of the north.

"We say to those groups who are betting on the Americans, the Americans will not protect you," he said without naming

them. "The Americans will put you in their pockets so you can be tools in the barter, and they have started with (it)."

U.S. President Donald Trump declared in December he would pull troops from Syria, raising more questions over the fate of Washington's Kurdish allies under the threat of Turkish attacks. **→13**

U.S. did not reach its goal on Iran in Warsaw meeting: Robert Hunter

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Robert E. Hunter, the former U.S. ambassador to NATO, says INSTEX is a political signal to the Trump administration.

"It is doubtful that INSTEX will make a major substantive difference, given the size of Iranian 'needs' and the continued dominant role of the US dollar," Hunter tells the Tehran Times.

Hunter also says, "U.S. did not reach to its



goal on Iran in Warsaw meeting."

Following is the full text of the exclusive interview with Hunter:

■ Do you think that anti-Iran Warsaw meeting reach to its goal on Iran?

A: The U.S. goal, no.

■ Again in this meeting U.S. want for withdrawing the EU countries from JCPOA. But three European countries emphasized on remaining in this agreement. Can we interpret this as isolation of Trump administration in this regard? **→7**

U.S. will never tolerate independent countries: Adib-Moghaddam

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN — Commenting on the U.S. policy towards Venezuela, Professor Arshin Adib-Moghaddam says this has been the aim of successive U.S. governments to roll back the Bolivarian revolution that is the paradigm of independence for Latin America.

The U.S. President Donald Trump couple of weeks ago announced that he is recognizing Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido as the legitimate president of Venezuela.

Trump also urged other governments to recognize Guaido, adding that he "will continue to use the full weight of United States economic and diplomatic power to press for

the restoration of Venezuelan democracy."

Recent developments in Venezuela was discussed with Professor Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, Chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute.

Here is the full text of our interview with him:

■ How do you see the U.S. role in creating economic crisis in Venezuela? **→7**

Anti-Iran Warsaw meeting failed to achieve its goal: Pillar

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Paul Pillar, who was CIA intelligence analyst for 28 years, tells the Tehran Times that the goal of the Trump administration from anti-Iran Warsaw meeting "was to muster more European support for isolating and sanctioning Iran and to demonstrate U.S.-European

unity regarding policy toward Iran."

Pillar says "It failed to achieve that goal."

He adds, "The conference instead demonstrated that major differences remain between the United States and the major European countries on the basic approach toward Iran."

Following is the text of the interview:

■ Do you think that anti-Iran Warsaw meeting reach to its goal on Iran?

A: The goal of the Trump administration was to muster more European support for isolating and sanctioning Iran and to demonstrate U.S.-European unity regarding policy toward Iran. It failed to achieve that goal. The conference instead demonstrated that major differences remain between the United States and the major European countries on the basic approach toward Iran. The final statement of the conference did not even mention Iran. **→7**



ARTICLE

Salman Parviz
Journalist

INSTEX: EU assumes Iranians walking on banana leafs

After months of delay and despite the 2015 commitments of European leaders towards the Iran nuclear deal, the so-called E-3 (Germany, France and the UK) registered the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX). However, this special purpose vehicle (SPV) has no engine or driver and doesn't conform with the trade and investment promises made in return for dramatic reduction in Iran's nuclear program.

After Washington's exit from the JCPOA in May last year the EU, in order to save face and have a show of sovereignty and independence from the U.S. decision-making, decided to stay with the JCPOA and in order to keep the historical nuclear deal alive and act on their promises they pledged to come up with a SPV which will keep the trade flowing between Europe and Iran.

After missing several deadlines, finally on January 31 the European trio announced registration of such an SPV. In order to save face, it was announced that initially the INSTEX will focus "on sectors most essential, such as pharmaceutical, medical devices and agri-food goods." By doing so, the E-3 has avoided a direct clash with the White House, since U.S. sanctions already permit these categories of trade due to their humanitarian nature. This puts forward the question of creation and purpose of SPV in the first place.

In this driver-less SPV trade of oil is nowhere in sight and Washington remains on track with its goal of bringing Iranian fossil fuel exports to "zero" while E-3 can claim they remain committed to the nuclear deal. This is hypocrisy in action.

■ **Iran's ballistic missile program**

The spate of intermediate ballistic missiles and satellite launches by Iran around the fortieth anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution took the forefront in Western media. Iran suffered intensively due to missile bombardments by Saddam Hussain's army during the 1980-88 war. And to this day Iran is under the threat of military assault.

Iran maintains that the missile program is for defensive purposes and acts as a deterrent. **→7**



ARTICLE

Sebastián Salgado
Researcher and journalist

It was a revolution of faith

There are very few reports on the Islamic Revolution in Iran in the Western media and what springs to mind is the movie Argo on the Iran hostage crisis in 1979.

The movie, directed and starred in by Ben Affleck, portrays hundreds of Iranian revolutionary students climbing over the wall of the US embassy in Tehran with photos of Ayatollah Khomeini in hand. They seized the "US Den of Espionage", as it was dubbed, where Shah Pahlavi received instructions from the U.S., puppet that he literally was. Just like any other Hollywood production, the movie mostly demonizes the people's movement that stood against Washington.

Getting the full picture of what happened in Iran in 1979 is quite difficult. Our imaginative view of a Latin American revolution in which protesters are dressed in military uniforms fades away quickly. It was a fight against a dictator in this region of the world and not guerrilla warfare.

The Islamic Revolution offered a new element: Faith. Words had more value than guns.

The duty of Muslims was to rise up against oppression. The exile of Imam Khomeini only spread his peace message across the entire world. He urged the revolutionaries not to confront the soldiers of the Shah as he considered them part of the people, even though they were in control of the regime. At the rally, people handed soldiers flowers.

Imagine a photo portraying a military guy receiving a flower as a loving gesture. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. There is no way to confront people who are willing to sacrifice for their faith and demand changes in the political system.

The torture method in Shah's time was like the Videla in Argentina. (Waterboarding, the picana electrica, and other methods). I visited the Towhid Prison (Iran Ebrat Museum), putting abuses under the Shah on display, in Tehran, and felt that I was in the former ESMA, (the School of Mechanics of the Navy's Clandestine Detention Center.) Pictures of missing people hang on the walls and many survivors of that time are part of the Iranian government now. **→7**



This combination photo shows poet Qeisar Aminpur (L) and novelist Mohammadreza Bairami.



Aminpur, Bairami best Iranian writers of past 40 years: poll

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Qeisar Aminpur, who is considered as the most influential poet of the post-revolution literature, and Mohammadreza Bairami, the writer of the acclaimed novella "Barren", are the best poet and best writer of the past 40 years, a poll conducted by the Shahrestan Adab Cultural Institute showed.

The institute asked 50 Iranian literati to vote for their five favorite writers in each category of poetry and story writing on the post-revolution literature. **→16**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Iran unveils new submarine armed with cruise missiles

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — To boost the Islamic Republic's defense power, President Hassan Rouhani unveiled on Sunday a new homegrown submarine armed with cruise missiles.

Fateh, with a 100-percent domestically-sourced technology, can operate more than 200 meters below the sea surface for nearly five weeks, Press TV reported.

It is capable of carrying and firing cruise missiles that could be launched from a submerged position.



IRGC hails attendance at funeral procession for terror victims

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — In a Sunday message, the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) lauded the nation for their strong participation at a burying ceremony for the victims of the terrorist attack.

The IRGC also said it will not let the enemies of the Islamic Republic and sponsors of the Takfiri terrorists threaten the security of the country, vowing to avenge the brutal murder of the fallen soldiers, IRNA reported.

A car laden with explosives hit a bus carrying members of the IRGC on Wednesday, killing and injuring dozens. The attack took place on a highway near the city of Zahedan, which is located close to the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan.



Majlis urges Pakistan's 'political will' against terrorism

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Majlis has urged Pakistan to show more political will in fighting terrorists that use the country's soil to launch attacks inside Iran, IRNA reported.

The lawmaker said Tehran understands Islamabad's problems in controlling its border with Iran but they need to "show stronger political will not to allow terrorist groups to use its soil to attack Iran," said Ali Najafi Khoshravi, the spokesman for the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee.

He added that Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and some security officials had attended the committee's meeting earlier on Sunday to discuss the recent terror attack in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan that killed 27 IRGC members and injured 13 others.



KRG vows to keep ties with Iran under sanctions

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is profoundly indebted to Iran's support in the past, a Kurdish official has said, adding that the KRG is hopeful to partially make up for Tehran's helps now that the U.S. has imposed unilateral sanctions against the country.

"The government of the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government and Halabja are greatly indebted to Iran's numerous helps," governor of the Halabja Governorate of the KRG Azad Tofiq said at a joint press conference with the Iran's Kermanshah Province governor Houshang Bazvand in western Iran on Sunday.

"We hope to return a small part of that aid now that America has imposed unjust sanctions against Iran," he added.



Merkel defends nuclear deal, defying U.S. opposition

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — German Chancellor Angela Merkel has defended the Iran nuclear deal in the face of strong opposition from the United States.

"Would canceling the only remaining agreement with Iran help our common goal to contain its negative impact?" Merkel asked, and reaffirmed that Germany will stay in the deal signed in 2015.

Her remarks came after U.S. Vice President Mike Pence called on European allies to leave the deal and join Washington's diplomatic and economic pressure campaign against Iran.



Virginia senator: Trump's withdrawal from JCPOA was idiotic

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Virginia Senator, Timothy Kaine, on Saturday described Donald Trump's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), as a foolish act resulting from Trump's jealousy towards his predecessor Barack Obama.

"Thank goodness Europe is committed to diplomacy and peace. US abandonment of Iran deal was idiotic and driven by Trump's envy of Obama. The professionals—Secretary Mattis, General Dunford—urged Trump to stay in," Kaine tweeted.

Zarif: Iran won't forsake own security for Le Drian's sake

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — In a panel discussion on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference on Sunday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said he cannot deprive his country of its defense capabilities just for the sake of his French counterpart, Jean-Yves Le Drian.

He made the remark when asked to comment on the position of some European countries, including France, which demand negotiations with Iran on its ballistic missile program, ISNA reported.

"I cannot leave the door open for some to attack my country and harm its people. In Iran, there are many people who are still suffering from the chemical weapons that Europeans sold to Saddam's regime," he said.

On recent reports regarding U.S. plans to sabotage Iranian missiles and rockets, Zarif said Iran is still investigating the issue.

Foreign Minister Zarif says Israel is looking for war.



He pointed to U.S.-Israeli assassination of Iran's nuclear scientists, saying they should be reminded that the world is not a jungle,

where they can do whatever they want. He condemned Washington's regime-change approach toward Iran and its

support of the Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO), saying for forty years the U.S. rulers think the Islamic Republic will just disappear into thin air.

The foreign minister also said Israel is looking for war and warned that its actions and those of the United States were increasing the chances of a clash in the region.

"Certainly, some people are looking for war ... Israel," Reuters quoted Zarif as saying. "The risk (of war) is great. The risk will be even greater if you continue to turn a blind eye to severe violations of international law."

He further said Israel has violated international law after bombing campaigns in Syria, criticizing European powers for not calling out Israel and the United States for their behavior in the region.

"Israeli behavior is putting international law on the shelf, U.S. behavior is putting international law on the shelf," he said.

Israeli and U.S. behaviors are "putting international law on the shelf".

Rouhani says Iran seeking brotherly ties with neighbors

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday that Iran has never started a war in the region and seeks "brotherly ties" with neighboring countries.

Speaking in a gathering of people in Bandar Lengeh on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf, Rouhani also said, "Those who think that the U.S. and the Zionist regime of Israel can provide them with security are quite mistaken."

In an open reference to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Rouhani said certain regional countries have taken the wrong path and seek the U.S. and Israel's help while Iran seeks "friendly ties with all the countries in the region".

He noted that the regional countries should maintain security through unity.



"We all should be united and prevent enemy from reaching its objectives through causing division among us," the president suggested.

Elsewhere, he noted that Iran has no fear of pressure by the enemies.

"The U.S. and Zionists seek to hatch plots and cause division among our nation and also cause rift among the government..., the three branches (of government) and the Leadership and weaken the people's trust on the system. However, we are not fearful of the enemy's pressure," the president stated.

He added, "We stand against the oppressor and help the oppressed in the world and as we have said we will not give in to the hegemony."

Pakistan must account for terror attack: Larijani

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said on Sunday that the Pakistani government should account for the Zahedan terrorist attack which left 27 military personnel killed.

Pakistan cannot act "irresponsibly" in this respect, Larijani told an open session of parliament.

"With all due respect for the Pakistani government, such behaviors will influence the two countries' cooperation negatively," Larijani remarked.

Late on Wednesday, a car laden with explosives hit a bus of soldiers on Zahedan-Khash road in the border province of Sistan-Baluchestan killing 27 and injuring the remaining 13.

Terrorists usually use Pakistan's soil as a

safe haven to carry out attacks inside Iran.

Iran has always been complaining that Pakistan fails to fully guard its borders with Iran. Pakistan has also rejected repeated calls by Iran for joint operations against terrorists inside Pakistan's soil.

On Sunday, during a funeral ceremony for the fallen soldiers in Isfahan, IRGC chief Mohammad Ali Jafari said, "If Pakistan does not live up to its obligations, the Islamic Republic of Iran, under international laws and regulations, is entitled to counter threats coming from the other side of country's borders."

■ Iran summons Pakistani ambassador over Zahedan terrorist attack

On Sunday, Iranian Foreign Ministry summoned Riffat Masood, the Pakistani ambassador to Tehran, over the terrorist attack.

"During this meeting, increase in terrorist moves from inside Pakistan, including the recent terrorist incident on Zahedan-Khash road, was mentioned and our country's complaint was announced. It was clearly stressed that the Islamic Republic of Iran expects the Pakistani government and army to take serious actions against the terrorist groups' headquarters in border areas with Iran," Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said.

He added that the Pakistani government and people should not let the terrorist groups cause distrust between the two countries through taking "terrorist" and "inhuman" actions.

Qassemi also urged the Pakistani government to identify and arrest perpetrators of the terrorist attack.

■ Rouhani: 'We will take revenge of Zahedan attack'

Addressing people in Bandar Lengeh on the shores of the Persian Gulf on Sunday, President Hassan Rouhani called the attack "brutal" and said the Iranians will take revenge for the Zahedan attack and will not let terrorists take actions in the region.

■ 'Pakistan to send delegation to Iran over Zahedan attack'

In a phone conversation on Sunday, Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi told his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif that Pakistan will send a delegation to Iran over the Zahedan attack.

Qureshi strongly condemned the attack and said Pakistan is ready to cooperate in fighting terrorism.

U.S. policies driven by its pathological obsession of Iran, Zarif says

"Washington has taken its animus towards Iran to a new extreme over the past two years"

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — In a speech to the Munich Security Conference on Sunday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif criticized Washington's policy toward Iran, saying the U.S. is maddeningly obsessed with Iran

Here is Zarif's speech to the conference:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful Ladies and Gentlemen,

This past Monday, millions of Iranians gathered for mass rallies to mark the 40th anniversary of the Islamic revolution; an earthquake that collapsed a pillar of US domination in West Asia.

We've never been forgiven by the United States for having exercised our right to self-determination. As a result, we have long been the target of an unhealthy fixation—an obsession—which continues to this very day.

The demonization of my country has been a convenient cross for seven consecutive American presidents to bear—and a smokescreen for America's regional clients to hide behind. It is long overdue for the United States to dismantle this malign institution, for it has today morphed into one of the greatest threats to even its own interests—and of course international peace and security.

In the past two years, the U.S. has taken its animus towards Iran to a new extreme, as epitomized by its unlawful and unilateral abrogation of its commitments under the painstakingly-negotiated Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which was unanimously endorsed by the UN Security Council. To gain accomplices in its lawlessness, the U.S. is now even laboring to force others to violate that Resolution, which explicitly calls for normalization of economic relations with Iran.

At the recent meeting of "the unwilling" and "the openly-coerced" in Warsaw, the U.S. Vice President and the Secretary of State both blasted Europe for even

"Is it Iran that threatens the annihilation of others—or is it Mr. Netanyahu—Israel's wolf-crier-in-chief—who openly threatens my country's obliteration while standing next to his nuclear bomb factory?"

"INSTEX falls short of the commitments by the E3 to 'save' the JCPOA".

attempting—albeit without much practical success—to abide by its obligations under the JCPOA and Security Council Resolution 2231. Yesterday—right here in Munich—Vice President Pence repeated this farce when he arrogantly demanded that Europe must join the U.S. in breaking its commitments while undermining its own security. His hateful accusations against Iran—including his ignorant allegation of anti-Semitism against the heirs of a man described as 'Messiah' in the Torah for saving Jews - is both ridiculous and dangerous.

This malign obsession with Iran is imposing costs on others—and especially in our region, which has for 40 years suffered the consequences of U.S. insistence on making wrong choices.

Driven by its pathological obsession with Iran, America has long encouraged reckless and destructive adventurism on the part of its clients: from arming Saddam Hussein in his attack against Iran to supporting the propagation of extremism; from aiding and abetting the ruining of Syria and bombing of innocents in Yemen to whitewashing the incarceration of a Prime Minister and dismemberment of a journalist. In parallel, the U.S. has systematically shielded Israel's constant aggression against Palestinians, while insulating its severe violations of the sovereignty of Lebanon and Syria.

And all in the name of "containing" Iran.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The U.S. claims—and some blindly parrot its accusation—that it is Iran which is interfering in the region. But has it ever been asked whose region? Just glimpse at a map. The U.S. military has traveled 10,000 kilometers to dot all our borders with bases. Meanwhile, it has milked the region of its resources through vast arms sales. According to the most conservative estimate, the GCC's military spending alone will reach a record high of \$100 billion this year—almost seven times that of Iran.

So, who is really exporting insecurity to our region? What is it that threatens the region more?

The unfathomable arsenals used to terrorize the people of Yemen? Or Iran's defensive missiles, which have only ever been used against ISIS terror in self-defense?

Is it Iran that threatens the annihilation of others—or is it Mr. Netanyahu—Israel's wolf-crier-in-chief—who openly threatens my country's obliteration while standing next to his nuclear bomb factory?

No theatrics here—including the show put on by Vice President Pence—can obscure these realities.

Indeed, more and more nations are becoming explicit about the fact that the United States is now the single biggest source of destabilization in our neighborhood. As we speak, Iraqi lawmakers are demanding the withdrawal of U.S. forces from their land. And after more than 17 years of failure in Afghanistan, the U.S. is now negotiating with the Taliban to withdraw the American military.

In contrast, our standing with the peoples of Iraq and Syria to counter terrorism has put ISIS on the verge of extinction, with both countries enjoying levels of peace and stability not seen in years.

I arrived here in Munich from Sochi, where President Rouhani continued his dialogue with his Russian and Turkish counterparts on how to further promote peace in Syria. Prior to that, I visited Lebanon and Iraq for 7 days of discussions with government officials, as well as with political, community and business leaders on how to work together to strengthen stability and advance mutual economic opportunity in our region.

But the reckless U.S. obsession with Iran is threatening these hard-won victories.

On another front, Iran's continued full implementation of the JCPOA—despite the US' abrogation—has played a major role in decreasing tension and promoting regional and global stability. But Iran cannot foot the entire bill for vital global security achievements—whether it is the nuclear accord, or the combatting of drug and human trafficking to Europe. ➔13

Zarif says Mike Pence's "hateful accusations against Iran—including his ignorant allegation of anti-Semitism against the heirs of a man described as 'Messiah' in the Torah for saving Jews - is both ridiculous and dangerous."

Yemeni protesters slam ‘Arab traitors’

Tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets across Yemen to slam some of the country’s fellow Arab states’ attempts at normalization of relations with Israel.

The rallies took place in the capital, Sana’a, as well as in the western provinces of Sa’ada, al-Hudeidah, Ta’izz, and al-Jawf, among other places in the country, on Sunday, Yemen’s al-Masirah television network reported.

The demonstrators specifically criticized a recent United States-led conference held in the Polish capital of Warsaw, during which Arab leaders met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Many Arab observers also called the event — where Netanyahu and some Arab foreign ministers adopted a similar tone regarding the regional situation — a pre-planned stage for the normalization of Israeli-Arab ties.

Netanyahu’s office leaked a video of a closed-door meeting in which Persian Gulf Arab officials were seen playing down the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, defending Israel’s “right to defend itself,” and describing Iran as a “threat” to regional peace.

The Yemeni demonstrators chanted slogans against Israel and slammed Arab leaders as “traitors.”

They called the warming up of the Israeli and Arab regimes an act of treason against the Palestinian cause and vowed to stand by the Palestinian nation in its fight against the Israeli occupation.

The protesters were heeding a call by Abdul-Malik Badreddin, the leader of Yemen’s



popular Ansarullah (Houthi) movement.

Calling for the rallies, Abdul-Malik had called the Warsaw conference “just a manifest of many steps taken against our Islamic Nation,” referring to the international Muslim community.

“The [Arab] traitors and their masters wanted our dear people to be puppets for Israel and the United States,” he said.

■ 9 Saudi soldiers killed in Yemeni fire on southern border posts
Meantime, at least nine Saudi soldiers

have been killed in renewed wave of fire from Yemeni fighters of the Ansarullah movement on military positions south of the kingdom.

Saudi regime authorities said in a statement late on Saturday that the soldiers had been killed in battles with the Ansarullah in the southern border regions.

The Saudi regime military also published images of a funeral of one of the soldiers in the al-Ahsa region.

Ansarullah said they had inflicted considerable losses of the ranks of the Saudis in

attacks on Saudi military positions, adding that fighters had taken control of a number of sites in areas east of Jaffan and Jizan regions.

A military source from the Ansarullah said that fighters had also launched attacks on Saudi army personnel stationed in Najran and Asir regions on Friday, leading to scores of deaths among the ranks of the Saudi military.

The new clashes in the Saudi-Yemen border regions come after a period of relative calm in the area.

The cross-border violence had largely ebbed after the United Nations managed to mediate a truce agreement between the Ansarullah and Saudis in Sweden in December. However, the two sides have repeatedly accused each other of violating the truce.

Attacks by Ansarullah on Saudi positions south of the kingdom are largely meant to respond to Riyadh’s relentless bombardment of the country which has left more than 15,000 people, most of them civilians, killed.

The House of Saud regime has put the death toll of its military personnel during the four-year-old war on Yemen at around 1,500, with many of them killed in counter-attacks by the Ansarullah on army positions in three southern regions of Najran, Jizan and Asir.

The Saudi regime and a number of its allies launched a war on Yemen in 2015. The war has killed thousands of people and brought Yemen close to the brink of a countrywide famine.

(Source: Press TV)

Trump demands Europe take hundreds of ISIL terrorists

The United States President Donald Trump has demanded that Europe take in hundreds of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists captured in Syria, threatening that the United States would otherwise be forced to release them.

“The United States is asking Britain, France, Germany and other European allies to take back over 800 ISIS fighters that we captured in Syria and put them on trial,” the president wrote in a flurry of social media posts on Saturday.

