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Venezuelan Deputy Foreign Minister Ruben Dario Molina (L) meets Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif in Tehran on Sunday, Feb. 24, 2019.

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Afghanistan officially starts exporting goods to India through Chabahar

TEHRAN — In an official ceremony on Sunday, the Afghanistan-Iran-India trade corridor in which Afghanistan will export goods to India through Iran's southeastern Chabahar Port was inaugurated.

The event was attended by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, along with Iranian Ambassador to Kabul Mohammadreza Bahrami and Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan Vinay Kumar, IRNA reported.

As reported, Afghanistan's first 570-ton

export cargo includes 200 tons of grains and 370 tons of talc stone.

In the ceremony, Ghani expressed appreciation for Iran and India's joint efforts which have led to creating this important trade corridor in the region.

"Chabahar Port is the result of healthy cooperation between India, Iran, and Afghanistan. This will ensure enhanced connectivity and economic growth for the countries," he said. **→4**

Iranian-made electric car 'Yooz' leads the way for pilot production

TEHRAN — The first electric-powered car developed domestically by a knowledge-based company is now in pilot production stage.

Dubbed 'Yooz', meaning Panther, the manufacturing of the two-seater car began in the Iranian calendar year 1394 (March 2015-March 2016) and it was unveiled on January 18, 2017 concurrent with the national clean air day.

The two-seater model of electric car is not defined in Iran's traffic law. This has led to problems for issuing license plates for these cars, the director of the knowledge-based company, Hossein Ziarati, said.

However the problem is solved with help of vice presidency for science and technology and related organizations, he explained. **→10**

Landmine blast kills 24 civilians in Syria

A landmine left behind by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorists in Syria's west-central Hama Province has killed 24 civilians.

Syria's official SANA news agency reported that the mine exploded on Sunday when a car carrying workers ran over it on the outskirts of Hama's Salamiyah district.

Earlier this month, a similar landmine explosion left seven civilians dead and an unspecified number of people injured in Rasm Ahmar Village in Salamiyah.

An armed conflict began in Syria in 2011. But the Syrian military, backed by the Russian air force and Iranian military advisers, **→13**



PERSPECTIVE

Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

The behavioral paradox of Europe continues

The European Union has still not been able to define a clear relationship between itself and the United States. Some European politicians like the German Chancellor, the French President and, above all, the British prime minister are trying to continue to turn Europe into a passive act in the international system. In this equation, the independence of the European Union in the world has been completely questioned.

The paradoxical approaches taken by the European authorities is definitely one of its kind! Over the past months, Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, has repeatedly emphasized that the EU can no longer rely on the United States to secure its interests. However, the German Chancellor held secret and hidden negotiations with the U.S. government and Trump to resolve Europe's economic and security problems and crises.

In other words, there is a significant difference between the speeches and actions of the European authorities regarding the EU's independence from Washington.

What is really happening in Europe? Senior European officials seem to have no time finding out about the consequences of their direct play on the land of the Trump government! It seems that people like Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron do not pay attention to the trump's hostility to the existence and nature of the European Union! There is no doubt that the continuation of the current process in the European Union will result in no more than a fall: a subject many European analysts have warned about.

European officials have practically closed their eyes to the realities of the international relations! U.S. President Donald Trump is one of the main opponents of the existing structure in Europe! He has come to this conclusion that the collapse of the United Europe will provide the United States with great economic growth among its allies.

The White House therefore monitors the simultaneous destruction of the Eurozone and the European Union as essential goals. This is the main reason for Trump's support for nationalist and anti-EU movements in Europe. Donald Trump has officially urged French President Emmanuel Macron to pull his country out of the EU to benefit from more U.S.-France ties! **→7**

Is it Trump, or King Jared who is providing Saudi with nuclear capabilities?!

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Robert David Steele, a former Marine Corps infantry officer and CIA spy who was recommended for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017, regularly answers questions for Tehran Times.

■ Top Trump administration officials have advocated for a plan to build dozens of nuclear power plants in Saudi Arabia despite warnings that the move could pose ethical concerns and violate federal law, according to a report released by House Democrats. Which groups in U.S. will try to sell this sensitive technology to Saudi Arabia?

A: First let me say that the power behind

Trump that is seeking to increase Saudi Arabian nuclear capabilities is King Jared as he is now being called, the false messiah of the Chabad Supremacist cult. He is a toxic presence in the White House and is known to be an agent of a foreign power, Zionist Israel. We also have reports that former National Security Advisor General Michael Flynn has been active in helping a consortium seeking to build 40 nuclear plants and facilities to enrich uranium. I am not a fan of Jared Kushner, who should be expelled from the White House but I am a huge fan of General Flynn's and attribute his engagement to his need for money to pay legal bills associated with his contrived destruction by the Deep State terrified of his telling President Trump the truth every day.

Second I would emphasize that President Trump is a businessman first and a politician second. Everything he is doing with Saudi Arabia is being done in the absence of a grand strategy, and focused on bringing revenue to U.S. companies. This is more about sales than it is about nuclear.

Third, I would point out that Saudi Arabia is already a nuclear power, aided by China, Israel, and Pakistan as well as the USA. Saudi Arabia is said to be spending 40% of its military budget on nuclear arms, and may have tested a nuclear weapon in Yemen.

Finally, I completely condemn any expansion of nuclear power. The waste from nuclear power plants – completely apart from their potential as a bridge toward nuclear weaponization – is potentially catastrophic. **→7**

Trump's policy toward Saudi to be subverted by Clintonites: Kovacevic

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN — Prof. Kovacevic says Trump administration's policy toward Saudi Arabia will eventually be subverted by the Clintonites who would prefer a regime change in Saudi Arabia.

The U.S. is rushing to transfer sensitive nuclear power technology to Saudi Arabia, according to a new congressional report.

The issue was discussed with Professor Filip Kovacevic from University of San Francisco. Here is the full text of his interview:

■ What can be the consequences of such an act for the region?

A: What has to be understood is that, at this time, the U.S. ruling political class is seriously

divided between the Trump people and the Clintonites. In other words, between the nativist/nationalist faction and the neoliberal/globalist faction. This is the case in every Department of the U.S. government: the Defense Department, the State Department, the U.S. intelligence community, etc. I see this particular foreign policy decision as being linked to the Trump people, but it is possible that it will eventually be subverted by the Clintonites who would prefer a regime change in Saudi Arabia.

■ As the Saudi Kingdom is the main sponsor of Takfiri extremism all around the world, what can be the consequences of such an act globally?

A: I think that Saudi Arabia is embroiled in serious internal political problems. The ruling

family is divided and so are its international partners. The EU and the Clintonites support one wing of the ruling family; the Trump administration and the Israelis another. We will see who will prevail. In order to distract public attention from internal problems, Saudi military and intelligence might launch operations outside of the country. However, I don't expect them to involve the use of any weapons of mass destruction.

■ U.S. is committed to Israeli regime's security. Cant such a move create possible threats to the security of Tel Aviv despite current cooperation between Riyadh and Tel Aviv?

A: This depends on which wing of the ruling family prevails in the Saudi internal struggle. So far I don't see much danger to Israel. **→7**



Iranian director Ali-Asghar Dashti (R) holds the grand prize for his play "The Above-Named Person" during the 37th Fajr International Theater Festival at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on February 23, 2019.

"The Above-Named Person" wins grand prize at Fajr Intl. Theater Festival

TEHRAN — "The Above-Named Person" by Iranian director Ali-Asghar Dashti has won the grand prize of the 37th Fajr International Theater Festival.

The play also brought Dashti the best director award and Asghar Piran the award for best actor during the closing ceremony of the event held at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on Saturday. **→16**



ARTICLE

Heshmatollah Rahnama
Latin American expert

Changing the imposed system

The U.S. policy of "regime change" in the world countries is to keep America intact and prevent the collapse of the American Empire. After losing power in the West of Asia, Washington is struggling to regain influence in the Latin American region.

Regime change is brought by the U.S. when Washington loses influence in states as that is the case in Venezuela.

With influence on Columbia, Brazil, Argentina and various right-wing states, the U.S. has endeavored to implement its illegal demands in the region.

The right-wing nations of South America are grappling with many problems, but their governments try to cover the issues with anti-Venezuelan policy.

Columbia, particularly in Cúcuta, where humanitarian aid organizations come together, needs the assistance far more than anywhere else.

A man who is supposedly a "freedom seeker" in the public eye, is no one but Juan Guaidó who received his training in the U.S. regime change system for a few years. In a few months leading up to the unrest in Venezuela, Guaido was indirect contact with the right-wing radicals who believe in street violence.

In a simple phone call to U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, Guaido declared himself interim president of Venezuela, and soon after the New York Times acknowledges him as "credible rival" for incumbent Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro saying Guaido has a refreshing style and vision for Venezuela's progress. Bloomberg News, too, praises Guaido for revival of democracy, and the Wall Street Journal calls him the new democratic leader.

Many countries in Europe, Israel, Canada, and other right-wing Latin American states, known as Lima Group, acknowledged Guaido as the legitimate Venezuelan president. Marco Terrugi, an Argentinian sociologist and leading chronicler of Venezuelan politics, says, "Juan Guaidó is a character that has been created for this circumstance."

Diego Sequera, a Venezuelan journalist and writer agreed, "Guaido is more popular outside the country especially among the Ivy League University (the 8 American influential and private universities) and Washington says he is well-known there and will remain faithful to the project. **→13**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Senior officials highlight Leader's roadmap for future

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Heads of the three branches of government on Sunday highlighted the need to fully implement the recent guidelines issued by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on the second phase of the revolution and ways to move forward.

President Hassan Rouhani, Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani and Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani made the remarks during a meeting of the Supreme Economic Coordination Council, headed by Rouhani, Mehr reported.

In a statement after the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, the Leader said the Islamic Revolution guaranteed Iran's security, stability, and territorial integrity, and stressed that Iran must not back down from its national and revolutionary values.



Larijani: €1.5b to be withdrawn from NDF for defense

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said on Sunday that the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has agreed with the request to withdraw €1.5 billion from the National Development Fund (NDF) to strengthen the defense sector.

On Sunday, lawmakers ratified a bill according to which €2.375 billion can be withdrawn from the NDF for different purposes including €1.5 billion for the defense sector, Mehr reported.

Larijani said based on the lawmakers' requests, he had offered to the Leader 15 different cases of withdrawal from the fund. The Leader endorsed 10 cases and their amount cannot be changed, Larijani explained.



Official warns of ambiguities in FATF

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Mohsen Rezaee, secretary of the Expediency Council, said on Saturday there are many ambiguities surrounding the FATF, the Financial Action Task Force.

"While there is many questions and ambiguities about FATF guidelines, it is expected from the government to prevent the country from sinking into a new quagmire," he wrote on his Instagram account, Mehr reported.

The FATF extended Iran's deadline for four months to implement the related guidelines, he said, adding, "It is two years that they are following this policy."

The Paris-based FATF watchdog said on Friday that it has extended Iran's deadline to June to strengthen its anti-money laundering legislation.



Enemies seriously after sabotaging Iran's missiles: general

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force, said on Sunday that the enemies have seriously tried to sabotage Iran's missiles.

"In the field of missiles, the enemies recently announced that they are after sabotaging parts shipped to Iran... However, we have seen this for 7-8 years but have not articulated it," Hajizadeh said, Mehr reported.

The enemies have done everything they could in order to prevent our missiles from hitting targets, he said, "But we took the enemies' enmity seriously and did our strengthening policies." The general also said the Feb. 13 suicide attack against IRGC border guards in which 27 lost their lives was carried out by Pakistani nationals who serve as Saudi mercenaries.



General warns of rise in disguised threats

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Gholam Reza Jalali, chief of the Civil Defense Organization, on Sunday warned of the rise in camouflaged threats originating from modern technologies.

The complicated relation between technology and threats has confused many decision-makers, Jalali said, adding that such complexity has given birth to camouflaged threats, Tasnim reported. "The modern technologies cause a combination of threats and opportunities, therefore, distinguishing threats and opportunities is itself a scientific job," he remarked.

"We must reduce or control the impacts of threats on our assets with technology and science," Jalali added.



Iran says ready to send medical aid to Venezuela

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — An official has voiced Iran's readiness to send medicine and medical equipment to Venezuela, which has been gripped by mounting economic and political tensions in recent months, Tasnim reported on Sunday.

Ira's Food and Drug Administration director, Mahdi Pirsalehi, said his organization is prepared to send medicine and medical equipment to Venezuela and provide the Latin American nation with the technical know-how in the medical sector under a mutual agreement signed in 2018.

Pirsalehi made the comments at a meeting in Tehran with Venezuela's deputy foreign minister and its ambassador to Iran on Sunday.

Independence means not to rely on others to survive: Zarif

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Sunday that independence in the foreign policy does not mean separation from world.

"Independence means not to rely on others to survive. Independence in the foreign policy does not mean separation from the world," he said during a speech at conference on multilateralism in Iran's foreign policy.

Independence means to rely on domestic capacities in order to survive and be safe, he added.

He also said, "Our independence did not require (us) to clash with anyone in the [UN] Security Council. It was to assert that we are able to stand on our feet despite the U.S. pressure."

Referring to remarks made by Lindsey Graham, a Republican U.S. senator, Zarif said that independence means that no one be able to make such remarks about Iran.

In remarks made to Fox News in December 2018, Senator Graham said, "Let me put it this way — I want to be very blunt with you: If it weren't for the United States,



"When we say that we are proud of the people's resistance, we do not mean that it is their duty to resist. It is our duty to praise this resistance and reduce the pressure on the people."

Erdogan hails progress with Iran, Russia over Idlib

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Saturday that "significant progress" has been made in his country's ongoing talks with Iran and Russia to secure Syria's northwestern province of Idlib.

"Let's secure the Idlib region completely, we say. We are talking with Russia and Iran to do that and we have made significant progress," Erdogan said, Hurriyet Daily News reported.

"At least half a million Syrians are waiting for securing of this region to return there. Millions of Syrians will return to their homes when we secure the east of the Euphrates as well," he added.

"We hope to accomplish it in cooperation with our allies. But we are keen to do it in our own capacity under any condition if they don't provide us with such a convenience," the Turkish president said.



It is estimated that between 10,000 to 15,000 members of different factions of armed groups, which Syria, Russia, Iran, and Turkey consider terrorists, are active in the volatile province, which is home to around three million people.

Iran and Russia believe that a buffer zone would help stop attacks from Idlib-based militants on Syrian army positions and Russia's military bases in the flash-point region.

Russia, Iran and Turkey have no plans for joint operations in Syria: Lavrov

By staff and agency

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said that Russia, Iran and Turkey have no plans to carry out joint military operations in Syria.

"We don't plan to carry out any military operations in Syria that would involve Russia, Turkey and Iran. Russia and Iran are active in Syria at the invitation of the country's legitimate government. Turkey has been citing its security concerns, but the Syrian government opposes the Turkish military presence," TASS quoted Lavrov as saying on Sunday in an interview with Vietnam's national broadcaster Vietnam Television (VTV), China's CCTV and Phoenix TV.

Damascus supported the Astana process, which made it possible "to ensure a true



ceasefire in most of Syria and launch direct dialogue between the government and the armed opposition," he noted.

The Astana peace talks were launched on Jan. 23-24, 2017 with the aim of putting an end to the Syrian crisis.

Kazakhstan has hosted multiple rounds of talks on Syria since January 2017, backed by the three power brokers, most of which involved delegations from the Syrian government and opposition.

Zarif, Araqchi push for ratification of FATF by Expediency Council

Foreign Minister Zarif says Expediency Council should decide on FATF based on realities

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his deputy Abbas Araqchi on Sunday called for ratification of the FATF by the Expediency Council.

Talking to reports, Zarif said the Expediency Council should decide on the FATF based on the "realities".

"Our friends should decide based on realities. So far, they have said that nothing will happen but they are now seeing the situation," Zarif remarked.

Zarif added, "We will follow any decision that they take, however, they should be aware of the consequences of their decision."

Mehrdad Lahouti, the spokesman of the Majlis Independent Velayee faction, said that Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi told the Sunday meeting of the faction that

it is better to approve the FATF in order to pass the current problems facing the country.

The Paris-based FATF watchdog announced on Friday that Iran has until June to fix its anti-money laundering and terrorism financing rules or face increased international scrutiny of its banks.

Last October, the global watchdog had already given Iran until February to complete an action plan of reforms that would bring it in line with global norms, or face consequences.

The FATF concluded at its February 22 meeting that "there are still items not completed" and said in a statement it "expects Iran to proceed swiftly in the reform path", according to Reuters.

One of the actions Iran is required to take to appease the FATF is joining the United Nations Convention

against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), which is also called the Palermo Convention, a 2000 United Nations-sponsored multilateral treaty against transnational organized crime.

The other action is to join the CFT (the convention combatting financing of terrorism).

On October 7, 2018, the Majlis (parliament) voted in favor of the CFT. However, the oversight Guardian Council rejected the bill by finding 22 faults with it.

To become a law, the Guardian Council should vet the bill for compliance with the Constitution.

According to the constitution, in cases when the parliament and the Guardian Council disagree on a bill the issue is referred to the Expediency Council for final arbitration. The bill is now under study by the Expediency Council.

Iran fires anti-ship cruise missile from submarine

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — For the first time during naval drills in southern waters, the Iranian Navy fired an anti-ship cruise missile at mock enemy targets.

Cruise missile was fired from a Qadir-class submarine. It took place on the third day of military exercises which started on Friday.

Hossein Khanzadi, commander of the Iranian Navy, had announced last Monday that Qadir-class submarines had several times fired anti-ship cruise missiles. Khanzadi said the newly home-made submarine, called Fateh, also enjoys this capability.

"Our Qadir-class submarines have so far fired cruise missiles and Fateh has this capability too and we will display it in future drills," Rear Admiral Khanzadi told FNA.

He also added that the missile mounted on Fateh submarine is the new generation of home-made Nasr missile which was developed within the framework of Jask 2 project and has differences in range with the past

models of Nasr cruise missile.

On the first day of the war games, the naval forces for the first time used Fateh submarine and Sahand destroyer.

Also, during the third day of exercises in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, the helicopter units of the Navy carried out helicopter operations and launched attacks and destroyed mock enemy targets.

The helicopters, including Bell-212, used rocket-launching systems and machine guns to successfully smash the targets. Other helicopters of the Navy, equipped with demining equipment, destroyed enemy mines in the sea.

Also, one of the Air Force's Phantom fighters fired a air-based Nasr cruise missile at a target in the sea to provide support for the Navy vessels during the war games.

The Naval forces fired several domestically-made cruise missiles and torpedoes from vessels and submarines on the second day of war games.

The massive three-day drills, codenamed

"Velayat 97", started in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman on Friday. The drills were held in an area of two million square kilometers, from the Strait of Hormuz to the southeastern coasts of Makran, the Sea of Oman and the northern parts of the Indian Ocean, down to the 10-degrees latitude.

On the second day of war games, Naqdi destroyer and Tabarzin missile-launching frigate fired two Qader and Qadir cruise missiles at the targets.

In addition to the vessels, the coast-to-sea missile-launching systems of the Navy fired Qader cruise missiles at hypothetical enemy targets, destroying them.

Qader and Qadir missiles have a range of 250km and 300km respectively and can be fired from vessels and coast-to-sea launchers and aircraft. Also, the Tareq submarine fired an electric torpedo and the Qadir submarine fired Valfajr torpedo at targets.

Meantime, an SH helicopter of the Army destroyed hypothetical enemy's target with



a Mark 46 torpedo.

Also, during the drills, the Navy's drones which are equipped with different types of bombs attacked the hypothetical enemy and the air defense units of the Navy intercepted and downed a hypothetical enemy drone.

In another development on Saturday, the Navy's hovercrafts successfully fired surface-to-surface cruise missiles in the drills, smashing targets in long distances successfully.

Zarif backs dialogue between Venezuelan rival factions

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Venezuelan Deputy Foreign Minister Ruben Dario Molina met with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Tehran on Sunday to discuss the latest status in bilateral ties as well as ways to enhance cooperation between Tehran and Caracas.

During the meeting, Molina briefed Zarif about the latest development in his country and thanked Iran for helping Venezuela restore its political stability, IRNA reported.

Zarif denounced any form of foreign intervention in the internal affairs of Venezuela and voiced Iran's support for political talks between the Venezuelan government

and the opposition in order to resolve the issues.

The two sides further said Washington's interference in Venezuela and other Latin American countries is a violation of international law, adding such measures are "doomed to failure."

President Hassan Rouhani had said earlier that Iran supports the "legitimate government" of President Nicolas Maduro and that the Venezuelan people will foil the current plot in the country as before.

Pointing out that Washington is basically opposed to all popular revolutions and independent countries, the Iranian president said that they want to dictate their dominance over the world by suppressing the revolutions

and the independent countries throughout the world.

■ March to prevent intervention in Venezuela

The government of Nicolas Maduro is doing far more for the people of Venezuela than the U.S. administration by providing free services for its population, anti-war activist Sara Flounders told RT, condemning the U.S.-led intervention.

The activists, opposing intervention, organized some 150 demonstrations around the globe on Saturday to show that ordinary people are against any form of foreign interference. Rallies have been taking place across the US, Flounders told RT after attending a 'No War on Venezuela' rally in New York City.

N. Korea could become ‘great economic power’ without nukes: Trump

U.S. President Donald Trump Sunday said North Korea could become one of the world’s “great economic powers” if it relinquished its nuclear arsenal, ahead of his summit with Kim Jong Un.

In a series of tweets on the eve of his departure for this week’s summit in Hanoi, Trump also praised China and Russia for enforcing sanctions on North Korea while insisting he had a “great relationship with Chairman Kim.”

“Chairman Kim realizes, perhaps better than anyone else, that without nuclear weapons, his country could fast become one of the great economic powers anywhere in the world. Because of its location and people (and him), it has more potential for rapid growth than any other nation!” he wrote.

■ **N. Korea warns U.S. skeptics as Kim heads for Vietnam for summit**

North Korea warned President Donald Trump on Sunday not to listen to U.S. critics who were disrupting efforts to improve ties, as its leader, Kim Jong Un, made his way across China by train to a second summit with Trump in Vietnam.