“The caliphate is ready to fall. The alternative is not a good one in that we will be forced to release them.”

“The U.S. does not want to watch as these ISIS (ISIL) fighters permeate Europe, which is where they are expected to go.”

“We do so much, and spend so much - Time for others to step up and do the job that they are so capable of doing. We are pulling back after 100 per cent Caliphate victory!” he wrote.

Trump caused widespread concern among the U.S. allies in December when he suddenly announced that the U.S. would withdraw its troops from Syria and that ISIL had already been defeated.

Critics warned that the armed group remained a threat and that a pullout could lead to a resurgence, with the U.S. allies in the region not equipped to handle the threat alone.

Sami Nader, director of the Levant institute for Strategic Affairs in Beirut, told Al Jazeera that Trump’s remarks are a “recurring theme.”

“The big question is, where will they put these fighters,” Nader said.

“If they put them in French prisons – then it will be known that these prisons have become organizing cells for those to gather and organize themselves,” he said.

“The larger European public does not want these fighters to come back ... because they are responsible for terrorist acts.”

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a U.S.-backed Kurdish-led militia, launched an offensive last week to dislodge ISIL from the village of Baghuz, the only area still under its control, near the Iraqi border.

As the SDF advanced under heavy U.S. air attacks in recent days, a stream of civilians have also fled the few areas that remain under ISIL control, along with defeated fighters trying to escape unnoticed.

Though ISIL terrorists still hold out in a pocket of central Syria’s remote desert and are believed to have gone underground as sleeper cells in Iraqi cities, their territorial rule is, for now, almost over.

It ends a project launched from a mosque in Mosul in northern Iraq in 2014, when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi seized advantage of regional chaos to proclaim himself caliph, suzerain overall Muslim people and land.

He set up a governing system with courts, a currency and flag that at its height stretched from northwest Syria almost to Baghdad, encompassing some two million people.

According to Nader, the root causes that led to the emergence of ISIL still remain.

“All the political grievances, the ethnic grievances [are still there] and poverty is widespread in this region,” he said.



Meanwhile, Turkey, which regards the SDF’s strongest component, the Kurdish YPG (People’s Protection Units/ People’s Defense Units/Yekineyen Parastina Gel), as terrorists, has threatened to march deeper into northern Syria to drive it back.

On Friday the U.S. Army General Joseph Votel, who oversees American forces in the Middle East as head of Central Command, said the end of ISIL could lead to a more dispersed, harder-to-detect network of fighters waging guerrilla warfare.

That should require continued help from Washington, he said.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

China, U.S. continue tit-for-tat row over Huawei

A senior Chinese official has dismissed concerns raised by the United States Vice President Mike Pence over telecommunications giant Huawei, rejecting allegations the company might covertly collect data and report it to Beijing.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference on Saturday, top diplomat Yang Jiechi also urged European leaders to ignore Washington’s calls for Huawei to be banned from developing 5G wireless infrastructure in their countries.

“The Europeans know very well what is the wise path for them to go forward,” Jiechi said.

“In the Fourth Industrial Revolution, we should all work together ... And Chinese law does not require companies to install backdoors or collect intelligence,” he added.

Huawei, the world’s biggest producer of telecoms equipment, is the subject of intense scrutiny in the West over its relationship with the Chinese government.

The U.S., Australia and New Zealand have all put restrictions on the company’s access to their markets, citing concerns its equipment could be used by Beijing for spying.

Washington has argued that Chinese vendors are subject to a National Intelligence Law that requires the country’s organizations and citizens to collaborate in espionage efforts.

In separate comments to the Munich conference on Saturday, Vice President Pence said the U.S. had been “clear with our security partners on the threat posed by Huawei and other Chinese telecom companies”.

“Chinese law requires them to provide Beijing’s vast security apparatus with access



to any data that touches their network or equipment,” he said.

Pence added that Washington was “calling on all our security partners to be vigilant and to reject any enterprise that would compromise the integrity of our communications technology or our national security systems”.

Huawei has repeatedly denied the U.S. claims it may be involved in the collection of intelligence for the Chinese government.

Saturday’s tit-for-tat came after Britain’s foreign intelligence service called on Friday for a “proper conversation” in Britain about whether to restrict Huawei’s access to the country’s 5G market, warning it was not “in-

herently desirable that any piece of significant national infrastructure is provided from a monopoly supplier”.

Asked by the Reuters news agency if Britain was weighing up a move to ban the telecoms giant, MI6 chief Alex Younger replied the issue was “more complicated ... than ‘in or out’”.

“I’m not pretending I have the full answer for this, I am saying that it’s important for us to work through all of this stuff,” the 55-year-old said, adding that he had not felt any pressure from Britain’s allies in the West over potentially using Huawei as a supplier.

Britain’s BT Group - the largest provider of mobile services in Britain - said in December

it was removing Huawei equipment from the core of its existing 3G and 4G mobile operations and would not use the Chinese company in central parts of the incoming 5G network.

Separately on Friday, German Economy Minister Peter Altmaier told Reuters that Berlin plans to tighten the law on the security standards that must be met by telecoms operators bidding to participate in the build-out of next-generation 5G networks in the country.

“We will improve and strengthen our national law regarding security requirements for secure communications,” Altmaier said on the sidelines of the Munich conference.

“All suppliers to German telecoms service providers will have to meet these requirements,” he added.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has stated that Germany would require guarantees Huawei would not hand over data to the Chinese state before the telecoms equipment supplier can participate in building its 5G network.

An upgrade to existing 4G mobile technology, 5G is expected to deliver enhanced speed and security to internet users, enabling much faster data download and upload speeds, wider coverage and new types of machine-to-machine communication.

Most countries are unlikely to roll out the technology before 2020, according to a recent study by the United States-based Eurasia Group consultancy firm, but China is pushing ahead with efforts to launch its 5G network this year.

(Source: agencies)

Heather Nauert ends bid to be next U.S. ambassador to UN



The United States President Donald Trump’s choice for ambassador to the United Nations, Heather Nauert, has withdrawn from consideration for the job for family reasons, according to the State Department.

Nauert was State Department spokeswoman when Trump chose her for the UN position; prior to that, she had been a host on the conservative-leaning Fox News Channel. She had been criticized by Democrats for her lack of diplomatic experience.

“The past two months have been grueling for my family and therefore it is in the best interest of my family that I withdraw my name from consideration,” Nauert said in a State Department statement on Saturday.

The statement did not specify the hardship on her family but the Washington Post said Nauert’s husband and children had remained in New York while she was working in Washington, DC.

Meanwhile, Bloomberg News, quoting anonymous sources, said Nauert’s nomination began to falter after a White House background check discovered that Nauert employed a nanny who was legally in the United States but not authorized to work.

Nauert, 49, suggested in the statement that she was leaving government entirely, saying: “Serving in the administration for the past two years has been one of the highest honors of my life.”

Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State, praised Nauert in a statement, saying that he had “great respect” for her “personal” decision to withdraw.

Trump had announced on December 7 he would nominate Nauert for the UN position to replace Nikki Haley, who resigned at the end of 2018. Haley was a former South Carolina governor who also had little experience in world affairs before taking the ambassador position.

Calling Nauert “very talented, very smart, very quick”, Trump said he thought she would be “respected by all”.

In the wake of November elections that strengthened Republican control of the Senate, her confirmation appeared likely, if not easy.

Yet Trump never put Nauert’s name forward with the Senate and no confirmation hearing was scheduled.

The State Department in its statement that Trump would announce a nominee for the UN position “soon”.

Before coming to the State Department, Nauert was a breaking news anchor on Trump’s favorite television show, Fox & Friends. She joined the department as a spokeswoman in April 2017, three months into the Trump administration.

She was named acting undersecretary for public diplomacy and public affairs in early 2018.

The role of the U.S. ambassador to the UN is a highly visible international position.

While Nauert had little diplomatic experience, other nations with veto power on the UN Security Council are represented by ambassadors with decades of foreign policy work.

“She’s clearly not qualified for this job but these days it seems that the most important qualification is that you show up on Donald Trump’s TV screen,” Democratic Senator Chris Murphy said of Nauert on CNN in December.

(Source: agencies)

Pakistan questions India’s ‘security lapses’ after Kashmir attack

Pakistan has hit back at the allegations by India that it is harboring fighters from the armed group that claimed responsibility for the last week’s deadly attack on a paramilitary convoy in Indian-administered Kashmir.

Thursday’s car bomb attack, which killed 42 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel, was claimed by the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM/The Army of Muhammad).

Following the blast, New Delhi called for “the complete isolation of Pakistan” with Prime Minister Narendra Modi promising a “strong response”.

“If our neighbor thinks it can destabilize India, then it is making a big mistake,” Modi said on Friday.

On Sunday, Islamabad rejected New Delhi’s accusations, saying they were “knee-jerk” and made without any thorough investigation.

“India needs to introspect and respond to questions about its security and intelligence lapses that led to this attack,” Pakistan’s foreign ministry said in a statement.

“Bluster, belligerence and pursuit of expedient standards to suit internal political interests is both delusional and counterproductive.”

“India must come out of the denial mode, end state repression against Kashmiri youth, address widespread alienation in IOK and pursue the path of dialogue,” the statement added.

The bombing ratcheted up the tension between the two South Asian neighbors, which rule parts of Muslim-majority Kashmir while claiming the entire territory as their own. India has, for years, accused Pakistan of backing separatist groups in divided Kashmir.

Pakistan insists that it only offers political support to Kashmir’s suppressed population.

Formed in 2000, the JeM is a Pakistan-based armed group that aims to undermine and overthrow Indian control over Kashmir through attacks on security and government targets.

The group was founded by Masood Azhar, who previously fought under the banner of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM) and has been linked to al-Qaeda.

“JeM remains a proscribed entity in Pakistan since 2002 and Pakistan is implementing its obligations on sanctions implementation,” added the statement from Pakistan foreign ministry.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Japan PM nominated Trump for Nobel after U.S. request

Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe nominated U.S. President Donald Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize last autumn after being requested to do so by Washington, a Japanese newspaper reported Sunday.

Washington sounded out Tokyo over the possibility of nominating Trump for the prize after his landmark summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un in June last year,

an unnamed Japanese government source told the Asahi Shimbun.

Trump said Abe had sent him a copy of a five-page nomination letter delivered to the Nobel Peace Prize committee in which the Japanese leader praised his efforts in defusing tensions with Pyongyang.

“He said ‘I have nominated you respectfully on behalf of

Japan. I am asking them to give you the Nobel Peace Prize.’ I said thank you,” Trump told reporters at the White House.

“Many other people feel that way, too. I’ll probably never get it. That’s okay.”

Japanese officials did not respond to AFP’s requests for comment on Trump’s claim or the newspaper report.

(Source: AFP)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	156155.1
IFX	1937.58

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,427 rials
GBP	54,140 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$66.25/b
WTI	\$55.98/b
OPEC Basket	\$64.28/b
Gold	\$1,322.70 /oz
Silver	\$15.81/oz
Platinum	\$812.79 oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Panahi appointed as acting head of Tax Administration

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Mohammad-Qasem Panahi was appointed as the acting head of Iran's National Tax Administration (INTA), Shada reported on Sunday. In a decree, Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjasand appointed Panahi, who was previously the deputy head of INTA, to the new post, replacing Seyed Kamel Taqavi-Nejad.

Airbus warns of no-deal Brexit, says has spent tens of millions preparing

Airbus said on Sunday it would have to make “difficult decisions” about future investment if Britain crashes out of the European Union without a deal, adding it had already spent tens of millions of euros in preparations. “There is no such thing as a managed ‘no deal’, it’s absolutely catastrophic for us,” senior vice president Katherine Bennett told the BBC’s Andrew Marr. “Some difficult decisions will have to made if there’s no-deal (...) we will have to look at future investments.” She said Airbus had already spent “tens of million of euros” on preparing for Brexit, for example on stockpiling parts and securing IT systems. *(Source: Reuters)*

China to lure foreign investment in state giants

China will seek to attract foreign investment in its larger state-owned enterprises (SOEs), which are undergoing reforms to make them more competitive, the head of the country’s state asset regulator said. China began a new round of reforms in 2016 aimed at streamlining its lumbering SOEs by introducing private capital, curbing overcapacity, shutting down “zombie” subsidiaries and restructuring assets. Private and foreign firms should “actively participate in reform and development of central enterprises, and jointly explore ways of deep cooperation including mixed-ownership”, Xiao Yaqing, chairman of the State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC), said on the regulator’s website on Sunday. China has been promoting “mixed-ownership” reforms aimed at introducing private capital and management methods into giant central government SOEs. The SASAC will also support investment by state giants in private and foreign firms, Xiao said, without giving details. *(Source: Reuters)*

Dollar set for consecutive weekly gains for 1st time since November

The dollar was modestly higher against its rivals Friday and remained on track to post consecutive weekly gains for the first time since November. The dollar’s rise came as traders digested mostly negative U.S. economic data. The U.S. dollar index, which measures the greenback’s strength against a trade-weighted basket of six major currencies, rose 0.03% to 96.83. The end of the week brought mostly negative economic data. A New York manufacturing index topped economists’ forecasts, while trade and industrial data fell short. The Empire State manufacturing index rose 4.9 points in February to a reading of 8.8, the New York Federal Reserve said. U.S. import prices fell 0.5% in January from December for the month, the Labor Department said Friday. That missed expectations for a 0.1% decline. Industrial production -- a measure of output at factories, mines and utilities -- fell 0.6% to a seasonally adjusted 109.4 from December’s 110.1, the Federal Reserve said Friday. This confounded economists’ expectations for a 0.1% increase. The mostly negative data came a day after the U.S. retail sales fell to their lowest since 2009, adding to expectations that the Federal Reserve will keep monetary policy tightening on hold. *(Source: Yahoo Finance)*

‘PMO determined to rely on domestic potentials’

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Regarding Iran’s need for quality and swift maritime and port services as well as improving the efficiency of such services, the country’s Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) is determined to utilize domestic potentials and capabilities in manufacturing equipment and providing related services, PMO Head Mohammad Rastad announced on the opening ceremony of the 26th Conference on Coordination of

Iranian Maritime Organizations in Tehran. As the official portal of PMO reported on Sunday, the official underlined the vitality of supplying PMO strategic needs via relying on domestic capabilities, adding that PMO plans to manufacture gantry cranes and some other required equipment domestically. Rastad called for Iranian knowledge-based companies to assist maritime organizations with manufacturing strategic equipment.

500 kilometers of freeways to be inaugurated in a month

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — About 500 kilometers of freeways will be inaugurated throughout Iran by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019), Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami announced on Saturday, IRNA reported.

Two months ago, Iran’s Deputy Transport Minister Kheirollah Khademi had announced



The one-day Conference on Coordination of Iranian Maritime Organizations was attended by Iranian Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami, the Managing Director of National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC)

Nasrollah Sardashti, the Managing Director of Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) Mohammad Saeidi, several Iranian Parliament members besides some other Iranian high ranking officials.

ECB eyes data as slowdown proves ‘significant,’ Villeroy says

The slowdown of the European economy is “significant” and the European Central Bank could change its interest-rates guidance if it becomes clear the situation isn’t temporary, Governing Council member Francois Villeroy de Galhau said. The extent of the weakness at the end of 2018 has taken policy makers by surprise, with Italy entering recession and Germany narrowly avoiding the same fate. The ECB has so far stuck to its guidance that it will keep borrowing costs at record lows at least through the summer, indicating hikes could come after that. Asked an interview with Spanish paper El Pais if poor economic data decreases the likelihood of a rate increase

after the summer, Villeroy said the ECB will look at the numbers. “The key question will be if the slowdown is temporary -- with a bounce-back during this year -- or more durable,” he said. The comments are another dovish signal after Executive Board member Benoit Coeure said Friday the ECB is discussing whether to offer new longer-term loans to banks. Investors responded to Coeure’s comments by selling the euro and buying bank stocks. Villeroy said in the interview that the ECB could be “extremely efficient” using a trio of instruments, including tools for increasing liquidity to banks, as well as its stock

of asset purchases and interest rates. “We will be pragmatic in using this trio,” he said. Villeroy, who is also governor of the Bank of France, said the main problem facing the euro-area economy is global political uncertainty. That hurts Germany more than other European countries like France and Spain, where economies rely more on domestic demand, which is resilient, he said. “If political leaders are able in the months to come to diminish this uncertainty, it would significantly improve the economic picture,” Villeroy said. *(Source: Bloomberg)*

Central bankers take to stage as dovish outlooks spread

Central bankers get a chance to flesh out their increasingly dovish outlooks for monetary policy this year as economic data continue to disappoint. The U.S. Federal Reserve will on Wednesday publish minutes from its recent meeting, which will likely show how much conviction there was among policy makers to suspend their interest rate hiking campaign. Fed officials John Williams, Richard Clarida and Randal Quarles are among those speaking on Friday. “Policy makers over-corrected in a dovish direction in January,” said Carl Riccadonna, chief U.S. economist at Bloomberg Economics. “However, the dovish tone of the meeting statement may not necessarily reflect a universal consensus among meeting participants. Public comments since the meeting, suggest the hawkish contingent may be regrouping.” Over in Europe, President Mario Draghi and Chief Economist Peter Praet are among several European Central Bank policy makers delivering speeches at a time when the euro-area economy keeps falling short of expectations. Those commentaries and the Thursday release of the minutes of their last meeting might give clues on policy makers’ intentions March, in particular whether they plan new loans for banks. “The minutes will bring more color on the January gathering, at which policy makers described risks to the outlook as to the downside,” said Jamie Murray, chief European economist at Bloomberg Economics.

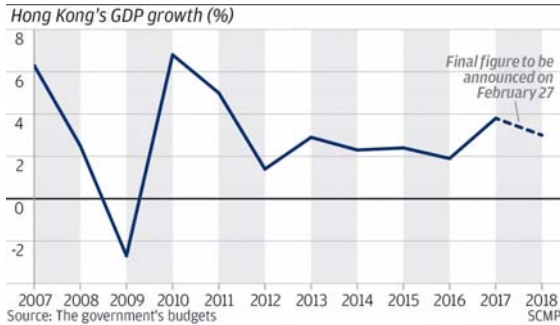


“Growth in the euro area has slowed, but the worst is probably over.” Elsewhere, Bank of Canada Governor Stephen Poloz speaks on Thursday and Reserve Bank of Australia Governor Philip Lowe gives parliamentary testimony on Friday. Investors are looking for clues on whether Canada will harden its position around its pause on rates and what the recent dropping of a tightening bias means for Australia. Here’s our weekly rundown of the other key economic events. **U.S.** Talks between the U.S. and China over trade are set to recommence in Washington

below 3 per cent was in 2013, when the city recorded 2.9 per cent growth. From 2012 to 2016, Hong Kong’s GDP growth rates ranged from 1.4 to 2.9 per cent. Business sector lawmakers and experts on Sunday urged Chan to roll out measures to help Hong Kong’s small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and residents deal with the economic slowdown. Economist Andy Kwan Cheuk-chiu, director of the ACE Centre for Business and Economic Research, called on Chan to be generous with his relief measures. “Hong Kong’s economy depends a lot on consumption ... Chan should consider waiving people’s rates, electricity bills and salaries tax, as well as increasing their tax allowances,” he said. Kwan urged Chan to also help companies borrow money, as banks could tighten lending amid unfavourable and uncertain economic conditions. Under a special lending scheme launched from 2008 to 2010, the government has provided 80 per cent guaranteed coverage to 30 banks so they can lend to SMEs without sufficient assets to secure loans.

Slowest economic growth in 2 years expected for Hong Kong amid US-China trade war and weak retail

Hong Kong’s economy expanded at its slowest pace in two years as the US-China trade war and weak domestic consumption dragged growth down to an estimated 3 per cent last year, the city’s finance chief revealed on Sunday. Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po said the economic growth rate for the fourth quarter of 2018 would be lower than 1.5 per cent – the weakest since the first quarter of 2016. The latest figures pale in comparison to a higher-than-forecast expansion of 3.8 per cent in 2017, which was greater than the average rate of 2.9 per cent from 2007 to 2016. In his official blog, Chan said he expected growth this year to be lower than the decade trend. “From what we see now, I would not rule out such a possibility,” he said. “It would show that the momentum behind our economic growth has slowed down quite quickly. We estimate that the growth rate for 2018 will be around 3 per cent, on the lower end of our projection when we rolled out our last budget [in February last year].” In his next budget address on February 27, Chan will pledge to place emphasis on supporting businesses, employment and people’s livelihoods. The growth rates for the first three quarters of last year were 4.6 per cent, 3.5 per cent and 2.8 per cent respectively. Chan said the numbers showed an obvious trend of economic slowdown. “The impact of the US-China trade war has started to emerge ... and it was almost zero growth for commodities exports in the last quarter. This was a sharp drop from the 6 per cent average growth in the first three quarters,” he wrote. “Consumption was also affected – retail volume only grew by 2.1 per cent in the fourth quarter, much lower than the 12 per cent growth in the first half of the year.” The last time Hong Kong’s economic growth rate dropped



The maximum amount each enterprise can borrow is HK\$12 million. Kwan and industrial sector lawmaker Jimmy Ng Wing-ka, vice-chairman of the Business and Professionals Alliance, agreed that it was time for the government to relaunch the scheme. “Hong Kong’s major trading partners, such as the US, Europe, Japan and Taiwan, are all struggling, and our exporters have been receiving fewer and fewer orders from these places,” Ng said. “So the government needs to help businesses borrow money. The Hong Kong Monetary Authority should also ask the banks to relax their loan requirements.” Liberal Party lawmaker Peter Shiu Ka-fai, who represents the wholesale and retail sectors in the legislature, proposed that business registration and various licence fees should be waived this year. “Chan should also consider giving out consumer vouchers to encourage residents to shop,” he added. The finance minister warned that Hong Kong this year would continue to be affected by the outcomes of trade negotiations between the US and China, as well as Britain’s exit from the European Union and other geopolitical factors. “External uncertainties and variations were relatively large, so when we prepared the budget, our theme was to support businesses, protect employment, stabilise the economy and benefit people’s livelihoods,” he said. Chan also noted that large corporations in Hong Kong were pessimistic about the economy this year. He cited surveys conducted by the Census and Statistics Department indicating that most large companies expected the economy to worsen in the first quarter of this year, with only a minority optimistic about the situation improving. *(Source: South China Morning Post)*

Crude oil likely to stay range-bound in the short term

Crude oil has been range-bound this week. Much uncertainty prevailed regarding the trade deal between the U.S. and China. In global markets, trade tensions have resurfaced as the U.S. President Donald Trump said that he is unlikely to meet his Chinese counterpart before the March 1 deadline.