The two leaders will meet in Hanoi on Wednesday and Thursday, eight months after their historic summit in Singapore, the first between a sitting U.S. president and a North Korean leader, where they pledged to work toward the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

But their vaguely worded agreement has produced few results and U.S. Democratic senators and U.S. security officials have warned Trump against cutting a deal that would do little to curb North Korea’s nuclear ambitions.

The North’s KCNA state news agency said such opposition was aimed at derailing the talks.

“If the present U.S. administration reads others’ faces, lending an ear to others, it may face the shattered dream of the improvement of the relations with the DPRK and world peace and miss the rare historic opportunity,” the news agency said in a commentary,



referring to North Korea by the initials of its official name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

The Trump administration has pressed the North to give up its nuclear weapons program, which, combined with its missile capabilities, pose a threat to the United States, before it can expect any concessions.

But a week before his second summit with Kim, Trump signaled a possible softening of that stance, saying he would love to be able to remove sanctions if there was meaningful progress on denuclearization.

Trump also said he was in no rush and had no pressing schedule for North Korea’s denuclearization, hinting at a more gradual, reciprocal approach, long favored by Pyongyang.

The North also wants security guarantees and a formal end of the 1950-1953 Korean War, which ended in a truce, not a treaty.

In a letter to Trump last week, three Democratic chairmen of key House committees accused the administration of withholding information on the negotiations with North

Korea.

“There are ample reasons to be skeptical that Chairman Kim is committed to a nuclear-free North Korea,” the lawmakers wrote.

U.S. intelligence officials recently testified to Congress that North Korea was unlikely to ever give up its entire nuclear arsenal.

KCNA, referring to U.S. fears of the North’s weapons, said if this week’s talks ended without results, “the U.S. people will never be cleared of the security threats that threw them into panic.”

■ **Red carpet send-off**

Few details of Kim’s trip to Vietnam had been announced until early on Sunday, when North Korean state media confirmed he had left Pyongyang by train, accompanied by senior officials as well as his influential sister, Kim Yo Jong.

In rare, revealing coverage of Kim’s travel, the North’s Rodong Sinmun newspaper featured photographs of him getting a red-carpet send-off on Saturday afternoon and waving from a train door while holding a cigarette.

He was joined by top officials also involved

in the Singapore summit, including Kim Yong Chol, a former spy chief and Kim’s top envoy in negotiations with the United States, as well as senior party aide Ri Su Yong, Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho and defense chief No Kwang Chol.

Other senior officials, such as his de facto chief of staff, Kim Chang Son, and Kim Hyok Chol, negotiations counterpart to U.S. envoy Stephen Biegun, were already in Hanoi to prepare for the summit.

Both sides are under pressure to forge more specific agreements than were reached in Singapore. The two leaders are likely to try to build on their personal connection to push things forward in Hanoi, even if only incrementally, analysts said.

“They will not make an agreement which breaks up the current flow of diplomacy. (President Trump) has mentioned that they’ll meet again; even if there is a low-level agreement, they will seek to keep things moving,” said Shin Beom-chul, a senior fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

■ **Train spotting**

Few details of summit arrangements have been released.

Some lamp posts on Hanoi’s tree-lined streets are decked with North Korean, U.S. and Vietnamese flags fluttering above a handshake design, and security has been stepped up at locations that could be the summit venue, or where the leaders might stay.

It could take Kim at least 2-1/2 days to travel to Vietnam by train.

Some carriages of a green train were spotted at Beijing’s station on Sunday, but it was not confirmed it was Kim’s.

South Korea’s Yonhap news agency said Kim’s train had passed through a station in China’s port city of Tianjin, southeast of Beijing, at around 1 p.m. (0500 GMT).

China has given no details of his trip. Its foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

(Source: agencies)

Venezuelans vow to continue protests as clashes turn deadly

U.S. ‘will take action’ in support of anti-gov’t protests in Venezuela

By staff & agencies

Violent clashes broke out in Venezuelan border towns on Saturday that left at least two people dead, as Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro blocked humanitarian convoys from entering the country.

Troops loyal to Maduro fired tear gas and rounds of rubber bullets at protesters who tried to bring boxes of the United States-supplied aid across the border, leaving dozens injured.

Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido, who is supported by Washington, backed the efforts to import the aid, saying hundreds of thousands of people are in urgent need of food and medicine. Maduro sees the aid as part of a U.S. plot to remove him from power.

At least two people were killed in clashes in the Venezuelan town of Santa Elena de Uairen, close to the border with Brazil.

Throughout the chaotic day, Guaido called on Venezuelan troops to turn against Maduro and join him. Colombian authorities said that more than 60 soldiers defected, although most were among the lower ranks of the military.

At the Simon Bolivar international bridge that connects Colombia to Venezuela, the smell of vinegar and tear gas filled the air, as protesters clashed with government forces.

Hundreds of people filled the bridge, standing behind a Special Forces cordon, a few meters away from the burned carcasses of three aid trucks that tried to enter Venezuela.

The background sound of constant gunfire blended with shouted warnings about the incoming injured and the cries of street vendors who, despite the chaos, still tried to sell cigarettes and ice cream. The violence began early in the day, as petrol bombs, stones, and burning branches flew from one side of the border to the other, where the Venezuela National Guard held off protesters with rubber bullets and tear gas.

The flow of injured seeking assistance was constant and the crowds of demonstrators parted to make way for them. Some came slumped over the shoulders of strangers, their clothes ripped and bloodied. Others rushed back to the front line after receiving treatment.

On Saturday afternoon, President Nicolas Maduro announced the severance of all diplomatic ties with Colombia and ordered its officials in Venezuela to leave the country.

“We can’t keep putting up with Colombian territory being used for attacks against Venezuela,” he said during a rally in Caracas.

“For that reason, I have decided to break all political and diplomatic relations with Colombia’s fascist government. All their ambassadors and diplomats are to leave Venezuela in 24 hours. Get out of here, oligarchs.”

Juan Guaido also addressed his supporters by the end of the day, saying all options are on the table. He also confirmed he would be meeting the U.S. Vice President Mike Pence in Bogota on Monday.



Speaking at the same press conference, Colombian President Ivan Duque announced his forces would remove the trucks from all bridges “not to expose them to further aggression”.

“Our objective is to guarantee protection,” he said.

■ **Guaido says to ask U.S. to consider ‘all options’ in Venezuela**

Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido says he plans to propose that the U.S. consider “all options” to oust Maduro after a bid to bring in American “aid” was blocked by Venezuela’s army. Trucks of the U.S. “aid” returned to warehouses in Colombia on Saturday after Guaido’s supporters failed to break through lines of troops, who dispersed them with tear gas and rubber rounds.

“Today’s events force me to make a decision: to formally propose to the international community that we must have all options open to secure the freedom of our country, which fights and will keep fighting,” Guaido said on Twitter.

Meanwhile, the Venezuelan military has reaffirmed its support for Maduro despite Trump’s threat of dire consequences if troops do not abandon the president.

Troops fired tear gas on Saturday, forcing at least two trucks carrying the U.S. supplies to return to warehouses in Colombia.

The violence at the Colombian border has so far left some 300 people injured, while clashes near Venezuela’s crossing with Brazil also left two people dead.

■ **U.S. ‘will take action’ in support of anti-gov’t protests in Venezuela**

The developments follow as the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo says that the United States “will take action” in support of anti-government protesters amid clashes between them and Venezuelan police. Pompeo took to Twitter on Saturday, condemning what he described as violence by Maduro’s security forces, calling them “thugs.”

Pompeo also said that “a broad coalition of democracies” insists that humanitarian aid should be allowed to enter the country.

Meanwhile, Russia has warned that the United States is using humanitarian aid to instigate a “dangerous provocation”

in Venezuela by arming the country’s opposition while moving its own forces closer to Venezuelan borders in preparation for a military invasion.

In addition, China said that the “so-called aid” should not be forced into Venezuela, lest it cause violence.

“If so-called aid material is forced into Venezuela, and then if it causes violence and clashes, it will have serious consequences. This is not something anyone wants to see,” China’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said.

■ **Colombia: Deserting Venezuelan soldiers cross into Colombia**

Meantime, members of the Venezuelan National Guard have left their posts and crossed into Colombia to the applause and cheers of those protesting at the border in Cucuta on Saturday.

Footage shows thousands of protesters at the border, some throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails, and a fire starting as night falls. A small group of Venezuelan National Guard soldiers, escorted by Colombian police, are seen walking past the protesters away from the border.

Maduro described his Colombian counterpart, Ivan Duque, as the devil. He also called on the U.S. President Donald Trump not to interfere in Venezuela’s internal affairs. Maduro was speaking at a rally of thousands of his supporters in the capital Caracas.

■ **Clashes break out after aid trucks attempt to cross border**

Elsewhere, violence broke out in the border city of San Antonio de Tachira on Friday, after trucks and protesters attempted to break through the barricaded Simon Bolivar bridge to bring humanitarian aid into the country.

Soldiers from the Venezuelan National Guard could be seen firing projectiles and tear gas, while protesters on both sides, some supporting humanitarian aid, others helping the soldiers, threw rocks.

■ **Mass march to military airport supports Guaido’s call for aid**

Venezuela crisis is escalating as clashes have erupted between anti-government protesters and Venezuelan troops at the border with Colombia. Supporters of Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido marched to La Carlota military airport in Caracas on Saturday, demanding military support in allowing the entry of humanitarian aid into the country while thousands of pro-Venezuelan government supporters rally in Caracas.

Protesters gathered outside the airport gates to cheer, chant and demand that the military switch sides in the ongoing aid entry contention.

The protest came after Guaido called for nation-wide mobilization to demand aid being let into the country.

At the request of Guaido, the aid brought by US military planes has been stockpiled in the border town of Cucuta and is expected to be carried across the border by a number of Venezuelan volunteers.

Dem chairman: Trump the ‘greatest threat’ to U.S. democracy ‘since the Civil War’

The United States House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) in an interview airing on Sunday called the U.S. President Donald Trump the “greatest threat” to the U.S. democracy since “the Civil War.”

“I view this president and his conduct as the greatest threat to the democratic system and to the constitutional government since the Civil War,” Nadler said in an interview with radio host John Catsimatidis on AM 970

in New York. “Whether it’s threatening the newspapers or threatening the judiciary or calling people who criticize him treasonous.”

Nadler, one of the Democratic chairmen set to probe various aspects of the Trump administration, said the House will soon be holding hearings including into “abuse of power” and “obstruction of justice.”

“Clearly...there have been major abuses of power, major obstruction of justice, obvious

violations of the emoluments clause of the Constitution,” he said. “All of these have to be looked at.”

He noted that the hearings would be focused on any actions conducted in a “noncriminal manner,” whether norms were violated and whether there have been threats to the democratic system.

Nadler also said Democrats would seek to push legislation mandating that special

counsel Robert Mueller’s final report be made public. Mueller is investigating whether Russia interfered in the 2016 election, including whether there was collusion between Russia and the Trump campaign.

As chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Nadler would also oversee any impeachment investigation should Democrats pursue such a course of action.

(Source: The Hill)

Lavrov says Russia could police Syria-Turkey safe zone

Russian military police could be deployed in a proposed “safe zone” along Syria’s northern border with Turkey, Russian news agencies cited Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov as saying to Chinese and Vietnamese media Sunday.

The suggestion is unlikely to appeal to Ankara, which is keen to set up the zone but has stressed it must be under Turkish control, with only its own forces deployed there.

“Our only expectation from our allies is that they provide logistical support,” Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told his supporters in a speech in January.

Russia has said that Turkey had no right to set up the zone without seeking and receiving consent from Syrian President Bashar Assad. Lavrov was cited as saying Sunday that the format of the safe zone was in the process of being finalized by military leaders, and that any decision would take the interests of Damascus and Ankara into account as far as possible.

“We have experience in combining ceasefire agreements, safety measures and the creation of de-escalation zones with the roll-out of Russian military police,” Lavrov was cited as saying.

“Such a possibility is being kept open for this buffer zone.”

(Source: Reuters)

Palestinians demand Abbas resignation at Gaza protest rally

Thousands of Palestinians have staged a demonstration in the besieged Gaza Strip, demanding that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas step down.

On Sunday, the protesters converged on al-Saraya Square in Gaza City to express their resentment over the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority’s recent decision to cut salaries of civil servants in the impoverished enclave and continue co-operation with the Israeli regime.

The demonstrators also chanted, “Go, go, Abbas, that’s the demand of the people,” as they took part in a rally organized by the Free Gaza Movement, a coalition of human rights activists and pro-Palestinian groups working to challenge the Tel Aviv regime’s 12-year naval blockade.

(Source: AP)

Highest recorded number of Afghan civilians killed in 2018: UN report

A record number of Afghan civilians were killed last year due to stepped up aerial attacks by U.S.-led forces and more suicide bombings, the United Nations said in a report Sunday.

The conflict in Afghanistan claimed 3,804 civilian lives that included 927 children, both all-time highs, leading to an 11 per cent spike in civilian deaths versus 2017, the report from the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said.

“The best way to halt the killings and maiming of civilians is to stop the fighting. That is why there is all the more need now to use all our efforts to bring about peace,” said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the top UN official in Afghanistan.

The Afghan war – which started after U.S. forces led a campaign to overthrow the Taliban following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington – has intensified despite peace talks gaining momentum.

Afghan forces, backed by U.S. advisers, have in recent months stepped up airstrikes and raids to the highest levels since 2014 in what senior security officials have described as a coordinated series of attacks on Taliban leaders and fighters.

Suicide attacks and aerial operations each caused the most civilian casualties ever recorded by UNAMA. Ground engagements, mainly between pro-government forces and anti-government groups remained the second leading cause of civilian casualties.

The report stated that 1,185 civilians were killed and 1,427 civilians were injured from operations conducted by pro-government forces. Their aerial operations caused 492 child casualties as many attacks were on anti-government elements hiding among the civilian population.

“The fact that the number of children killed this year is the highest on record, is particularly shocking,” said Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The report said the Taliban was responsible for 1,751 civilian casualties in 2018, versus 916 in 2017, while the ISIL killed or wounded 2,181 civilians last year.

A wave of suicide attacks in the eastern province of Nangarhar and in the capital Kabul last year hit students preparing for exams, spectators at sporting events, people waiting to register for elections as well as Shiite mosques.

The mainly Shiite Hazara minority has been heavily targeted by attacks claimed by the local Daesh (ISIL) affiliate.

The UNAMA report comes amid efforts to find a peaceful end to the 17-year war. U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad is expected to meet Taliban negotiators on Monday in Qatar.

(Source: Reuters)

Passengers safe after apparent hijack attempt on Dubai-bound plane in Bangladesh

All passengers on board a Dubai-bound Bangladesh Biman plane are safe after a man apparently attempted to hijack the aircraft Sunday, the national civil aviation chief said.

“All 150 plus passengers are safe,” Air Vice Marshall Nayeem Hasan told AFP of flight BG147 which had taken off from the capital Dhaka, adding that the man’s intentions were unclear.

“We think he is a suspected madman. He is saying that he has a bomb, but we are not sure,” Hasan said after the plane landed at Chittagong airport in southeastern Bangladesh, where the passengers were evacuated.

(Source: AFP)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	166030.4
IFX	2052.02

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,622 rials
GBP	54,815 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$67.25/b
WTI	\$57.26/b
OPEC Basket	\$63.96/b
Gold	\$1,328.95/oz
Silver	\$15.97/oz
Platinum	\$847.95 oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



NIDC completes digging operation of 123 oil, gas wells in 11 months

Economy Desk **TEHRAN**— National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) dug and completed digging operation of 123 oil and gas wells during the 11-month period from March 21, 2018 to February 19, 2019, according to an official with the NIDC.

Mohammad Al-e Khamis, the acting deputy managing director of NIDC for drilling operation, said over 173,386 meters of digging has been conducted for the mentioned onshore and offshore wells, Shana news agency reported on Sunday.

NIDC, a subsidiary of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), undertakes most drilling operations across the country and drilled 4,489 onshore and offshore oil and gas wells in nearly 40 years.



Iran private sector to construct 200,000 housing units in Syria

Economy Desk **TEHRAN** — Iranian private sector will construct a 200,000-unit residential complex in Syria, the deputy head of Mass Construction Society of Iran announced in a ceremony on Sunday.

As Mehr news agency quoted Iraj Rahbar, “an agreement in this regard was signed between Iran and Syria during the recent visit of Iranian First Vice-President Ishaq Jahangiri and Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami.”

“Iran is Syria’s priority among other foreign applicant investors to rebuild the country and plans to make up to \$2 billion of investments in that country,” he added.



Over \$7b of tax collected in Tehran Province in 10 months

Economy Desk **TEHRAN** — Tehran Province collected 300 trillion rials (about \$7.142 billion) of taxes during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018 – January 20, 2019), head of Tehran Province’s Management and Planning Department told Mehr news agency on Sunday.

Nematollah Torki said the figure indicates eight percent rise compared to the taxes collected in the same period of time in the previous year.

It also shows that the tax income anticipated for this time span has come true by 78 percent, he added.



Iron ore concentrate export increases nearly 100%

Economy Desk **TEHRAN** — Iran’s export of iron ore concentrate rose 96.6 percent during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018 – January 20, 2019), compared to the same period of time in the past year.

The country exported 5,552 million tons of the product worth \$398 million during the ten-month period, IRNA reported on Sunday citing the data released by Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).



Iranian trade, marketing, technical-engineering delegation to visit Britain in June

Economy Desk **TEHRAN** — An Iranian trade, marketing, technical-engineering delegation will visit Britain from June 9 to 13 for the first time after the implementation of JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which lifted the sanctions against Iran in January 2016).

The delegates are mainly active in the foodstuff, medicine and agriculture sectors, Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) published on its website on Sunday.

Inflation rate at 23.5%: statistical center

Economy Desk **TEHRAN** — The Statistical Center of Iran announced that the inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on February 19, which marks the end of the eleventh Iranian calendar month of Bahman, stood at 23.5 percent, IRIB reported on Sunday.

Inflation rate in the mentioned period shows 2.9 percent rise from the figure of the twelve-month period ended on the last day of the tenth Iranian calendar month of Dey (January 20).

As reported, the average goods and services Consumer Price Index (CPI) stood at 157.3 in urban areas and at 162.9 in the rural regions in Bahman, indicating 2.1 percent and 2.8 percent increase, respectively, compared to the previous month.

In Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended on March 20, 2017), Iran could manage to experience a single-digit inflation rate after 26 years.

The inflations rate stood at 9.8 percent in that year according to the Statistical Center of Iran and at nine percent according to the



Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

But since this year’s calendar month of Khordad (ended on June 22, 2018), when

the inflation rate stood at 10.2 percent, as announced by the CBI, the country’s experiencing a double-digit inflation rate again.

Iran’s exports to Pakistan hit record high in 10 months

Economy Desk **TEHRAN** — Iran’s commercial attaché to Pakistan announced that during the first ten months of the present Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018- January 20, 2019) exports to Pakistan hit the highest record ever reaching \$1.019 billion, the official portal of Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) reported.

According to Mahmoud Hajiyousefipour, “Iran’s exports to Pakistan stood at \$741 million in the same time in the preceding year but grew by 41 percent, hitting \$1.019 billion in the said period this year.”



Afghanistan officially starts exporting goods to India through Chabahar

1 → Iranian ambassador for his part noted that the infrastructure in Chabahar Port has been significantly upgraded over the past few years, and the next phases of the port will be inaugurated in the coming years.

India launched a trade route to Afghanistan via Iran through shipping its first consignment of wheat to Afghanistan in late October 2017, bypassing longtime rival Pakistan.

In 2016, Iran, India and Afghanistan decided to jointly

establish a trade route for land-locked Central Asian countries.

India committed up to \$500 million for the development of Iran’s Chabahar Port along with associated roads and rail lines.

Vietnam’s Bamboo Airways to buy 10 Boeing planes during Trump-Kim summit

Vietnamese carrier Bamboo Airways will sign a deal with Boeing Co to purchase 10 planes on the sidelines of this week’s Trump-Kim summit, an airline executive said on Sunday.

The carrier, which is owned by property and leisure company FLC Group and made its first flights in January, placed a provisional order last year for 20 Boeing 787 widebody jets worth \$5.6 billion at list prices.

“We will sign with Boeing a deal to buy 10 more Boeing 787s. This is different from the deal signed earlier for 20 Boeing planes,” said the executive who declined to be named due to the confidentiality of the matter.

“That means we will have ordered 30 Boeing 787s. The deal will be signed during the summit,” the executive said.

“This is a firm order valued at nearly \$3 billion,” added the executive. Boeing had no immediate comment.

Bamboo is currently operating 10 Airbus planes.

Bamboo is aiming to open routes to the United States after the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration declared Vietnam complied with international aviation standards, in a move that would allow Vietnamese carriers to fly there for the first time and codeshare with U.S. airlines.

U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will hold their second summit in the Vietnamese capital of Hanoi on Feb. 27-28.

Bamboo’s first 787 is set to arrive in the third quarter of 2020 and the airline is preparing to launch flights to the United States from late 2019 or early 2020 with leased jets unless Boeing can deliver them earlier, Bamboo’s chairman Trinh Van Quyet had earlier told Reuters.

“Direct flights between Vietnam and the U.S. will not only push tourism activities, but also further facilitate bilateral trade and investment,” he said. “We are receiving huge support from Boeing to deploy our flights to the U.S.”

Rivals Vietnam Airlines JSC and VietJet Aviation JSC also have ambitions to fly to the United States, although the latter carrier has yet to place an order for widebody jets.

VietJet is also expected to sign a major jet deal with Boeing on the sidelines of the Trump-Kim summit, according to sources familiar with the matter.

VietJet, while not government-owned, increasingly uses state visits to showcase major plane orders balanced between Boeing and Airbus SE. It signed a deal to buy 100 Boeing 737 MAX narrowbody jets when former U.S. President Barack Obama visited Hanoi in 2016.

The airline is likely to finalize next week a separate provisional deal agreed last year at the Farnborough Airshow to buy another 100 Boeing 737 MAX jets worth almost \$13 billion at list prices, sources said on condition of anonymity.

(Source: Reuters)

Challenging dollar dominance: how using the euro is good for European business

Real Economy looks at how the euro can challenge the dollar’s dominance as an international currency, and how switching to euros could be good for European business.

Europeans identify the euro as one of the main symbols of the European Union, but for many European businesses, the dollar remains the main currency of choice.

In his 2018 State of the Union Address, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker called on the EU to promote the euro as a global currency to rival the US dollar.

Dominant dollar

More than half of all non-EU imports were invoiced in US dollars in 2016. At the same time, just a third of the goods brought into the EU were priced in euros. The three sectors the US dollar dominates are energy, raw materials and transport.

When it comes to energy, more than 80% of Europe’s imports are priced and paid for in US dollars, despite supplies coming mainly from Russia, the Middle East and Africa. That amounts to €240 billion over the last five years. The situation is similar when it comes to raw materials and the food commodity markets.

In the transport sector, nearly all invoicing for aircraft manufacturing is done in US dollars. The picture is reversed for exports: almost half of goods that left EU28 were invoiced in euros, while a third were invoiced in US dollars.

A European Commission study published

in 2016 found that large firms invoice less in euros.

Belgium case study: “A more international euro would definitely mean more growth for our company”

Chocolate is one Belgium’s most famous exports and the Belgian Chocolate Group produces more than 8,000 tons of the stuff, to be sold in almost 100 countries.

David Vermeire, Asian Market Director at the Belgian Chocolate Group said: “A more international euro would definitely mean more growth for our company and for other European companies because that would make us more competitive than US companies, and it would also make the sales process much easier.”

A fifth of the company’s production is exported to Asia.

“When trading with Asia, we always use euros, that’s actually a company policy of ours, because it makes it easier for us administration-wise,” Vermeire adds.

In the European Union, around half of exports are denominated in the euro while a third are denominated in the US dollar. In the US, on the other hand, most exports are priced in the local currency.

Francesco Papadia, senior resident fellow at the Bruegel Institute, explains: “There are some benefits in having a currency that is used internationally. For a long time, there’s been talk about the ‘exorbitant privilege’ that would accrue to the United States and this has been seen essentially in financial terms.

(Source: Euronews)

U.S. and China barrel toward trade-war deadline: economy week ahead

The March 1 deadline for the U.S. and China to reach a trade deal arrives this week, likely serving as just an early milestone in a long process rather than the end of tensions between the world’s two largest economies.

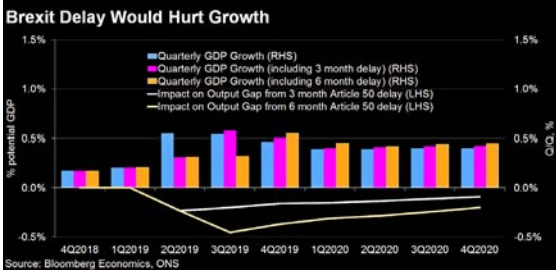
President Donald Trump has threatened to more than double tariffs on \$200 billion in Chinese goods if the two sides don’t reach a deal by Friday. Trump suggested Feb. 22 that he might extend the deadline if progress is made, and may meet Chinese leader Xi Jinping in the “not-too-distant future.”

Negotiations last week in Washington moved matters forward, with U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer saying the two sides made progress on structural issues, but adding that major hurdles remain. The two countries haven’t yet agreed on the critical issue of enforcement in a proposed currency deal that would ensure Beijing lives up to its promise to not depreciate the yuan, according to people familiar with the matter.

The IMF has warned that a full-blown trade war could undercut global growth at a time when the expansion is already losing steam. With investors on edge and growth at risk, it’s unlikely the two countries will ratchet up their tariff spat, said Bloomberg Economics chief economist Tom Orlik.

“Ignore the arbitrary deadlines. March 1 will come and go. Continued trade tensions --politically expedient for the U.S. -- are now the steady state,” Orlik said. “Further tariffs are possible but, in our view, unlikely given the fragile state of growth and markets.”

Lighthizer should have an update this week on the state



of the talks. Trump’s top trade negotiator will testify before the House Ways and Means committee on Wednesday.

Here’s our weekly rundown of other key economic events.

U.S.

Beyond the trade developments, the main event is the congressional testimonies of Jerome Powell, with the Federal Reserve chairman appearing on Tuesday and Wednesday. The big indicator of the week is gross domestic product, a report delayed by the government shutdown that’s expected to show the economy expanded at a 2.4 percent annual pace in the fourth quarter. U.S. housing data also is due, with investors looking for signals on whether the market is continuing to cool.

Europe, Africa and Middle East

The European Central Bank’s pre-decision blackout period begins on Thursday, so comments in the preceding days may take on greater significance in light of speculation for a stimulative measure at the March 7 decision -- speeches policy makers Benoit Coeure on Tuesday and Jens Weidmann

the next day will be of particular interest. Meanwhile in the U.K., Bank of England Governor Mark Carney will testify on Tuesday on his latest economic forecasts, which remain clouded by the uncertainty over Brexit and the possibility of a disorderly withdrawal from the European Union. In the Middle East, Turkey releases trade data on Thursday, while in Africa, investors will be responding to the results of Nigeria’s election on Saturday.

Asia

This week brings fresh readings on the state of commerce in the trade-dependent region, with reports on Hong Kong’s and Korea’s exports, Taiwan’s industrial production and PMI gauges across Asia due. India reports fourth quarter GDP on Thursday -- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be hoping for a pick up as he gears up for an election campaign. As for monetary policy, South Korea’s central bank meets and will likely keep interest rates on hold.

The Americas

Canada’s fourth-quarter GDP report on Friday will show the extent of what is expected to be only a temporary slowdown stemming from weakness in the oil sector. Brazil publishes its GDP report a day earlier, with the figures likely to give an indication of the scale of the challenge facing new President Jair Bolsonaro as he seeks to boost an anemic recovery. Same story in Mexico, where GDP data come out on Monday morning and will indicate the scale of the country’s economic slowdown. On Thursday, Chile will release its copper production statistics, a key indicator of the country’s economic health.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Vitol expects oil to rally as OPEC and Venezuela cause shortage

The world's largest energy trader says oil prices are set to rally further as OPEC output cuts and American sanctions on Iran and Venezuela cause a "shortage" of the low-quality heavy crudes refiners rely on.

"From here there's probably the potential to be a little bit higher," said Russell Hardy, chief executive officer of Vitol Group. "Oil supply is going to be pretty tight until the third quarter."

As the who's who of the oil industry descend on London for the annual International Petroleum Week of conferences, meetings and cocktail parties, traders are dealing with an international crude market that's increasingly divided.

Texas and other shale-rich states are spewing a gusher of high-quality crude -- light-sweet in the industry parlance -- feeding a growing glut that's bending the global oil industry out of shape. Refiners who invested billions to turn a profit from processing cheap low-quality crude are paying unheard of premiums to find the heavy-sour grades they need.

"You have a squeeze on heavy supply probably for the next six months," Hardy said in a Bloomberg TV interview. "The OPEC decision has meant there's less available, the Iranian situation has meant there's less available, and the Venezuelan situation now is adding to that."

The heavy-light crude conundrum is turning the oil market's usual price patterns on their head. The Brent-Dubai exchange of futures for swaps, which reflects the heavy-



light spread, narrowed to an almost 9-year low earlier this month.

The light-heavy mismatch is good news for OPEC giants like Saudi Arabia and Iraq, who don't produce much light-sweet, but pump plenty of the dirtier stuff. Car drivers could even benefit, because too much light-sweet crude often leads to too much gasoline, and lower prices. On the flip side, truckers may find themselves short-charged, as refiners prefer heavy-sour crude to make diesel.

While less well known than industry giants like Exxon Mobil Corp. and Royal

Dutch Shell Plc, Vitol is the world's largest independent oil trader, handling more than 7 million barrels a day -- enough to meet the combined consumption of Germany, France, Spain and Italy.

Hardy said the recent price rally that's pushed Brent, the global benchmark for light-sweet crude, above \$65 a barrel was "fully justified" on supply and demand fundamentals. In contrast, the sell-off from October until late December, when Brent plunged from more than \$85 to \$50 a barrel was "a bit irrational," he said.

While Vitol painted a bullish view for the first half of the year, it warned shale supply could turn the market around in the fourth quarter because new pipelines linking the Permian with the U.S. Gulf of Mexico coast will allow drillers to boost production. Oil demand growth is the other wild card as the global economy slows down. Vitol is forecasting consumption growth of just 1.1 million barrels a day in 2019, down from 1.5 million barrels a day in 2018.

"There could be a question mark over market direction by the fourth quarter of this year," Hardy said. "There's a certain amount of pent-up production that's awaiting logistics to allow it to be exported. As the pipelines come on, some of the drilled but uncompleted wells will start to hit. We should have a surge in production related to the pipelines."

U.S. oil production last week hit an all-time high of 12 million barrels a day, up nearly 2 million barrels a day from a year ago. At the same time, America exported a record 3.6 million barrels a day of crude oil, putting it ahead of every OPEC country barring Saudi Arabia and Iraq, at least on a gross basis.

When U.S. production surges further, OPEC will face a "bit more challenging situation," Hardy said. But for the time being, the cartel is keeping "supply and demand reasonably tight, so we think that refiners have to reach out for crude oil, and this is not helped by the problems in Iran and Venezuela."

(Source: Bloomberg)

OPEC's next headache is Brazil's burgeoning crude output

When the giant P-67 floating oil production vessel lit its flare tower earlier this month, it marked the start of a Brazilian supply boom that's poised to challenge OPEC's efforts to balance the global market.

The mammoth facility -- long and wide enough to fit an American football field -- is the first of four similar platforms that will begin pumping crude this year, lifting Brazilian output by roughly 365 000 barrels a day, its largest annual increase in at least 20 years, according to the International Energy Agency.

The Brazilian surge, combined with more oil from shale fields from Texas to North Dakota, is set to create a headache for the oil producers' cartel. In the worst-case scenario, it may force Saudi Arabia and Russia to roll their production cuts over into the second half of the year, testing the strength of the Riyadh-Moscow oil relationship.

"Brazil is on the verge of major supply growth," said Francisco Blanch, head of commodities research at Bank of America in New York. "U.S. shale is not the only driver of increased volumes."

Brazil has disappointed in the past, with output growth coming far below expectations because of maintenance issues, declines in mature fields, and delays installing new vessels for oil production and storage. The Tartaruga Verde field, which should have come online back in late 2017, didn't start until June 2018. The P-67 itself was delayed several months.

Still, oil traders and executives believe this year Brazil will make good on its promises. The P-67 vessel, about 260km from Rio de Janeiro, will pump about 150 000 barrels a day in the next few months, when it reaches its plateau.

Owned by a consortium including Brazilian state-controlled oil giant Petroleo Brasileiro, or Petrobras, and Royal Dutch Shell, the vessel will be joined through this year by another three as big: P-76, P-68 and P-77. And between 2020 and 2023, Petrobras aims to install another 10 big vessels.

"Brazil is reaching a new level of production and that is a fact," Decio Oddone, head of the country's oil regulator, the National Petroleum Agency, said in an interview. "2019 will be critical."

OPEC itself is keeping tabs on Brazil, noting that the nation will boast the second-largest increase in annual output oil growth within the non-Opec camp, only behind the U.S. shale. Brazil produced almost 2.7 million barrels a day of oil in December, putting the Latin America's nation production roughly in line with Opec-members Kuwait and Iran.

"Oil production could rise substantially in 2019" if the delayed floating storage and production vessels and other scheduled facilities start this year, Opec said about Brazil in its last monthly report. The cartel forecast Brazilian growth of 360 000 barrels a day.

The so-called pre-salt fields, reserves located deep in the Atlantic Ocean under a thick layer of salt, are poised to beat production estimates made when the oil blocks were discovered more than a decade ago. The Lula field, where the P-67 is located, will likely breach 1 million barrels a day output this year, making it one the world's largest offshore oilfields, behind only Safaniyah in Saudi Arabia.

The country is also rapidly becoming less dependent on its state-controlled oil company Petrobras, which generated



a massive 93 percent of Brazil's total production in 2010. "Brazil and Petrobras used to be synonyms in terms of oil production until recently. But not anymore," Oddone said.

The Brazilian surge comes at the right time as the world's oil market is hungry for the kind of oil that the pre-salt fields pump: medium-heavy crude, ideal for refining into diesel. The production cuts in OPEC and Canada, coupled with American sanctions on Iran and Venezuela, have significantly reduced the availability of medium-heavy crude, pushing its price higher relative to the global benchmark.

"Apart from U.S. shale, there is nothing around the world like Brazil in terms of supply" of crude oil, former Petrobras geologist and oil consultant Pedro Zalan said from Rio de Janeiro. "Reserves are huge and pre-salt productivity is enormous."

(Source: Washington Post)

Moscow and Beijing discuss natural gas megaproject

Diplomatic relations between Moscow and Beijing have significantly improved over the past couple of decades. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and China were on the brink of war which the U.S. exploited with the 'Opening of China' during the Nixon administration. However, recent geopolitical and economic developments have created a new strategic environment: Russia controls some of the world's largest reserves in terms of resources such as oil and gas while China's expanding economy requires ever-larger volumes of raw materials.

The crisis between Russia and the West has created a rift between Moscow and Europe, its most important customer regarding natural gas. To maintain a steady flow of demand for Russian gas, a political decision was made to speed up negotiations between the state-sponsored companies Gazprom and China National Petroleum Corporation for new energy infrastructure. A historic deal was struck in 2014 concerning the Power of Siberia pipeline valued \$400 billion for 38 bcm of gas over 30 years. While the first delivery of gas is set on December 1st, negotiations are ongoing for another pipeline which would make China Gazprom's most significant customer within a decade.

The Power of Siberia-2 or Altay pipeline is not a new idea. The infrastructure has been discussed on both sides of the border but with no actual plan for construction. New developments, however, have significantly increased the need for additional capacity. The most important circumstance is the fast-growing demand for natural gas in China for which domestic production is not sufficient.



Due to environmental reasons, Beijing has decided to implement the coal-to-gas policy which has increased demand by 23 percent from 195 bcm in 2015 to 240 bcm in 2017. The import of relatively expensive LNG increased by 44 percent in 2018 compared to 2017 to approximately 55 Mton or 75 bcm. Currently, China only imports pipeline gas from Central Asia which has reached 51 bcm in 2018.

Due to the expectation that demand will keep on growing, Beijing has been looking for an alternative to LNG imports. Last year, during the economic forum in Vladivostok, Presidents Putin and Xi committed their state gas companies to reopen negotiations on a new pipeline option from Russia to China, the Power of Siberia-2 pipeline. Diversification in China's most remote western regions

would improve energy security by decreasing dependence on Central Asia.

The existing infrastructure in the region, the so-called Central Asia-China pipeline, consists of the lines A, B, and C with a maximum capacity of 55 bcm. A project to extend the pipeline with line D is shelved due to specific concerns on the Chinese side. Beijing is worried about overdependence on the region. CNPC's statement accused "frequent equipment failures" in Turkmenistan of causing shortages in China. Also, Kazakhstan is suspected of diversions of gas and the resulting pressure drops in China during the winter of 2012-13.

It is painfully evident for Moscow that Europe has become a difficult market for Russian gas. The issue of energy security is high on the European political agenda.

The construction of Nord Stream 2 is facing significant pushback from European politicians in several countries as well as Washington which has threatened with sanctions to derail the project. Recently, EU energy ministers have made an agreement that could delay the completion of Nord Stream 2, but probably not stop it. Also, in the case of Turk Stream Gazprom faced significant opposition. Despite a high probability that both projects will be completed, the limits of Russian gas in Europe is within sight.

Therefore, diversification is also high on the Russian agenda. Currently, Germany is the biggest buyer of Russian gas. That could change when the second interconnector with China is built. Energy security for Russia entails a steady flow of revenue for the state coffers. Furthermore, Gazprom has also been pushing for the western route which is much cheaper to construct because of pre-existing infrastructure in Western Siberia.

Despite the ever-closer political relations between Moscow and Beijing, the Chinese are notorious for being formidable partners when it comes to negotiations. Although the current political climate is benefiting negotiations, several wild cards remain. China's ongoing trade talks with the U.S. could alter the situation. Beijing could compromise on the trade imbalance through an agreement to buy additional American LNG. That could be bad news for alternative suppliers. However, it remains the question whether Beijing is willing to commit itself into a position of vulnerability vis-à-vis its strategic competitor.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Can any country dethrone Qatar as top LNG exporter?

By now it should be clear that Qatar has no intention of giving up its slot as the world's top LNG player, both in terms of exports and liquefaction capacity. While Australia did pass the Middle Eastern gas producer briefly a few months ago, Qatar will ramp up its liquefaction capacity from 77 million tons per annum (mtpa) to 110 mtpa within five years, making it difficult for both Australia and the U.S. to catch up.

Now, Qatar is also talking up its LNG game in Asia, which represents 72 percent of global LNG demand, with that demand projected to increase to at least 75 percent amid increased usage of the super-cooled fuel from China. China's historic increase in both piped natural gas and LNG comes as the country fulfills a government mandate that natural gas makes up at least 10 percent of its country's energy mix by 2020 to offset record air pollution levels, particularly in its major urban centers. Further earmarks are in place to 2030 as well.



"Asia is the biggest market for LNG, or fuels in general because that is where [economies are growing], and that is where the need is," al-Kaabi said. "For us, the Asian market is a fundamental market and we have great relationships politically with all the Asian countries," Qatar's Energy Minister Saad Sherida al-Kaabi said in an interview with Nikkei Asian Review on Thursday. He also mentioned Japan, which is currently the world's largest LNG importer, followed by China and South Korea. "Japan, in particular, has a very special place in our heart, and we are looking to extend our contracts with Japanese companies," al-Kaabi said.

al-Kaabi said that in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Qatar canceled LNG shipments to other destinations, diverting them instead to Japan and selling them at contract prices, despite gas prices being "very high" at the time, the report added. "We wanted to show the people of Japan our respect," he said.

However, what he failed to address was that much of that supply was still attached to restrictive long-term contracts that eventuality forced Japan to turn to India and others to try at the time to bring more control over contractual LNG deals. Japan also saw the formation of what is now the world's largest buyer of LNG when Tokyo Electric Power and Chubu Electric Power formed JERA to have more buying power in LNG markets as well as integrating the value chain from upstream fuel investment and procurement through power generation.

Due to increased LNG usage in Asia, particularly Japan after Fukushima, spot LNG in Asia breached the \$20 per million British thermal units (MMBtu) mark in February 2014. Since then, amid more supply coming from new projects in Australia and the U.S., markets have been in a multi-year supply overhang with a corresponding downward trajectory in prices.

In fact, LNG spot prices in Asia have hit a 17-month low, an unusual development for this time of year. Spot prices for March delivery to Asia LNG-AS fell to \$6.50/MMBtu last week, down 20 cents from the previous week to their lowest since Sept. 8, 2017, trade sources said. Lower prices come amid tepid demand in North Asia and warmer than usual temperatures for this time of year.

Going forward, al-Kaabi said that by the end of 2019 Qatar will likely raise the bar again, developing natural gas fields in Africa and North America to maintain its top spot and keep up with Asian demand. Not only will more demand be coming from China, but also from Pakistan as that country develops its LNG import sector to offset record energy supply shortages that have caused persistent blackouts, the Philippines too as it tries to put in place its first working LNG import terminal before its main source of natural gas in its offshore natural gas field runs out in less than five years, from India, Bangladesh, Thailand and in time Vietnam.

(Source: oilprice.com)

BlackRock and KKR clinch \$4 billion investment deal with ADNOC

Investing giants BlackRock and KKR on Sunday signed a \$4 billion agreement with Abu Dhabi's National Oil Company (ADNOC) to become the first institutional investors joining forces with a national oil producer in the Middle East.

The deal represents a landmark partnership in midstream pipeline infrastructure development for ADNOC. It's also the latest step in its drive to diversify revenue sources and bring private capital and more commercial management into the company.

The agreement forms a new entity called ADNOC Oil Pipelines, which will "lease ADNOC's interest in 18 pipelines, transporting stabilized crude oil and condensate across ADNOC's offshore and onshore upstream concessions," for 23 years, according to the company's press release Sunday.

ADNOC will retain a 60 percent majority stake, with BlackRock and KKR collectively holding a 40 percent interest in the consortium, the company said.

ADNOC CEO and UAE Minister of State Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber described the deal as an "important milestone."

"It is part of our comprehensive integrated 2030 Smart Growth strategy which is really centered around value maximization and ensuring efficiency across the value chain of our business," al Jaber said after the signing.

"This deal comes at a time when we're starting now to unfold the new approach to attracting strategic FDI (foreign direct investment) into good quality infrastructure assets that belong to ADNOC," he told CNBC's Hadley Gamble on Sunday.

"This type of investment class represented by BlackRock and KKR is not a typical partner for a national oil company," al Jaber pointed out, emphasizing ADNOC's drive to "combine the best both, being a national oil company (NOC) and an international oil company," and demonstrating a commitment to commercial discipline as a means of attracting that kind of investment.

(Source: CNBC)

Will Germany permit joint European security?

By Joschka Fischer
Former German foreign minister

In an institution as large and complex as the European Union, there will always be blame to go around when efforts to deepen economic and political integration fail to get off the ground. But when it comes to developing a joint EU defense capability, it is clear where the problem lies.

U.S. President Donald Trump has proved truly disruptive to the transatlantic relationship. His questioning of America's mutual-defense commitments presents NATO with an ominous and potentially existential crisis. The U.S. security guarantee, after all, is one of the two pillars upon which European peace and prosperity have rested since the end of World War II. And nor has Trump spared the second pillar: the rules-based global trade system and economic order.

Just two years after Trump's election, Europeans find themselves shivering alone in the icy winds of international politics, rightly wondering what is to be done. It stands to reason that Europe must deepen its internal bonds, close ranks, and strengthen its military capacity. Some might question whether this is what Europeans truly want, given that we are living in the age of Brexit, which will deprive the European Union of its second-strongest military and economic power.

But just because the British don't seem to know what they want doesn't mean the rest of Europe is in the same boat. In fact, most Europeans favor a stronger, more powerful EU with a joint security policy.

The big exception is Germany. As the EU's economic engine and most populous member state, there can be no joint security policy without the country that sits at the very heart of Europe. But it is an open question whether achieving joint European security with Germany's participation is even possible.

Europeans must not allow wishful thinking to obscure important facts, as happened when the European Monetary Union was being formed in the 1990s. From the start, there were pronounced differences between individual member states not only with respect to economic and fiscal policy, but also in terms of political culture and mentality. Nonetheless, willful ignorance prevailed, and the monetary union was launched without the integrated political institutions that such a project requires.