However, short-covering after a sharp fall contained losses in crude. API reported a drawdown in crude inventories. This supported prices of crude oil. OPEC crude oil production declined sharply in January largely due to a steep cut in Saudi Arabia's production. Sentiment turned bullish after Saudi Arabia said it would reduce production to nearly 9.8 million barrels a day in March, well below its production quota under a deal to cap output.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) warned that the political crisis in Venezuela risks disrupting the global crude oil market as the type of oil it pumps becomes increasingly scarce. The IEA reported a sharp rise in the inventories. But that did not have any impact on crude oil prices. Crude oil extended gains on optimism over OPEC's resolve to rebalance the market.

All five base metals were under pressure as the U.S. President ruled out the possibility of meeting the Chinese President before the trade-truce deadline of March 1. Further, strength in the dollar weighed on base metals.



sibility of meeting the Chinese President before the trade-truce deadline of March 1. Further, strength in the dollar weighed on base metals.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned about a slowdown in the global economy eroding the outlook for demand. Risk appetite declined due to concerns about

the outlook for China's economy. Hence, the sentiment remained bearish. However, Donald Trump asserted that trade talks between the U.S. and China were making progress. Hence, signs of progress on trade matters supported base metals.

Trump is also considering pushing back the deadline for the imposition of higher

tariffs on Chinese imports by 60 days. China's trade balance data showed strong growth. Its aluminum exports surged to a record high in January as rising output from new smelters pushed more metals into the global market.

Ahead, the outlook for crude oil is mixed. OPEC's production declined in January largely due to Saudi Arabia. The country has pledged to further cut production in March. This augurs well for the crude-oil market.

According to OPEC, 2019 oil demand growth is forecast to rise to 100 million bpd, from 98.76 million last year. However, much uncertainty continues regarding trade matters between the U.S. and China. Also, inventories and the Baker Hughes rig count are volatile. The ongoing crisis in Venezuela is a matter of concern.

The IEA has warned that Venezuela's oil crisis could disrupt the global crude-oil market. Non-OPEC supply is expected to average 64.34 million bpd in 2019, up from 62.17 million bpd the previous year. Moreover, the dollar is rising. Hence, there is no clear direction for crude at the moment. Overall, crude oil is expected to stay range-bound in the short term.

(Source: Money Control)

OPEC has a president under sanctions, but history shows it's manageable

Being hit by U.S. sanctions isn't ideal when you're representing a global oil institution, but history shows it's manageable.

Venezuelan Oil Minister Manuel Quevedo, who this year holds the rotating presidency of OPEC, has just been sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department for his ties to President Nicolas Maduro. That means any American assets he owns will be blocked and dealings with U.S. persons forbidden.

While it might be personally problematic for Quevedo, who also heads state-owned oil giant PDVSA, his role as OPEC president probably won't be affected.

The organization is more directly represented by its secretary-general, currently the Nigerian Mohammad Barkindo. The president's duties are more ceremonial, including such items as shaping the agenda of OPEC meetings in concert with the secretary-general. Quevedo will chair his first ministerial meeting in April.

And there's historical proof that the office



can still be discharged while being subject to American sanctions.

Iran's Rostam Qasemi, a former commander of the Revolutionary Guards, was on the sanctions list when he became oil minister -- and OPEC president -- in summer 2011. Qasemi held the role of president until the end of the year, when it alphabetically rotated to the next country, and remained as Iran's oil minister for another two years.

(Source: Business Standard)

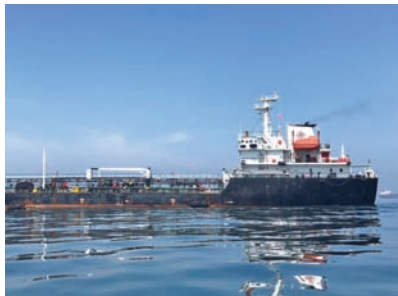
India to continue buying Venezuelan oil despite U.S. warning

India will look into commercial considerations and related factors to determine the value of oil imports from any country, an Indian official said, after a top U.S. official warned countries against buying oil from Venezuela.

Earlier this week, U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton warned countries and companies against buying crude oil from Venezuela, after the Latin American country's Oil Minister Manuel Quevedo said during a surprise visit to India that Venezuela wants to sell more oil to the fast-growing Indian market.

Raveesh Kumar, the spokesman of India's Ministry of External Affairs, said at a press briefing on Thursday, as carried by Sputnik:

"Venezuela is the chair of OPEC and GECF. We don't have any barter system with Venezuela; commercial considerations and related factors will determine the value of trade which we



have with any country."

At the start of the Venezuelan political crisis last month, Indian media reported that the Asian country continues to be one of the main buyers of Venezuelan crude oil. Indian refiners are still buying more than 400,000 bpd of oil from the troubled Latin American country, which is sitting on the world's largest crude oil resources.

(Source: RT)

Try and try again: Philippines resurrects LNG ambitions

On Thursday, news broke (again) that the Philippines is trying to build its first operational liquefied natural gas (LNG) project. Manila-based Phoenix Petroleum said it was in talks with state-owned Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) for a "strategic alliance" on its proposed \$2 billion LNG hub.

Phoenix said in a statement that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) could be signed with PNOC in the coming weeks. The company added that the alliance with PNOC could involve pipeline infrastructure, PNOC's share of Malampaya gas, equity, and marketing opportunities. Philippine Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi said that PNOC "was approached by some potential investors for a possible 10-15 percent participating interest" in an LNG project, but he gave no further details, Reuters reported. Cusi is also the board

PNOC board chairman. "We just have to wait for further developments," he added.

Phoenix has already indicated that it plans to break ground sometime this year on a 2.2 million tons per annum (mtpa) LNG terminal in Batangas province, just south of Manila, the capital. Commercial operations have targeted to start by 2023. The facility will also include a 2,000-megawatt power plant component.

The disclosure comes just a few weeks after PNOC said it had terminated its selection of a joint venture partner for its proposed LNG hub in the country, formally ending its bid to spearhead what could have been a state-led facility for the imported LNG. The problem, according to Cusi at the time, is that the proposed project could not be started immediately because PNOC had to do initial studies and prepare the budget that will be

presented to Congress for approval. "I said, we've been in this for two years. I said, had that been started, if that had broken ground, maybe next month we'd be operating the first power plant. Until now we're still in the drawing board," he said.

Now, apparently, the situation has changed amid fresh talks between Phoenix, a retail fuel supplier, and PNOC. However, as I've reported several times before this could be just another rehashing of preliminary talks that lead to no tangible decision or agreement to put up the Philippines' first LNG import terminal. The problem for the Philippines is that its offshore Malampaya natural gas field, operated by Shell, and the main source of natural gas for Luzon, the country's main island and its most populated, including Manila with 20 plus million people, will run out in less

than five years, according to Philippine DOE estimates. Unless the Philippines acts and acts soon, it will run out of gas and have to turn to dirtier-burning coal for power production to offset the loss of gas from Malampaya.

The DOE, for its part, has long been pushing for the country to turn away from over-reliance on coal, but at the end of the day, the DOE has no statutory power to enforce its plans, it can merely advise. Even if the impending, not yet signed, MoU is reached between Phoenix and PNOC it's a long shot for a project to be built due to the country's history of governmental indecision, inefficiency, and corruption, while provincial politicians also often demand financial kickbacks to approve projects, even projects that have the backing of the power base in Manila.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Are Saudi Arabia's renewable ambitions realistic?

The Arabian Peninsula has, for most of its existence, not been of significant strategic value. The region is mostly dry and, until recently, didn't produce much the world needed. Saudi Arabia, however, has become a regional power center due to custodianship of Islam's two holiest sites and due to its pivotal role in the global oil market. Now, Riyadh is also planning to become a renewable energy powerhouse.

The oil kingdom has an incredibly high number of sunny days, with only 45 cloudy days each year. It also has significant potential for wind energy, particularly in the Red Sea area. Furthermore, Riyadh has embarked upon a path to become a nuclear energy powerhouse with the instalment of approximately 19 reactors. It is only relatively recently that the Saudi government has made clear its intentions to expand its renewable footprint.

Until recently, Saudi Arabia was a country controlled by old men, all brothers from the same father and founder of the Kingdom. King Salman, however, has fostered his son, Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), to become the heir-apparent and the de-facto leader of the country. The crown prince's instalment was greeted with much excitement due to his intention to wane Saudi Arabia of its oil addiction and diversify the economy. The Vision 2030 program outlines the Kingdom's objectives in the diversification of the country's sources of development and growth. The creation of a renewables sector is an essential part of the program.

Besides diversification, ulterior motives drive the push for clean energy production. Saudi Arabia produces on average 10 million barrels of oil per day of which the majority is exported. A significant portion, approximately one million barrels, is burnt for electricity production. Therefore, Riyadh's plans



to diversify its energy sector are also aimed at increasing its export capacity and thus its revenue stream.

Saudi Arabia's primary focus is solar energy, with the country having announced several projects already. It aims to invest \$50 billion on expanding PV installations and plans to install 41 gigawatts of solar energy by 2032. As well as solar, several companies have signed contracts worth \$500 million to build the first Saudi wind energy farms.

Economic and political factors have pushed the country to build a critical domestic nuclear energy industry from scratch, an industry which should provide 15 percent of its energy by 2032. Saudi Arabia's archenemy, Iran, already has several active atomic reactors which have been built with Russian assistance. A nuclear energy industry serves two purposes: having the capacity to produce 'the bomb' if an arms race occurs and decreasing dependency on the oil industry.

Although the Saudi Energy Research Centre acknowledges that hydrocarbons will remain a significant part of its energy mix until 2032 (60 GW), there will also be 41 GW of solar energy, 17.6 GW of nuclear energy, 9 GW of wind power, 3

GW of waste to heat, and 1 GW of geothermal energy.

Despite the abundant media attention for Riyadh's planned reforms and investment in alternative energy sources, not much has materialized in recent years. The unrealistic nature of some projects together with lousy communication with the relevant authorities have led to disappointing results. The planned investment of \$200 billion in a 200 GW solar energy facility together with Japanese Softbank is an example of a project which has failed to deliver due to bad planning and unrealistic volumes.

Also, MBS' streak of political blunders has decreased investor confidence. The crown prince is blamed for the disastrous war in Yemen which has led to the biggest humanitarian crisis on the planet, the blockade of Qatar which has driven the country into the hands of Iran, and the murder of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi. The murder of Khashoggi has probably proven to be the most damaging of all of these factors. This has also made the U.S. Congress wary of any deal to provide American nuclear technology for energy production that could also be used to produce a nuclear weapon.

Thirdly, an essential factor influencing Riyadh's commitment to reaching its renewable energy targets is the price of oil. Being the largest exporter of oil in the world has the advantage of providing 'easy money' for the state coffers. When prices collapsed in 2014, the urgency was high for the Kingdom to decrease its dependency on both oil revenues and the oil industry as a form of employment. However, the improved position of oil exporters in recent years has reduced the pressure on the Saudi leadership to push through painful reforms.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Renewables to grow faster than any fuel in history: BP

BP has published the 2019 edition of its Energy Outlook, exploring the need for more energy to support continued global economic growth and rising prosperity and the need for a more rapid transition to a lower-carbon future.

The Outlook also considers the possible impact of an escalation in trade disputes and the implications of a significant tightening in the regulation of plastics.

Much of the narrative in the Outlook is based on its evolving transition scenario which assumes that government policies, technologies and societal preferences evolve in a manner and speed similar to the recent past. "The world of energy is changing," says Spencer Dale, group chief economist. "Renewables and natural gas together account for the great majority of the growth in primary energy. In our evolving transition scenario, 85 percent of new energy is lower carbon."



The evolving transition scenario predicts:

- Global energy demand increases by around a third by 2040, driven by improvements in living standards, particularly in India, China and across Asia.

- Energy consumed by industry and buildings accounts for around 75 percent of this increase in overall energy demand, while growth in energy demand from transport slows sharply relative to the past as gains in vehicle efficiency accelerate.

- The power sector uses around 75 percent of the increase in primary energy.

- 85 percent of the growth in energy supply is generated through renewable energy and natural gas, with renewables becoming the largest source of global power generation by 2040.

- The pace at which renewable energy penetrates the global energy system is faster than for any fuel in history.

- Demand for oil grows in the first half of the Outlook period before gradually plateauing, while global coal consumption remains broadly flat.

Across all the scenarios considered in the Outlook, significant levels of continued investment in new oil will be required to meet oil demand in 2040. Other scenarios include:

■ More energy scenario

More energy will be needed to support growth and enable billions of people to move from low to middle incomes. There is a strong link between human progress and energy consumption; the UN Human Development Index suggests that increases in energy consumption of up to around 100 gigajoules (GJ) per head are associated with substantial increases in human development and well-being.

Today, around 80 percent of the world's population live in countries where average energy consumption is less than 100 GJ per head. In order to reduce that number to one-third of the population by 2040, the world would require around 65 percent more energy than today, or 25 percent more energy than needed in the evolving transition scenario. The increase in energy required over and above the evolving transition scenario is roughly the equivalent of China's entire energy consumption in 2017.

■ Rapid transition scenario

The rapid transition scenario is the combination of analyses throughout the Outlook which brings together in a single scenario the policy measures in separate lower carbon scenarios for industry and buildings, transport and power. Doing so results in around a 45 percent decline in carbon emissions by 2040 relative to current levels – which is broadly in the middle of a sample of external projections with claim to be consistent with meeting the Paris climate goals.

The fall reflects a combination of: gains in energy efficiency; a switch to lower-carbon fuels; material use of Carbon Capture Utilization and Storage; and, of particular importance in the power sector, a significant rise in the carbon price.

The power sector is currently the single largest source of carbon emissions from energy use. Reductions in carbon emissions from the transport industry in all scenarios to 2040 is relatively small in comparison.

■ Less globalization scenario

International trade underpins economic growth and allows countries to diversify their source of energy. In the less globalization scenario the Outlook explores the possible impact that escalating trade disputes could have on the global energy system.

"The message from history is that concerns about energy security can have persistent, scarring effects," said Dale.

The scenario highlights how a reduction in openness and trade associated with an escalation in trade disputes could reduce worldwide GDP and therefore energy demand. Moreover, increasing concerns about energy security may cause countries to favor domestically-produced energy, leading to a sharp reduction in energy trade. The greatest impact is on net energy exporters who suffer a material slowdown in the growth of oil and gas exports.

■ Single-use plastics ban scenario

The single-largest projected source of oil demand growth over the next 20 years is from the non-combusted use of liquid fuels in industry, particularly as a feedstock for petrochemicals, driven by the increasing production of plastics. Growth of non-combusted demand in the evolving transition scenario is, however, slower than in the past, reflecting the assumption that regulations governing the use and recycling of plastics tighten materially over the next 20 years.

Given the heightening environmental concerns regarding single-use plastics, the Outlook considers a single-use plastics ban scenario, in which the regulation of plastics is tightened even more quickly, culminating in a worldwide ban on the use of all single-use plastics from 2040 onwards.

In this scenario, oil demand rises more slowly than in the evolving transition scenario. However, the Outlook cautions that the full impact on energy growth and the environment will depend on the alternative materials that may be used in place of single-use plastics. A ban on single-use plastics could result in an increase in energy demand and carbon emissions without further advances in alternative materials and the widespread use of collection and reuse systems.

(Source: maritime-executive.com)

The Saudi coalition can't be trusted with U.S. weapons



By Daniel Larison

CNN has more details about the spread of U.S.-supplied weapons to terrorists and war criminals in Yemen that I discussed here:

Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners have transferred American-made weapons to al Qaeda-linked fighters, hardline Salafi militias, and other factions waging war in Yemen, in violation of their agreements with the United States, a CNN investigation has found.

There were credible reports late last year that the Saudis and Emiratis had been violating their agreements with the U.S. by transferring weapons to militias in Yemen. Mohamed Abo-Elgheit and the Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalists (Arii) were the first to cover this story in a documentary released in 2018. The CNN article (co-authored by Abo-Elgheit) confirms and expands on their reports:

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, its main partner in the war, have used the U.S.-manufactured weapons as a form of currency to buy the loyalties of militias or tribes, bolster chosen armed actors, and influence the complex political landscape, according to local commanders on the ground and analysts who spoke to CNN.

By handing off this military equipment to third parties, the Saudi-led coalition is breaking the terms of its arms sales with the U.S., according to the Department of Defense. After CNN presented its findings, a U.S. defense official confirmed there was an ongoing investigation into the issue.

The coalition's diversion of weapons to other parties is obnoxious, but it is just the latest reminder that the U.S. shouldn't be providing the Saudis and Emiratis with any weapons for their war on Yemen. We know that they and their proxies use these weapons to commit war crimes and heinous abuses of the civilian population. We also know that they can't be trusted to keep these weapons out of the hands of terrorists.

When our government floods a war zone with weapons, it is more or less inevitable that those weapons will end up in the hands of armed groups that absolutely shouldn't have them. This is what happened in Syria, and it is what usually happens when we throw weapons at an ongoing, multi-sided conflict. That is why the U.S. shouldn't be so quick to provide clients and proxies with weapons that they are certain to use for their own purposes. In this case, some weapons have ended up in the hands of both Al Qaeda members. This latest outrage comes on top of the arming and financing that the Saudi coalition and its proxies have been providing to Al Qaeda members in Yemen and the alliance of convenience that has existed between the coalition and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) since the war began. U.S. weapons don't just happen to make their way into the hands of terrorists. Our clients provide the terrorists with these weapons because they and our government are all on the same side in an indefensible war that our government has supported for close to four years.

These latest reports are just the most recent evidence that the Saudis and Emiratis are not our allies and cannot be trusted with the weapons and support that our government has eagerly provided them. It is one more reason why the U.S. must end all involvement in the war on Yemen, cease all arms sales to the Saudis and the UAE, and downgrade our relations with these reckless and unreliable clients.

(Source: Yemen Press)

Trump's phony national emergency

By Gary Hart

There is no emergency. There is no crisis. There is no invasion. There is certainly no need to trash the United States Constitution.

There is a fantasy. According to this fantasy, armies of drug dealers, criminals, and rapists are at or are approaching our Southern border. They are crossing in massive numbers in many dozens of unprotected places along the 2000-mile border and are wreaking havoc in border towns and cities across America.

It seems not to matter to the executive and his supporters that there are many more important and pressing issues facing the country at home and abroad and that none of them has caused a lengthy shut down of our government, let alone a Constitutional crisis.

It also seems not to matter that immigrants seek refuge through established border checkpoints, nor that their numbers have been steadily decreasing for a number of years. The same is true of drugs, almost all of which seek entry through those same checkpoints and are quite often intercepted.

More importantly, the vast majority of those seeking entry are not criminals but are refugees fleeing from South American criminal gangs and repressive governments. If there is a crisis, it is humanitarian in nature, and we are refusing to respond in a humanitarian way.

At the least, the bizarre episode of the border wall will become, in hindsight, a blueprint for future crypto-authoritarians as to how to whip up a pseudo-frenzy based on no evidence and the continuing need for distraction from real national problems, and investigations.

As it makes its way through the judicial system, this drama is far from over. There is always the possibility that Nancy Pelosi is surreptitiously encouraging the crazed criminal elements assaulting our Southern border, or that Robert Mueller is a secret agent of the Government of Mexico, or that Jeff Bezos is covertly financing miles of tunnels under existing barriers.

This strange episode in American history is irony on stilts. The symbol of the Cold War was a wall dividing Berlin. In the world of the twenty-first century, will the symbol of the Trump era be a wall trying, unsuccessfully, to divide America from the rest of the world?

(Source: Reuters)

The Warsaw conference and the isolated superpower

By Paul R. Pillar

The Trump administration tried to make last week's Middle East conference in Warsaw what the administration had intended it to be all along: an Iran-bashing exercise that would get Europeans to join in more of the bashing. But the conference instead became what most European governments — whose attendance at the gathering was spotty and often low-level — warned it would be: a demonstration not of U.S.-European unity on policy toward Iran but instead of disunity. That the conference's final statement makes no mention of Iran has to be a major disappointment for the administration.

In its obsessive campaign of stoking maximum hostility toward Iran, the Trump administration is isolated except for partnering with Iran's regional rivals, which means Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. These regimes have their own reasons for keeping Iran a pariah — reasons that are distinct from U.S. interests and distinct from any fondness for peace and stability in the Middle East.

These three states are responsible for much of the uninvited extraterritorial use of military force — apart from Saddam Hussein's two offensive wars, the U.S. offensive war in Iraq and other interventions, and Turkey's intervention in northern Syria — as well as more irregular methods of destabilizing other countries in the Middle East over the past 40 years.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu can be considered a winner at Warsaw for using the conference to show that he can rub elbows with Arab leaders. It was after a side meeting with the Omani foreign minister that Netanyahu commented in a Hebrew-language interview about Israel and Arab states sharing a "common interest of war with Iran." Netanyahu's office later altered its English translation to suggest that he



In its obsessive campaign of stoking maximum hostility toward Iran, the Trump administration is isolated except for partnering with Iran's regional rivals, which means Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

intended only a metaphorical meaning of "war." Regardless of the translation issue, Netanyahu's government has escalated its already intense anti-Iran rhetoric, as it did in recently acknowledging for the first time its repeated airstrikes in Syria.

Netanyahu's government highly values any overt dealings with Arab governments as demonstrating that it does not need to end the occupation of Palestinian territory to conduct worthwhile business with regional neighbors.

The Trump administration is pointing to such dealings in claiming a success at Warsaw. Deflecting international pressure to end the occupation pervades almost all Israeli

diplomacy and includes an East European dimension. Offsetting West European opposition to the occupation is the main reason for Netanyahu cozying up to the Hungarian regime of Viktor Orban, notwithstanding Orban's authoritarianism and habit of blaming George Soros for anything bad in Hungary.

The Warsaw conference leaves the world with the same old story regarding the campaign of maximum hostility toward Iran and the Trump administration's lining up behind a few regional rivals of Iran even when this means lining up against the rest of the world. But despite this relative isolation and the small ball the administration is playing on this issue, it still speaks as if the United States

can dictate what the rest of the world should do. This tone pervaded Vice President Mike Pence's speech at the conference, in which his complaints about European governments not being "cooperative" with U.S. sanctions sounded like a schoolmarm scolding pupils for evading discipline.

Unstated in the speech is that the United States — not the Europeans and not Iran — is in blatant violation not only of the Iran nuclear deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA) but of the unanimously enacted United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, which is the international community's endorsement of the JCPOA. Pence was calling on European governments to violate their own obligations and to show as much contempt for the Security Council as the Trump administration does.

Pence also had harsh words about the recently established "special purpose vehicle," a kind of barter clearing house that the Europeans hope will enable at least humanitarian goods to be sold to Iran while staying outside the formal banking system and beyond the reach of U.S. sanctions. The new mechanism probably will have for now only marginal effect on commerce with Iran, but it has larger significance for long-term U.S. interests.

It is one more indication of how a world increasingly fed up with how the United States pursues narrow political objectives by exploiting its economic advantages — with the U.S. dollar being the principal reserve currency and New York being at the center of international finance — is looking for ways to overcome or negate those advantages. If the isolated superpower keeps trying to do the sort of things it is doing on Iran, it will see its super powers diminish more rapidly and, in the future, will become less able to impose its will on many issues that have nothing to do with Iran.