The EU must not make this mistake again. Today, the main fact that cannot be ignored is that a joint security policy will require a compromise between Germany and France, the two largest and most powerful member states. Such a compromise will not come easily. The two countries' political mentalities, historical narratives, and geopolitical interests are simply too far apart, and in many cases diametrically opposed. Still, owing to its particular history, Germany poses the bigger obstacle, even if its official rhetoric suggests otherwise.

For its part, France's traditional self-image reflects its long history as a great European power, even if that era – and Europe's global dominance generally – has passed. As a nuclear power and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, France views its military actions and arms exports not as moral failures but as the prerogatives of a world power conducting foreign policy.

The genius of Charles de Gaulle was to claim the status of a victorious power for his country after World War II. Doing so invited French citizens to forget the Vichy regime, the defeat by the Nazis in 1940, and the internal political rifts of the 1930s. It was thanks to de Gaulle that France maintained its historical course.

The same cannot be said for Germany. During the twentieth century, Germany made two bids for European hegemony and world domination, and the price it paid was its own destruction, to say nothing of Europe's. Its sense of historical continuity was demolished in 1945, at which point its culture and traditions were devalued and its territorial integrity destroyed. Germany became synonymous with aggression, terror, and genocide.

Postwar Germany abandoned military-based power politics and foreign adventurism, and concerned itself primarily with economic development. Germans simply saw no other way to gain reentry to the democratic West, let alone reclaim political sovereignty. This strategy culminated in the reunification of East and West Germany in 1990.

With the shift away from power politics in 1945, Germans on both the left and the right became pacifists. And to this day, many Germans remain deeply and emotionally committed to neutrality, despite many decades of European integration and NATO membership. This has been particularly true in the post-reunification period, owing in no small measure to America's security guarantee and willingness to manage the dirty business of power politics on Germany's behalf. But this cozy division of labor, like the American-led postwar order, came to an end with the election of Trump.

A German return to traditional power politics certainly has its risks. But the alternative is to maintain the status quo and forego a joint EU security policy. A policy consisting of more than lofty words necessarily implies a deepening of political integration in the name of European sovereignty. Without common export rules, for example, there can be no meaningful cooperation on European armaments development, let alone more far-reaching and ambitious projects.

Germans are currently engaged in an intense debate over defense spending, which must rise to 2% of GDP by 2024 to meet the country's NATO commitments. Given the foreseeable geopolitical risks on the horizon, in the absence of a joint EU security policy, German defense spending would have to rise even higher to make up for the US's withdrawal from Europe.

Needless to say, Germany's rearmament on its own would raise many questions and historical concerns. Rearmament with and for Europe and NATO, however, would be a completely different matter. One way or another, Europe must grow stronger. It is in everyone's interest that Germany be productively engaged in that process.

(Source: Project Syndicate)

Bin Salman's need for Pakistan hinders his ties with India

By Fazzur Rahman Siddiqui

The much-hyped visit of Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammad Bin Salman, to Pakistan and India concluded on Wednesday with him promising to extend full support to India in its battle against terrorism and calling for UN sanction against those who are involved in it.

In the first leg of his Asian tour, which included Malaysia and Indonesia, Bin Salman landed at Nur Khan air base in the Pakistani town of Rawalpindi last Sunday where he was received by Prime Minister Imran Khan, members of his cabinet and Army Chief Jawed Bajwa. Bin Salman was accompanied by an 1,100 strong entourage consisting of members of his cabinet, prominent businessmen and members of the royal family.

Later the prime minister drove the Crown Prince, heir-apparent and de facto ruler of Saudi, to the his house where a ceremony was held in his honor. The enthusiasm of Pakistan's government was at full display over Bin Salman's first visit which Khan tweet took the countries' relationship to a level where it has never reached before. The heir apparent, he added, had won the hearts of millions of Pakistanis when he said that he could be considered Pakistan's ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

Khan said Saudi is a real friend and it is true as it has stood by Pakistan even in times of hardship. Only last October Saudi offered Islamabad a \$6 billion rescue package to support its tattered economy, this at a time when the kingdom was in the spotlight following the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in its consulate in Turkey.

As a gesture of goodwill, the President of Pakistan, Arif Alvi, conferred the highest civilian award of Paskenta, Nishan-e-Pakistani on



Pakistan is more important for Saudi Arabia. The kingdom wants Pakistan's military at its disposal not for its own internal security or that of its regime, but for its battles further afield.

the Crown Prince and he was also presented a gold plated gun by a group of senators. In exchange, Bin Salman dedicated a hospital in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province to the late Ferman Khan who scarified his own life to save 15 people, including nine Saudis, from floods in Jeddah in 2009.

Saudi and Pakistan also signed numerous investment agreements worth \$20 billion, including one to establish an oil refinery in the city of Gwadar. These, Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir said were not charity, but rather mutually beneficial investment.

It was also agreed that 2,107 Pakistanis who are being held in Saudi jails would be

released. They are among the 3,309 currently incarcerated in the kingdom.

Bin Salman's visit to India came at a time when locals were still mourning the wanton targeting of 40 Indian police forces at the hands of the Jaish-e-Mohammed in the town of Pulwama, disputed Kashmir. Many have already termed the visit a hallow exercise because of the silence and indifference displayed by the Crown Prince over the killing when he met leaders in Pakistan.

■ **But still prime minister description**
Narendra Modi went in person to the airport to receive the guest and hugged him. During his day-long engagement, Bin Salman

An emergency for the GOP

The Constitution or The Donald? Why is this such a hard choice for congressional Republicans?

Once again, congressional Republicans are facing a gut-check moment, forced to choose between supporting and defending the Constitution or Donald J. Trump. It's not looking good.

House Democrats introduced a joint resolution of disapproval on Friday aimed at canceling President Trump's bogus national emergency at the southern border. Representative Joaquin Castro of Texas is leading the charge, and Speaker Nancy Pelosi is expediting the measure, which is on track for a floor vote on Tuesday. It is widely expected to pass the chamber, where Democrats have the majority.

Once the resolution clears the House, the Senate is required to hold its own vote within 18 days — meaning the majority leader, Mitch McConnell, cannot do his usual stonewalling. Even so, with Republicans in control there, and loath to irk the president, the resolution is widely expected to die. At that point, it will be up to the courts, where multiple suits have already been filed, to grapple with this out-of-control executive.

It is not too late to stop this legislative cop-out. Critical principles are at stake — Congress's power of the purse, the separation of powers — that transcend any one declaration or leader. Members of both parties need to make clear that a presidential pique is not the same thing as a national emergency, that a president who fails to persuade Congress to support his priorities can't then simply pursue them by fiat. Lawmakers who cannot rally themselves to this cause should stop pretending that they're anything more than partisan automatons; they will have declared themselves members of a second-class branch of government.

As has often been noted, there is no border emergency, aside from Trump's desperation to make good on a rabble-rousing campaign slogan. Having failed to extract billions of taxpayer dollars from Congress for the construction of his wall, the president executed a power grab. Don't just take our word for it; that's how Trump himself explained it in last week's bizarre Rose Garden emergency declaration.

Think of it as the presidential equivalent of phoning 911 because your pizza delivery is taking too long.

Congress has the power to effectively override an emergency declaration through a resolution of disapproval. On



Members of both parties need to make clear that a presidential pique is not the same thing as a national emergency, that a president who fails to persuade Congress to support his priorities can't then simply pursue them by fiat.

Wednesday, Ms. Pelosi sent Democratic and Republican members a "Dear Colleague" letter urging support for such a move. "We have a solemn responsibility to uphold the Constitution, and defend our system of checks and balances against the President's assault," she wrote.

House Republicans once cared passionately about checks and balances, and frequently accused President Barack Obama of abusing his authority. In 2016, one of the "Big Ideas" in the conference's "Better Way Agenda" was a pledge to end presidential overreach: "Our President has been acting more like a monarch than an elected official. That stops now."

Obama did extend emergency declarations for several uncontroversial foreign policy matters and use executive orders (lawfully) to achieve policy goals. But he never in-

voked emergency authority to divert money after Congress refused to fund a pet project.

For some reason, the Republicans have been far less vocal about their high-minded principles with Trump in the White House. Of the more than 225 co-sponsors who had signed on to the disapproval resolution as of Friday, only one was a Republican, Representative Justin Amash of Michigan.

In the Senate, plenty of Republicans remain skittish about executive overreach. Several have publicly expressed disapproval of Trump's faux-emergency, ranging from the ultraconservative Mike Lee to the more moderate Susan Collins, from the freshman Mitt Romney to the old-timer Chuck Grassley. "I don't like this," Alaska's Lisa Murkowski told The Associated Press. "I think it takes us down a road and with a precedent that, if it's allowed, that we may come to regret." Kentucky's Rand Paul declared that "extraconstitutional executive actions are wrong, no matter which party does them."

For the joint resolution to clear the Senate, only four Republicans need to join Democrats to assert that the president cannot thumb his nose at Congress whenever it suits him. But despite all the hand wringing, thus far, only one has said she will: Ms. Collins, who recently told reporters, "If it's a clean disapproval resolution, I will support it."

Some Republicans dislike what Trump has done but have convinced themselves that there's no point in voting for the resolution since the president will surely veto it. Others rationalize that the emergency declaration, while outrageous, may be technically legal, and thus should be left to the courts to sort out. Some Republicans are toying with the idea of voting against the resolution but then introducing new legislation to reform the underlying National Emergencies Act.

These are all dodges — ways to make Republicans feel better about not pushing back — and they can provide only false comfort. As he has shown time and again, Trump is a bully, and he likes to push boundaries. Let him take your lunch money today, and tomorrow he will kick you out of your treehouse.

Republican lawmakers swore an oath to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution and to well and faithfully discharge the duties of their office. Here's their chance.

(Source: The NYT)

Major shake up in Sudan's government on first day of emergency rule

By Mohammed Amin

Sudan's government underwent a radical transformation on Saturday as President Omar al-Bashir appointed a new vice president and prime minister, a day after declaring a state of emergency in response to more than two months of protests against his 30-year rule.

Mohamed Tahir Ayala, the former governor of Gezira state whom Bashir had previously touted as a potential successor as president, was appointed prime minister.

Defense Minister Awad Mohamed Ahmed Ibn Auf became first vice president while retaining his defense portfolio.

Earlier this month, Auf, who previously served as the head of military intelligence, became the second of several top officials to strike a conciliatory tone towards the protests, saying that young people caught up in the recent turmoil had "reasonable ambition".

Bashir declared a one-year nationwide state of emergency in a speech on Friday and set up a caretaker administration. He replaced all state governors with military officials.

Meanwhile, thousands of Sudanese pro-

tested on Friday night and Saturday, rejecting Bashir's speech and insisting he step down immediately.

Before Bashir's announcement on Friday, the head of Sudan's National Security and Intelligence Services (NISS), Salah Gosh said Bashir would be stepping down as the leader of the ruling party and would not run for president in 2020.

Bashir declared a one-year nationwide state of emergency in a speech on Friday and set up a caretaker administration. He replaced all state governors with military officials.

Bashir said however that he would only postpone amending the law to allow his re-election. Urging his opponents to join a "path of national reconciliation" and dialogue, Bashir called on parliament to postpone constitutional amendments that would have allowed him to seek another term in 2020.

There are no signs so far that his actions have calmed matters, with the National Con-

sensus Forces, one of the main opposition groups, saying the state of emergency was aimed at countering a "popular revolution" and vowing to push ahead until he is toppled.

■ **'Military and security methods'**
"We will resist the state of emergency by all peaceful means including protests," said Salah Shoaib, spokesman for the Sudanese Professionals Association, which has organ-

ized regular protests demanding Bashir's resignation.

"Now the regime has no political solutions to the current crisis and is trying to use military and security methods to stop the uprising."

Witnesses from different neighborhoods of the capital Khartoum told MEE that protests started immediately after Bashir's speech and

attended a banquet hosted by President Ram Nath Kovind, held bilateral meeting with the prime minister and met Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj. Five agreements were signed including cooperation in the fields of tourism, housing and broadcasting. The countries also agreed to enhance cooperation to combat terrorism.

In a joint statement, they discussed the potential investment of \$100 billion in India in the field of energy, refinery, petrochemicals, infrastructure, agriculture and minerals.

Relations between Saudi and Indian have entered a new era in recent times and they can no longer be confined to the areas of oil, remittance and pilgrimage but must now be seen in the changing regional and global scenario where they are strategic partners in various fields.

But this does not mean that the growing and deepening ties with one country would come at the cost of another, particularly in case of Pakistan with whom Saudi Arabia has always enjoyed a distinct relationship. India should harbor no wishful thinking that its growing tie with the kingdom will eventually bring Saudi Arabia out of Pakistan's ideological fold. Pakistan is more important for Saudi Arabia. The kingdom wants Pakistan's military at its disposal not for its own internal security or that of its regime, but for its battles further afield.

The changing situation on the ground in Afghanistan after the U.S.' planned withdrawal, has left Pakistan indispensable to Saudi.

Saudi's links to India can only be seen through its need for Pakistan in its ongoing proxy wars with its regional foes.

(Source: Middle East Monitor)

Is it Trump, or King Jared who is providing Saudi with nuclear capabilities?!

1→ Saudi Arabia should be pioneering free or zero-point energy and solar power that can be rapidly exported to Somalia and Yemen and Central Asia – Iran and others should be doing this also. I would add that given the effort being made by China with support from Trump toward the unification of the Koreas and the denuclearization and demilitarization of the Koreas, a story I broke on 4 March 2018, there is every reason to believe that in the future Russia, China, and the USA will agree that the Middle East must be denuclearized.

In summary, I believe the nuclear power plant matter is on the one hand being advanced by King Jared on behalf of Israel, and on the other, “just business.”

■ Democrats have raised concerns that the Trump administration, in aiding this effort, would allow the Saudi regime access to “sensitive U.S. nuclear technology” that could in turn “allow Saudi Arabia to produce nuclear weapons that contribute to the proliferation of nuclear arms throughout an already unstable Middle East.” What is your opinion?

A: The Democrats don’t care about anything other than undermining the Trump Administration. Israel has 200 nuclear weapons paid for by the U.S. taxpayer and allowed by both Democratic and Republican administrations.

It takes no less than five years toward 10-15 years to build a nuclear power plant. With the level of corruption and worker incompetence that exists in Saudi Arabia today I am quite certain that none of this will come to fruition before the next U.S. President, elected in 2024, takes office, and gets serious about cutting off all military assistance to Israel and sanctioning Saudi Arabia.

■ Do you think Trump administration

should not come as a surprise. Our Congress is totally corrupt and also being bribed and blackmailed by the Zionists, many with pedophilia videos made by Jeffrey Epstein, a fake billionaire and Mossad extortion specialist. There will be no confrontation. Israel wants Saudi Arabia nuclearized, it will deliver U.S. Congressional approval.

Q: In May 2018, Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the Iran nuclear agreement. Trump’s logic for the withdrawal was Nuclear Non-Proliferation. But the transferring “sensitive U.S. nuclear technology” that could in turn “allow Saudi Arabia to produce nuclear weapons that contribute to the proliferation of nuclear arms throughout an already unstable Middle East.” How can explain this contradiction?

A: There is no contradiction. Our President is a genius at leverage and at business. Let me emphasize that with this quote from Jack Welch, the legendary “Neutron Jack” of General Electric fame:

“They can say what they want about him, but I don’t know if any president has been more prepared to sit in that room and talk business. It was like talking to a peer, not a politician. Hell of a meeting.”

The mistake Iran continues to make in the Trump era is in not listening to President Vladimir Putin and General Secretary Xi Jinping, both of whom have established working relationships with President Trump that are setting a course of peace and prosperity for all that will last 100 years or more. There is no substitute for a personal meeting with our President.

I was recommended for the Nobel Peace Prize – which I do not deserve – because I represent the integration of holistic analytics, true cost economics, and Open Source Everything Engineering (OSEE). The lat-

that Mecca should not be left in the hands of war-mongers; Jerusalem is a corpus separatum; Palestine should be Palestinian; Lebanon should again be the Paris of the Middle East; and Syria should be free to be Syria. These matters are for the 2024-2028 timeframe, and addressed within my eight-part peace proposal for the Middle East.

The future is Asian – this is what my friend Parag Khanna documents so well in his book

on in Yemen, Cf. Gordon Duff, “Did Saudi Arabia Nuke Yemen?” Veterans Today, 20 April 2015. Victor Bout, now in jail in the USA, is offering testimony on the Saudi nuclear program with particular attention to how nuclear materials stolen within the USA with official US Government complicity, have been delivered to Saudi Arabia by Israel. The US is also reported to have delivered to Saudi Arabia new warheads



by that title. Turkey and Iran are part of Asia, as is 80% of Russia. In the very near term, the strategic priority for Iran should be facing North and East. Iran – and Turkey – are the logical Eastern edges of the One Belt One Road co-prosperity sphere, until such time as wealth from the east can simply buy peace in the West.

The critical missing piece – the catalyst for eradicating the Zionist parasite and creating peace and prosperity for all, is the understanding, embrace, and implementation by leaders everywhere of the post-Western economic and technological paradigm, Open Source Everything Engineering (OSEE) The Open Source Agency I have proposed to President Trump, twice approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) at \$2 billion a year Final Operating Capability (FOC) and violently opposed for thirty years by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), should be replicated in every region.

It is open source everything engineering, not nuclear weapons, that will win the war between the Satanic 1% and the good people of faith, most very poor, the 99%.

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The behavioral paradox of Europe continues



1→ Also, the U.S. president has asked Theresa May, the British prime minister, to sue the European Union for making barriers in Brexit talks. Trump has gone even further, and warned Theresa May that she should choose between integrating in the European Economic structure and having economic relations with the United States! Together, these statements and stances show that Trump is working hard to achieve his main goal in Europe, which is the collapse of the European Union.

Ultimately, the only way forward for people like Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron is to change their behavior and political and economic strategy against the United States. If this strategy does not change, in the near future, the Europe Union will easily be broken by the United States.

It is reaffirmed that one of the public objectives of the Trump government is the destruction of the European Union and the empowerment of nationalists in the political and executive equations of European countries. Do the European authorities understand this absolute truth?

U.S. \$1.6 billion arms deal with UAE will perpetuate the war-fest in Yemen



TEHRAN (FNA) — The warring factions in Yemen have agreed on the first phase of a withdrawal of forces around the key port of Hodeida.

According to the United Nations, Saudi-backed forces and Ansarullah resistance groups have made “important progress on planning for the redeployment” following talks, but no start date has been given. The pull-out is a critical part of a ceasefire agreed in Sweden in December. And Hodeida is the principal lifeline for two-thirds of Yemen’s population, which is on the brink of famine.

Tell that to the United States government, which refuses to end its complicity in Saudi-led war crimes in Yemen, and has just signed deals with the United Arab Emirates worth more than \$1.6 billion for Patriot missile launchers from Raytheon – even as the UAE- and Saudi-led coalition’s actions in the war on Yemen is under fire by the UN, human rights groups, and international aid agencies.

The new arms deals come days after an Amnesty International investigation further implicated the UAE in war crimes for transferring Western weapons to unaccountable militia groups and terror proxies, thereby deepening the humanitarian crisis and fueling carnage in the war-ravaged country.

As maintained by Patrick Wilcken, arms control and human rights researcher at Amnesty International: “Emirati forces receive billions of dollars’ worth of arms from Western states and others, only to siphon them off to militias in Yemen that answer to no-one and are known to be committing war crimes. The ongoing carnage against civilians in Yemen – including at the hands of the Saudi and UAE-led coalition and the militias it backs – should give serious pause to all states supplying arms.”

It’s a sentiment also shared by the UN Human Rights Council and UNICEF. They are also calling for a stop to the war and all arms transfers to the Saudi- and UAE-led coalition. They have steered the ground offensive in the conflict, which broke out in 2015 and has, by some estimates, killed over 60,000 Yemenis, uprooted millions, and left millions more on the brink of famine.

On that note, American fingerprints are all over the place too. US arms sales and intelligence to Saudi Arabia are still ongoing in the air war, despite new legislation at the Congress hoping to halt US support for the war. This is while the Trump administration officials have brushed off criticism the US and its weapons industry are facing. They make policy and this is not the way forward – at a time when all warring factions in Yemen have signed a ceasefire and pullout agreement that is being monitored by the UN.

At any rate, the new lucrative deals shed light on what is going to happen next to at least some of the weapons the UAE receives from its American partners: The ground war will continue, weapons will be used not only by UAE forces in Yemen, but will also be passed on to completely unaccountable Coalition-allied and Qaeda terrorists, with an open and long record of war crimes and terrorism.

Given the scope of war crimes and breadth of the catastrophe, the United States and its allies in Europe must halt all their weapons sales or risk being complicit in the Saudi-UAE war crimes.

The new arms sale by the US to the UAE is a wake-up call. It will only perpetuate this disastrous conflict which is getting out of hand. Given the shocking number of civilians that have been consistently killed in the war, the time is now for the US and its European allies to end their direct involvement and complicity.



will allow Saudi Arabia to develop the capability of enriching uranium and reprocessing of plutonium by itself?

A: The short answer is no. There are a number of us that believe that President Trump is going to turn against the Zionists. He has promised complete disclosure on who did 9/11 – if he fulfills that promise, the Zionist parasite will be expelled from the USA and Israel will cease to exist as a viable country. I plan to make 9/11 disclosure a 2020 election issue and the President knows this, he received my report on 8 August 2018. I like our President. I think he is “just doing business” and also playing for time. If I am wrong it does not matter, in 2024 I anticipate a total overthrow of the two-party tyranny that enables the Deep State and we will finish the job Trump started.

■ The report alleges that those involved in the planning are aiming to enrich themselves and are possibly in violation of the Atomic Energy Act, a federal law that lays out the preconditions of any nuclear deals with another nation and requires Congressional approval. What is the result of the confrontation of the congress and President Trump administration in this case?

A: Everyone in the U.S. military-industrial complex is trying to enrich themselves, this

ter enables the creation of a post-Western economy without nuclear and chemical hazards, at ten to twenty percent the cost of the failed Western model that is 50% waste and 90% profit for the banks. This is where Iran should be focusing its mind, in partnership with China and Russia as well as Turkey.