(Source: Lobe Log)

If Saudi's MBS remains in control, more tensions with Morocco will come

By Abdulaziz Kilani

Saudi-Moroccan relations are witnessing an unprecedented period of tension. Morocco has decided to pull its Ambassador from Riyadh. The Ambassador, Mustafa Al-Mansouri, has explained to 360 that the reason for his recall was Al Arabiya's broadcasting of a video report against the "territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Morocco," which was interpreted as indicating support for the Polisario Front's independence campaign in the Western Sahara region of Morocco. This came just a few days after Morocco left the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

The decision to leave the war in Yemen indicates that the coalition is becoming increasingly weak. What started as a nine-nation coalition appears, now more than ever, to be a coalition led only by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Yet despite the longstanding relations between Rabat and Riyadh, relations have reached their lowest point in decades.

"Morocco's decision to leave the Saudi/UAE-led coalition, as well as the diplomatic row involving the recall of the ambassador, came in the aftermath of a number of issues, including the Qatar crisis, which has created tension between Rabat and Riyadh," CEO of [Persian] Gulf State Analytics Giorgio Cafiero told me. "Morocco did not join the anti-Qatar Quartet in 2017, and has maintained warm relations with Doha since this [(Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council] [P]GCC dispute broke out," he added, referring to the ongoing Saudi-UAE blockade of Qatar.

On top of not joining the anti-Qatar Quartet, Morocco's King Mohammed VI visited Qatari capital Doha six months after the siege began, which resulted in strengthening relations between Rabat and Doha. Furthermore, despite the fact that the king visited the UAE before heading to Doha, he did not visit Saudi Arabia, an action which may have not have pleased Riyadh.

It has also been reported that Morocco has previously declined Saudi Arabia's request to freeze the bank accounts of those Saudi princes detained in Riyadh's Ritz Carlton. Such a refusal could easily have played a role in deepening the then-silent tensions between the two kingdoms, especially when it comes to a crown prince who seems to want all his orders executed regardless of what risks could ensue.

In June 2018, Saudi Arabia turned its back on Morocco and supported the United States' bid to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup. This was received with a wave of widespread anger among Moroccans and signaled that Saudi-Morocco



MBS has taken the Kingdom's diplomacy down a new offensive, arrogant and aggressive path that has weakened the Kingdom's relations with many countries in the Middle East.

relations could head into a new stage weaker than in any previous period.

Arguably, the crimes committed in Yemen have led many countries which previously supported the coalition to take a step back. This happened as the world's outrage against the war in Yemen grew, particularly in the wake of the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, which shone a spotlight on Saudi Arabia's conduct in Yemen and elsewhere.

The United Nations reported on Monday that desperately needed food for millions of Yemenis "is at risk of rotting" in a key Red Sea storage facility because conditions are too unsafe to reach it. These sorts of warnings result in countries like Morocco — which tend to care about their global image — reconsidering their decisions and recalculating them. "Yet since 2015, Morocco has not been a major player in the Yemeni civil war. Thus, the decision was largely symbolic and will have little implications for events on the ground in Yemen," Cafiero added.

During Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS)'s world tour in November, some expected Morocco would be one of his destinations. However, this did not materialize. According to Morocco World News — which cited a government source close to the events — Morocco decided that it was not ready to host MBS. This suggests that even

Saudi Arabia's closest allies have begun to find it difficult to deal with Mohammed Bin Salman.

"I think this proves that even the Arab monarchies are not comfortable with the way Saudi Arabia under the de facto leadership of Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman is running Arab affairs," the Director of Research and Analysis at the Arab Center Washington DC, Dr Imad Harb, told me. "It is likely that the Moroccan government was just waiting for an excuse to step away and Al Arabiya gave it that excuse," he added.

In November, a report from Morocco's treasury showed that Qatar and Kuwait are the two countries which provided the country with a pledged grant of \$1.25 billion each, while Saudi Arabia paid only \$868 million of the \$1.25 billion pledged in 2012. This demonstrates Saudi Arabia's failure to fulfil its promise, which could be one of the reasons that contributed to today's ailing relations.

Moreover, in a rare step, Morocco did not support — as we are used to seeing in the past — the Saudi version of events on Khashoggi's murder. "Morocco has misgivings about the Yemen war and the humanitarian disaster being perpetrated there, as well as the [MBS's] responsibility for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi," Harb added. This elucidates the caution that Morocco has practiced when it come into announcing its position on issues related to Saudi Arabia's foreign policy recently.

"What will be important to watch is how Morocco positions itself in future conflicts and disputes that further pit the Saudi/UAE bloc against the Turkey/Qatar alliance. Other Sunni Muslim countries in the Arab world such as Kuwait and Jordan find themselves under similar pressure," Cafiero concluded.

These series of events hint that the tensions between Morocco and Saudi Arabia have been created by cumulative factors. In light of this, Al Arabiya's video has only added fuel to the fire and caused the Moroccans to say: "Enough is enough!"

Perhaps one reason why many countries have started to find it difficult to deal with Saudi Arabia's foreign policy is that, since MBS became crown prince, the Kingdom has started gradually to lose its traditional "Quiet Diplomacy" policy. MBS has taken the Kingdom's diplomacy down a new offensive, arrogant and aggressive path that has weakened the Kingdom's relations with many countries in the Middle East. As long as MBS remains the de facto ruler of the Kingdom, it seems that we should expect to more tensions between Saudi Arabia and other countries.

(Source: Middle East Monitor)

Theresa May's approach has failed

The prime minister has tried to ignore parliament and pretend there is backing for her attempt to carry Brexit based on Tory votes. Time for a new strategy.

The latest government defeat on Brexit should be a watershed. Thursday's 45-vote defeat, in which scores of MPs abstained, says something lethal about the parliamentary Brexit process. Opposition amendments from Labour and the SNP were duly defeated, as expected. An important all-party backbench amendment was withdrawn at the last moment, leaving key issues again unresolved. And

the government lost another vote because of Conservative splits, exposing the bankruptcy of Theresa May's Conservative-facing Brexit strategy and reinforcing the need now for an all-party consensus approach.

At a time when supermarkets, health authorities, police chiefs, manufacturers and service industries are all raising their Brexit threat levels to critical; in the week in which government plans to run extra ferries between Kent and the continent fell apart so abjectly; and 48 hours after MPs were told it might be 10 years before the "alternative

arrangements" on which the entire recent Tory truce on the Irish border rests might be viable, it might have been supposed there would have been more of a sense of national peril in Thursday's exchanges.

A large part of what is so reckless about this process is that the row between the fanatics and the government centres on rightwing dogmas not facts. At issue this week were the words in the prime minister's bland motion, part of which reiterated "its support for the approach to leaving the EU expressed by this house on 29 January". That "approach" to

Brexit included the vacuous Graham Brady amendment, which required the government to replace the backstop by alternative arrangements. But the house's approach on 29 January also included the Caroline Spelman amendment, which rejected leaving the EU with no deal. That brief exchange encapsulated the haplessness of recent Commons Brexit proceedings, because it was both misguided and unavailing. The assurances made no difference. This is hopeless stuff for matters of such importance. It reeks of failure.

(Source: The Guardian)

U.S. will never tolerate independent countries: Adib-Moghaddam

1 → A: There are several factors to be considered, but the most important one is the price of oil. The Trump administration lobbied Saudi Arabia very hard to keep the price of oil down, not least to put pressure on countries such as Iran and Venezuela. The Venezuelan economy is largely dependent on oil. After years of social empowerment programs instituted by Hugo Chavez, the government simply ran out of money. The Trump administration intensified its economic war against Venezuelans when it sanctions its economy at the height of the crisis. It is ironic, given that this President has used the most disgraceful and brute profanities to describe Mexicans and other Latin Americans, whom he intends to keep out of the United States by building a wall, which is a good metaphor for the closed mindedness of this administration, certainly the most uneducated one in the history of the country.

■ What are the reasons behind the U.S. hostile policy towards Maduro's government? And what is the importance of the country for the U.S. foreign policy?

A: At the heart of the stand-off is a politico-ideological factor, as the deep structure of world politics is constituted by a war of ideas. This is the trigger that makes everything else possible, i.e. when you can subvert the ideational system of a country and re-code its institutions and political culture in accordance with what can be safely called a paradigm of dominance and one-sided hegemony, then the



results are long term and strategic. This has been the aim of successive U.S. governments, i.e. to roll back the Bolivarian revolution that is the paradigm of independence for Latin America which grew out of the Cuban revolution and which is hinged upon a rich and deep political culture, from Simon Bolivar to the legendary Cuban poet Jose Marti. This is very similar to the independence drive that emerged out of the Iranian revolution and it explains the hostility of the U.S. state to Iran. The similar calculus works for Venezuela and the rest of free and independent Latin America. The message is clear: The

U.S. state will not tolerate independence, even when Venezuela continues to supply the United States with oil.

■ How do you see the possibility of the U.S. military intervention in the country?

A: This is the fascinating and pivotal part that U.S. decision-makers don't seem to grasp: The world order has radically changed and the U.S. is only one among many players. There is Russia, which has made it clear that any military intervention in Venezuela would provoke a response from Moscow. There is China which would easily veto any UNSC resolutions endangering the sovereignty and

territorial integrity of Venezuela. And there is Turkey, the close NATO ally of the United States which has reconfirmed the legitimacy of Nicola Maduro in strict opposition to the Trump administration. So there is not much the United States can do in terms of inciting a coup d'etat or a military intervention, exactly because of that multipolar world order which is distinctly non-American these days. The country and its subservient allies have been on the wrong side of history too many times, in Iraq, in Syria, in Lebanon in East Asia, in Latin America etc.

■ The U.S. has recognized the parliament's head as the country's president. Is this legal based on international law and norms?

A: The Trump administration has repeatedly contravened international law and this is another example. This President adheres to the law of anarchy, kill or be killed, a distinctly aggressive mentality that is devoid of diplomatic acumen and cultural empathy. President Nicolas Maduro has been elected as the President of Venezuela. Democracy requires patience. Venezuelans will have the opportunity to change their government after the next elections. It is another tragic irony that the self-proclaimed "leader of the free world" once again betrays all the ideals that it trumpets to the rest of the world with such cacophonous and annoying hysteria that it lacks any semblance with reason and rationality.

INSTEX: EU assumes Iranians walking on banana leafs



1 → Only recently Washington pulled out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, a major 1987 U.S.-Soviet accord on potential nuclear missile technology. Without wasting time, Russia reacted by pulling out from the INF as well.

During the State of the Union address in the U.S. Congress on Feb. 5, France, the U.S. and Russia all test-fired nuclear-capable missiles. Moreover, Iran's regional rival Saudi Arabia launched a surveillance and communications satellite into orbit aboard a French rocket fired from space center in

South America on the same day.

So far International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has certified that Iran has complied with all its commitments under the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

If INSTEX is a vehicle that is meant to persuade Iran to remain in the nuclear deal then this engine-less vehicle just might end up doing the opposite.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called on the European Union to meet its obligations under the deal, saying Iran may pull out of the JCPOA if Europe sets conditions for INSTEX.

U.S. did not reach to its goal on Iran in Warsaw meeting: Robert Hunter



1 → A: Relatively speaking, yes.

■ Germany, France, and the European Union — all members in the Iran nuclear deal — didn't send high-level delegates to Warsaw meeting and Arab nations sent low-level delegates to the sessions. Why?

A: These and some other countries did not believe it would be useful to take part in a meeting, certainly not at a high level, that was in fact designed to put pressure on Iran rather than genuinely to seek means of increasing security in the Middle East.

■ What is your assessment about the INSTEX?

A: A political signal to the Trump administration.

■ Can this tools fulfill Iran needs?

A: Iran will have to make that judgment. Looking at it from outside, it is doubtful that INSTEX will make a major substantive difference, given the size of Iranian "needs" and the continued dominant role of the U.S. dollar.

There is no escaping the need for Teheran to stop thumbing its nose at the outside world, including the U.S. and Israel.

Anti-Iran Warsaw meeting failed to achieve its goal: Pillar



1 → ■ Again in this meeting U.S. want for withdrawing the EU countries from JCPOA. But three European countries emphasized on remaining in this agreement. Can we interpret this as isolation of Trump administration in this regard?

A: The Trump administration has aligned itself with Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Otherwise it is isolated regarding anything having to do with Iran.

■ Germany, France, and the European Union — all members in the Iran nuclear deal — didn't send high-level delegates to Warsaw meeting and Arab nations sent low-level delegates to the sessions. Why?

A: The attendance reflected basic disagreement with the Trump administration on the purpose of the conference. Most of the other attendees did not want to participate at all as long as the U.S. purpose was to intensify conflict with Iran. But most did not want to snub the United States entirely, so they sent representation below the foreign minister level. Had the purpose of the conference been all along to discuss Middle Eastern security issues more broadly, then most of the Europeans probably would have been willing to participate at a more senior level.

■ What is your assessment about the INSTEX? Can this tools fulfill Iran needs?

A: INSTEX is likely to fall short of meeting Iran's needs. It will have a modest effect in facilitating some trade by keeping transactions out of the international banking system where U.S. sanctions could come into play. Initially INSTEX is intended to be used only for humanitarian goods, although the European intention is to expand its use over time. But avoiding the formal banking system addresses only part of the problem. Major companies that still want to do business in the United States will continue to be deterred from doing business with Iran because of the threat of being excluded from the U.S. market.

It was a revolution of faith

1 → Over the course of eight years, U.S. ally Saddam Hussein attacked Iran, but he did not realize that these peace-loving people, at the same time, were proud to become martyrs and would sacrifice their lives for the revolution. In the Sacred Defense (the Iran-Iraq war), there were more volunteers than weapons. Over a million people died in the war.

Iran is celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, a living movement that is reinforced in spite of foreign attacks and financial sanctions, and the revolution has transferred Iranians to world leaders in a variety of technological and scientific fields, such as nano-technology and peaceful nuclear industry.

Warsaw meeting did not achieve its goal: Shireen Hunter

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Shireen Tahmaasb Hunter, a professor of political science at Georgetown University, tells the Tehran Times that "The Warsaw meeting did not achieve its goal."

"To begin with, the meeting originally was billed as a forum to create a broad-based front against Iran," Hunter tells the Tehran Times.

She adds that "But the organizers, in the face large-scale opposition, had to refocus it as a meeting on peace and stability on the Middle East. This meant that the meeting was a failure form the start."

Following is the text the interview:

■ Do you think that anti-Iran Warsaw meeting reach to its goal on Iran?

A: The Warsaw meeting did not achieve its goal. To begin with, the meeting originally was billed as a forum to create a broad-based front against Iran. But the organizers, in the face large-scale opposition, had to refocus it as a meeting on peace and stability on the Middle East. This meant that the meeting was a failure form the start. The conference itself rather than being a show of unity, demonstrated the deep differences between Europe and America and even within Arab states vis a vis Iran, but also on such issues as the status of East Jerusalem and the so-called deal of the century.

■ Again in this meeting U.S. want for withdrawing the EU countries from JCPOA. But three European countries emphasized on remaining in this agreement. Can we interpret this as isolation of Trump administration in this regard?

A: The meeting demonstrated that, except



for Israel and such Arab states as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, no country favors the extremely hardline policy of the Trump administration against Iran. In this sense, the Warsaw meeting showed the limited support for Trump's policy on Iran and in that sense it reflected a degree of America's isolation on this issue.

■ Germany, France, and the European Union — all members in the Iran nuclear deal — didn't send high-level delegates to Warsaw meeting and Arab nations sent low-level delegates to the sessions. Why?

A: The absence of some countries and the low-level of European representation, except for Britain, was a reflection of their unwillingness to be associated with


Both Trump's belligerent stand on Iran, but also its so-called deal of the century on the Palestinian issue. The success of this deal is by no means guaranteed and these states want to

keep their options open.

■ The main achievement of Warsaw meeting was showing the normalization of some Arab countries with Israel. What do you think?

A: Those who work on Middle East issues, were aware of the fact that some Arab states have had secret relations with Israel at least since the mid1990s. Now these connections have become more open. However, they are still far from having reached the level of normalization. None of these states, except for Egypt and Jordan, have officially recognized Israel or established diplomatic relations with it. I don't believe as long as there is no acceptable solution to the Palestinian problem, Arab states will fully normalize their ties with Israel. However, the trend seems to be in that direction, but the situation could change if there is change of government or direction in some of the key Arab states.

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National Iranian Drilling Company

Tender descriptions:

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National Iranian Drilling Company	3/191/447	snk97/- 06 / 33 - 5274	(6,779,850) AED

Qualitative evaluation of tenderers

Method	1-Based on minimum scoring made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms. (60 score) – Technical evaluation (60 score) 2- Tenderers which has a four active current contract with NIDC, will not be allowed to participate in other tenders . 3-Tenderers which have a two active current contract with same subject (exactly same subject) with NIDC, will not be allowed to participate in other tenders.
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Purchasing & Submitting

Tender Document Distribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following seventh day thereof.
Distribution Place
Submitting Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 990,000 Iranian Rials under account number 400111400420491 in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank.Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.
Closing date	Days after the last time of Purchasing 14
Documents Receiving Method	Hall No. 107, 1 st floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569

Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	266.766 AED or 3,051,000,000 IRR
Type of guarantee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Name of department)

More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on:

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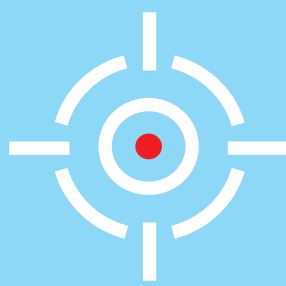
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‘Know your cholesterol like you know your Pin code’

People are being encouraged to know their cholesterol and blood pressure numbers as well as they know their bank Pin code - because it could save their life.

These numbers flag up early signs of cardiovascular disease, which can lead to heart attacks and strokes.

Forty health organizations have teamed up to urge more people to go for a routine NHS health check.

Doctors should also identify and treat at-risk patients better, they say.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) causes one in four deaths in England, the equivalent of someone dying every four minutes, according to Public Health England and NHS England.

Poor heart and artery health can also lead to heart failure, kidney disease, arterial disease and vascular dementia.

So, health bodies are leading efforts to improve the detection and treatment of three conditions that contribute to CVD - atrial fibrillation, high blood pressure and high cholesterol - over the next 10 years.

These conditions often have no symptoms, which is why health experts are recommending people aged over 40 take up a free NHS health check.

These can be booked at GP surgeries. They are also available at some local pharmacies and shopping centers.

PHE recommends checking your local area to find out where they are being offered.

People over 30 are being urged to take the Heart Age Test.

■ **‘I had to give up work’**
Keith Wilson, from Liverpool, had a heart attack out of the blue at 37.

“I had no symptoms and no reason to believe I was sick in any way,” he says.

His father had died of heart disease in his late 60s so he assumed it was something that happened to older people.

“I just didn’t consider I was going to get it. I was complacent,” he says.

After a second heart attack, Keith spent the next three to four years in and out of hospital receiving treatment.

He had to give up work and this really affected his family and young son.



Millions of people are needlessly at risk of heart attacks or strokes when it could be prevented, so more people should take the time out to protect their future health and get checked.

Now 60, Keith is mindful of his health and keeps a close eye on how much he drinks and exercises. He gave up smoking straight after his heart attacks.

■ **What is high cholesterol?**
Cholesterol is carried in your blood by proteins. It can build up in the artery walls, restricting blood flow to the heart, brain and rest of the body. It can be measured with a blood test.

Total cholesterol levels should be: 5mmol/L or less for healthy adults 4mmol/L or less for those at high risk

You are at high risk if you have a family history of heart disease, heart attacks or strokes, are overweight or have high blood

pressure.

■ **What is high blood pressure?**
Blood pressure is recorded using two numbers - the systolic pressure at which the heart pumps blood around your body and the diastolic pressure which measures resistance to blood flow in the blood vessels.

High blood pressure is usually 140/90mmHg or higher.

Ideal blood pressure is usually between 90/60mmHg and 120/80mmHg.

Low blood pressure is lower than 90/60mmHg.

Cardiovascular disease can be characterized by a build-up of fatty deposits in the arteries.

Most cases of CVD are preventable and, alongside free health checks, PHE recommends people should: stop smoking, eat healthily, keep to a healthy weight, and drink at safe levels.

The report also calls on health professionals to improve the way they manage patients at risk of CVD.

By 2029, PHE and NHS England want: 80% of people with high blood pressure detected and treated - up from 57% currently.

75% of 40- to 74-year-olds having cholesterol levels measured - fewer than 50% currently take up the free health check.

45% of 40- to 74-year-olds at high risk of CVD treated with statins - up from 35% currently.

These targets will help meet the commitment to prevent 150,000 heart attacks, strokes and cases of dementia, as set out in the government’s long-term plan for the NHS.

But there is no new funding for these new targets.

■ **‘Needlessly at risk’**
Duncan Selbie, chief executive of Public Health England, said: “We know our Pin numbers but not the numbers that save our lives.

“Thousands of heart attacks and strokes can be prevented by more people knowing their blood pressure and cholesterol numbers and by seeking help early.”

Prof Stephen Powis, NHS medical director, said reducing health inequalities was also a priority, with people in the most deprived communities four times more likely to die prematurely from CVD than those in the most well off.

England’s Health Secretary Matt Hancock said: “Almost half of those with high blood pressure are going about their daily lives without it being detected or treated.

“Millions of people are needlessly at risk of heart attacks or strokes when it could be prevented.

“So, I want to help more people take the time out to protect their future health and get checked.”

Five million people are estimated to have undiagnosed high blood pressure in England. (Source: BBC)

New drug could reverse memory loss caused by Alzheimer’s disease and depression

A new drug has shown promise in reversing memory loss of older people, including those in the early stages of Alzheimer’s disease.

As poor memory can also affect people suffering from mental illness, it may also relieve some of the effects of conditions such as depression.

By homing in on the brain receptors involved in these conditions, the scientists behind the new substance say it is capable of acting “with surgical precision” to revitalize faulty cells.

Though the drug has so far only been used in mice, the team developing it plans to trial it with people suffering depression, and then older patients.

Dr Etienne Sibille of the University of Toronto’s Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, who led the research, said developing medications to deal with these issues was notoriously difficult.

However, he believes the new drug could be administered as a pill to anyone in their late 50s at risk of cognitive problems in old age.

When administered to older or stressed mice, the drug returned them to the condition of far younger individuals.

“Our findings have direct implications for poor cognition in normal ageing. This would include learning and memory, executive functions, decision making and planning,” said Dr Sibille.

The researchers first identified a specific problem with the system controlling the neurotransmitter chemical GABA in the brains of people with depression. The same problem is also found in the brains of those with conditions including schizophrenia and Parkinson’s.

Reactivating this failing system with tweaked versions of the anti-anxiety drugs benzodiazepines turned out to be a powerful way of restoring memory.

Examination of the mice revealed the drugs did not just relieve symptoms but actually modified their brains.

“The aged cells regrew to appear the same as young brain cells,” said Dr Sibille, who was presenting his team’s findings at the American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting in Washington DC.