Trump’s problem is that he has a shit staff and a corrupt intelligence community that is consumed with mass surveillance, drone assassinations, and regime change instead of rendering decision-support to the President and everyone else. At the same time, the center of gravity for eradicating the Zionist parasite is not nuclear weapons, it is the hearts and minds and the pocketbooks of the American public. If Iran were to collaborate with Russia and others to accelerate American public understanding of the Zionist role in planning and carrying out the 9/11 atrocity – thousands of times worse than the USS Liberty atrocity – this disclosure will do what decades of atrocities against the Palestinians have not been able to do because of U.S. media complicity in covering it all up: it will wipe out Zionist influence within the U.S. economy, U.S. government, and U.S. society.

From where I sit, there is no question but

Trump’s policy toward Saudi to be subverted by Clintonites: Kovacevic

1→ I think we should not underestimate the fact that the U.S. president Donald Trump proclaimed the policy of ‘America first.’ This means that the U.S. will primarily begin to look at the Middle East from the position of its own national interests, strictly defined, and not through the position of its present allies in the region. Trump wants to withdraw some forces from the Middle East in order to focus on the areas closer home. He wants the U.S. to become a major exporter of energy resources and sees the Middle Eastern oil-producing countries as economic competitors for the European and Asian markets. For him, making money is more important than ideology.

Q: Comparing the U.S. reaction to Saudi missile and nuclear programs with its reaction to Iran’s ones, isn’t the U.S. policy enjoying double standard?

A: The double standard is the essence of the U.S. foreign policy just as it is the essence of the foreign policies of any government, either big or small. This is nothing to be sur-



prised about. The U.S. sees Iran as the main geopolitical enemy in the region, from the economic, political, military,

and ideological point of view. However, I think that the relations of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia may turn sour, too, if the Saudis do not obediently spend billions of dollars to buy U.S. products. The current U.S.-Saudi relations hinge on economic blackmail.

Q: What is Trump after in the region by such destabilizing acts?

A: Making money. Opening markets for U.S. companies and products. He runs the U.S. the way he ran his own business. If you buy his stuff, you are a friend. If you don’t, you are an enemy. His rational is simple to understand. However, he does not operate in a vacuum and the Clintonites in the U.S. Congress will soon begin the procedure to impeach him. I think he will have less and less time for any kind of sustained foreign policy. He may act rashly and that is the biggest dangers for world peace. The powers of Eurasia are rising, and the fractured U.S. political class is unable to formulate a constructive response.

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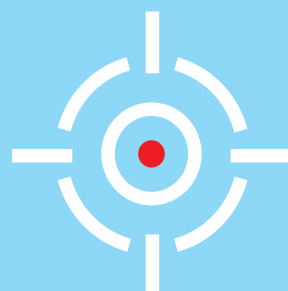
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Onions and garlic could protect against cancer

Aside from their ability to inject deep flavor into almost any meal, onions and garlic might also protect against cancer, according to a recent study.

Garlic, onions, leeks, chives, and shallots are classed as allium vegetables.

They are grown throughout much of the world and form the bedrock of family meals far and wide.

Earlier studies have shown that certain compounds in allium vegetables — including flavanols and organosulfur compounds — are bioactive.

Some have been shown to hinder the development of cancer.

Scientists from the First Hospital of China Medical University recently set out to understand whether consuming greater amounts of these vegetables might prevent people from developing colorectal cancer. They recently published their results in the Asia-Pacific Journal of Clinical Oncology.

Not counting skin cancers, colorectal cancer, also called bowel cancer, is the third most common cancer diagnosed in men and women in the United States.

Researchers are aware of certain dietary risk factors, such as consuming high levels of red or processed meats. However, they know less about foods that might protect against bowel cancer.

■ **Unpeeling the onion**

Scientists have already investigated whether allium vegetables could reduce bowel cancer risk. Although some have identified a significant effect, others have found either a small interaction or none at all.

The authors of the latest study believe that the variation in results is partly due to how data was collected. For instance, some studies combined all allium vegetables into one group for analysis, and others did not include data from some, less common, types of allium vegetable.

With this in mind, the researchers designed a study that would more faithfully capture the impact of allium vegetables on colorectal cancer risk.

To investigate, they matched 833 individuals with colorectal cancer with 833



Not counting skin cancers, colorectal cancer, also called bowel cancer, is the third most common cancer diagnosed in men and women in the United States. Researchers are aware of certain dietary risk factors, such as consuming high levels of red or processed meats. However, they know less about foods that might protect against bowel cancer.

control participants without it, who were similar in age and sex and who lived in similar locations.

Each participant was interviewed, and their dietary habits were recorded using a validated food frequency questionnaire.

■ **The benefits of allium vegetables**

The researchers found that, as theorized, there was a significant relationship between the level of allium vegetables that an individual consumes and their risk of colorectal cancer.

Specifically, in adults who consumed the highest levels of allium vegetables, the risk of developing colorectal cancer was 79 percent lower than those who consumed the lowest levels.

"It is worth noting that in our research there seems to be a trend: the greater the amount of allium vegetables, the better the protection."

The inverse relationship was seen in the overall consumption of allium vegetables,

as well as in specific types, namely garlic, garlic stalks, leeks, onions, and spring onions.

The correlation was also significant in both men and women. This is interesting because, in some earlier studies, differences were seen between the sexes. For instance, one study found a weakly protective effect in women and a slight increase in colorectal cancer risk in men.

As previously mentioned, past research into allium vegetables and colorectal cancer risk produced conflicting results. However, evidence in favor of the relationship is now growing.

For instance, a study with Southern European participants found "an inverse association between the frequency of use of allium vegetables and the risk of several common cancers."

Similarly, a meta-analysis assessed links between allium vegetable intake and the presence of adenomatous polyps, which are precursors of colorectal cancer.

The authors concluded that "[h]igh intake of total allium vegetables may be associated with a risk reduction of colorectal adenomatous polyps."

■ **A simple dietary change**

Dr. Li believes that this group of vegetables provides a simple lifestyle change that could help reduce the risk of colorectal cancer.

Of course, consuming these vegetables alone will not reduce risk in a meaningful way, but used in conjunction with other dietary changes, they might make a difference.

The debate is likely to continue for some time; there is a dizzying array of reasons why allium-rich diets may seem (or not seem) to impact cancer risk. For example, how a vegetable is cooked can significantly alter its chemical composition.

This might help explain why studies conducted among different global populations had differing results; future studies would do well to take this into account.

Conclusions cannot yet be drawn, but, if the results are replicated, adding extra onions and garlic to our dishes may be a tasty way to reduce colorectal cancer risk.

(Source: Medical News Today)

Most hip and knee replacements 'last longer than thought'

Eight out of 10 knee replacements and six out of 10 hip replacements last as long as 25 years, says a large study from the University of Bristol.

This is much longer than believed, the researchers said, and the findings will help patients and surgeons decide when to carry out surgery.

To date, there has been little data on the success of new hips and knees.

But this Lancet research looked at 25 years' worth of operations, involving more than 500,000 people.

Hip and knee replacements are two of the most common forms of surgery in the NHS, but doctors often struggle to answer questions from patients on how long the implants will last.

■ **'May last even longer'**

Nearly 200,000 of the operations were performed in 2017 in England and Wales, with most carried out on people between 60 and 80 years old.

Dr Jonathan Evans, orthopaedic registrar, lead study author and research fellow at Bristol Medical School, said: "At best, the NHS has only been able to say how long replacements are designed to last, rather than referring to actual evidence from multiple patients' experiences of joint replacement surgery."

"Given the improvement in technology and techniques in the last 25 years, we expect that hip or knee replacements put in today may last even longer."

As the ageing population grows, and life expectancy rises, this becomes even more important, Dr Evans added.

Wendy Fryer, 80, had a hip replacement 17 years ago and it has completely changed her life.

"I was in agony beforehand, it was horrendous," she said. "I used to cycle to work but had to stop. But the very next day after the operation, it was like magic, the pain had gone."

She still plays table tennis and badminton regularly, and also enjoys cycling and walking.

"The worst thing you can do is become a couch potato," Wendy says.

■ **How long do they last?**

Hip replacements: 89% lasted 15 years, 70% lasted 20 years, 58% lasted 25 years

Total knee replacements: 93% lasted 15 years, 90% lasted 20 years, 82% lasted 25 years

Partial knee replacements: 77% lasted 15 years, 72% lasted 20 years, 70% lasted 25 years

The researchers, writing in the Lancet, looked at reports from joint replacement registries in six countries which held at least 15 years of data - Australia, Finland, Denmark, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden.

They did not look at data from the UK, because its record of patients does not go back far enough, but the research team said their findings mirrored results from smaller studies of UK patients.

(Source: BBC)

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TECHNOLOGY

Electronic authentication to prevent fraud in telecom operators

TEHRAN — As a part of e-government project in Iran, an electronic authentication system is now available on mobile government app to prevent fraud in telecommunication operators, Mehr reported on Sunday.

Named Shahkar system, it is considered as an intermediate between telecommunication operators and authentication authorities, the deputy minister for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Hossein Fallah Joshagani said.



The operators can obtain authentication of the users before providing services for them through this system, he added.

The telecom operators can find out about the nationality of their users and in case it is verified they are authorized to provide services for them, he explained.

The users of telecom operators can get information about the phone numbers registered in their names through the Shahkar system, which is available on mobile government app, he said.

The Shahkar system also adapts the identifiers of the registered user and service by which, no one other than the owner of phone number cannot registered in e-mobile software, mobile banks, online stores and other soft wares which, related to private information of users, he asserted.

----- E-government in Iran

Iran moved 20 notches up to rank 86 among 193 countries in the United Nations E-Government Development Index (EGDI 2018), which was released in July 2018 in comparison with EGDI 2017.

Iran was amongst 17 countries that transitioned from Middle-to High-EGDI level group.

Iran started issuing smart cards for purchasing gasoline in May 218 through “Mobile Government”.

In December 2018, the head of Information Technology Organization of Iran, Amir Nazemi, stated that over five million Iranians have got electronic documents up to now and 5.138 million citizens benefited from e-government services Until December 16, 2018.

Meanwhile, ICT Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi announced that a total of 67 percent of state-run organizations in Iran are currently offering e-services, the information and communication technology.

He said that the ICT Ministry proposed that the government allocate one trillion rials (about \$240,000) to development of e-government in the next Iranian calendar year, which begins on March 21.

For big innovation, think small

By Kumar Mehta

Organizations trying to innovate are wired to think big. They want to make a big impact, set big goals, and talk about big plans and big successes. No one is interested in anything that appears small. At first blush, this makes sense: in order to move the needle on your P&L you need to have a big success. Small is uninteresting.

This thinking is flawed. My research on innovation has shown that a vast majority of the “big” innovations we admire started as something small. These innovations did not become big by executing on a plan to create something big; they became big by providing inspirational offerings that enhanced customer experiences. Financial rewards were not the reason for the innovation: they were the outcome—the reward to a company that increased societal value through innovation.

Google started off as an academic experiment by two PhD students to understand how web pages link to each other. It wasn’t even a commercial initiative; search results were simply a byproduct of the index they created. In fact, when the founders noticed that their search results were superior to those of other search engines, they were ready to sell the company to Excite (a leading search engine of the time) for under a million dollars. Excite refused.

Of course, Google became very big, but the big didn’t happen by executing on a big strategic plan: it happened by providing a big positive change to the experience of users. And the financial rewards that followed? Generating billions through advertising revenues was not part of executing on a strategic plan: it was simply that, as the company increased its value to society, society was happy to reward the company.

Google is not alone. Uber started with three cars and the goal of providing a better service than taxis. The founders of Airbnb rented out their own loft with an air mattress and free breakfast to make extra money; they certainly had no plan to build the planet’s largest home sharing network.

Unfortunately, most companies I come across think of big only in terms of P&L. Consequently, they are ruled by financial models and strategic plans that are filled with assumptions. Very rarely do companies pursue plans based on the how much a customer experience is altered (something I call the “experience delta”), or on products that inspire at a small scale.

This often causes companies to invest in areas that seem like they’ll have the best financial outcomes based on their assumption-filled plans. However, as we all know, big breakthroughs rarely come from strategic plans and financial models.

Worse yet, while executing the strategic plan, companies very often pass up on inspiring products or developments or ideas because they don’t appear to make a big contribution to the bottom line, or may not fit with their traditional business model. Inspiring ideas are exactly the ones you don’t want to pass on because they are the ones most likely to become word-changing innovations.

Remember that the big opportunity you are chasing may often appear as something quite small. The key is to learn to recognize the opportunities that enhance customer experiences, even in a small way. Once you start viewing innovation from the lens of the experience delta (the change in customer experience you provide) chances are high you will find the opportunities that transform your company and give you the big rewards you are looking for.

(Source: forbes.com)

Iranian-made electric car ‘Yooz’ leads the way for pilot production

TEHRAN — A total of 100 cars is manufacturing in pilot production stage, which will be completed until midyear of 1398 (about late September 2019) and the process of pricing and final assessments until the yearend (March 20, 2020), he explained.

He pointed to the crucial role of electric car in decreasing air pollution due to their engine size and their small feature.

“We have already conducted some negotiations with other countries in southern America, northern Asia and southern Persian Gulf for further cooperation after mass production in Iran,” he announced.

Electric car promising clean air

Choking air pollution troubling citizens in metropolises has urged the need to develop ecofriendly and green transport as a replacement for old, high emission transport system known as the main cause of severe air pollution.



However, swapping the old vehicles for newer and greener models bear high costs and entails abundant resources and strong infrastructure.

Over 1,000 Iranian expat experts return home in past four years



TEHRAN — About 1,100 Iranian expat experts and entrepreneurs have returned home in the past four years, an official with the vice presidency for science and technology said.

Ali Morteza Birang announced that the experts have started technological businesses and academic activities in the country.

In September 2018, Sourena Sattari, the vice president for science and technology, announced that during the past three years 300 talented Iranian experts, who have returned home, became faculty members in universities nationwide.

He said that 70 companies were established by 1,020 talented Iranians who returned the country during past three years.

Most of them returned from the U.S., Britain and Canada and were graduated in engineering, basic sciences, and human sciences, he announced.

Some Iranian talented experts travel their homeland to hold workshops and seminars, he said.

Sattari announced in May 2018 that with the support of the National Elites Foundation and Science and Technology Vice Presidency, a total of 67 universities, knowledge enterprises, technology parks and incubators performed ‘Cooperation with Iranian expat entrepreneurs and elite’ plan.

The plan aims to attract Iranians abroad to share knowledge in different forms including postdoctoral research, research opportunity and visiting fellow.

Iran’s first innovation factory to be established

TEHRAN — Over one thousand experts are working to establish the first innovation factory of the country in Tehran in the Iranian calendar month Ordibehesht (April 21-May 21), Sourena Sattari, the vice president for science and technology announced on Saturday.

Over 3500 young entrepreneurs with over 10 accelerator centers in different fields will begin their activity in the innovation factory, he said.

Sattari said that other innovation centers will be also established in the cities of Mashhad and Isfahan in the near future.

“The cities would be important places in near future, hence we can establish an innovation factory in urban environment,” he said.

The education is not limited to schools and universities but the cities are the main place for teaching and learning,



The undated photo shows science ministry officials paying visit to Tehran innovation factory, which is under construction.

Are you being scanned? How facial recognition technology follows you, even as you shop

If you shop at Westfield, you’ve probably been scanned and recorded by dozens of hidden cameras built into the centres’ digital advertising billboards.

The semi-camouflaged cameras can determine not only your age and gender but your mood, cueing up tailored advertisements within seconds, thanks to facial detection technology.

Westfield’s Smartscreen network was developed by the French software firm Quividi back in 2015. Their discreet cameras capture blurry images of shoppers and apply statistical analysis to identify audience demographics. And once the billboards have your attention they hit record, sharing your reaction with advertisers. Quividi says their billboards can distinguish shoppers’ gender with 90% precision, five categories of mood from “very happy to very unhappy” and customers’ age within a five-year bracket.

Mood is a particularly valuable insight for advertisers, revealing shoppers’ general sentiment towards a brand and how they feel in particular stores at certain times of the day. Unlike gender and age, mood is harder to determine, sitting at around 80% accuracy.

There are now more than 1,600 billboards installed into 41 Westfield centers across Australia and New Zealand. Scentre Group, Westfield Australia’s parent company, emphasizes that all data collected is anonymous and that they are using facial detection, not

facial recognition technology (FRT).

This means generic information such as a shopper’s age and gender is collected rather than the technology using photo-matching databases to identify who customers are. A spokesperson would not confirm whether or not Westfield would consider using FRT in the future.

Retail companies are increasingly turning to facial detection and facial recognition software to attract and engage a distracted audience. Quividi’s host of international clients include Telstra, 7-Eleven, Coca-Cola, oOH Media and HSBC bank.

Terry Hartmann, vice president of Cognitec Asia Pacific, the company that develops “market-leading face recognition technologies for customers and government agencies around the world”, says using facial detection commercially is no different to Facebook’s manipulation of users’ online search history for targeted advertising.

“You’re not identifying who that person is, you’re just identifying the characteristics of that person. That’s no different to Facebook popping up ads you might be interested in and social media picking up people based on their clicking habits or the shopping that they’ve done.”

While facial detection could be considered relatively benign, it is a step closer to the more problematic FRT.

Dong Xu is the chair in computer en-

gineering at the University of Sydney. He says that under optimum lighting and using high-quality photo data bases, FRT is more accurate than humans at identifying faces and can now recognise an individual from millions of photographs.

According to Xu, the technology is even more reliable at identifying criminals – and presumably other people – than using fingerprints.

This technology is still in its teething stages within the Australian retail sector, but FRT has significant investment and growth potential. International companies including Target, 7-Eleven, Walmart, Google and Facebook are all experimenting with facial recognition. The global FRT market is worth approximately US\$3bn (A\$4.1bn) and is expected to grow to US\$6bn by 2021. Target and Walmart say they trialed the technology in-store to prevent theft and fraud, while 7-Eleven plan to use it to “identify loyal customers”. Facebook has been using facial recognition since December 2017 to help users “manage their identity online” while Google has also been using FRT for some time.

China is the world’s leader in facial recognition, with more than 176m CCTV cameras. FRT is used for street surveillance and policing but also in China’s “cashless” stores. In these stores shoppers can buy products by simply scanning their faces, while in ATMS

In November 2017, the Iranian Tax Administration has exempted domestically manufactured hybrid and electric vehicles from value added tax (VAT).

As per the clean air law, adopted by the Iranian parliament on July 16, 2017, all homegrown, ecofriendly, zero-emission hybrid and electric cars and motorcycles are subjected to exemption from tax, Mohammad Masihi, an official with the tax administration said.

Direct emissions are emitted through the tailpipe, through evaporation from the fuel system, and during the fueling process. Direct emissions include smog-forming pollutants (such as nitrogen oxides), other pollutants harmful to human health, and greenhouse gases, primarily carbon dioxide. All-electric vehicles produce zero direct emissions, which specifically helps improve air quality in urban areas.

Research projects in Iran rise year on year



TEHRAN — The number of research projects in Iran has increased in the current Iranian calendar year 1397 (to end on March 20) in comparison with the past year, Mehr reported on Saturday.

In a report released by the National Science Foundation, the number of submitted research projects increased by 18 percent and the number of approved projects grew by 27 percent.

During the first nine months of the year, 3550 projects were submitted to the foundation, out of which 1179 projects were approved and 464 projects have been completed, head of the foundation, Nosratollah Zargham, announced.

He said that the research projects sponsored by the foundation resulted

in producing 28 technical knowledge.

The number of manufactured products during the current year is 51 items, which increased by 122 percent in comparison with the past year, he explained.

The foundation also sponsored different congresses during this time in order to discover talented researchers and to help them develop their studies, he said.

The foundation also provides researcher bank which has over 20,000 researchers who provide projects as members and they can share their experience with each other, he said.

Some Iranian, foreign and expatriate researchers are members of the bank, he explained.

he said.

Over 6000 startups active in different fields including biotechnology, nanotechnology, cognition science and aerospace,

It is the time to think about the methods to influence on economy through innovation, he said.

The knowledge-based companies create new little innovations, which can have innovative activities, he said.

It is important that one can transform his or her idea into a company or entrepreneurship, he said.

He pointed to the Sharif University of Technology as one of the main successful academic centers in which, over 450 companies are working.

Such places change urban life and bring new attitude and culture with them in different parts of the city, he said.

Technology startups are the new generation, which are marketing like service startups, he said.

The world’s insects are vanishing - will we really be wiped out with them?

There are an awful lot of insects. It’s hard to say exactly how many because 80 percent haven’t yet been described by taxonomists, but there are probably about 5.5 million species.

Put that number together with other kinds of animals with exoskeletons and jointed legs, known collectively as arthropods – this includes mites, spiders and woodlice – and there are probably about 7 million species in all.

Despite their ubiquity in the animal kingdom, a recent report warned of a “bugpocalypse”, as surveys indicated that insects everywhere are declining at an alarming rate. This could mean the extinction of 40 percent of the world’s insect species over the next few decades.

What is particularly worrying is that we don’t know exactly why populations are declining. Agricultural intensification and pesticides are likely a big part of the problem, but it’s certainly more complicated than that, and habitat loss and climate change could also play a part.

■ Insects could vanish

Although some newspaper reports have suggested that insects could “vanish within a century” total loss is unlikely – it’s probable that if some species die out, others will move in and take their place.

Nevertheless, this loss of diversity could have catastrophic consequences of its own. Insects are ecologically important and if they



were to disappear, the consequences for agriculture and wildlife would be dire.

It’s difficult to overstate how many species there are. Indeed, the 7 million estimate above is likely a major underestimate. Lots of insects that look alike – so-called “cryptic species” – are distinguishable only by their DNA.

There are an average of six cryptic species for every easily recognizable kind, so if we apply this to the original figure, the potential total number of arthropods balloons to 41 million.

Even then, each species has multiple kinds

of parasites which are mostly specific to just one host species. Many of these parasites are mites which are themselves arthropods.

Conservatively allowing just one kind of parasitic mite per host species brings us to a potential total of 82 million arthropods. Compared with only around 600,000 vertebrates – animals with backbones – that’s 137 species of arthropod for every vertebrate species.