While the team say they are confident their tests show the molecules enter the brain safely while also producing a marked positive effect, they will not begin applying them in clinical human research for another two years.

Drugs for Alzheimer’s and similar conditions are highly sought after, but trials that succeed in mice do not always produce the same kind of exciting results in humans.

But if the drug is viable, Dr Sibille and his team hope it will also cause fewer of the side effects seen in many existing treatments. (Source: The Independent)

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Iran seeking national brand for homegrown drones

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Aviation Technology Development Headquarters is seeking a national brand for homegrown drones, the secretary of the headquarters Manouchehr Manteqi announced, IRNA reported on Saturday.

The headquarters, which is affiliated to the vice presidency for science and technology, plans to focus on the manufacturing of drone, as an industry, which can create added value.



The Iranian professionals have a great development in manufacturing drone industry, which lead to good results, he said.

The headquarter aims to gather the manufacturer of the drone pieces, producers and those who provide drone-based services, he said.

“We aim to choose a national brand for all drones made in Iran, which pave the way for exporting to other countries,” he added.

The drone industry is growing fast and every week we see press releases and research papers on what new areas drones are being used for.

The usage of drones in some of these sectors was originally completed using helicopters and airplanes. However, these are expensive to hire and not always available when they were required.

Rescue, marketing, filmmaking, firefighting, site surveying, parcel deliveries, imaging structures, precision agriculture, family fun occasions, lighting concert shows, counting stockpiles, search and rescue, weather patterns, environmental conservation, insurance, policing and sports are some of the uses of the drones.

Tehran center to host workshop on cryptocurrency

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The Information Technology Cultural Center in Tehran hosts a workshop on cryptocurrency on Monday, Mehr reported on Saturday.

The members of Iran Blockchain Community, which sponsored the event, discusses the fundamental issues of blockchain, Initial Coin Offering, the principles of bitcoin, Ethereum, smart contracts, cryptocurrencies in Iran and state-run projects based on blockchain.

A cryptocurrency (or crypto currency) is a digital asset designed to work as a medium of exchange that uses strong cryptography to secure financial transactions, control the creation of additional units, and verify the transfer of assets.

In April 2018, the Central Bank of Iran banned domestic banks and people from dealing in foreign cryptocurrency because of money laundering and financing risks.

However, the CBI decided to take a more moderate stance toward the digital money and blockchain technology following the imposition of a new round of U.S. sanctions, hoping that the digital technology would facilitate Iran’s international money transfers and let the country evade the sanctions.

In late January, the acting head of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Mohammad Reza Modoudi announced that Iran is in negotiating the use of cryptocurrency in its financial transactions with eight countries.

Meeting, savior and killer of fresh startup

Many people come from semi-governmental backgrounds and in these cases people think that they can solve everything with meeting. This is true to some extent but it is not the result we may need at all the time. People are not machines that a same code goes and works on them on and on an done of the most problematic things that new startups are going after is conducting too many meetings and that can be a very dangerous thing for the team work. Today we want to take a look at this concept and check why meeting can be savior and killer of fresh startup.

So when do we need each one of them? Let’s start from the bottom, casual gathering can happen with any reason, they may happen with the goal of team work improvement, a manager can see his or her team when they want to grab a cup of coffee and talks to them about daily things and routine tasks and even hints on their performance. These type of events can happen all the time and you may face 30 of them in a single working day. The main thing is planning for these gatherings. You must have a plan to talk to your people about constructive things and not only chit-chat. But remember that you should not take it too serious and turn it into a full scale meeting. Take a short step toward your team in each session and then before you know it, you will be in track and people will mimic your working style. Using this method you can share knowledge and information without making it a hard thing to do and the whole team connection will be greater than ever.

The next thing is group sessions. As a manager you can call a couple of people and talk to them about any specific content. There is no need for them to get ready for this and you can think of it as an agile method of sharing knowledge. You should expect small problems to get solved using this method and these kind of discussions may last up to half an hour or longer. You can make use of these type of gathering because it is not official and it doesn’t have the mental pressure of a meeting on people so you can conduct them frequently without damaging your team work.

Finally we are there for the meeting. Meetings are official, they are like generals with badges and uniforms and they cannot be taken lightly. To conduct a meeting, you should have a plan and know what is going on before and what you want to gain after the meeting. You should have e plan for all participants and they should come in ready to be questioned and come with a proper reply. These things makes a meeting a little bit trickier than what most of the people think. Meeting has stress on people and they have to spend time preparing for it so having it regularly can be costly for your performance.

(Source: startupik.com)

Jobs for digital marketing, startups up 46% in 2018: report

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — The number of jobs created for digital marketing businesses and startups grow by 46 percent during 2018 in comparison to its preceding year, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The statistics is released by the IranTalent.com, the leading job site and online recruitment service in Iran. The website compares the job opportunities and demands in Iran during 2017 and 2018.

According to the report, the demand for computer experts grew by 14 percent. During 2018, some jobs like developer had a big share of marketing despite the economic crisis Iran is facing.

Travel and tourism companies with 37 percent, human resources companies with 32 percent, investment, bank and insurance firms with 24 percent are on the top of the job vacancy list, the report stated.

The demand decreased six percent generally during 2018 especially in big companies. The figure for companies with more than 100 employers is 13 percent and is five percent for firms with less than 100 employees.

In comparison with 2017, during 2018, the telecom companies had a bigger share of decreasing demand with 77 percent, the power plants with 70 percent, and pharmaceutical companies with 70 percent and medical equipment firms with 58 percent.



Travel and tourism companies with 37 percent, human resources companies with 32 percent, investment, bank and insurance firms with 24 percent are on the top of the job vacancy list in 2018

Children and cyberspace; how to deal with cyberbullying?

TECHNOLOGY **TEHRAN** — Do we have the power to cope with cyberspace? Many experts believe that the answer is negative. A number of children experts and professionals discussed the ways to use cyberspace as a capacity during a meeting on last Wednesday.

The government can increase media literacy and introducing the red lines to the society, university professor Seyyed Bashir Hosseini said.

The role of family is much more important than the role of government in recognition of the capacities of the cyberspace, he added.

Families should have their own strategies and wisdoms to deal with cyberbullying and they cannot condemn the governments to stop the infrastructure development of cyberspace, he explained.

“We should recognize cyberspace as a reality and believe that we have encounter something more than a revolution, which already changed many terms and relations and most of children and young adults are using smartphones,” he said.

“Our children are growing up with concepts like blockchain and crypto currency and they form the society in coming 20 years,” he said.

Without media literacy, which makes content attractive and develops it, the society cannot treat children, he said.

■ Government cannot be responsible for cyberspace’s content

During the meeting, the children writer Ali Asghar Seyyedabadi said that cyberspace is present in real life and all people are engaged with it.

“Everybody can produce content at his or her home and no one wait for an organization to provide it,” he said.



Families should have their own strategies and wisdoms to deal with cyberbullying and they cannot condemn the governments to stop the infrastructure development of cyberspace.

He said that the entrance of government to content production for kids lead to failure.

Cyberspace is a pluralistic entity, hence no single organization or government can decide for it, he explained.

“The cyberspace provides an opportunity for us to be user as well as producer at the same time. Hence on cannot regard cyberspace as a cultural entity and disregard its economic impact,” he explained.

Is the era of artificial speech translation upon us?

Interpreters work in a sound booth while China’s President Hu Jintao speaks at the 2009 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Singapore.

Noise, Alex Waibel tells me, is one of the major challenges that artificial speech translation has to meet. A device may be able to recognize speech in a laboratory, or a meeting room, but will struggle to cope with the kind of background noise I can hear surrounding Professor Waibel as he speaks to me from Kyoto station. I’m struggling to follow him in English, on a scratchy line that reminds me we are nearly 10,000km apart – and that distance is still an obstacle to communication even if you’re speaking the same language. We haven’t reached the future yet.

If we had, Waibel would have been able to speak in his native German and I would have been able to hear his words in English. He would also be able to converse hands-free and seamlessly with the Japanese people around him, with all parties speaking their native language.

At Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, where he is a professor of computer science, Waibel and his colleagues already give lectures in German that their students can follow in English via an electronic translator. The system generates text that students can read on their laptops or phones, so the process is somewhat akin to subtitling. It helps that lecturers speak clearly, don’t have to compete with background chatter, and say much the same thing each year.

The idea of artificial speech translation has been around for a long time. Waibel, who is also a professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, “sort of invented it. I proposed it at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of

Technology] in 1978.” Douglas Adams sort of invented it around the same time too. The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy featured a life form called the Babel fish which, when placed in the ear, enabled a listener to understand any language in the universe. It came to represent one of those devices that technology enthusiasts dream of long before they become practically realisable, like portable voice communicators and TVs flat enough to hang on walls: a thing that ought to exist, and so one day surely will.

Waibel’s first speech translation system, assembled in 1991, had a 500-word vocabulary, ran on large work stations and took several minutes to process what it heard. “It wasn’t ready for prime time,” he acknowledges. Now devices that look like prototype Babel fish have started to appear, riding a wave of advances in artificial translation and voice recognition. Google has incorporated a translation feature into its Pixel earbuds, using Google Translate, which can also deliver voice translation via its smartphone app. Skype has a Translator feature that handles speech in 10 languages. A number of smaller outfits, such as Waverly Labs, a Brooklyn-based startup, have developed earpiece translators. Reviews in the tech media could reasonably be summarised as “not bad, actually”.

The systems currently available offer proof of the concept, but at this stage they seem to be regarded as eye-catching novelties rather than steps towards what Waibel calls “making a language-transparent society”.

One of the main developments driving artificial speech translation is the vogue for encouraging people to talk to their technology.

“We’re generally very early in the par-

adigm of voice-enabled devices,” says Barak Turovsky, Google Translate’s director of product, “but it’s growing very rapidly, and translation will be one of the key parts of this journey.”

Last month, Google introduced interpreter mode for its home devices. Saying: “Hey, Google, be my French interpreter” will activate spoken and, on smart displays, text translation. Google suggests hotel check-in as a possible application – perhaps the obvious example of a practical alternative to speaking travellers’ English, either as a native or as an additional language.

You can do this already if you have the Translate app on your phone, albeit using an awkwardly small screen and speaker. That kind of simple public interaction accounts for much usage of the app’s conversations feature. But another popular application is what Turovsky calls “romance”. Data logs reveal the popularity of statements such as “I love you” and “You have beautiful eyes”. Much of this may not represent anything very new. After all, chat-up lines have been standard phrasebook content for decades.

Waverly Labs used the chat-up function as a hook for its Indiegogo funding drive, with a video in which the company’s founder and CEO, Andrew Ochoa, relates how he got the idea for a translator when he met a French woman on holiday but couldn’t communicate with her very well. Trying to use a translation app was “horrible”. Phones get in the way – but earpieces are not in your face. The video shows what might have been: he presents a French woman with an earpiece, and off they go for coffee and sightseeing. The pitch was spectacularly successful, raising \$4.4m (£3.4m) – 30 times the target.

Car manufactures is on the bottom of the list with 37 percent.

According to the report, the only jobs, which were still required were IT-related careers. The requirement in computer engineering, software and web design increased 14 percent during economic crisis.

On the other hand, job demand related to marketing and advertising, which were always pioneer in demands of human resources, decreased.

According to a report released by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in September 2018, over 93,700 job opportunities were created in the field of smart transportation system, e-commerce and mobile applications in Iran during the previous Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017-March 2018).

According to a report released by the E-Commerce Development Center of Iran in September 2018, 72 percent of e-commerce businesses were run with less than five persons and only six percent of them were companies with more than 30 staff in the previous calendar year.

Some 43 percent of individuals who are active in the field of e-commerce are from 30 to 40 years old, and 36 percent are between 20 and 30 years old. Meanwhile, only nine percent of e-commerce managers are women.

Children have different characteristics and we cannot categorize them by their nationalities, he explained.

■ Kids create content themselves

During digital era, the main concern is not content creation for children but some more fundamental problems, kid’s content creator Hossein Sheikholeslami said.

The children who teach their parents about cyberspace do not wait for someone who create content, he said.

Today children are living in another world, which is not very familiar for us, he said.

“Actually we do have two worlds, one of them named cyberspace and we should believe that in this new world, children are not mere addressee and costumers but they have crucial roles by themselves,” he said.

In late January, the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) announced that some 65 percent of children in Iran between 3-5 years of age have smart cellphone or tablets.

Deputy education minister for training Alireza Kazemi announced in December 2018 that about 20 million internet users out of 56 million users are below 18 in Iran.

People spend from 20 to 80 hours per week in cyberspace, which change sleeping time and encounter them to unnecessary information and issues, he said.

In mid-November, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Ministry announced that it plans to introduce parental control applications in the near future.

According to a survey conducted by the ICT Ministry, only eight percent of Iranian parents monitor their children’s online activity.

The survey revealed that Iran is not very successful in content creation for children and to control children’s online activity.

One customer said the company’s Pilot earpiece had enabled him to speak to his girlfriend’s mother for the first time. Some even report that it has enabled them to speak to their spouses. “Every once in a while, we’ll receive an email from someone who says they’re using this to speak with their Spanish-speaking wife,” says Ochoa. “It baffles me how they even got together in the first place!” We might surmise that it was through the internet and an agency. Ochoa acknowledges that “the technology has to improve a bit before you’ll really be able to find love through the earbud, but it’s not too far away”.

Many of the early adopters put the Pilot earpiece to entirely unromantic uses, acquiring it for use in organisations. Waverly is now preparing a new model for professional applications, which entails performance improvements in speech recognition, translation accuracy and the time it takes to deliver the translated speech. “Professionals are less inclined to be patient in a conversation,” Ochoa observes.

The new version will also feature hygienic design improvements, to overcome the Pilot’s least appealing feature. For a conversation, both speakers need to have Pilots in their ears. “We find that there’s a barrier with sharing one of the earphones with a stranger,” says Ochoa. That can’t have been totally unexpected. The problem would be solved if earpiece translators became sufficiently prevalent that strangers would be likely to already have their own in their ears. Whether that happens, and how quickly, will probably depend not so much on the earpieces themselves, but on the prevalence of voice-controlled devices and artificial translation in general.

(Source: theguardian.com)

Recent breakthrough in science boosts plant growth by 40 percent, suggests professor

One of the most significant challenges of the 21st Century is how to sustainably feed a growing and more affluent global population with less water and fertilizers on shrinking acreage, despite stagnating yields, threats of pests and disease, and a changing climate.

The "meeting this year is about 'Science Transcending Boundaries' -- the idea for the session is to highlight research that is transcending scientific and knowledge boundaries, with the ultimate goal to transcend geographic boundaries and reach smallholder farmers in Africa," said Lisa Ainsworth, a scientist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) and an adjunct professor of plant biology at the University of Illinois. Recently, Ainsworth was awarded the 2019 National Academy of Sciences Prize in Food and Agriculture Sciences.

Session speaker Donald Ort, the Robert Emerson Professor of Plant Biology and Crop Sciences at Illinois' Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology, will discuss the global food security challenge and a recent breakthrough in Science that boosted crop growth by 40 percent by creating a shortcut for a glitch that plagues most food crops.

■ To manufacture plant biomass

"Plants have to do three key things to produce the food we eat: capture sunlight, use that energy to manufacture plant biomass, and divert as much of the biomass as possible into yields like corn kernels or starchy potatoes," Ort said. "In the last century, crop breeders maximized the first and



third of these, leaving us with the challenge to improve the process where sunlight and carbon dioxide are fixed -- called photosynthesis -- to boost crop growth to meet the demands of the 21st Century."

This landmark work is part of Realizing

Increased Photosynthetic Efficiency (RIPE), an international research project that is engineering crops to photosynthesize more efficiently to sustainably increase worldwide food productivity with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Foundation

"Land plants evolved with a biochemical glitch whereby a photosynthetic enzyme frequently captures oxygen instead of carbon dioxide, necessitating a convoluted and energy-expensive process called photorespiration to mitigate this glitch," says Ort.

for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR), and the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID).

"Land plants evolved with a biochemical glitch whereby a photosynthetic enzyme frequently captures oxygen instead of carbon dioxide, necessitating a convoluted and energy-expensive process called photorespiration to mitigate this glitch," said Ort, who is also the deputy director of the RIPE project.

■ Conserving the energy

"Crops like soybean and wheat waste more than 30 percent of the energy they generate from photosynthesis dealing with this glitch, but modeling suggested that photorespiratory shortcuts could be engineered to help the plant conserve its energy and reinvest it into growth."

Borrowing genes from algae and pumpkins, the team engineered three alternate routes to replace the circuitous native photorespiration pathway in tobacco, a model plant used to show proof of concept before scientists move technologies to food crops that are much more difficult and time-consuming to engineer and test. Now, the team is translating this work to boost the yields of other crops including soybean, cowpea, rice, potato, tomato, and eggplant.

"It is incredible to imagine the calories lost to photorespiration each year around the globe," Ort said. "To reclaim even a portion of these calories would be a huge success in our race to feed 9.7 billion people by 2050."

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Tiny satellites reveal water dynamics in thousands of northern lakes, finds new research

A new study uses CubeSats to measure short-term changes in northern hemisphere lakes.

Using an army of small satellites, researchers have shown that water levels in small lakes across northern Canada and Alaska are far more variable during the summer than previously thought.

The findings, published in *Geophysical Research Letters*, could have implications for how scientists calculate the natural greenhouse gas emissions from these northern lakes.

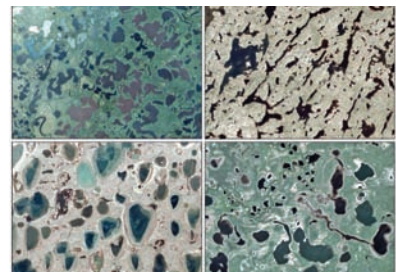
The study used images taken by a network of more than 150 CubeSats -- small satellites about the size of shoeboxes -- which made nearly daily observations of more than 85,000 small North American lakes during the summer of 2017. The images enabled the researchers to see how the lakes changed over time. They found small but significant shoreline changes in individual lakes that added up to hundreds of square kilometers of lake area change across the study region.

■ Climate-driven changes

"There's been a lot of research on climate-driven changes in lake area, but it's mainly focused on long-term changes," said Sarah Cooley, a Ph.D. student at Brown University and the study's lead author. "This is the first time that anyone has looked at fine-scale, short-term changes, and we found that there's much more variability within a season than expected."

The study area captures a substantial swath of Arctic tundra and boreal forest, a biome that circles the Earth's northern hemisphere in a band from about 50 to 70 degrees north latitude.

The region is home to critical forest and tundra ecosystems as well as the planet's highest density of lakes, so understanding its hydrology is scientifically important. One reason for that is that boreal lakes are a significant source of natural greenhouse



gas emissions. Their sediments contain tons of organic carbon, which washes in from the surrounding landscape. Some of that carbon then decomposes and it emitted into the atmosphere in the form of carbon dioxide and methane greenhouse gases.

This new finding of substantial summer shoreline fluctuation has implications for how scientists calculate these emissions, the researchers say. That's because shoreline areas where water ebbs and flows from season to season are known hotspots for greenhouse gas production and emission. But estimates of lake emissions generally assume shorelines to be stable within each season.

■ Current emissions models

The finding of surprising within-season shoreline fluctuation, the researchers say, suggests that current emissions models from boreal lakes may be underestimated.

A "shoreline that's fluctuating is going to emit more carbon than a stable shoreline," Cooley said. "These short-term fluctuations, which no one had ever mapped before, suggest these lakes are potentially emitting more gas than people thought."

Another finding that surprised the research team was the large overall importance of shoreline fluctuations on the ancient Canadian Shield, a rocky, wet landscape in central Canada where millions of small lakes cover 20 percent of the landscape.

(Source: natureworldnews.com)

How sea snakes, surrounded by salt water, quench their thirst

Most yellow-bellied sea snakes spend their entire lives at sea. They rarely end up on land and are vulnerable there, since their paddle-shaped tails and keeled undersides make crawling difficult. Armed with potent venom, they drift in a vast territory that encompasses much of the world's oceans, riding the currents and hunting fish near the sea surface.

Like other reptiles, these creatures need to drink water to survive. How does an animal surrounded by saltwater quench its thirst?

It used to be thought that these serpents drank from their salty surroundings. "Previous textbook dogma was that sea snakes drank seawater and excreted the excess salts using their sublingual salt glands," explains Harvey Lillywhite, a biologist at the University of Florida.

Recent work has proven that false -- and a new study suggests that yellow-bellied sea snakes (*Hydrophis platurus*) rehydrate at sea by drinking rainwater that collects on the ocean surface.

A new study, published this month in the journal *PLOS ONE*, shows that the snakes are finding freshwater. In May 2017, Lillywhite and colleagues were in Costa Rica to study the snakes, during which time the six-month dry season suddenly ended with a deluge of rain. The researchers captured 99 yellow-bellied sea snakes over the course of the trip, before and after the rain's arrival.

■ The captured snakes

They brought the snakes into the lab and offered them freshwater, finding that 80 percent of those brought in before the rains drank -- but over the next five days of rainy weather, that percentage continually dropped among newly captured snakes. Eventually, only about 10 percent of snakes brought in took the offer to rehydrate, a dramatic drop in only a few days.

Since fewer sea snakes were thirsty as the dry season transitioned to wet, the snakes



must have been quenching their thirst.

As rain falls, the uppermost part of the water's surface is diluted, creating a temporary freshwater "lens" that doesn't immediately mix with saltwater. If the salinity falls enough, the sea snakes can drink from this surface layer and rehydrate after months without water.

The results help solidify earlier observations in the laboratory showing that the sea snakes were reliant on freshwater, despite their saltwater habitat. But by uncovering just how the reptiles exploit temporary weather conditions to access life-sustaining water, the researchers have identified where their coveted freshwater source comes from in the wild.

■ The sea snake biology

"I found this study very interesting," says Vinay Udyawer, a marine ecologist at the Australian Institute of Marine Science not involved in this study. "It provides a fascinating insight into a rarely observed aspect of sea snake biology."

This reliance on freshwater "often limits their distributions, with sea snake populations often very patchy and close to large sources of freshwater like river mouths, estuaries or springs," says Udyawer.

An animal completely at the whim of open ocean currents, like the yellow-bellied sea snake, says Udyawer, must have some way to hydrate far from any of these land-based water sources.

(Source: nationalgeographic.com)

Large-scale window material developed for PM2.5 capture and light tuning

Tuning the light intensity and reducing the concentration of atmospheric particulate matter (PM) in commercial buildings are both crucial to keep indoor people comfortable and healthy. While, the intelligent smart windows fabricated on the flexible transparent electrodes can change its transmittance in response to electrical or thermal stimulus to tune the light intensity of commercial buildings to maintain thermal comfort. Up to now, it is still a significant challenge to fabricate the large-scale flexible transparent smart window for high-efficiency PM2.5 capture.