Astronomical numbers like these caused the physicist-turned-biologist Sir Robert May

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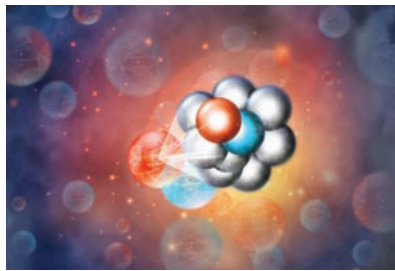
Physicists calculate proton’s pressure distribution for first time

MIT physicists have calculated the pressure distribution inside a proton for the first time. They found the proton’s high-pressure core pushes out, while the surrounding region pushes inward.

Neutron stars are among the densest-known objects in the universe, withstanding pressures so great that one teaspoon of a star’s material would equal about 15 times the weight of the moon. Yet as it turns out, protons – the fundamental particles that make up most of the visible matter in the universe – contain even higher pressures.

For the first time, MIT physicists have calculated a proton’s pressure distribution, and found that the particle contains a highly pressurized core that, at its most intense point, is generating greater pressures than are found inside a neutron star.

The physicists’ results represent the first time that scientists have calculated a proton’s pressure distribution by taking into account the contributions of both quarks and gluons, the proton’s fundamental, subnuclear constituents.



■ A fundamental aspect

“Pressure is a fundamental aspect of the proton that we know very little about at the moment,” says lead author Phiala Shanahan, assistant professor of physics at MIT. “Now we’ve found that quarks and gluons in the center of the proton are generating significant outward pressure, and further to the edges, there’s a confining pressure.”

In May 2018, physicists at the U.S. Department of Energy’s Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility announced that they had measured the proton’s pressure distribution for the first time, using a beam of electrons that they fired at a target made of hydrogen. The electrons interacted with quarks inside the protons in the target. The physicists then determined the pressure distribution throughout the proton, based on the way in which the electrons scattered from the target.

Ocean acidification harms cod larvae more than previously thought

Acidification is, next to rising temperatures and dwindling oxygen concentrations, one of the major threats to marine life due to the changing global climate.

Carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere are rising and the ocean therefore takes up increasing amounts of CO2 from the atmosphere as well. The reaction of carbon dioxide with the water forms carbonic acid, the pH is lowered - the ocean becomes more acidic.

To what extent and how ocean acidification affects the marine ecosystem as a whole is incredibly hard to predict, but evidence is accumulating that some species are affected adversely. One of these species is the Atlantic cod.

A new scientific study, which was just published in the scientific journal *Global Change Biology* by scientists from the GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel with colleagues from France and Norway, as well as previously published articles show that the high carbon dioxide concentrations damage this species, particularly the early life stages, like eggs and larvae.

■ Cod larvae survive

The previously published paper by these scientists has shown that due to ocean acidification less cod larvae survive, which



means less individuals mature and reproduce. “So far, we liked to believe that at least the larvae that survived would be able to deal with these conditions,” says Dr. Martina Stiasny from GEOMAR, first author of this study, “and could have across generations allowed the species to adapt”. The results of the new study defeat this hope.

It shows that even the surviving larvae have

Proximity to land determines how coral reef communities respond to climate change events

Severe weather and environmental disturbances, such as cyclones or thermal coral bleaching, affect specific areas of coral reefs differently, new research has shown.

A new international study has found that the marine wildlife that live amongst the coral are affected differently by devastating climate change events, depending on how close to the mainland they are found.

The research, co-authored by Laura Richardson from the University of Exeter, studied the effect of the natural disasters on the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) - which is home to more than 1,500 species of fish including clownfish, parrotfish and lionfish.

The research studied three specific areas of the GBR - the inner reefs closest to the mainland, middle-shelf reefs, and outer-shelf reefs, where the continental shelf drops off into the Coral Sea. Surveys of fish and coral reef habitat were made both five years before and six months after two severe cyclones and a mass coral bleaching event.

■ Environmental events

While those environmental events caused substantial and widespread loss of coral across all reefs, the numbers of herbivorous fishes remained stable (inner-shelf reefs) or even increased (middle- and outer-shelf reefs).

Dr. Richardson, a marine biologist at the University of Exeter’s Penryn Campus said: “After widespread loss of corals due to large storms or severe coral bleaching events, herbivorous reef fish are vital for removing seaweed that starts to grow over the dead corals, so that new corals can grow, and surviving corals can recover.”

“Understanding how these herbivorous fish respond across the continental shelf highlights where reefs may be more vulnerable and possibly slower to recover.

The “increased number of herbivorous fish on some reefs in this study is highly promising as they can help prevent the proliferation of seaweed after these huge disturbances.”

Importantly, however, the study showed that the number of herbivorous fish spe-



cies decreased following the environmental events.

The “loss of species is of greatest concern, affecting the functioning of these reefs and their capacity to respond to future disturbances. It may be setting these reefs up for future ecological surprises” said Dr. Hoey from James Cook University in Australia.

■ Better conservation and management

The researchers believe the study - the first of its kind - offers a pivotal insight to allow for better conservation and management of coral reefs found worldwide, particularly those reefs exposed to land-based sources of pollution and sedimentation.

The lead-author of the study, Eva McClure from James Cook University, said: “On coral reefs, it is common to find distinct communities of coral and reef fish living together at different locations across the continental shelf.

“But until now, we haven’t known whether these different communities respond in the same way to environmental disturbances or whether specific local conditions might result in different community responses whether close to the mainland or further from shore.”

Coral reefs are made up of thin layers of calcium carbonate (limestone) secreted over thousands of years by billions of tiny soft bodied animals called coral polyps. They are amongst the world’s most diverse marine ecosystems and are home to thousands of species of plants and animals.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Tiny Neptune moon spotted by Hubble may have broken from larger moon: study

After several years of analysis, a team of planetary scientists using NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope has at last come up with an explanation for a mysterious moon around Neptune that they discovered with Hubble in 2013.

The tiny moon Hippocamp was discovered by the Hubble Space Telescope in 2013. Only 20 miles across, it may actually be a broken-off fragment from a much larger neighboring moon, Proteus, seen as a crescent in the background. This is the first evidence for a moon being an offshoot from a comet collision with a much larger parent body.

The tiny moon, named Hippocamp, is unusually close to a much larger Neptunian moon called Proteus. Normally, a moon like Proteus should have gravitationally swept aside or swallowed the smaller moon while clearing out its orbital path.

So why does the tiny moon exist? Hippocamp is likely a chipped-off piece of the larger moon that resulted from a collision with a comet billions of years ago.

The “first thing we realized was that you wouldn’t expect to find such a tiny moon right next to Neptune’s biggest inner moon,” said Mark Showalter of the SETI Institute in Mountain View, California. “In the distant past, given the slow migration outward of the larger moon, Proteus was once where Hippocamp is now.”

This scenario is supported by Voyager 2 images from 1989 that show a large impact crater on Proteus, almost large enough to have shattered the moon. “In 1989, we thought the crater was the end of the story,” said Showalter. “With Hubble, now we know that a little piece of Proteus got left behind and we see it today as Hippocamp.” The orbits of the two moons are now 7,500 miles (about 12,070 kilometers) apart.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

Why do these monkeys nurse each other’s babies?

Lactating and nursing costs a lot of energy. There must be some benefit to spending it on someone else’s infant.

Being a mom is hard enough, but imagine mothering someone else’s kids, too. That’s the norm for golden snub-nosed monkeys, according to a new study in the journal *Science Advances*.

Scientists found that over a five-year period, more than 87 percent of golden snub-nosed monkey infants were nursed by females other than their mothers – a phenomenon called allonursing.

While allonursing has been documented in a number of rodent and carnivore species, as well as some primates, it is not common. This is the first evidence of allonursing in an Old World monkey.

Allonursing on a regular basis has only been reported in about 40 mammal species, and researchers weren’t expecting to see this behavior when they first started observing the behavior of groups of the monkeys in central China’s Shennongjia National Nature Reserve in 2012.

Zuofu Xiang, a professor of wildlife conservation at Central South University of Forestry and Technology in China and one of the new study’s authors, says it wasn’t until they noticed a female simultaneously suckling two infants that the idea even occurred to them.

“When we started tracking newborns, we were surprised to find that allonursing was common during the first three months of an infant’s life,” says Xiang.

Xiang and his colleagues found that over the course of five birth seasons, more than 87 percent of infants suckled from females that were not their mothers.

(Source: nationalgeographic.com)

Squid teeth-inspired proteins may provide eco-friendly plastic alternative, team finds

Proteins found in the ringed teeth of squid may be used to create materials such as an eco-friendly plastic alternative. This biomaterial have unique properties that are not readily apparent in synthetic materials.

Can squid help find eco-friendly plastic alternatives? Researchers find that a protein in squid teeth can be an excellent alternative to plastics and even revolutionize various materials.

Plastic waste is a major problem, and the oceans are some of the most affected areas. Interestingly, a team of scientists discovered that the answer may be from the ocean as well.

Researchers of a new study found that the properties of a recently discovered squid protein, specifically from squid ring teeth (SRT), can revolutionize materials in a way that conventional plastic cannot.

Apart from its elasticity, flexibility, and strength, SRT-based materials can also conduct electricity and is thermal, optical, and self-healing because of the variety of ways that its molecular arrangements can adopt.

According to researchers, these natural materials can be excellent alternatives to plastics especially since they are biodegradable, eco-friendly, and sustainable. Furthermore, the SRT protein can be easily and cheaply made in the laboratory using genetically engineered bacteria, so there is no need to use actual squid.

Apart from being an excellent plastic alternative, the SRT protein also has many other revolutionary uses. For instance, its self-healing property may be used by the textile industry to provide clothes with abrasion-resistant coating that will reduce microfiber erosion in washing machines, thereby also reducing microplastic pollution. It can even be used to create clothes that can protect against biological and chemical warfare agents.

Furthermore, SRT proteins may also be used to develop smart clothing that can protect from pollution while also monitoring its wearer’s health. According to study lead author Mike Demirel, SRT photonics may be used to create wearable health monitors and implantable devices because they are biocompatible and biodegradable.

“Scaling up these materials requires additional work. We are now working on the processing technology of these materials so that we can make them available in industrial manufacturing processes,” said Demirel.

(Source: techtimes.com)

Ban gas cookers and central heating to tackle climate change

Gas hobs and boilers could be banned from new homes within the next six years amid fears they are hindering efforts to tackle climate change.

Government advisers have recommended no new homes should be connected to the gas grid by 2025 at the latest – with super-efficient houses and flats heated using low-carbon energy.

A report by the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) said UK homes are not fit for the future, with stalling efforts to cut greenhouse gases and properties at growing risk of overheating and flooding.



The committee called on the government to get serious on tackling emissions from homes and making sure they are adapted to cope with a future of more heatwaves, droughts and floods.

The way new homes are built and existing properties are “retrofitted” with energy efficiency measures often falls short of stated design standards, deceiving homeowners and inflicting costs on the future, the committee said.

The Treasury should support measures in existing homes to install low-carbon heating such as heat pumps, loft and wall insulation and protection for properties at risk of flooding, as a “major infrastructure priority”.

Support is also needed to train designers, builders and installers of climate-friendly technology to address the low-carbon skills gap and create green jobs.

Baroness Brown, chairwoman of the adaptation sub-committee of the CCC, said: “There are almost 30 million homes in the UK, and the depressing fact is most of them are not in a condition to keep us comfortable and productive and well as the climate changes.

“They are a huge part of the problem - energy use in our homes is around a fifth of greenhouse gases, and the biggest part of those emissions is from burning gas for heating and hot water.”

A government committed to meeting climate targets, which require net zero emissions to curb rising temperatures, “has to get serious about this”, she said.

Methods for making homes net zero emissions and resilient to a changing climate, as well as lowering bills and ensuring people live in a healthier environment, cutting NHS costs, were already known. Baroness Brown pointed to the diesel scandal, which raised concerns about the gap between reported standards by cars and real world performance, and described the performance gap for homes as “an invisible cheat”.

“This is an unspoken crisis,” she warned.

Sir David Attenborough at United Nations conference: Climate change ‘our greatest threat’

She suggested the government should be demanding much higher standards through measures to encourage building 300,000 new homes a year.

“We shouldn’t be allowing 300,000 substandard homes that will need upgrading to be built, they should be built to the right standard now.

“We could tell house builders who are making a lot of money from Help to Buy that it’s only available for homes of a really high quality.”

Householders can also make a difference in cutting emissions and making homes more resilient to a changing climate, through measures such as setting boilers and thermostats to the right temperature, switching off the tap while cleaning their teeth and watering the garden only when needed.

Lord Deben, chairman of the committee, warned: “Simply put, there is no way in which the UK can meet the legally binding climate change targets that parliament has determined unless we take the measures outlined in this report.”

A government spokesperson said: “The UK has reduced emissions faster than any other G7 nation, and moving to a greener, cleaner economy while continuing to grow the economy is at the heart of our modern Industrial Strategy.

(Source: The Independent)

LEARN ENGLISH

Buying A Suit

A: Hello sir, what can I do for you today?

B: Hi, I need a new suit. I have an important interview next week, so I really need to look **sharp**.

A: No problem! We have a **broad** selection of suits, all tailored made so that it will fit perfectly.

B: Great! I want a three-piece suit, **preferably** made from Italian cashmere or wool.

A: Very well sir. Would you like to have some shirts made also?

B: Sure. I'll also take some silver **cuff link** and a pair of silk ties.

A: Very good. Now, if you will **accompany** me, we can take your measurements and choose the patterns for your suit and shirts.

■ **Key vocabulary**
sharp: stylish or fashionable
broad: wide; a lot

preferably: most wanted or preferred

cuff: the end of a sleeve

cuff link: a small piece of jewelry that a man can use to fasten his shirt cuffs

accompany: to go together with

■ **Supplementary vocabulary**

collar: the cloth around the neckline of a shirt, that is folded over

impression: the first feeling you give when you encounter/meet someone

custom made: made according to your own speciation

alteration: a change (in length, width, fit) made to an item of clothing

dry-clean: a cleaning process that uses chemicals to clean clothes

herringbone: a type of pattern, common on suits, that resembles thin, “saw-like” lines

garment: an article of clothing

(Source: irlanguage.com)

‘Water transfer from Caspian Sea not economically justifiable’

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Water transfer from the Caspian Sea in northern Iran to the drought-stricken central provinces brings heavy economic burden to the country, regardless of posing probable damages to the environment, former deputy Department of Environment (DOE) chief has said.

Instead of implementing the expensive water transfer project and harming the sea’s environment, water consumption patterns must be managed in different sectors, ISNA quoted Abdolreza Karbasi as saying on Sunday.

Referring to transfer of water from the Caspian Sea to drought-ridden provinces including Semnan proposed some 7 years ago, he noted that it is not economically justifiable to transfer water from the Caspian Sea due to the high costs of water desalination.

Given that Iran locates in an arid and semi-arid area, and water supply must be provided, in the future construction of water desalination system might be inevitable, he lamented, adding, however, before any action, water management should be transformed in Iran.

As long as 100 billion cubic meters of water is consumed in a non-optimal way for agricultural, industrial and drinking purposes, expensive water supply project should not be implemented, he highlighted, implying that at least 15 billion cubic meters of water can be saved only in agricultural sector per year.

The Caspian Sea being an enclosed body of water cannot survive the environmental damages to its biodiversity as a result of low water level, he regretted.

He went on to explain that any harsh



environmental impact could fully diminish this blue zone, as brine waste, a solution to salts and contaminants separated from the water, generated by desalination system is about 3 million tons a year, which is released to the sea and poisons the aquatic species.

Karbasi also served as environment faculty member of University of Tehran, said that desalting process will result in an annual increase of 3 million tons of salt to the sea, which will reach up to 60 million tons over a period of 20 years (the life span of a desalination system), so increased volume of salt will affect the Caspian Sea.

Currently, I totally disagree with water transfer from the Caspian Sea even if tox-

icity test shows that brine waste does not impose any environmental damages to the sea, he concluded.

This is while, chief of Department of Environment Issa Kalantari, told ILNA news agency on January 5 that he has no objection to water transfer from the Caspian Sea to the central parts of the country.

Moreover, according to a report by the YJC published on January 11, Mohammad Ali Shaeri, head of the agriculture committee of Majlis (Iranian Parliament), said the Caspian Sea is an enclosed body of water and any changes to it would endanger its ecology.

While, Aziz Abesi, an environmental expert, has also mentioned the environmental,

Water drenches 18,000 ha of Hamoun-e Sabori wetland

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Hamoun-e Sabori wetland on the Iran-Afghanistan border has been saturated, as rainwater flowed over 18,000 hectares of the wetland, Mohammad Reza Alimoradi, head of marine affairs at the Sistan-Baluchestan provincial department of environment has announced.

The Hamouns are transboundary wetlands on the border of Iran and Afghanistan made up of three lakes: Hamoun-e Helmand, which is entirely in Iran, Hamoun-e Sabori on the border, and Hamoun-e Puzak, almost entirely inside Afghanistan. The three lakes are linked and fed by water from the Helmand River which starts in the Hindu Kush Mountains in Afghanistan.



“Water entered 18,000 hectares of the wetland in the country, after the afghan part has been soaked in water,” Alimoradi said, IRNA reported on Saturday.

Due to the recurrent droughts and extreme dryness, the wetland soil surface is slowly getting wet and moisturized, so the water level is gradually increasing, he added.

He went on to say that water level at Iranian part of Hamoun-e Sabori wetland is currently less than 50 centimeters, so long as the whole wetland is filled, the water level will start enhancing.

He further expressed hope that water completely fill the wetland in the coming months along with increased precipitation rate in Afghanistan.

‘Recent rainfall fluctuations indicate rapid climate change’

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — The country’s precipitation and temperature rate is anticipated to meet normal and above normal averages during the next three months (February 20-May 21), while getting above normal averages might be worrisome due to climate change instant growth, head of the climatological research institute affiliated to Iran’s Meteorological Organization (IMO) has said.

The three months’ period starts from the last month of the current Iranian calendar year to the first two months of the next [Iranian calendar] year (beginning on March 21).

“The country will receive above normal rainfall compared to the long-term means during the aforesaid period, especially in the northern and eastern provinces,” ISNA quoted Iman Babaeian as saying on Sunday citing IMO’s recent weather forecast.

During this month, rainfall raises in

the northern part of the country, while southwestern parts are expected to receive below-average rainfall, he highlighted.

He also stated that compared to the long-term mean, the country is predicted to experience normal temperature over the aforementioned period.

Elsewhere in his remarks Babaeian noted that since the beginning of the current crop year (starting on September 23, 2018), Iran has received 166.6 millimeters rainfall while the long-term averages are 130.8 millimeters which indicates a 27.3-percent drop in mean precipitation nationwide.

Over the same period last year, the average precipitation level of the country has been recorded nearly 59.9 millimeter, which also shows 178.1 percent increase compared to the corresponding period this year, he stated.

Despite the country’s rising rainfall, most of the provinces in southern and

south-eastern Iran have faced 20-85 percent drop in mean precipitation since last month, he lamented adding, such condition indicates climate change rapid growth.

“So, proper planning is essential to mitigate the consequences of climate change across the country,” he highlighted.

He further explained that severe rainfall fluctuations over the past months have caused some southern and southeastern provinces, including Sistan-Baluchestan, Fars, South Khorasan, Yazd and Hormozgan, to receive one third of the total rainfall [must be received during a crop year] in less than a month.

“This situation is characterized by the prevailing climate change challenging the country’s future, which not only does not supply subsurface water resources, but can also lead to casualties and damages to the infrastructure of the country through floods,” Babaeian concluded.

This is while, rainfall extremes dur-



ing spring and autumn this year slowly questioned the conception that Iran is experiencing a long-term drought and some of the experts announced that wet spell will embrace the country for 20 years.

Moreover, Mohammad Darvish, faculty member of the Research Institute of Forests and Rangelands in January said that statistics show that Iran’s weather patterns are changing toward entering a period of consecutive rainy days.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ب

294-bed hospital inaugurated in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad

A hospital with 294 beds was inaugurated in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province, western Iran, on Friday.

The 8-storey hospital, stretching over 50,000 square meters with 24,800 square meters superstructure, is comprising 32 specialty and sub-specialty wards. It was launched in a ceremony with Health Minister Hassan Qazizadeh-Hashemi in attendance, Health Ministry official website reported.

The completion of the hospital took 10 years and some 900 billion rials (nearly \$22 million) was spend on its construction, the report added. Additionally some 800 billion rials (nearly \$19 million) was paid out for equipping the hospital.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-fication”

■ **Meaning:** a word ending that indicates making or process

■ **For example:** These systems provide effective **amplification** for children with borderline or mild hearing loss.

PHRASAL VERB

Watch over somebody

■ **Meaning:** to protect someone so that they are not harmed

■ **For example:** There must have been an angel watching over me that day.

IDIOM

A bad apple spoils the bunch

■ **Explanation:** a person whose own words or actions negatively impacts an entire group of people

■ **For example:** Jeremy is really a bad apple. After five minutes with my usually well-behaved kids, they’re all acting out.

بیمارستان ۲۹۴ تخت خوابی کهگیلویه و بویر احمد

به بهره برداری رسید

روز جمعه بیمارستان ۲۹۴ تخت خوابی کهگیلویه و بویر احمد به بهره برداری رسید.

این بیمارستان در زمینی به مساحت ۵۰ هزار متر مربع و با زیر بنای ۲۴ هزار و ۸۰۰ متر مربع در ۸ طبقه با ۳۲ بخش تخصصی و فوق تخصصی ساخته شده است.

به گزارش وبدا این بیمارستان در مراسمی با حضور وزیر بهداشت افتتاح شد.

برای ساخت این بیمارستان که عملیات احداث آن از سال ۸۶ آغاز شده ۹۰ میلیارد تومان و برای تجهیز آن ۸۰ میلیارد تومان اعتبار هزینه شده است.

Landmine blast kills 24 civilians in Syria

→ have taken back control of most of the areas in Syria that had been held by militant and terrorist groups.

Pockets of ISIL terrorists remain on a tiny patch of territory — the village of Beghouz — in northern Syria, near the Iraqi border.

Other armed groups have been bused into Syria's Idlib Province under deals with Damascus. Three guarantor countries for Syrian peace, namely Iran, Russia, and Turkey, are negotiating on behalf of the Syrian government and opposition to decide about the fate of the armed groups in Idlib.

■ **Erdogan warns U.S.-planned Syria safe zone must be under Turkey's control**

Meantime, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has warned the United States and allies operating along the Syria border that any safe zone planned for the area should be under Ankara's control.

Erdogan said in an interview aired late on Saturday that plans by the U.S. and European military forces to set up a safe zone along Syria's border with Turkey should be coordinated with Ankara, reiterating that the Turkish military should have control over such initiatives.

"If there is to be a safe zone along our



border then it must be under our control. Because that is my border," Erdogan told broadcaster CNN Turk.

The warnings came as Washington revised plans for a total pull-out of troops from Syria by saying that it will form part of the contingent of 800 to 1,500 troops meant to police northeastern Syria in the near future.

Around 400 U.S. troops will remain in

Syria to contribute to the safe zone and other plans, according to a Friday statement by a U.S. administration official, which was seen as a reversal of promises by the U.S. President Donald Trump to withdraw all 2,000 U.S. troops from the country once Washington's alleged fight against terrorism ends.

However, Turkey suspects the U.S. and allies are helping the Kurdish YPG (People's

Protection Units/People's Defense Units/Yekineyên Parastina Gel) forces operating east of the Euphrates river to establish a permanent foothold in the region. Ankara views the armed Kurds in northeastern Syria as an extension of its outlawed Kurdish militants.

"It is important for us that the U.S. decision to withdraw from Syria does not lead to developments against the interests of our countries and Syria's political unity and territorial integrity," said Erdogan.

The Turkish military has launched several operations to push back the Kurds from west of the Euphrates while authorities have repeatedly warned that they would continue the battle into the other bank of the river where the U.S. and European allies plan to set up the safe zone. Erdogan said Turkey's border regions would be the first to be affected by the heavy gunfire from Syria if the safe zone is violated.

"I will take my precaution in the opposite country," he said, adding that Ankara had the right to conduct operations inside Syria near the Turkish border based on a 1998-agreement signed with the Syrian government.

(Source: Press TV)

Israel releases Palestinian inmate after nearly two decades

Israeli officials have released a Palestinian who they had kept in detention for nearly two decades on trumped-up charges of engagement in acts of terrorism across the West Bank and occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem).

The Palestinian Prisoners Society (PPS) announced in a statement that 38-year-old Abed al-Rahman Khalil Mahmoud, from al-Issawiya neighborhood in al-Quds (Jerusalem), was set free on Sunday after 17 years of imprisonment.

The PPS noted that Mahmoud was detained in February 2002 over membership in the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), which Tel Aviv later accused of "supporting terror activities" in al-Quds (Jerusalem).

The development came a day after Israeli authorities released two Palestinian teenagers to house arrest for one week, and ordered each of them to pay a fine of 5,000 shekels (\$1,385).

Palestinian sources, requesting not to be named, identified the pair as 14-year-old Abed Mahmoud Odeh and Muhammad Mahdi al-Shaludi.

Sources said Israeli forces detained the teens in front of their homes in the Silwan neighborhood of East al-Quds (Jerusalem) late on Friday. The reason for their detention remains unknown.

Earlier this month, a professor exposed the fact that Tel Aviv's officials grant permits to major pharmaceutical companies so they can carry out tests and clinical trials on Palestinians currently being held in Israeli jails and detention centers.

Speaking at Columbia University in New York City, Professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (al-Quds) also revealed that Israeli arms manufacturers are experimenting new weapons systems on children in the Palestinian neighborhoods of occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem) in order to help boost their international weapons sales.

Shalhoub-Kevorkian, who is a professor of social work and law at the university, went on to say that the invention of products and services of Israeli-sponsored security corporations are "fueled by long-term curfews and Palestinian oppression by the Israeli army."

Back in July 1997, Israeli Hebrew-language Yedioth Ahronoth daily newspaper, citing Dalia Itzik, chairman of a parliamentary committee, reported that the Israeli Ministry of Health had allowed pharmaceutical firms to test their new drugs on Palestinian inmates, noting that 5,000 tests had already been conducted.

Some 7,000 Palestinians are currently behind bars in 17 Israeli prisons and detention centers, according to reports.

More than 400 Palestinians are being held without trial under so-called administrative detention, which is a policy

according to which Palestinian inmates are kept in Israeli detention facilities without trial or charge. Some Palestinian prisoners have been held in administrative detention for up to 11 years.

Furthermore, a total of 13 Palestinian lawmakers are currently held in Israeli detention facilities, nine of whom under administrative detention.

■ **Israeli news anchor defends anti-occupation comments despite death threats**

Elsewhere, an Israeli news anchor who has blamed the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands for turning regime troops into "animals" has defended her comments despite having received death threats from "thousands."

Israeli Channel 13 TV anchor Oshrat Kotler had last week denounced the mistreatment of Palestinians in Israeli custody following a piece aired on the channel about five Israeli soldiers indicted for beating two handcuffed and blindfolded Palestinians — a father and his 15-year-old son.

According to the indictment, the father was hospitalized for three days after sustaining multiple broken ribs, a "severely" broken nose, and sub-dermal bleeding around his stomach. The son also suffered a number of wounds to his head and "significant swelling" on his face.

After the report was aired, Kotler said, "We send children to the army, to the [occupied] territories, and get back animals. That is the result of the occupation."

Her remarks infuriated extremist Israeli politicians, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Education Minister Naftali Bennett, both demanding that the TV host apologize.

On Saturday, however, Kotler said she stood by her comments despite having been flooded with death threats, according to The Times of Israel.

She accused Israeli politicians of taking "cynical" advantage of her comments and taking them out of context in the midst of an election campaign.

"I am sorry if I hurt anyone with my words, but I cannot see the price we pay through our children for the reality of controlling another nation," she said, appearing to fight back tears and referring to Palestinians. "We have lived this reality for 52 years. I do not have a magic solution; I am not a politician."

She said her comments, "spoken with great pain," had been "directed only at the soldiers who violated the law" and not all Israeli troopers.

"Thousands threatened my life and the life of my family, and I am afraid, but I hope to find the strength to continue and express my opinion as a reporter," she said.

Israeli NGO (non-governmental organizations) Peace Now backed Kotler, saying, "It is permissible and even



desirable to look into the mirror from time to time and honestly admit to the damage [caused by] the occupation. Those whose children's futures are important to them should work to end the conflict rather than maintain it, because the price is high."

Tamar Zandberg, the leader of left-wing Meretz Party, called the attacks on Kotler "pathetic and yet predictable... shutting your eyes [to the problem] and then assailing the messenger is not a solution."

Israeli forces have on numerous occasions been caught on camera brutally beating or killing Palestinians, with the videos going viral online and sparking widespread condemnations.

Israeli regime officials, including mainly Netanyahu and Bennett, are strong opponents of a Palestinian state and have advocated a regime policy of building Israeli settlements deep into the territories that Palestinians want as part of a future state of their own.

■ **Funeral held for Palestinian teen shot dead at March of Return protest**

Moreover, hundreds of mourners attended the funeral of Palestinian teenager Yousef Saeed Dayeh in Gaza City on Saturday.

According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, the youth died during the weekly Great March of Return demonstrations on Friday, after he was reportedly hit in the chest by live ammunition fired by Israeli forces.

The Great March of Return, launched in late March 2018, forms a series of protests along the Israeli-Palestinian border to demand the right for Palestinians to return to their families' pre-1948 homes.

At least 168 Palestinians have reportedly been killed and a further 15,000 injured since the beginning of the weekly demonstrations.

(Source: agencies)

Pope Francis calls for 'all-out battle' against child sex abuse

The Catholic Church will stop covering up the crimes of pedophile priests "as was usual in the past", Pope Francis has said in a speech, marking the end of the Vatican's anti-child abuse conference.

"No abuse must ever be covered up, as was usual in the past, or overlooked, as covering up abuses favors the spread of evil and adds a further layer of scandal," the pope said on Sunday in a closing speech to the four-day conference.

He called on for an "all-out battle" against the sexual abuse of minors by clergy, a crime which he called abominable and that should be "erased from the face of the earth".

Speaking to almost 200 bishops and other high-ranking figures, he reaffirmed

that "if in the Church there should emerge even a single case of abuse - which already in itself represents an atrocity - that case will be tackled with the utmost seriousness."

The meeting of the world's top bishops which Pope Francis has called is part of an effort to tackle a crisis that has dogged the Catholic Church for decades.

On the opening day, on Thursday, Francis presented a 21-point reform road map against child abuse.

However, his speech on Sunday was short on concrete measures and did not include specific commitments, except for a pledge to toughen Vatican laws against online child pornography.

Francis vowed to confront abusers with

"the wrath of God" and to prioritize victims of this "brazen, aggressive and destructive evil".

He compared the sexual abuse of children with human sacrifice.

The ongoing scandals have hit countries around the world, with recent cases affecting Australia, Chile, Germany and the United States.

Francis said those priests who prey on children are "tools of Satan".

The Jesuit pope noted that the vast majority of sexual abuse happens in the family. He offered a global review of the broader societal problem of sexual tourism and online pornography, in a bid to contextualize what he said was once a taboo subject.

But he said the evil of sexual abuse of children becomes even more scandalous

when it occurs in the Catholic Church "for it is utterly incompatible with her moral authority and ethical credibility".

Earlier in the conference, a leading German cardinal said that the Roman Catholic Church files on priests who sexually abused children were destroyed or never even drawn up.

Reinhard Marx, the German cardinal, apologized personally in September to thousands of victims of sexual assault by clergy in the German Church, saying perpetrators must be brought to justice.

The Vatican has in the past refused to hand over internal documents about child sexual abuse cases to civil authorities investigating pedophilia.

(Source: agencies)

Sweden: Thousands protest violence and racial profiling from security guards and police

About 2,000 demonstrators gathered in Stockholm on Saturday, to protest against alleged violence targeting ethnic minorities in Sweden by police and security guards.

Protesters denounce "both language and violence towards black and brown bodies," said Fanna Ndw Norrby, one of the event's organizers.

"We are calling for the police to understand the fact that they have a serious issue

and a serious problem with racism, and also these different private security companies who provide security guards to understand that what they are doing is racially profiling black and brown Swedish people and also using too much violence," she said.

The protest was sparked by a video posted to social media showing police physically removing a pregnant black woman from a train when she couldn't produce her train ticket.

■ **Arrests, tear gas mark 15th weekly Yellow Vest protest**

Meantime, police tear gassed and clashed with Yellow Vest protesters who had taken on Paris streets on Saturday. Clashes unfolded as protesters arrived at the Eiffel Tower where at least one person was arrested by the police.

This marks the 15th week of demonstration against French President Emmanuel Macron's economic policies. According to France's Interior Ministry, a total of 41,500

people took part in protests throughout the country on the past Saturday, a clear decrease on the 282,000 peak during the beginning of the movement. Organizers of the marches, however, state that the number of participants is considerably higher.

Macron has condemned a group of protesters for recent anti-Semitic abuse against prominent philosopher Alain Finkielkraut. Prosecutors have opened an investigation into the case.

(Source: Press TV)

Changing the imposed system

→ Luis Vincent Leon, a Venezuela's leading pollster writes, "These radical leaders have no more than 20 percent in opinion polls". According to León, Guaidó's party remains isolated because the majority of the population "does not want war. 'What they want is a solution.'"

Guaido, picked by Washington, does not seek freedom and national interest of the Venezuelans and surely wants the collapse of a country that for the past two decades has been a bulwark of resistance to U.S. hegemony.

Throughout the administrations of U.S. Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama., Chavez survived numerous assassinations and plots. His successor, Nicolas Maduro, has survived three attempts on his life.

On October 5, 2005, with Chavez's popularity at its peak, five Venezuelan "student leaders" arrived in Belgrade, Serbia to begin training for an insurrection.

The goodwill was offered by the Center for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies, an ONG center funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

This is one of the U.S. government's main arm of promoting regime change. The disclosed information at Stratfor r revealed that CANVAS "turned its attention to Venezuela" in 2005 after training opposition movements that led pro-NATO regime change operations across Eastern Europe.

In 2007, Guaido graduated from the Andres Bello Catholic University (UCAB) with a degree in industrial engineering. He then moved to Washington to enroll in the Governance and Political Management Program at George Washington University, under the tutelage of Venezuelan economist Luis Enrique Berrizbeitia (former executive director of the IMF who was ousted by Chavez).

The Institute for Advanced Studies in Management (IESA) and the University of George Washington (UGW) are two Venezuelan institutions that are known as the Venezuelan opposition base, and UGW is the home to educate many of the Caribbean secret services, and is a specialist in international politics.

In the same year, Guaido with the support of the U.S. launched Generation 2007, through CANVAS activists and specialized staff. In an email disclosed by the WikiLeaks in 2007, former U.S. ambassador to Caracas William Brownfield praised Generation 2007 for exerting pressure on the Venezuelan government.

Taking advantage of the past, in 2009, Guaido reappeared differently. He launched the political party "Voluntad Popular".

The party's leadership was leftist Leopoldo Lopez, educated at Princeton University and active in NED programs. He is elected as mayor of a wealthy Caracas region. In a country with all social problems, Lopez displayed the image of a Venezuelan aristocracy and was perfectly aligned with Washington.

In 2010 when Venezuela was experiencing the worst drought of the last decade, a severe shortage of electricity caused a shortage of water in the country, and the global economic downturn and a decline in oil prices caused a critical crisis in the country. At this time, Voluntad Popular and its foreign sponsors tried to get the most out of it.

Stratfor and CANVAS, Guardian's main advisers and its anti-government team planned the VZ elections, which depended on the collapse of the country's electrical system by 70 percent in April 2010.

"This could be the watershed event, as there is little that Chavez can do to protect the poor from the failure of that system," the Stratfor internal memo declared.

"This would likely have the impact of galvanizing public unrest in a way that no opposition group could ever hope to generate. At that point in time, an opposition group would be best served to take advantage of the situation and spin it against Chavez and towards their needs."

While the scenario envisioned by Statfor did not come to fruition, the Popular Will party activists and their allies cast aside any pretense of non-violence and joined a radical plan to destabilize the country.

the Venezuelan opposition was receiving a staggering \$40-50 million a year from U.S. government organizations like USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy, according to a report by the Spanish think tank, the FRIDE Institute.

In November, 2010, Guaidó, Goicoechea, and several other student activists attended a secret five-day training at the Fiesta Mexicana hotel in Mexico City.

The meeting had reportedly received the blessing of Otto Reich, former official in George W. Bush's Department of State, and the right-wing former Colombian President Alvaro Uribe.

Guaidó and his fellow activists hatched a plan to overthrow President Hugo Chavez by generating chaos through protracted spasms of street violence.

In 2014, demonstrators erected violent barricades across the country, turning opposition-controlled quarters into violent fortresses known as guarimbas.

While international media portrayed the upheaval as a spontaneous protest against Maduro's iron-fisted rule, there was ample evidence that Popular Will was orchestrating the show.

Around 43 were killed during the 2014 guarimbas. Three years later, they erupted again, causing mass destruction of public infrastructure, the murder of government supporters, and the deaths of 126 people, many of whom were Chavistas. In several cases, supporters of the government were burned alive by armed gangs. Guaidó was directly involved in the 2014 guarimbas.

In 2016, the collapse of Popular Will under the weight of the violent campaign of destabilization it ran alienated large sectors of the public and wound much of its leadership up in exile or in custody. Guaidó came in second place during the 2015 parliamentary elections, winning just 26% of votes cast in order to secure his place in the National Assembly. However, there is no record left of him as a representative in any project.

In December 2018, Guaidó sneaked across the border and junketed to Washington, Colombia and Brazil to coordinate the plan to hold mass demonstrations during the inauguration of President Maduro. The night before Maduro's swearing-in ceremony, both Vice President Mike Pence and Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland called Guaidó to affirm their support.

A week later, Senator Marco Rubio from Florida, Senator Rick Scott from Florida and U.S. representative Mario Diaz-Balart from Florida all met with Trump and his Vice President Mike Pence in the White House and Trump agreed to back up Guaido if he declares himself the new president..

According to the Wall Street Journal, although on January 10, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had personally met Guaido, in a press conference back in January 25, Pompeo had mistakenly referring to him as "Juan Guido."

Guaido can meet the U.S. demands. According to the Trump administration, Washington now has the right element aligned with the U.S. strategy inside Venezuela.

Thailand’s 14-year-old shooting prodigy aims for World Cup gold

Thailand’s James Bond-loving ace sport shooter says he is unfazed by his older opponents as the high school prodigy sets his sights on World Cup gold in India this week.

Isaranuudom Phurihiranphat is the youngest competitor at the tournament and the 14-year-old faces a strong field in the 25-metre rapid fire pistol event.

“I know I am the youngest in these games. There is tough competition but I don’t feel any pressure. I stay relaxed and calm when I shoot,” he told AFP after practice at the New Delhi shooting range.

“Of course I’ll go for gold. I feel I can do it. My aim is to participate in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics,” he added.

Isaranuudom says his love of British spy films motivated him to become a full-time sporting shooter at the age of nine.

“I liked guns since I was a small boy. I also watched a lot of James Bond movies,” he said.

“My favourite is Johnny English,” he added, referring to the slapstick British spy film franchise.

But his parents have also motivated him all of the way, with his mother Phon Phak travelling with her only child to the Indian capital as one of the Thailand shooting squad’s managers.

“My father is a captain of a ship and my mother runs a business. They helped me pursue my sport full-time. My mother travels with me to all events and she wants me to do something more than just study.”

Phon is all praise for Isaranuudom’s “focus” at such a young age as she recalls his early trips to the Bangkok shooting academy from their home four hours away in Nakhon Ratchasima city.

(Source: AFP)

Poch: I made mistake in confronting ref



Tottenham Hotspur manager Mauricio Pochettino has said he made a mistake when confronting referee Mike Dean after the 2-1 defeat at Burnley.

Pochettino appeared to be unhappy with the award of the corner from which the home side scored their opening goal, believing the final touch had been off the home side’s Jeff Hendrick rather than Jan Vertonghen.

He voiced his frustrations on the touchline and then confronted Dean after the full-time whistle.

But speaking at his postmatch news conference, he said: “When you feel so disappointed and upset, maybe you sometimes make some mistakes. We made mistakes on the pitch and I made a mistake after. “Maybe I needed to go straight away to my dressing room and get some water and be a little bit relaxed.

“What can I say? One day I crossed the cables in my brain. It was weird and strange that it didn’t happen before during 10 years.

“You know it’s something where the feelings and emotions are there. Something stupid happens and you react. Maybe I’ll go after [to apologise].”

Pochettino had stressed in the build-up that the trip to Turf Moor had the potential to be “decisive” for his side’s title hopes, and he said the defeat was a big setback.

“I think it was a fantastic opportunity for us to be a real contender and to show everyone that we deserved to be there,” he said.

“OK, we had the possession, we created more chances than Burnley, but it’s not enough. At this type of level, if you want to be a contender you have to come here and show your credentials and say: ‘We are here because we deserve it and we are going to be real contenders.’

“That didn’t happen and we need to find why, inside not outside. Maybe we are heroes if we win at Stamford Bridge and beat Arsenal, but it’s the same feeling as when we lost against Watford. It was in our hands to win and we lost.

(Source: Mirror)

Hamilton: Mercedes cannot focus on making history

Reigning World Champion Lewis Hamilton says Mercedes must keep their fight and hunger to win if they are to claim a record sixth-straight title-double.

Hamilton secured his fifth Drivers’ title in 2018, while the Silver Arrows secured a fifth-consecutive Constructors’ Championship, moving level with Ferrari’s achievements from 2000-04.

2019 presents the opportunity for Mercedes to set further Formula 1 history, but their star man insists nobody within the team allows their successes to turn into complacency.

“For me, it’s not something that I allow my peers to talk about, that’s not who we’re here to focus on, that number,” he said via Motorsport Week.

“It’s never been done before. We are always driven to do something new and break boundaries and do stuff that no-one has done before, but we are fully aware of the work that it will take to deliver something like that.

“By no means are we like ‘yeah we’re going for the sixth’ like it’s a relaxed thing. It’s nothing like that.

“It’s a new season, a new year, a new chapter, and we have to approach it like it’s our first and we’re going for number one. That’s how I approach it.”

Hamilton praised his team for never taking their foot off the gas, even though it would be easy to do so after so much success.

(Source: Planet F1)

LeBron James questions Lakers’ experience, ‘sense of urgency’



A 128-115 loss to the Anthony Davis-less New Orleans Pelicans left LeBron James questioning whether his Los Angeles Lake-ersteammates have the experience to grasp the challenge at hand and help the franchise qualify for the playoffs for the first time in six years.

“How many know what’s at stake if you’ve never been there?” James asked Saturday after L.A. went down by as many as 20 points to a Pelicans team that was resting Davis and came into the night eight games under .500.

“I’m playing devil’s advocate, you know? It’s kind of a fine line when you talk about that, because when you’ve never been there or know what it takes to actually shoot for something like that, sometimes you’re afraid to get uncomfortable.

“So you got to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. So I’m not saying that’s what we are as a whole. It kind of looks that way at times, that sometimes we’re afraid to be uncomfortable and kind of get out of our comfort zone and kind of, you know, have that sense of urgency from the jump, and not be afraid to actually go out and fail to succeed. So, I mean we have, what? Twenty-three games left. We’ll see what happens.”

The loss to New Orleans came on the same night the Sacramento Kingsbeat the Oklahoma City Thunder, leaving the 29-30 Lakers two games behind the Kings for the No. 9 spot in the Western Conference and 3½ games behind the LA Clippers and San

Antonio Spurs, who currently occupy the final two playoff spots in the West.

James has made the NBA Finals the past eight years and the playoffs the past 13 years after failing to make the postseason each of his first two seasons in the league. He has played 239 playoff games in his career. If you add up all the playoff experience of the 11 other Lakers to see the court Saturday, they’ve played 289 playoff games combined, with five of them -- Kyle Kuzma, Brandon Ingram, Josh Hart, Moe Wagner and Alex Caruso -- having never been there at all.

“The last few years, everyone’s so accustomed to the losses that I’m just not accustomed to,” James said. “I’m not accustomed to it. I will never get comfortable with losing. So, losing Game 1 to Houston [at home], it feels the same way as losing Game 59 in New Orleans to me. It’s just how I’m built.

That’s who I am.”