Recently, a research team led by Professor YU Shuhong from the University of Science and Technology of China (USTC) develops a simple solution based process to fabricate large-area Ag-nylon flexible transparent windows for high-efficiency PM2.5 capture.

It takes only about 15.03 dollars and 20 minutes to fabricate 7.5 m2 Ag-nylon flexible transparent windows without any modification showing a sheet resistance of as low as 8.87 sq-1 and optical transmittance of 86.05%.

The obtained Ag-nylon mesh serves not only to turn the indoor light intensity as thermochromic smart windows after uniformly coated with thermochromic dye but also to purify indoor air as high-efficiency PM2.5 filter.

The time-dependent temperature profiles and uniform heat distribution show that the obtained Ag-nylon electrodes can be used as an ideal intelligent thermochromic smart window with excellent mechanical stability whose performance remains stable even after 10,000 bending cycles of bending test with a minimum bending radius of 2.0 mm and 1,000 cycles of stretching deformation with mechanical strain as high as 10%.

In addition, the Ag-nylon electrodes can be constructed for PM filter showing a removal efficiency of 99.65% and maintaining stable even after 100 cycles of PM filtration and cleaning process.

The success of the present design strategy provides more choices in developing next-generation flexible transparent smart windows and air pollution filters.

(Source: techtimes.com)

An asteroid will block our brightest star today, astronomers predict

Sirius, a double-star system and the brightest object in the night sky, will briefly blink out of existence for parts of Earth this evening.

In an event called an occultation -- when one object in space blocks the light of another behind it -- a small asteroid known as (4388) Jürgenstock will slip in front of the star for a fraction of a second and, like an eclipse, cause it to briefly dim or even disappear.

"This unusual occultation of the brightest star in the night sky will occur around 10:30 P.M. MST on Monday evening, February 18," according to a post by Bill Merline from the Southwest Research Institute and David Dunham from KinetX Aerospace, which was published on the astronomer-run website Occultation Pages.

To understand where and when the occultation will be visible, it's helpful to think of a moving ball blocking a lightbulb, which would draw a moving shadow across a wall.

Another appropriate comparison is a solar eclipse, when the moon blocks the light of the Sun.

That shadow of occultation, which we first learned about from Sky & Telescope, will begin in Antarctica, swing around the southern continent, then head north across the Southern Ocean and Pacific Ocean.

After Antarctica, the first land site to see the occultation should be the

southern tip of Baja California in Mexico, at around 10:28 P.M. MST.

Next up will be the U.S. cities of Las Cruces, New Mexico, and El Paso, Texas. Those southern locations will have a shot at viewing the event around 10:30 P.M. MST.

Then, around 10:31 P.M. MST (11:31 P.M. CST), Denver, Colorado, and parts of western Nebraska will get a chance to see it.

The astronomers note that their predictions, while precise, aren't perfect.

Sirius is too bright for spacecraft to determine its exact motion through and position in space, so the map shows a range of probable visibility stretching about 130 miles wide. Even at the central line, there is only a 7% chance of seeing a full Sirius-dimming occultation.

(Source: sciencealert.com)



SHATEL Co.'s CEO: New Range of Shatel Mobile SIM Cards on the Way

The new range of mobile SIM cards of Shatel Company will hit the consumer market in the very near future, the Chief Executive of Shatel Company Arash Karim-Beygi reported.

Given the expansion of using SIM cards of Shatel Mobile and the license issued by the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA), the third range of SIM cards of this mobile operator in the country with pre-code (0998) and coded (12) will hit the mobile

market of the country in very near future, he maintained.

Karim-Beygi reiterated, "after active presence of this operator in the market of mobile phone operators and presentation of new pre-code (0998) and coded (10) as well as unsparing supports of the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), RightTel, Hamrah Aval, SHATEL Company managed to set up G3,

G4 to the three networks of TD and FD in the nationwide, he said, adding, "in this regard, the company managed to present the latest generation of mobile phone operators at the market."

As the sole provider of real experience of convergence of mobile and conventional services in Iran as well as sole provider of mobile tariff (special of free use of internet in Iran), SHATEL Company offers quality

round-the-clock services to the noble people and is home to more than 400 sales and after-sales offices across the country, CEO of the company opined.

In conclusion, Chief Executive of SHATEL Company Karim-Beygi reiterated, "the company has thus far made its utmost effort to present economical, applied and easy services to its subscribers in the best form possible."



With the coordination made in this regard, the zone has witnessed about \$40 million investment growth as compared to the last year's corresponding period, the chief executive opined.

The chairman of the Board of Directors of Aras Free Zone Nariman said, "despite reimposition of sanctions, investors

from Armenia, Turkey and Republic of Azerbaijan have invested in this zone."

More investment has been made in the production, cellulose, iron, steel, oil and refinery sectors, he maintained.

Commissioning production line of foreign brands in Aras Free Zone is one of the programs envisioned for the generation of employment, he said, adding, "despite existence of several circular letters in the current year (started March 21, 2018), total exports volume hit \$213 million in 10 months of current year (March 21 -- Jan. 21)."

Some parts of raw materials have been imported into the country with the governmental exchange rate of 4,200 toman while some of which has been provided through NIMA system (Online Integrated FOREX Management System), he added.

Of total 2,000 companies registered in Aras Free Zone, \$8.803 million of which has been invested in the 10 months of the current year (March 21 -- Jan. 21), he concluded.

Free Zones' Tax Exemption Aimed to Spur Production: CEO

Chief Executive of Aras Free Zone Organization Mohsen Nariman said that tax break in the free zone organization is to spur production.

There are incentives in free zones with the aim of supporting production and production activity, he reiterated.

He made the above remark on Sunday Feb. 17 in his weekly press briefing and said, "ARAS Free Zone is the most industrialized region in the country."

Aras Free Zone Organization is busy active in neighboring countries of Armenia, Republic of Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan, he said, adding, "this zone is busy active in four different districts running within a free zone."

Accordingly, about 51,000 ha of this zone has been defined alongside of Aras River, he stipulated.

He put the investment made in Aras Free Zone in 10 months of current year (March 21 -- Jan. 21) at 1,200 billion toman, 90 percent of which has been invested in the production sector.

Engineers detail new technology that allows them to build complex mechanisms into the exterior of a structure without taking up any actual space below the surface. This new class of mechanisms, called 'developable mechanisms', get their name from developable surfaces, or materials that can take on 3-D shapes from flat conformations without tearing or stretching, like a sheet of paper or metal.

Engineers at Brigham Young University detail new technology that allows them to build complex mechanisms into the exterior of a structure without taking up any actual space below the surface.

This new class of mechanisms, called "developable mechanisms," get their name from developable surfaces, or materials that can take on 3-D shapes from flat conformations without tearing or stretching, like a sheet of paper or metal. They reside in a curved surface (like, say, the arms of Iron Man's suit) and can transform or morph when deployed to serve unique functions. When not in use, they can fold back into the surface of the structure seamlessly.

"These new discoveries make it possible to build complex machines that integrate with surfaces to be very compact, but can deploy and do complex tasks," said researcher Larry Howell, professor of mechanical engineering at BYU. "It opens up a whole new world of potential devices that have more functions, but are still very compact."

Making hyper-compact mechanisms is something increasingly important as manufacturers across medical, space and military industries are constantly working to get more complex functionality in less space.

This new class of mechanical structures evolved from Howell and colleague Spencer Magleby's work on origami-based engineering, done in collaboration with origami artist Robert Lang. From solar arrays for NASA to bulletproof barriers for police officers, their work has generated national and international coverage. As the group of researchers moved to curved origami principles, the mathematics revealed a new way of doing more complex machines.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

Lake Urmia water increased by 810 million cubic meters

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — The volume of water in Lake Urmia, northwestern Iran, has increased by 810 million cubic meters compared to the same date last year, director general of West Azarbaijan regional water company has said.



Lake Urmia, shared between West Azarbaijan and East Azarbaijan provinces, used to be the largest salt-water lake in the Middle East. It was a home to many migratory and indigenous animals including flamingos, pelicans, egrets and ducks and attracted hundreds of tourists every year who had taken a trip to take advantage of the therapeutic properties of the lake.

However, the lake started to shrink in 1990s. The drastic decrease of the lake water level over the past 20 years has seriously affected the lake's wildlife and human ecology.

Currently the total volume of water in the Lake measures at 2,000,060,000 cubic meters and the lake surface area stands at 2,311 square kilometers, ISNA news agency quoted Kiyomars Daneshjoo as saying on Saturday.

Alireza Shari'at, head of monitoring and supervision department of the Lake Urmia restoration program said in September 2018, that in order to maintain the Lake Urmia ecological balance of 14 billion cubic meters over the next 10 years, an annual amount of 3.3 billion cubic meters of water is required.

Iran to hold 3rd media literacy Olympiad

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The 3rd national media literacy Olympiad will be held in three phases during spring and summer, ISNA news agency reported on Sunday.

Head of the 3rd national media literacy Olympiad council, Bashir Hosseini explained that award winners will be qualified to attend International Media Literacy Olympiad in 2020.

Mohammad Sadeq Bateni scientific secretary of the 3rd media literacy Olympiad also said that students interested in taking part in the Olympiad can submit on the website until April 18.

The first media literacy Olympiad was held in the year 1395 (March 2016-March 2017), Bateni said, adding that the Olympiad is organized by media literacy club (a non-governmental group aiming to improve media literacy).

Gold medal winners can also gain admission at Iran Broadcasting University, he highlighted.

Last year some 1,000 students from 40 different cities took part in the Olympiad, he concluded.

LEARN ENGLISH

Capital Punishment

Professor: It's all for today's class. We will continue our lecture on crime and punishment tomorrow.

A: Do you think we should be tougher on crime?

B: Well, it depends on what you mean.

A: For example, we could bring back the **death penalty** for murder, give longer **prison sentences** for lesser offences and lock up **juvenile offenders**.

B: Those really sound like **Draconian** measures. Firstly, what do you do about **miscarriages of justice** if you've already put innocent people to death?

A: You'd only use **capital punishment** if you were absolutely sure that you'd convicted the right person.

B: But, there've been many cases of wrongful conviction where people have been imprisoned for many years. The authorities were sure at the time, but later it was shown that the evidence was unreliable. In some cases, it'd been **fabricated** by the police.

A: Well, no system of justice can be perfect, but surely there's a good case for longer prison sentences to deter serious crime.

B: I doubt whether they could act as an effective **deterrent** while the detection rate is so low. The best way to prevent crime is to convince people who commit it that they're going to be caught. It doesn't make sense to **divert** all your resources into the prison system.

A: But if you detect more crimes, you'll still need prisons. In my reckoning, if we could lock up more juvenile criminals, they'd learn that they couldn't get away with it. Soft sentences will merely encourage them to do it again.

B: Yes, but remember that prisons are often schools for criminals. To remove crime from society, you really have to tackle its causes.

A: Well, if I were president, I would impose tougher laws and punishment. I would have a peaceful society based on fear of punishment, not consciousness of doing the right thing.

B: You sound like a **dictator**!

A: Well if it works, why not?

■ **Key vocabulary**
death penalty: the punishment of death
prison sentence: the amount of time to keep criminals in jail
juvenile offender: underage criminals
Draconian: very strict and severe
miscarriage of justice: an unjust legal decision
capital punishment: punishment of death
fabricate: to make something up to trick people
deterrent: something that prevents people from doing something
divert: to move resources from one thing to another
dictator: someone who rules with absolute power
■ **Supplementary vocabulary**
diversion: the act of changing the direction or use of something
authoritarian: expecting or requiring people to obey rules or laws
divisive topic: an issue that causes disagreement between people and causes them to separate into different groups
recidivist: a person who continues to commit crimes even after being caught and punished
rehabilitate: to teach (a criminal in prison) to live a normal and productive life

60,000 Tehrani teachers to join fire safety training course

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Some 60,000 teachers in Tehran will be provided with fire safety training course to promote proper safety procedures while on duty in the next Iranian calendar year (March 2019-March 2020), head of Tehran Fire Stations and Safety Services Organization affiliated to Tehran Municipality has said.

The fire safety training course is designed to raise awareness of fire hazards in the workplace and how to act safely in the event of an emergency fire situation, including selecting and using the correct fire extinguisher. The course is also designed to train staff in your fire safety procedures.

“Students’ safety at schools has always been among the Organization’s priorities, so we need to train the students and teachers in order to establish a safety culture in which they can stay safe during the incidents,” Mehr quoted Mehdi Davari as saying on Sunday.

He further highlighted that children can also familiarize their families and school faculties with the dangers and how to survive such hazards, so we currently started safety training at elementary schools across the capital educating the students on how to manage the incidents.



“It is hoped that this plan will be implemented voluntarily in other provinces of the country to familiarize students and families with incident risks,” he added.

Referring to the next year’s plan on educating 60,000 teachers in this regard, he noted that the role of teachers in developing and maintaining effective incident control activities is a proven and successful method of intervention, so the Organization decided to implement the

scheme as soon as possible.

Pointing to fire as a common hazard threatening the schools nationwide, Davari stated that we cannot definitely say that a school is or is not resistant to fire.

During winter, over 2,000 schools in the capital have been inspected to comply with safety standards, he said, adding that although all schools are monitored at the beginning of each school year, we try to observe them again during the

16,000 clunker buses running in transport fleet nationwide

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Some 22,000 busses are operating in the country’s public transport fleet, 16,000 of which are clunkers, accounting for 70 per cent of the volume of bus transport system, deputy interior minister for urban and rural development has said.

“To encourage people using public transportation rather than private cars in order to curb air pollution, it is essential to develop and promote the transport system,” IRNA quoted Mehdi Jamalinejad as saying on Saturday.

Given the country’s public transport system being old or aging over 10 years; a plan was proposed by the president to renovate the public transport fleet since the Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017-March 2018), according to which 19,000 new buses, 48,000 new minibuses and 6,000 trucks should have replaced the clunker ones, he explained.

The railways system stretching to 295 kilometers across the country is planned to expand to 830 kilometers, he said, adding that currently, 289 kilometers of railroads are under construction and some 245 kilometers are being designed.

Additionally, through renovation of the taxi fleet started since two years ago, 71,000 clunker taxis were scrapped and 61,000 new taxis substituted the old ones, he highlighted.

He went on to add that last year, some 13,909 old taxis discarded from service while the number reached 1,000 this year, so we decided to discuss the issue with manufacturers to increase the number of scrappage.

Referring to a new traffic scheme proposed by Tehran Municipality in an attempt to address persistent air pollution and traffic congestion in the metropolis, he noted that if Tehran city council approves the proposal the new



scheme will go into effect by the beginning of summer and air pollution will be contained to some extent.

The new traffic scheme is decided to replace odd-even traffic scheme, based on which all vehicles, regardless of their registration numbers, are allowed to enter the traffic zones 20 days during each season (80 days all year round) for free without paying any fees and those who are planning on entering the zone more should pay taxes to the municipality.

Among the aforementioned plans on air pollution mitigation, metro development is on agenda, as 2,000 subway cars are being purchased to operate in cities of Tabriz, Isfahan, Shiraz, Qom and Mashhad, Jamalinejad stated.

He also added that some 570 cars are scheduled to operate in underground transport fleet of Tehran and Mashhad prov-

ince, which will be provided as long as €18 million customs clearance fees are paid.

The urban system in the country is poorly managed, as all the facilities and jobs are centered in the urban areas of metropolises, he noted, lamenting, in the near future many of the small cities and villages across the country will be depopulated and many migrate to the big cities.

Migration from small towns to the metropolises contributes to air pollution, lack of facilities and urban problems, so villages and rural areas must be developed to prevent huge migrations, he concluded.

Tehran bus company’s director general Peyman Sanandaji said in November 2018 that according to a five-year plan, Tehran must have 9,000 buses while there are only 6,000 buses operating in the capital’s transport fleet, of which some 3,000 are clunker and age more than 10 years.

In January, Tehran Mayor Pirouz Hanachi said that while currently some 1,350 railway cars are running in the capital’s subway system, it is still facing lack of 2,000 cars.

Ali Mohammadi, an official with traffic police, said in early January that the scrappage of clunker vehicles has decreased by 65 percent in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21, 2018) compared to a year earlier.

Clunker cars great deal of emission and cause air pollution especially in metropolises like Tehran. Tehraners have experienced a 17 days of excellent air quality since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year.

According to health and environmental officials over 70 percent of pollutants in Tehran is produced by clunker vehicles, which are 25 times more polluting than ordinary cars.

Food poisoning cases could surge as climate change brings swarms of flies, scientists warn

Food poisoning cases could surge as rising global temperatures bring swarms of disease-ridden flies, according to new research.

If greenhouse gas emissions continue at their current rates, fly populations are predicted to double or even triple in the coming decades as changing conditions create the perfect conditions for the insects.

In a new study, Canadian scientists looked at the knock-on effects this could have as fly-borne diseases become more prevalent.

Campylobacter bacteria are one of the main causes of food-borne illness worldwide, and while they are known to contaminate meat the way they spread through populations is not fully understood.

As fluctuations in infections are known to coincide with peak fly densities during the summer months, the insects are thought to be a key link in their transmission.

The microbes have been found living on flies, and are thought to be transferred to food and between domestic animals as the insects buzz around in search of a meal.

Researchers used information about the transmission of harmful bacteria by insects and predicted booms in fly populations to estimate how the spread of disease would change.

“Insects are very sensitive to changes in the weather and thrive in warmer temperatures,” said Melanie Cousins, a PhD student who completed this work as part of her master’s thesis at the University of Guelph. “When the temperature is warmer, fly eggs hatch much more quickly meaning that populations can increase rapidly. Therefore, with the projected increases in temperatures and the increased length

of the warm season, houseflies are predicted to benefit.”

Under high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, increased fly populations and activity could double cases of Campylobacter food poisoning by 2080.

They used data for the Canadian province of Ontario to create their model and data on illness rates from the past 12 years to establish its accuracy.

Their results were published in the journal Royal Society Open Science.

A separate report recently revealed that intensive agriculture and pesticides mean global insect populations are in freefall, and could be largely eliminated within a century.

However, the authors of that study predicted species like house flies, which are resilient and can adapt to pesticides, are likely to thrive as temperatures get warmer



and many of their competitors and predators are wiped out.

As the research undertaken by Ms Cousins and her team was theoretical, she said due to the known impact of warm weather on flies it was worth field work to test for microbes on actual flies.

(Source: msn.com)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ج

On verge of extinction: Cheetah killed in road accident in northeastern Iran

A female Asiatic cheetah lost life after being severely wounded in a car crash in Jajarm road in North Khorasan province, the provincial department of environment (DOE) public relations has announced. While walking across the northern margin of Zamen-e Ahoo national park and Miandasht wildlife refuge the young female cheetah has been injured in a car accident, chief of the provincial DOE said.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“geo-, ge-”

■ **Meaning:** earth

■ **For example:** Desert-going *geologists* know about dangerous local creatures.

PHRASAL VERB

Move somebody along

■ **Meaning:** to officially order someone to leave a public place

■ **For example:** A queue formed by the gates, and a policeman tried to move people along.

IDIOM

Cough up

■ **Explanation:** If you have to cough up something, such as money or information, you give it reluctantly or unwillingly

■ **For example:** He refused to say who attacked him until his father made him cough up the names.

یک قلابه یوزپلنگ طی تصادف جاده‌ای در خراسان شمالی تلف شد

به گزارش ایسنا و به نقل از روابط عمومی اداره کل حفاظت محیط زیست استان، علی‌مطهری مدیرکل این نهاد گفت: یک قلابه یوزپلنگ ماده طی تصادف جاده‌ای در جاده جاجرم تلف شد.

وی افزود: این یوزپلنگ جوان با جنسیت ماده در حاشیه شمالی پارک ملی ضامن آهو و پناهگاه حیات وحش میاندشت در اثر برخورد با خودروهای عبوری زخمی شده بود.

Over \$55mn to be invested in settlement projects in al-Quds Old City

An Israeli construction company is going to spend millions of dollars on the expansion of settlements in the Old City of al-Quds (Jerusalem) in violation of international law and United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions condemning Tel Aviv's land expropriation policies in the occupied territories.

According to a report published by the Hebrew-language daily Israel Hayom, the Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem (al-Quds) will invest more than 200 million shekels (\$55,288,940) in the projects.

The projects will include renovating the Tiferet Yisrael Synagogue, the Burnt House and the Wohl Archaeological Museum.

Palestinians and Israeli anti-settlement groups have described the move as a new attempt by Tel Aviv to Judaize the Old City of al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Earlier this week, Ir Amim, an Israeli NGO opposing Israel's settlement expansion activities, published a new map, describing an "accelerated, intensifying chain of new facts on the ground in the most historically contested and politically sensitive part of Jerusalem [al-Quds]: the Old City and adjacent ring of Palestinian neighborhoods."

The map pointed to a mounting number of Israeli regime-sponsored settlement campaigns inside Palestinian neighborhoods, as well as "settler-initiated evictions of Palestinians, takeovers of their homes,



and the expansion of settler compounds," in addition the use of "touristic settlement sites" as "key points along a ring of tightening Israeli control."

Ir Amim said tourism and supposed archaeology projects "assume a central role in Israeli settlement policy."

The NGO group also stressed handing over the management of such projects to settlement organizations allows Israel "to exploit tourism as a tool for reinforcing settlement initiatives in the Old City and its environs, erasing the significant Palestinian presence there, promulgating the idea of the entire area

as an Israeli environment, and imposing a nationalistic Israeli character that blurs the multi-religious and multi-cultural nature of the space, primarily to the detriment of the Muslim sites and presence."

"This use of national parks and tourist sites serves the goal of transforming the Palestinian neighborhoods in and around the Old City, including Silwan, al-Tur, Ras al-Amud and Sheikh Jarrah, from a densely populated Palestinian area into one sprawling tourist site that bolsters Israeli control of the area and access to it," Ir Amim pointed out. About 600,000 Israelis live in over 230

illegal settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds (Jerusalem).

The UN Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

Less than a month before the United States President Donald Trump took office, the United Nations Security Council in December 2016 adopted Resolution 2334, calling on Israel to "immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem" al-Quds.

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state with East al-Quds (Jerusalem) as its capital.

The last round of Israeli-Palestinian talks collapsed in 2014. Among the major sticking points in those negotiations was Israel's continued settlement expansion on Palestinian territories.

Trump backtracked on Washington's support for a "two-state solution" in 2017, saying he would support any solution favored by both sides.

"Looking at two-state or one-state, I like the one that both parties like. I'm very happy with the one both parties like. I can live with either one," the U.S. president said during a joint press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington on February 15, 2017.

(Source: Press TV)

Britain remainers plan huge march, possible referendum in run-up to Brexit

British campaigners and Members of Parliament opposed to the country's imminent withdrawal from the European Union (EU), which many believe would take place in a disorderly manner, are planning a huge march and a possible referendum to stop the divorce days before the official deadline at the end of March.

The Observer newspaper said on Sunday that hundreds of thousands could turn up at the march in central London on March 23, which is aimed to protest government plans for leaving the EU either on terms of a controversial deal, which is yet to gain Parliament's approval, or without an agreement, a move that could unleash huge economic uncertainties.

The march is mainly aimed at persuading members of the parliament to endorse the idea that they should only back Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal if it is put to a final vote of the British people, or in other words a new referendum three years after the June 2016 vote that triggered the divorce.

For the plan to succeed, pro-EU MPs (Members of Parliament) need to pass a "lethal" amendment that would allow May's deal to be passed only after people endorsed it in a referendum.

Doing so would require a delay of the official exit date from the EU, which is planned for March 29, something that the government has roundly rejected.

A possible rejection of May's deal in the second referendum raises the chances of reversing Brexit and extending London's stay in the EU on current terms, the report added.

Anti-Brexit campaigners and politicians believe May

is deliberately delaying a final parliamentary vote on her Brexit deal to force the lawmakers into a situation to either support a deal she signed with the EU in November or to give in to a no-deal exit.

Experts have warned that Britain's disorderly exit from the EU would have huge impacts on the economy.

Ever since lawmakers in the House of Commons rejected May's Brexit deal on January 15, she has been trying to gain concessions from the EU that would allow the deal to pass the chamber.

The EU has rejected Britain's demands for a renegotiation of a clause in the agreement which sets out terms for future administration of the Irish border. Brussels says the so-called Irish backstop should remain intact to ensure that there would be no return to a hard border between Ireland and the British province of Northern Ireland after Brexit.

May has insisted she would honor the exit date and would implement Brexit on time regardless of the political stalemate in the parliament.

■ **May to speak to every EU leader over Brexit deadlock next week**

Elsewhere, May is to hold Brexit talks with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker next week, her office said on Saturday, following this week's symbolic defeat in parliament which was widely interpreted as undermining her negotiating strength with the EU.

Her office did not give a date for the talks but said May planned to speak to the leader of every EU member state over the coming days.

On Monday, Brexit Secretary Steve Barclay will meet EU



chief negotiator Michel Barnier, it added in a statement.

On Tuesday, Attorney General Geoffrey Cox, will make a speech setting out what changes would be required to eliminate the legal risk that Britain could be trapped in a Northern Irish backstop indefinitely.

May's defeat in last Thursday's symbolic vote undermined her pledge to EU leaders that she could pass her deal with concessions primarily around the Irish backstop - a guarantee that there can be no return of border controls between the British province of Northern Ireland and EU-member Ireland.

The issue has become one of the main points of contention ahead of Britain's planned departure from the EU next month after 45 years.

May's office said she had written to her divided Conservative MPs urging them to overcome their differences over leaving the EU in the national interest.

(Source: agencies)

UK and Russia hold first talks in over a year

Junior foreign ministers from Britain and Russia met in Germany on Saturday in the highest-level contact between the two countries since an alleged nerve agent attack in Britain last March froze diplomatic relations.

Britain's Minister for Europe Alan Duncan held talks with Russia's First Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Titov on the margins of the Munich Security Conference, according to the foreign office in London.

"Alan underlined that we have deep differences, and the Russian state would need to choose a different path and act as a responsible international partner before there can be a change in our current relationship with Russia," it said in a statement.

Duncan added his own reaction on Twitter, alongside a photo of the pair.

"While we remain open to a different relationship with Russia, we will continue to stand with our allies and partners in expecting Russia to play its full part in upholding the rules-based international system," he said.

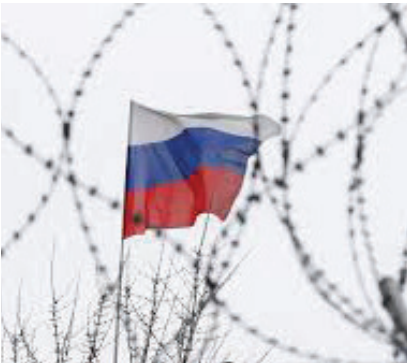
The meeting is the first between ministers from the two countries following the poisoning of a former Russian spy and his daughter in the English city of Salisbury on March 4 which Britain has blamed on Moscow.

The attempted assassination of Sergei Skripal, which Britain said was done using a Soviet era nerve agent Novichok, plunged relations to their lowest ebb in decades.

The attack also led to the death of a British woman who came into contact with the Novichok, as well as injuring several others including a policeman.

Among a raft of responses, London suspended all planned high-level bilateral contacts between the two countries, and cancelled ministers and members of the royal family attending last summer's World Cup in Russia.

"[The] minister reiterated the U.K.'s and Allies' firm stance in response to the Russian state's reckless use of chemical weapons in



Salisbury," the British Foreign Ministry added in its statement.

"He made clear that Russia must address the concerns of the international community. This includes ending its destabilizing activity in Ukraine; and the persecution of the LGBT community in Chechnya."

The Foreign Ministry said Britain would

continue to "build and strengthen our cultural ties and people to people links with Russia wherever we can".

Russia's RIA Novosti news agency cited a "diplomatic source" who disputed the British foreign office's robust description of the talks.

"The comment published [by London] does not correspond with the tone or the content of the meeting," it said.

The source added the British side had "stressed their desire for dialogue".

The last ministerial meeting between Britain and Russia was in December 2017, when former foreign secretary Boris Johnson met his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in Moscow.

This weekend's talks took place as ministers from around the world, including those from the U.S., France, Britain, and Germany, are in Munich for a conference centered on global security issues.

(Source: AFP)

Vatican hosts sex abuse summit

Pope Francis gathers bishops from around the world at the Vatican this week for a hotly awaited summit on tackling the wave of child sex abuse scandals assailing the Catholic Church.

The heads of around 100 bishops' conferences from every continent will convene from Thursday to Sunday for the meeting, with victims' groups demanding that a concrete action plan on fighting pedophilia be drawn up.

The pope, who asked the bishops to speak to victims of abuse in their respective countries before the Rome convention, has tried to dial down "inflated expectations" for a cure-all.

The conference aims to be an opportunity to improve awareness of the global phenomenon of sexual abuse of minors within the Church, despite many in Africa, Asia and the Middle East being in denial of what they call "a Western problem."

In many parts of the world, discussing violence toward children and even sex is taboo, leading the Vatican to organize this week's "educational" gathering. Some abuse



victims, particularly from countries where their plight is ignored, have also been invited to attend.

The aim is for the heads of the world's episcopal conferences to achieve "a feeling of collective responsibility" said Father Federico Lombardi, who will be leading debates

during the conference.

"The credibility of the Church is at stake," he said.

The summit comes after Pope Francis defrocked a former cardinal - American Theodore McCarrick - over accusations he sexually abused a teenager 50 years ago.

McCarrick, 88, who resigned from the Vatican's College of Cardinals in July, is the first cardinal ever to be defrocked for sex abuse.

Chilean Vatican expert Luis Badilla said the meeting would be a "decisive moment for the pontificate."

"We want this meeting to result in concrete measures," he said, echoing victims' hopes for the conference, being held in the wake of pedophile scandals that have shaken the Church particularly in Chile and in the U.S.

The summit's title, concerning "the protection of minors," avoids using the words "sex" or "pedophilia," noted Badilla. That reflects the Church's centuries-old instinct to protect its image, he said. But he added "the only way to emerge from the crisis is to tell the whole truth."

(Source: AFP)

Assad: U.S. will sell out those relying on it

➡ U.S. forces have long supplied arms and training to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), led by the Kurdish YPG militia, the main U.S partner in the battle against ISIL. The U.S. presence helped the SDF seize swathes of north and east Syria, and has also been widely seen as a deterrent against Turkey which has vowed to crush the YPG.

Ankara sees the YPG as a security threat and an extension of the Kurdish PKK movement that has waged an insurgency on Turkish soil for decades.

The U.S. move drove Syrian Kurdish leaders into fresh talks with Damascus and its key ally Moscow, hoping to agree a deal that could protect the SDF region and safeguard at least some of their gains.

"Nobody will protect you except your state," Assad said in a live televised speech on Sunday. "If you do not prepare yourselves to defend your country, you will be nothing but slaves to (Turkey)". (Source: Reuters)

Zarif: U.S. policies driven by its pathological obsession of Iran

➡ Europe needs to invest too. Many around the world—and particularly on this content—speak eloquently about multilateralism. But they also need to walk the walk. For instance, INSTEX falls short of the commitments by the E3 to "save" the JCPOA. Europe needs to be willing to get wet if it wants to swim against the dangerous tide of U.S. unilateralism.

While we have shown our desire for engagement, we don't depend on others for our security, stability, prosperity and progress. We solely depend on our own people. That is why 40 years of so-called "maximum pressure"—namely demonization, war, sanctions and terror—including the heinous foreign-sponsored terrorist bombing in my country on Wednesday—has failed to "bring Iran to its knees"; nor has it affected our people's decision-making calculus.

Distinguished Friends,

Iran's foreign policy is designed to further the goal of creating a strong region that precludes the emergence of hegemonic aspirations by any power – regional or global.

A strong region simply means more confidence, more trade and more interaction between and among the countries in the region, than with external powers.

It requires homegrown political and territorial stability; reliance on the populace as the source of legitimacy, security and prosperity; harmonization of national identities and regional citizenship; participation of all in ensuring peace; and the exercising of strategic self-restraint.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In spite of all the ignorant hate-speech by American officials, let me remind you that we Iranians are proud to be the inheritors of a great civilization. The entirety of humanity is today riding in the same boat and we either sail together; or sink together. Our renowned poet, Sa'adi, testified to this truth over 900 years ago:

All human beings are members of one frame

Since all, at first, from the same essence came.

When time afflicts one limb with pain

The other limbs cannot at rest remain.

I thank you for your attention.

Polish PM cancels trip to Israel in wake of comments on Poles in Holocaust

Poland's Prime Minister has canceled a trip to Israel in the wake of reported remarks made by Israel's prime minister suggesting Polish complicity during the Holocaust, an aide in his office told Polish media on Sunday.



A government spokeswoman confirmed to Reuters that Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki will not attend the summit and that Poland will send foreign minister Jacek Czaputowicz instead.

Morawiecki informed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of his decision to cancel his visit in a telephone call on Sunday afternoon, spokeswoman Joanna Kopcinska said.

The summit of four central and Eastern European countries is set to be held in Jerusalem this week.

Poland's government has sought to debunk references of potential Polish collaboration in the Holocaust, in an effort to "fight for the truth," Morawiecki told Poland's parliament last year.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said in a statement the prime minister, who was in Warsaw for a U.S.-sponsored Middle East conference when he made the comments, had been misquoted by The Jerusalem Post, which issued a corrected story.

In a later statement, Netanyahu's office said in his remarks on the question of Polish collaboration with Nazi occupiers, he had not cast any blanket blame.

Israel's ambassador to Poland Anna Azari was summoned by Poland's government on Friday and was asked to clarify Netanyahu's comments.

Morawiecki said in an interview published on Sunday by Polish news agency PAP that Azari explained that Netanyahu was referring to individual cases of Poles collaborating with Nazis.

Tensions between Israel and Poland ran high last year after Poland introduced new legislation that would make the use of phrases such as "Polish death camps" punishable by up to three years in prison.

After pressure from the U.S. government and an outcry in Israel, Poland watered down the legislation, removing the prison sentences.

Many Poles still refuse to accept research showing thousands participated in the Holocaust in addition to the thousands who risked their lives to help the Jews. (Source: Reuters)

Real Madrid suffer title blow against Girona, Sergio Ramos sees red



Girona pulled off an astonishing comeback, coming from 1-0 down to claim a famous 2-1 win at the Santiago Bernabeu to deal a devastating blow to Real Madrid's La Liga title hopes.

Santiago Solari's side had closed the gap at the top of the table to just six points in recent weeks, but Barcelona now hold a nine-point advantage over their rivals after Real Madrid's surprise home defeat.

The hosts coasted through the first half, with Casemiro scoring the opener after 26 minutes, powering home a header from a Toni Kroos cross. Marcelo also had a goal chalked off for offside at the end of the first half as Real Madrid controlled the match.

All that changed in the second half, though, as Girona equalised from the spot. The referee spotted a handball by Sergio Ramos after Cristhian Stuani had struck the post and the Uruguayan striker stepped up to convert the penalty.

Portu then hit the woodwork as Real Madrid rocked before putting Girona ahead, squeezing home a header following a Thibaut Courtois save from substitute Anthony Lozano's curling, right-footed shot.

Lozano could have made it three with a header of his own before Ramos was sent off late on for a dangerous overhead kick which saw him shown a second yellow card. The result eases Girona's relegation fears and keeps Real Madrid in third place.

Back-to-back draws from Barcelona, coupled with a surge in form from Real Madrid, saw the gap at the top of La Liga close to six points ahead of this weekend. All of a sudden, though, the gap between Barca and Real Madrid stands at nine points.

(Source: Eurosport)

Saudi Prince steps up £3.8bn Manchester United takeover bid

Manchester United have received a whopping £3.8BILLION takeover bid from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman.

The Saudi royal family, who are worth a staggering £850bn, are hoping to tempt United's current owners the Glazers into selling the club before the start of next season.

The proposed takeover bid comes after United chiefs have been seen spending an increasing amount of time in Saudi Arabia, according to The Sun.

Sources close to the Glazer family claim that they are against selling the Premier League club but an offer that big could certainly tempt United's owners.

The American owners purchased the Red Devils in 2003 for £790m but if they decided to accept Bin Salman's offer, the Glazers would bank a huge £2.2bn profit.

The Saudi Prince has previously been linked with buying United last year but sources insisted the club is not for sale, especially after Bin Salman became embroiled over the death of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. The £3.8bn valuation from the Saudi Prince is dependent on whether or not United can secure Champions League football next season.

Should Ole Gunnar Solskjaer fail to deliver Champions League football, then the valuation of United would likely drop while a deal is unlikely to go through until qualification is confirmed.

Purchasing United would signal the Saudi family's intent to rival Manchester City as the top team in English and world football.

City, who are owned by Sheikh Mansour of the Abu Dhabi royal family, have guided City to becoming one of the world's best club teams after huge investments were made over the past decade.

Sportsmail contacted Manchester United over a potential takeover but they refused to comment on 'speculation'.

(Source: Daily Mail)

American Nelly Korda wins Women's Australian Open in Adelaide

American Nelly Korda continued her family's remarkable success in Australia by winning the Women's Australian Open in Adelaide.

Korda finished on 17 under par, two clear of South Korea's Ko Jin-young.

Korda is the daughter of former tennis player Petr Korda who won the 1998 Australian Open men's singles title.

Her sister Jessica also won the golf Australian Open in 2012 while her brother Sebastian won the tennis junior singles title last year. The 20-year-old took a three-shot lead into the final round at The Grange and shot a five-under-par 67 to win.

England's Jodi Ewart Shadoff finished in a tie for eighth on nine under. Korda was born six months after her father won the Australian Open in Melbourne, the Czech's only Grand Slam title.

At the start of the week she said she felt "so left out" when her family discussed their Australian titles and when she completed her own victory she celebrated with her father's trademark scissor kick.

"I'm finally a part of the club," Korda said.

"I mean this win was really special for my family.

"I think there's something in the air here, we love coming down under.

"I just got off the phone with my dad and he said, 'Well, congratulations, you're part of the Korda Slam now'."

(Source: BBC)

LeBron James: Ownership is an 'aspiration,' not a dream

With Michael Jordan hosting All-Star Weekend as the only former player to serve as the principal owner of an NBA team, LeBron James said that while team ownership is a goal for when he is finished playing, it's not his singular focus.

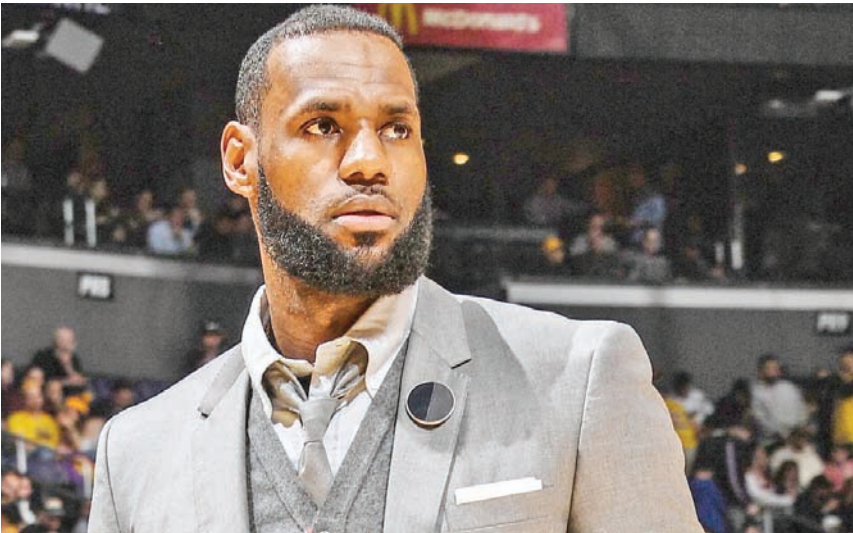
"It's not that it's intoxicating to me, and I don't think about it on a day-to-day basis," James said when asked about NBA ownership at Saturday's All-Star media availability session.

It was a step back from his recent declaration to The Athletic about the subject, when James said, "Ain't no maybe about it. I'm going to do that s---."

"I was asked a question and, um, I answered it how I felt at that point in time," James said Saturday. "I believe if I wanted to, I could own a team or be part of a basketball team. I know I got so much knowledge of the game that I don't want to, once I stop playing, I just [do not] want to get away from the game.

"Obviously I'm going to be along with my sons, because they're going to play the game -- they're playing the game now, and I'm going to be along with them. But if I can give back to this league in any way, shape or form and continue to make this league as great as it is today, then I would love to."

James has a net worth of more than \$450 million, according to Forbes, while the average NBA team is worth \$1.9 billion. Team values



are only going up as the NBA continues to find new revenue streams both domestically and across the globe.

Beyond raising enough capital to jump in the ownership pool, James said there are other parts of the puzzle that would have to come together first. "It would have to be the right fit. It'd have to be the right city. It'd have to be the right situation," James said.

Mikaela Shiffrin makes history with fourth straight slalom gold



Mikaela Shiffrin proved she really is in a league of her own in the slalom, becoming the first skier in history to win four consecutive world titles in the same event.

The American was third after the morning run, 0.15 seconds behind leader Wendy Holdener, but put in a faultless, textbook performance in her second run to finish almost a second ahead of home favorite Anna Swenn Larsson who took silver.

Swiss skier Holdener was last to go and challenge Shiffrin's daunting time, but a costly error inside the opening seconds cost her any hope of a medal.

Following victory, Shiffrin revealed that she had been struggling with illness throughout both runs on Saturday.

"I think that I maybe have a small infection in my lungs," Shiffrin told Eurosport after her win. "I've never had this before, it's tough to breathe without coughing."

"But everyone around me today was helping to much to make it so that I could breathe when I needed to and then halfway down this run, I ran out of oxygen."

"I was just trying to fight to stay in the course if I could and do by very best but it was tough today. My skiing, especially

in the second run, was really good, I was pushing really hard.

"I don't want people to think, like: 'Oh, I'm sick and I won.' I mean, I was really pushing and maybe I couldn't have done better if I was feeling normal."

It means that Shiffrin, remarkably still only 23, adds the world title in Are to her previous slalom golds in Schladming, Beaver Creek and St. Moritz.

She admitted that the possibility of making history was the extra motivation she needed to power through.

"Today was something else," she said of the occasion. "There's been a lot going on these Championships since the Super-G win. I certainly had a lot of doubt today but in the most important moments it was okay."

"Like I said, my team was just spectacular this whole time to get me to toughen up and do the job. I'm really, really happy."

The packed grandstand produced the loudest roar of the afternoon when home star Swenn Larsson crossed the line into second place, with just Holdener left to run, to guarantee herself a first ever World Championship medal.

(Source: CNN)

Robben: For me, Anfield is the worst stadium



Bayern Munich veteran Arjen Robben said Anfield is his "worst stadium" ahead of the Champions League last-16 tie against Liverpool.

Bundesliga champions Bayern will travel to last season's runners-up and Premier League leaders Liverpool for the first leg on Tuesday. Robben – who will leave Bayern at the end of the season – has some unhappy memories of Anfield from his time with Chelsea. Chelsea were edged 1-0 on aggregate by eventual winners Liverpool in the 2004-05 Champions League semi-finals, while Robben and his team-mates lost on penalties to the Reds at the same stage of the tournament in 2006-07.

"I think, if you ask [about] the worst stadium for me, it's probably Liverpool," the 35-year-old Dutch winger told The Guardian. "You always have your favourite opponent and there always has to be a negative one."

Reflecting on the two semi-final defeats to Liverpool in Europe, Robben added: "At that time [Liverpool] were really capable of being this cup fighter team, also in the FA Cup or [League] Cup."

"In one or two games they could really live up to it and perform, just not the whole

player for a long time."

While James distanced himself somewhat from following in the footsteps of Jordan, who owns the Charlotte Hornets, he is on course to pass him on the career scoring list sometime after the All-Star break. James is currently No. 5 on the list with 32,082 points, just 210 points behind No. 4 Jordan (32,292).

"It's kind of hard to talk into the future. You know how I am. I kind of live in the moment," James said of the approaching accomplishment. "Once that moment gets here, I'll be able to reflect on it. How long I reflect on it, probably pretty quick. You know how I am with that as well."

"One thing I can tell you is anytime I'm mentioned with one of the greats, if not the greatest that ever played this game, it's crazy to me. It really is. It's crazy to me when I'm talked about with some of the greats. You talk about MJ, who I looked up to and always believed was the greatest. It's just pretty cool, and I have no idea how I've been able to do it."

Jordan played in 14 All-Star games; James is making his 15th appearance Sunday. While he has heard comparisons for years -- inviting some by wearing No. 23 and openly pining for GOAT status -- James is seeing the big wheel turning with Duke sensation Zion Williamson being compared to him.

(Source: ESPN)

Glenn Hoddle 'died for 60 secs' during cardiac arrest and had 7 ribs broken

Football legend Glenn Hoddle has spoken for the first time about his TV studio cardiac arrest and admitted: "I was gone."

The former England manager's heart stopped for a minute at the end of a live BT Sport show on his 61st birthday in October.

Host Robbie Savage yelled for help as sound engineer Simon Daniels raced to Glenn's aid.

Hero Simon had to break seven of Glenn's ribs as he desperately pounded his chest to bring him back to life.

Glenn revealed: "My heart stopped for at least 60 seconds. I was gone."

"The engineer ran to me and brought me back to life. I wouldn't be here if not for him. It just wasn't my time to go."

The ex-Spurs and Chelsea hero suffered the cardiac arrest while guesting on the Live Saturday Morning Savage show.

He said: "Robbie and I had been playing the keepy-uppy game (chipping a football back and forth on to a table tennis table) at the end of the programme."

"Robbie said that after the credits rolled I was just at the moment of volleying the ball back to him when I fell backwards and smashed my head on the floor."

"It's ironic that if I had died, the last thing I would have done on this earth was kick a ball. What a way to go!"

"It could have happened on live TV. The timing of everything on the day was incredible."

"Robbie thought I was messing around with him when



I fell to the floor.

"We had been having banter. Then he stopped laughing and thought I might have swallowed my tongue."

"But he soon realised something very serious had happened."

"He couldn't do anything, so started shouting for help."

"Thank God first-aider Simon was nearby and got to me so quickly."

"If he had been in the toilet, or left the studio, or not on duty, I would not be here to tell my story."

"He performed chest compressions and fitted a defibrillator on my chest to keep me alive."

"Simon is a mild-mannered guy and was apologetic afterwards because something kicked in during the emergency and he was ordering everyone about."

"He told strangers 'Do this, do that'. He is a volunteer policeman and was embarrassed."

"It goes without saying if my cardiac arrest had struck on the golf course, or when I was watching Spurs play in the Netherlands a few days earlier, I'd be a goner."

Glenn's fall had medics fearing that he had suffered severe brain damage. He added: "I bumped my head so badly that that was their first concern. My head was so black it looked like I had been burned."

"They were worried about my brain. Only after that did they sort my heart."

His condition was regarded as so critical that an air ambulance took him the short distance from the studios in Stratford, East London, to the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel.

Paramedics had arrived at the scene after just six minutes, and their swift response was crucial in saving Glenn's life.

He said: "It keeps hitting me in waves, how lucky I am despite everything. The stars were aligned in many, many different ways."

(Source: The Sun)

Branko Ivankovic plays down ‘favorites’ tag in Iran’s Hazfi Cup

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic has played down his team favorites’ tag in Iran’s Hazfi Cup.

The Reds will host Padideh on Monday in Tehran’s Azadi Stadium in the quarter-finals round.

The winners of the match will face Sepahan in Isfahan.

“We are not favorites to win the title not because we don’t want to win the match. Hazfi Cup is different with the league and it’s so unpredictable,” Ivankovic said in the pre-match news conference.

“Iran’s first division team Damash have advanced to the final match by beating league team Saipa and it shows that you should not take nothing for granted in Hazfi Cup. There is tough task ahead because we need to beat

powerhouse teams Padideh and Sepahan to reach the final match,” the Croat added.

“Persepolis are going to win the title and will do our best. However, we feel the pressure because of league’s time table. I don’t want to criticize the organizers but I think the schedule has gone against us. Persepolis have cooperated with the Iran Football League Organization. When our players were called up for national duty we met Paykan in the league and Sepidrood in Hazfi Cup,” Ivankovic concluded.

Hazfi Cup is the Iranian football knockout cup competition, run by the Iranian Football Federation.

The competition was founded in 1975 and Esteghlal are the most successful club with seven titles.

Persepolis have claimed the title five time.



© Tehran Times/Asghar Khansefi

Barcelona aren’t team ‘we want to be’ after tough Valladolid win - Pique



Gerard Pique said Barcelona were not the team they want to be after laboring to a 1-0 victory over Real Valladolid in La Liga on Saturday.

Lionel Messi’s first-half penalty -- his 30th goal in all competitions this season -- was the difference between the two sides at Camp Nou as Barca returned to winning ways after three draws in a row.

Messi missed a second penalty later in the game and Barca squandered a host of chances as they struggled to kill the game off.

Pique said after the match that they must improve immediately as they embark on a difficult run of four away games, starting at Lyon in the Champions League on Tuesday.

“We didn’t play well,” Pique admitted. “It was not a good performance. We weren’t the Barcelona that we want to be.

“The only good news is the win,

getting back to winning ways, but we have to improve. The sensations aren’t good and we must be better on Tuesday [against Lyon]. If not, things won’t go well.

“We have to be more fluid, that’s what’s given us so many titles. If we don’t move the ball quickly, we have possession but we become a weaker team. We know that and other teams know that, so we have to improve.”

Pique was one of the few bright points of Barca’s performance on Saturday. The center-back was decisive at both ends, winning the penalty which Messi converted and contributing to a clean sheet in defence.

No one has played more than Pique in La Liga this season -- he hasn’t missed a single minute -- but Barca coach Ernesto Valverde played down fears he could suffer burnout in the crucial stage of the season.

(Source: ESPN)

Man United’s Sanchez lost confidence because of Mourinho’s methods



Alexis Sanchez has said he lost confidence under Jose Mourinho at Manchester United because of the former Chelsea and Real Madrid manager’s methods.

Sanchez, signed by Mourinho from Arsenal in January 2018, is a doubt for Monday’s FA Cup fifth round clash with Chelsea at Stamford Bridge after being injured in a collision with an assistant referee during last week’s 2-0 Champions League defeat against Paris Saint-Germain.

The former Barcelona forward’s injury problem is the latest setback to befall him at Old Trafford, with fitness issues and loss of form seeing him score just five goals in 37 appearances for United.

Sanchez also fell out of favor with Mourinho prior to the Portuguese’s sacking as manager in December and, while describing him as one of the best coaches in the world, the player has said that life became difficult during

the final months of his reign.

“Mourinho is one of the best coaches in the world, in the way that he coaches, how he studies videos, the way he goes about things,” Sanchez told the BBC. “But within the group, there was that feeling that you were in the team, then out.

“Sometimes I didn’t play, then I did, then I didn’t and as a player you lose confidence.”

Sanchez is battling to regain his best form for United, with caretaker manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer claiming recently that he “can’t do anything” to help the 30-year-old reproduce his previously high standards.

And Sanchez admits that he should have done more for the club since his arrival 13 months ago.

“I would like to have brought more joy to the club,” he said. “Yes, it worries me because I believe in my abilities as a player, I want to show it.

Saeid Ezatolahi’s condition unclear

PLDC — Iran international Reading midfielder Saeid Ezatolahi has yet to appear in the field from early October due to a foot injury.

The 22-year-old player suffered a quadriceps strain in the match against West Bromwich Albion in last year’s October and has not recovered after about five months.

Ezatolahi missed the 2019 AFC Asian Cup due to injury and it’s unclear whether he is anywhere close to optimum condition.



Team Melli failed to qualify for the final match after losing to Japan 3-0.

The Iranian international player was signed by Paul Clement in the Championship side in August.

Ezatolahi joined Royals on a season-long loan from Russian outfit FC Rostov and became the club’s eighth signing of the summer.

Clement was replaced by Jose Gomez in December and it’s not clear Ezatolahi can satisfy the Portuguese coach after his long-term return.

Now, Reading sit 21st in the 24-team table, just nine points above the relegation zone.

With 13 weeks remaining, Ezatolahi will likely miss the rest of the season and his condition remains unclear.

Iranian athletes win seven medals at Karate 1-Premier League

TASNIM — Iranian karatekas claimed seven bronze medals at Karate 1-Premier League event in Dubai.

The competition was held at the Al Wasl club in Dubai, the UAE.

In Female Kumite -55kg, Fatemeh Chalaki defeated Egyptian Salma Elshafi 1-0 and won the bronze medal.

In Female Kumite -61 Kg, Rozita Alipour defeated Turkey’s Merve Cuban 3-0 in the bronze medal match.

Amir Reza Mirzaei defeated Austrian Stefan Pokorny 7-4 in the Male Kumite -67 Kg to claim a bronze medal.

Also, another Iranian fighter Hamoon Derafshipour defeated Saudi Arabian Fahad Alkhatami 10-7 to take a bronze medal.

Zabihollah Poorshab also won a bronze medal after defeating Turgut Hasanov from Azerbaijan 1-0 in the Male Kumite -84 Kg.

In the Male Kumite +84Kg, Sajjad Ganjzadeh beat Russian Alexander Pshenitsyn 6-1 in bronze-medal match.

Iran also took a bronze medal in men’s kata.

Iran’s Zob Ahan, Saipa to meet Qatari rivals in ACL play-offs

Iran along with Qatar and Uzbekistan has two clubs vying to reach the Continental competition, with all to be decided in the one-legged match-ups.

Eight spots remain up for grabs in the 2019 AFC Champions League group stage ahead of the final Play-off round on Tuesday when four crucial fixtures will take place in West Asia.

Saipa of Iran will face Qatar’s Al Rayyan in Doha’s Jassim bin Hamad Stadium on Tuesday.

Despite being regulars in the tournament, Al Rayyan has never advanced beyond the group stage, while Saipa – whose coach Ali Daei was in charge of the side at the beginning of its only appearance (in 2008) – reached the quarter-final 11 years ago.

Another Iranian club Zob Ahan has been scheduled to meet Qatar’s Al Gharafa on Tuesday in Doha’s Thani bin Jassim Stadium.

Al Gharafa will look to confirm its second successive appearance and the Iranian side is attempting to qualify for the group stage for the fourth year in a row after last year reaching the Round of 16.

Al Gharafa finished fourth in the 2017-18 Qatar Stars League while Zob Ahan was runners-up in the Iranian Pro League, before seeing off three-time AFC Cup winner Kuwait SC 1-0 after extra time in Preliminary Stage 2 last Tuesday.

(Source: the-afc)

Olympic referee to represent United World Wrestling in Russia

IRNA — Mohammad Ebrahim Emami the S1 (Olympic grade) referee was introduced as the representative of the United World Wrestling (UWW) in the international wrestling competition of Ali Aliyev Cup in Russia.

The UWW introduced Mohammad Ebrahim Emami the S1 (Olympic) judge as neutral referee and representative of the United World Wrestling in the international wrestling competition of the Ali Aliyev Cup in Russia.

The Aliyev competition as one of the most prestigious international freestyle tournaments will be held in Kaspisk, Russia on May 9-12.

Australia’s fantastic four in Melbourne

Australia surged to four gold medals on the final evening of competition to claim victory in the unofficial ‘battle of the Tasman’ at the Melbourne 2019 World Para Swimming World Series.

The host nation ended three thrilling days of high-class action with the grand total of nine gold medals, 15 silver and 16 bronze - 40 of the 66 medals on offer.

Friends and neighbors New Zealand were second on the leaderboard with six golds and two silvers.

The Kiwis also clocked three world-record times during the meet, with Sophie Pascoe registering a blistering S9 all-time best of 28.15 seconds on Sunday evening on her way to winning the women’s 50m butterfly. Her time eclipsed Spain’s Sarai Gascon’s 2017 mark of 30.96.

The nine-time Paralympic gold medalist’s speedy sprint added to two world-leading marks set on Saturday, one by Pascoe herself in the S9 women’s freestyle, and the other by her countryman Cameron Leslie in the S4 men’s 100m backstroke.

■ Aussie Aussie Aussie

Sunday night started with a bang for the Australians, with a sweep of the podium places in the first event, the men’s 50m butterfly. Josh Alford swept home first, trailed by Nick Layton and Harrison Vig. Triple Melbourne 2019 World Series gold medalist Leslie just missed out on the silverware this time around, finishing in fourth place.

The Australians clinched two more medals in the next race, the women’s 50m butterfly, but missed out on gold thanks to Pascoe’s stunning swim. Emily Beecroft finished in the silver medal spot, with Taylor Corry picking up bronze.

It was back to Aussie dominance in race three, though, with Timothy Hodge leading a home charge in the 50m backstroke.

Rod Welsh took silver, with Josh Alford - back in the water a matter of minutes after his 50m fly exploits - finishing in third place this time around.

“I’m really happy,” winner Hodge said. “I went into this final just hoping for a decent time and I managed a small PB.” Hodge was grinning again later in the evening when he



picked up a second gold, winning the men’s 200m individual medley ahead of fellow Australian Liam Schluter and third-place Chan Long Tin of Hong Kong China.

“It’s been great racing here. I’ve never actually raced in this outdoor pool before, it’s been a good experience,” the 18-year-old said.

“[Now] I’ll start preparing for the next Paralympics. I’ll be working on the small stuff like skills, to try and perfect my individual race leading up to Tokyo. Hopefully I’ll be fit and ready to go.”

Singapore will host their first event in the World Series in May this year, and they picked up a first medal at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre when three-time Paralympic Games gold medalist Yip Pin Xiu won silver in the women’s 50m backstroke.

She was pipped to gold by New Zealand’s Tupou Neiuifi, while Australia’s Madeleine McTernan won bronze.

■ Joy for Japan

Japan picked up two golds on the final evening, the first of them going to Mei Ichinose in the women’s 200m individual medley. Her victory relegated Tiffany Thomas

(Source: Paralympic.org)

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Patience is two in kind: one against what you dislike, and the other before what you like and seems beautiful.

Imam Ali (AS)

Iranian santur player wins Rob Schultz Junior Scholar Award

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — London-based Iranian santur player and composer Saeid Kordmafi has won the Rob Schultz Junior Scholar Award in Greece.

Kordmafi received the award for his article "Iqa: a Canon to Respect or Break? The Dichotomy between Rhythm Making Strategies in Composition and Improvisation in Classical Music of the Arab Mashriq", the British Forum for Ethnomusicology, where Kordmafi is a member, announced in a post on its Facebook page on February 7.

Established in 2016 in memory of the co-founder of the journal Analytical Approaches to World Music (AAWM), the biennial award is given to graduate students and young scholars for the best paper, which is presented to the AAWM journal.

Saeid Kordmafi in an undated photo.

Kordmafi is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Music at SOAS, University of London.

His winning article was delivered at the AAWM 2018 conference in Thessaloniki, Greece, and will be published in a forthcoming issue of the AAWM journal.

Aminpur, Bairami best Iranian writers of past 40 years: poll

1 → In the poetry section, Ali Moallem Damghani and Seyyed Hassan Hosseini stood in second and third places. Hossein Monzavi, Ahmad Azizi and Alireza Qazveh received equal votes for the fourth place, and songwriter Mohammad-Ali Bahmani came in fifth.

In the story writing category, Bairami was followed by Mohammadreza Sharafi-Khabushan, the writer of the acclaimed Persian novel "Booklessness".

The third place was shared by Ahmad Mahmud, Mahmud Dowlatabadi, Zoya Pirzad and Mostafa Mastur. Nader Ebrahim, Reza Amirkhani were among the writers who took fourth place. Bestselling novelist Fariba Vafi is also among those writers who shared the fifth place.

Shahrestan Adab also ran two polls to find the five best works in each of the categories of poetry and story writing.

"The Red Return of the Star" by Ali Moallem Damghani was selected as best poem collection while Mohammadreza Sharafi-Khabushan's novel "Booklessness" was picked as best story.

"Roma" actress says she is proud of her roots after fellow actor uses racial slur

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Oscar-nominated Mexican actress Yalitza Aparicio, who stars in the critically acclaimed film "Roma," said on Saturday that she was proud of her indigenous roots after a soap opera star used a racial slur to describe her.

"I am proud to be an Oaxacan indigenous woman, and it saddens me that there are people who do not know the correct meaning of words," Aparicio, who became the first indigenous woman to be nominated for a best actress Oscar, said in a statement.

On Friday, video surfaced on Twitter in which Mexican actor Sergio Goyri, 60, can be heard criticizing the film community for nominating "a fxx Indian who says, 'Yes, ma'am, no, ma'am'."

Goyri quickly apologized for his remarks. "It was never my intent to offend anyone. I apologize to Yalitza, who deserves (this Oscar nomination) and much more," he said in a video posted on Instagram. "For me, it is an honor to see a Mexican be nominated for an Oscar."

Aparicio, 25, starred as a domestic worker in director Alfonso Cuarón's "Roma", which chronicles the life of an upper middle class family in the Mexico City neighborhood where Cuarón was raised.

The film, which was released by Netflix, has been nominated for 10 Oscars at the Academy Awards, to be held on Feb. 24.

Iranian manuscript scholars honored at national library

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The 16th Honoring Ceremony for Supporters of Manuscripts was held at the National Library and Archives of Iran (NLAI) on Saturday.

Thirteen scholars on Arabic and Persian manuscripts were honored during the ceremony. In the bibliography and document category, Aref Noshahi won the award. He received the honor for a compilation of the Persian manuscripts being preserved at libraries in Pakistan.

Ali Safari and Saeid Shafieun shared the award in the literature section. Safari won the award for the compilation of scattered Persian poems in manuscripts and the corrections he has made to the collection published under the title of "The Persian Poems Scattered in Manuscripts".

Shafieun received the honor for his corrections to "Nafa'is al-maasir, tazkirah-i sh'ura-i Farsi" by Ala al-Daulah Qazwini Kami.

In the history and geography section, Ali-Akbar Ahmadi Darani was honored for his corrections to "Dastur al-Katib fi Ta'in Al-Maratib" by Mukhammad ibn Khindushakh Nakhchivani.

The award in the sciences section went to Fatemeh Mehri for correcting Kamal Al-Din Abi Al-Baq'a Muhammad ibn Mu Dumanayri's "Hayat al-hayawan al-kubra".

The organizers also honored Farshideh Konani from the Central Library and Archives of the University of Tehran as the Best Librarian of Manuscripts and Documents.

In addition, Nayyereh Mohammadian and Roqieh Mahmudi shared an award for contributions to manuscript restoration.



Aref Noshahi (2nd R) receives an award from Science, Research and Technology Minister Mansour Gholami during the 16th Honoring Ceremony for Supporters of Manuscripts at the National Library and Archives of Iran on February 16, 2019. (Tasnim/Mohammadreza Amirhassani)

Culture minister Salehi attends street performance of "The Immortal" in Tehran



Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi (2nd R) watches the play "The Immortal" in the courtyard of Tehran's City Theater Complex on February 16, 2019.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi sat to watch an open-air performance of "The Immortal" in the courtyard of Tehran's City Theater Complex on Saturday night.

A large Iranian troupe performs the play that tells the story of a girl who in her dreams travels to Syria to find her father who was martyred by Daesh forces in Syria.

Speaking to journalists after watching "The Immortal", Salehi praised the play for its "remarkable content" and said, "It was interesting for me to see a play that

could keep people on their toes to watch and follow the story on such a cold night."

Directed by Amir-Hossein Shafiei, the silent play is an entrance to the 37th Fajr International Theater Festival.

Earlier, the director had noted that the play actually tries to find the answer to the question of which powers and ideologies are involved in the formation of Daesh.

A cast of 60 actors and a team of 30 technical crew members are collaborating on this production.

The 37th Fajr International Theater Festival will be held in Tehran from February 11 to 23.

Dutch-British director Michael Dudok de Wit on jury of Tehran animation festival



Dutch-British animator Michael Dudok de Wit in an undated photo.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Oscar-winning director Michael Dudok de Wit has been selected as a member of the jury for the 11th Tehran International Animation Festival, the organizers announced on Sunday.

The Dutch-British animator is also scheduled to attend a meeting, in which he will talk about his method of filmmaking and his attitudes towards his own productions.

Dudok de Wit won the Oscar for best animated short for "Father and Daughter" in 2001. His other credits include "The Monk and the Fish" (1994), "The Aroma of Tea" (2006), and "The Red Turtle" (2016).

A lineup of top animations from across the world will be competing at the animation

festival, which will take place from March 3 to 7.

Among the animations is "This Magnificent Cake", a co-production from Belgium, France and the Netherlands directed by Marc James Roels and Emma De Swaef.

The lineup also includes "Inanimate" by Lucia Bulgheroni and "Facing It" by Sam Gainsborough, both from the UK.

American movies "Weekends" by Trevor Jimenez and "Trump Bites: I Alone Can Fix It" by Bill Plympton, Billy Shebar and David C. Robert will also be screened.

Also included are "Late Afternoon" by Louise Bagnall from Ireland and "Grandpa Walrus" by Lucrèce Andreae from France.

Nadav Lapid's "Synonyms" wins Berlinale

BERLIN (Reuters) — Nadav Lapid's "Synonyms", an anarchic story about an individual who tries to suppress his origins after moving to Paris, won the Berlin Film Festival's coveted Golden Bear award on Saturday.

The film, a faintly comedic, semi-autobiographical study of identity and the ambivalence of national belonging, tells the story of Yoav, played by newcomer Tom Mercier, and his struggle to reinvent himself as French.

Yoav is shown muttering French synonyms in an attempt to displace his native Hebrew with French as he bonds with a young, wealthy Parisian couple, played by Quentin Dolmaire and Louise Chevillotte.

Lapid dedicated the film to his mother Era Lapid, who edited his films until her death.

"We edited this movie between editing room and hospitals," he told Reuters. "It was a kind of competition between death and completing the movie. And death won."

Like his protagonist, Lapid left his homeland for Paris at a young age, and he compared his journey to Yoav's.

"In his head he leaves the worst country ever to arrive in the best country ever," he told a news conference. "And at a certain moment he is facing a more complex reality. But I am always a little bit like Yoav ...



Nadav Lapid shows Golden Bear for Best Film after the awards ceremony at the 69th Berlinale International Film Festival in Berlin, Germany, February 16, 2019. (Reuters/Hannibal Hanschke)

I'm trying to open this closed door. I'm always charmed by something that exists in France."

Mercier's kinetic performance of a character determined to excise what he sees as an Israeli culture of machismo from his soul has been widely praised. But his attempts at reinventing himself also reveal much about French mores.

"I hope that people will feel a deep truth watching the movie," he said, saying that it was in France that he had discovered cinema "as an essential thing ... one of the most magnificent things the world can suggest us."

Junya Ishigami to design 2019 Serpentine pavilion

LONDON (Guardian) — A drifting cloud of rough grey slates will hover above the lawn of Kensington Gardens this summer, as the Serpentine pavilion commission takes on a dark, mysterious air. The feted 44-year-old Japanese architect Junya Ishigami has been selected as the designer of the 19th annual pavilion project, and he promises to conjure one of the strangest forms the park has ever seen.

The pavilion will be part rock face, part smog cloud, as if a landslide from an open-cast slate mine had been cut from a hillside and transported to the leafy royal park. Like a specimen in a natural history museum, the rocky slope will be held up on slender toothpick columns, forming a scaly canopy for visitors to explore beneath. Ishigami is clearly mindful of the perilous English summer: one image shows the structure in driving rain, with puddles and little streams snaking down its rugged surface. Like Francis Kéré's 2017 pavilion, it could be one of the few designs where a natural waterfall intentionally adds to the attraction.

"My design for the pavilion plays with our perspectives of the built environment against the backdrop of a natural landscape," says Ishigami, "emphasizing a natural and organic feel as though it had grown out of the lawn, and resembling a hill made out of rocks. Possessing the weighty presence of slate roofs seen around the world, and simultaneously appearing so light it could blow away in the



A rocky slope on slender toothpick columns, Ishigami's design for the 2019 Serpentine pavilion. (Junya Ishigami + Associates)

breeze, the cluster of scattered rock levitates, like a billowing piece of fabric."

Many architects talk of making their materials levitate and billow, but Ishigami actually does it. He has made a five-storey metal balloon float in a gallery in Tokyo, and produced a gravity-defying 10-metre long table of wafer-thin steel, with no visible means of support. At the Barbican in London, he installed a white frame that was so thin visitors could see it only when gallery investigators dressed in black stood behind its columns. More than any other practicing architect today, Ishigami is a magician of materials, an architectural alchemist who seems able to bend the laws of physics with his surreal, poetic work.