James’ message echoed his sentiments during the first season of his second stint with the Cleveland Cavaliers in 2014-15, when he challenged the “bad habits” of teammates Kyrie Irving and Dion Waiters, who at the time had also never played in the playoffs.

However, James made those comments in November of that season. It’s now late February. James admitted that he expected a learning curve with the Lakers. He just didn’t expect for that curve to continue this far into the season.

“I knew it was going to be very challenging,” James said. “Just because of the experience the roster had at that point and time. I knew it was going to be challenging from that sense, but I felt like we could still play better basketball. And we were doing that and obviously it sucks that my injury happened and [Lonzo Ball’s] injury happened and so many of our injuries happened.”

Ball’s severe left ankle sprain in mid-January coincided with the Lakers’ defense completely disappearing. L.A. has now allowed at least 115 points in nine consecutive road games, tied for the longest streak in franchise history, according to data compiled by ESPN Stats & Information.

Rajon Rondo said the team’s defense is the biggest issue the Lakers face, followed by the need to “play for each other” more often.

(Source: ESPN)

Three-goal Messi says Barca back to their best



Lionel Messi said Barcelona were back to their best following a mid-season slump after he scored a remarkable 50th career hat-trick in a rousing 4-2 win at Sevilla in La Liga on Saturday.

Barca had only won one of five games in February as they kicked off at the Sanchez Pizjuan stadium but after another landmark day, Messi pledged his side would now go all out for a ‘treble’ of La Liga, Copa del Rey and Champions League trophies.

Having been held to a goalless draw at Olympique Lyonnais in their Champions League last-16 first leg on Tuesday, Barca looked set for another disappointing result when Jesus Navas gave Sevilla the lead.

Yet Messi responded with a stunning volley and although Gabriel Mercado put Sevilla in front again before halftime, Barca’s captain again hauled his team back into the game quite brilliantly.

His thumping strike from just inside the area saw Barca equalise midway through the second half before he put them ahead with an ice-cool dinked finish in the 85th minute and then laid on the pass for Luis Suarez to seal all three points.

“Today, we were ourselves again and we produced a great performance,” Messi told reporters.

“We went through a spell where, to be honest, we did not play our best football so that made it much harder for us to score.

“You have different moments over a season, and we can’t always play at the highest level. But when we manage to get the play to flow, things always happen for us.”

Barca’s inconsistent results have not harmed their bid to successfully defend the La Liga title and the thrilling win extended their lead at the top of the table to 10 points over nearest challengers Atletico Madrid.

“There is still a long way to go in the season but it was very important to win here and keep the distance with our rivals,” added Messi, who leads the scoring charts in Spain and in Europe’s top five leagues with 25 goals.

“It’s always tough to win here, we know what it is like to come to this stadium and how good Sevilla’s players are, they made things very hard for us by taking the lead but we knew how to overcome all that.”

Barca now face back-to-back trips to arch rivals Real Madrid, with a Copa del Rey semi-final second leg on Wednesday followed by a league visit back at the Santiago Bernabeu next Saturday.

“Now we have some very difficult games coming up and everything will get harder as the season draws to a close,” Messi said.

“We won’t give up in any competition. We are one step from reaching the Cup final. That game is going to be very tough because it’s against Madrid, in their stadium.

“But we will go out to win and believe we can. Then we will focus on the league game. We’re going to try and win everything.”

(Source: Reuters)

Leicester City sack Claude Puel after 16 months in charge



Leicester City have sacked manager Claude Puel after 16 months in charge.

City were beaten 4-1 at home by Crystal Palace on Saturday in what proved to be Puel’s final game.

Puel, 57, leaves the club 12th in the Premier League having lost five of their last six league games.

The Frenchman guided Leicester to a ninth-place finish in the Premier League in his first season but the club are now looking for their fourth permanent manager in 23 months. Saturday’s defeat meant Leicester have lost four consecutive home Premier League games for the first time since January 2000 and conceded the first goal in 19 Premier League matches this season - more than any other side.

Assistant manager Jacky Bonnevey will also leave the club, with first-team coaches Mike Stowell and Adam Sadler set to take temporary charge of the squad.

Leicester’s next game is at home in the Premier League against Brighton on Tuesday.

Puel was appointed on a three-year deal in October 2017, succeeding Craig Shakespeare who in turn followed 2015-16 Premier League winning manager Claudio Ranieri in managing the club.

The former Lyon boss had been dismissed by Southampton in June 2017 and arrived at Leicester four months later with the club third from bottom of the league.

He led them to ninth in the table, just their second top-10 finish in the Premier League since 2000.

This season, Leicester have won nine of their 27 league matches, including back-to-back victories over Manchester City and Chelsea over the festive period.

But Puel’s style of play and recent team selections have been met with hesitation from Foxes fans. Puel incensed some fans by fielding a weakened side against Manchester City in a Carabao Cup quarter-final defeat, with James Maddison and Marc Albrighton starting on the bench, while Jamie Vardy did not feature at all.

The Foxes’ 2-1 FA Cup defeat at Newport came after Puel made seven changes to his side - with Maddison and Vardy named on the bench - despite choosing five Premier League winners in the starting XI.

Striker Vardy, who has scored eight Premier League goals this season and is the club’s highest goal scorer this campaign, recently admitted that Puel’s tactical approach did not suit his style of play.

“Does it? No, but is that down to me to adapt to it? Yes. And obviously the only way I’m going to do that and keep progressing is working hard on the training field,” he said.

Speculation about the Frenchman’s future stalled following the devastating helicopter crash outside the King Power Stadium in October, which killed Foxes owner Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha and four others.

(Source: BBC)

Mbappe: ‘Scoring goals and breaking records is what drives me’



Paris Saint-Germain superstar Kylian Mbappe now has 51 Ligue 1 goals after his brace in the 3-0 win over Nimes at Parc des Princes on Saturday and the France international admitted that he is motivated to set new records.

Christopher Nkunku put PSG ahead in the first half but Mbappe added a second-half brace to ensure the three-point haul for Thomas Tuchel’s men who took a provisional 17-point lead at the top of Le Championnat.

“I work every day to help my team as much as possible,” said Mbappe after the final whistle. “I want to enjoy my football because it is great fun. Scoring goals and breaking records is what drives me.”

Mbappe, 20, also praised Tuchel for his role in the victory, citing the German manager’s desire for relentless attack and effort as the reason for his and his teammates’ impressive form and performances this season.

“The coach transmits [and] motivates us to never give up and to always keep going forward,” Mbappe said. “We have players that run for the full 90 minutes -- we do it for him, as well as the supporters.

“We are working well. We have come a long way and

Mbappe, although he did recognise their improved second-half showing.

“We had a lot of chances to score throughout the game,” said the coach. “We could have won by more -- Kylian could have scored five goals!

“Perhaps we lacked a little concentration, but I think we played really well and defended high up the pitch.

“The second half was exceptional. It was a great win -- the team got stronger and stronger as the game wore on.”

Midfielder Marco Verratti, who assisted Nkunku’s opener, expressed his delight that his teammate has already reached a half-century of Ligue 1 goals.

“The most important thing is that Kylian keeps getting opportunities,” the Italy international said. “Right now, we are managing to find him.

“Kylian is even more decisive when played through the middle and we are happy with that -- I am really pleased that he has already reached 50 Ligue 1 goals.”

Next up for Mbappe, Verratti and PSG are Dijon at home in the Coupe de France quarterfinals next Tuesday.

(Source: Soccernet)

Vincenzo Montella candidate for Iran job: report

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Ex-Sevilla coach Vincenzo Montella has reportedly been offered a new job as coach of the Iran national football team.

The Italian was sacked by Sevilla in late April and is continuing to weigh up his options since then.

AS Roma legend Montella started his coaching career as Roma youth team coach and was appointed as the club's senior team as interim coach in 2011, taking over the role from resigning coach Claudio Ranieri.

The 45-year-old has also coached Italian teams Catania, Fiorentina, Sampdoria and Milan.

Montella took charge of Spanish team Sevilla in 2017 and led the team to first-ever UEFA Champions League quarterfinals. Under guidance the Italian coach, Sevilla

defeated Manchester United 2-1 on aggregate in the round of 16 but were beaten by Bayern Munich in the quarterfinals 2-1 on aggregate.

According to what was reported by Tuttosport, Montella has been offered a three-year contract until the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, worth €1.5m plus bonuses per year.

Montella has taken a few days of reflection and will shortly communicate his decision.

Iran football federation didn't renew Carlos Queiroz's contract at the end of the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

Under tutelage of the Portuguese coach, Team Melli qualified for the FIFA World Cups in 2014 and 2018 but failed to meet expectations in the AFC Asian Cups in 2015 and 2019.



Iran punch ticket to 2019 FIBA World Cup with rout of Australia

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran's men's basketball team booked a spot in the 2019 FIBA World Cup with a win over Australia.

Team Melli defeated the Boomers 85-74 in Tehran's Azadi Hall on Sunday.

Iran were paced by Behnam Yakhchali's 21 points, and Mitch Creek was Australia's top scorer with 20 points.

Iran had lost to Australia 76-49 in the Melbourne in

November.

The 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup will be the 18th tournament of the FIBA Basketball World Cup for men's national basketball teams.

The tournament will be hosted in China and it will mark a new era for the competition as described.

Rescheduled from 2018 to 2019, this edition will be the first FIBA Basketball World Cup since 1967 that will not

occur in the same year as the FIFA World Cup, but a year following the latter. Also, the group stage will expand from 24 to 32 teams. The top 8 teams, including Japan as the host of the 2020 Summer Olympics (and the top 2 teams from each of the Americas and Europe; and the top team from each of Africa, Asia and Oceania) in this competition will qualify for the men's basketball event in the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Iranian teams know fate FIBA Asia Champions Cup WABA Qualifiers 2019



The West Asia Basketball Association (WABA) has been among one of the most successful regions in the history of the FIBA Asia Champions Cup. The road for teams in this sub-zone towards the upcoming FIBA Asia Champions Cup season begins March 10-14 in Baghdad, Iraq at the FIBA Asia Champions Cup WABA Qualifiers 2019. This will be a monumental tournament for the city of Baghdad which will be hosting its first major basketball event since 1988.

The draw for the competition was completed after the FIBA World Asian Qualifiers game between Syria and China at the Nouhad Nawfal Sports Complex in Lebanon.

The competition will qualify spots for champions of their respective countries in Round 1 of the FIBA Asia Champions Cup, where 4 slots for teams from WABA are allocated. Therefore, the top 4 teams at the FIBA Asia Champions Cup WABA Qualifiers 2019 will each gain a qualifying spot for their respective country in the succeeding round.

Homentemen (LBN) are drawn to Group A along with Chemidor (IRI) and Al Jaych (SYR). The defending champions

Petrochimi (IRI) are drawn with Qalandia (PLE) and Nift Baghdad (IRQ).

The past three championship games of the FIBA Asia Champions Cup have featured a club from WABA in Lebanon's Al-Riyadi (2016, 2017) and Iran's Petrochimi (2018). Moreover, the recent two champions of the competition are both from the WABA subzone with Al-Riyadi winning it all in 2017 and Petrochimi winning it last year. Aside from these two powerhouses, other WABA teams in the past 3 seasons of the FIBA Asia Champions Cup include Iraq's Al-Shorta (2016) and Palestine's Sareyyet Ramallah (2017).

In the past three seasons of WABA's club championship, Al-Riyadi and Petrochimi have traded times hoisting the trophy. After winning the title in 2016, Petrochimi lost to Al-Riyadi in the championship game of 2017 before the Lebanese club went on to later on win the FIBA Asia Champions Cup. A year later in 2018, Petrochimi were able to exact their revenge by beating Riyadi in the Final and also made it all the way to win the FIBA Asia Champions Cup, too.

(Source: FIBA)

Pique issues warning over Solari's Clasico rest complaints



Gerard Pique suggested Real Madrid should be careful what they wished for after coach Santiago Solari complained that Barcelona would have an extra day's rest before Wednesday's Copa del Rey Clasico.

Madrid coach Solari said it was "curious" that Barca played Sevilla on Saturday while his side had to wait until Sunday to play Levante, and also pointed out that Barca had had an extra day off before the Copa del Rey semifinal first leg.

The two meet in the return at the Bernabeu with the scores tied at 1-1 from the first leg before facing each other at the same stadium in La Liga on Saturday.

Pique said an extra day of rest did not always have much impact, pointing out that Madrid had enjoyed a longer rest before being heavily beaten at the Camp Nou earlier in the season.

"The last time they had one day more rest than us we won 5-1," the center-back told reporters after Barca came from behind to beat Sevilla 4-2 thanks to Lionel Messi's 50th career hat-trick.

"I know they're looking forward to facing

us. They will be really up for it, but we will do everything possible to reach the cup final.

"Then winning the league game wouldn't decide the title -- but it would make a huge statement if we won."

La Liga leaders Barca had scored once in their last two games before putting four past Sevilla, and Pique praised their return to form.

"We're not playing our best football, but we're still alive in all three competitions," he added. "It was vital to win [on Saturday]. We've been good in defence in recent games but not so much in attack. But today we played better."

"Catalans have a tendency to see the glass half empty but Messi was really good today, scoring a hat trick and setting up another goal. We have to think [positively], and that we have Messi on our side."

Midfielder Ivan Rakitic, who set up Messi's first goal, said reaching the Copa del Rey final was more important than the fact that Barca were playing Madrid, and also played down reports that he could leave in the summer.

(Source: ESPN)

Tractor Sazi held by Saipa, Esteghlal emerge victorious over Zob Ahan

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Tractor Sazi football team were held to a goalless draw by Saipa in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Sunday.

Tractor Sazi moved one place down to fifth after Esteghlal defeated Zob Ahan 3-0 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

The Blues emerged victorious thanks to goals from Farshid Esmaeili, Ayanda Patosi and Mohammad Daneshgar.

Sepahan sit top of the table with 38 points on goal difference and one game in hand.

Persepolis and Padideh are second and third respectively.

Esteghlal are fourth, four points adrift of the leaders.

Iran deaf futsal team crowned as Asian champions

IRNA — Iran's deaf futsal team with the authority bagged championship in the third round of Asia-Pacific tournament.

In the final match hosted by Thailand, the Iranian team reached a 4-0 victory over Japan to crown the championship trophy.

The team of Iran at the group stage with the same result has defeated Japan. The Iranian deaf futsal players have also won the championship in the previous two rounds.

After a brilliant performance in the group stage, the Iranian team defeated Kazakhstan in the semi-finals with a 9-0 win and reached the final.

Ali Karimi steps down as owner of Sepidrood

PLDC — Ali Karimi has stepped down as owner of Iranian football club Sepidrood on Sunday.

The former Iran national football team and Bayern Munich midfielder currently is owner and head coach of the top-flight team.

Karimi has sent his resignation to General Manager of the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports of Gilan Province Maryam Bakhshi.

Karimi started his work with Sepidrood as a head coach last season but was forced to leave the team after having problem with Javad Tanzadeh as the owner of the club.

Karimi purchased the shares of the club at the start of the new Iran Professional League season and also works in the team as a head coach.

Sepidrood struggle in the new season and sit five points above the relegation zone.

Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers win two medals at Hungary event

TASNIM — Reza Khedri and Meysam Dalkhani claimed two medals at the Hungarian Gran Prix Imre Polyak Memorial on Saturday.

Khedri claimed a silver medal in the 55kg weight category.

The gold medal went to Uzbekistan's Ikhtom Bakhromov and Javokhir Mirakhmedov and Abdelkarim Fergat both claimed a bronze medal.

Also, in 63rd kg weight category, Dalkhani and Sailike Walihan from China won the bronze medal.

Japanese Shinobu Ota took the gold medal and the silver went to Chinese wrestler Erbatu Tuo.

Imre Polyak was a featherweight Greco-Roman wrestler from Hungary.

He competed in the 1952, 1956, 1960 and 1964 Olympics and won three silver and one gold medal.

He won the world title in 1955, 1958 and 1962, and placed second in 1961 and 1963. Nationally Polyak won 12 Hungarian titles and was named Sportsman of the Year in 1958 and 1962.

Iran badminton player bags bronze in Uganda int'l champs

IRNA — Iranian badminton player Samin Abed Khojasteh received a bronze medal in Uganda international championships.

After being defeated against Myanmar rival, Khojasteh ranked third.

In doubles category, she together with Jordan player stood against Zambia and advanced to final match.

In final match Iran-Jordan doubles will compete with Egyptian rival.

The competition will have \$10,000 award.

Nemanja Matic could be out for a month

Manchester United fear midfielder Nemanja Matic could be out for a month with a muscle injury, sources have told ESPN FC.

The Serbia international was ruled out of the Premier League clash with Liverpool at Old Trafford on Sunday after picking up an injury in training on Saturday. Scott McTominay took his place in midfield.

The 30-year-old has been a regular in Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's midfield since the Norwegian took over from Jose Mourinho in December. He has not missed a league game since the 1-1 draw with Wolves in September. Early indications suggest Matic could be sidelined for four weeks.

As well as Liverpool's visit to Old Trafford, it would also rule him out of the Champions League last-16 second leg against Paris Saint-Germain on March 6 and the trip to Arsenal on March 10. A month on the sidelines would see him miss United's next six games.

Solskjaer has built his success on a midfield on Matic, Paul Pogba and Ander Herrera as he has racked up 11 wins from his first 13 games in charge.

(Source: ESPN)

Iranian volleyball teams know rivals at Asian championships

Iranian national volleyball teams have learned their rivals at the 2019 Asian Volleyball Championships.

AVC will kick off its first competition campaign of the year with the 2019 Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championship in Taipei, Chinese Taipei from April 18 to 26. According to the draw results, hosts Chinese Taipei, which finished a below-par 8th at the previous edition in Myanmar last year, are in Pool A with Australia, Kuwait and Singapore. Defending champions Iran, Sri Lanka, Turkmenistan and Indonesia are in Pool B, while Pool C comprises Kazakhstan, silver medalists in Myanmar, Thailand, sixth place in the previous episode, Qatar and India. Vietnam, Japan, Iraq and Hong Kong China are in Pool D.

The 2019 Asian Women's Club Volleyball Championship in Tianjin, China during April 27 and May 5 attracts a total of 11 teams to vie for the top honor. China, hosts and third place at the previous edition in Kazakhstan last year, are in Pool A with Kazakhstan, Iran, Hong Kong China and Chinese Taipei, while reigning consecutive two-time champions Thailand, Japan, Vietnam, DPR Korea, Sri Lanka and Turkmenistan are in Pool B.

In the 3rd Asian Women's U23 Volleyball Championship in Hanoi, Vietnam from July 13 to 21, a total of 15 teams confirmed their participation, with hosts Vietnam, New Zealand and Turkmenistan in Pool A. Pool B consists of Thailand, silver medalists at the previous edition, Australia, Maldives and DPR Korea, while Chinese Taipei, Iran, India



and China are in Pool C. Pool D comprises Kazakhstan, Hong Kong China, Sri Lanka and Macau.

In the remaining two events, the 20th Asian Senior Women's Volleyball Championship in Seoul, Korea from August 17 to 25 and the 20th Asian Senior Men's Volleyball Championship in Tehran, Iran between September 13 and 21, will serve as a qualification event for the Asian Olympic

Qualification Tournament from January 6 to 12, 2020.

Top eight teams apiece from the Asian Senior Men's and Women's Championships will make the cut for the afore-mentioned tournaments (respective less-ranked teams in the Asian Seniors will replace the teams qualified for the Tokyo Olympics earlier through the six-group FIVB Intercontinental Olympic Qualification Tournaments).

In the 20th Asian Senior Women's Championship, hosts Korea, Iran and Singapore are in Pool A, while defending champions Japan, Kazakhstan, Australia and India are in Pool B. Pool C comprises Thailand, second place at the previous edition in the Philippines two years ago, Chinese Taipei, New Zealand and Hong Kong China. Powerhouses China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Sri Lanka are in Pool D.

Hosts Iran, Australia, Qatar and one team finishing second among the Central Zone teams (India, Sri Lanka and Turkmenistan) are in Pool A of the 20th Asian Senior Men's Championship, with title-holders Japan, Chinese Taipei, Thailand and Hong Kong China in Pool B. Pool C consists of Kazakhstan, silver medalists at the previous edition in Indonesia two years ago, China, one team finishing second among the Western Zone teams (Oman, Kuwait, Iraq), and one team finishing first among the Central Zone teams (India, Sri Lanka and Turkmenistan). Pool D comprises Korea, Indonesia, one team finishing first among the Western Zone teams (Oman, Kuwait and Iraq), and Pakistan.

(Source: asianvolleyball)

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When hardship goes to extreme, there comes a relief,
and when difficulties squeeze, comfort appears.

Imam Ali (AS)

“The Above-Named Person” wins grand prize at Fajr Intl. Theater Festival

1 → The story of the play is set during a theater festival in Saint Petersburg, where a director plans to stage an open-air performance of Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s “White Nights” based on an agreement with the festival’s president. However, he fails to stage the play due to financial problems. During his sojourn in the Russian city, he engages in a dialogue with Mikhail Gorbachev in a meeting with the seventh and last leader of the Soviet Union.



“The Above-Named Person” star Asghar Piran accepts the award for best actor for his role in the play during the 37th Fajr International Theater Festival at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on February 23, 2019. (Mehr/Mohammad Moheimani)

Most of the main awards in other categories of the international section of the festival were also presented to Iranian productions.

Fatemeh Motamed-Arya from Iran was named best actress for her role in “The Cool End of the Memory” by Hamidreza Azarang. Narges Hashempur’s play “Wolf Pups” was picked as best play and Ali Shams received the best playwright award for his work “When the Rooster Sings Wrong”.

The award for best set design went to “Flight Instructions for the Captain and Cabin Crew” by Farhad Fozuni.

In the national competition, “The Process” by Ali Korsizar was selected as the best play. It also won for Korsizar and Amir Ebrahimzadeh the best playwright award.

Mehrdad Mostafavi was named the best director for his play “Elephant in the Dark” in this section.

Moreover, four Iranian theater elites were honored during the closing ceremony of the festival.

Actors Hushang Tavakkoli, Reza Babak and Roya Teimurian, and playwright Mohammad-Amir Yarahmadi received awards for their lifetime achievements.

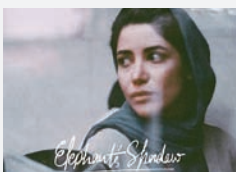
Iran’s “Goodbye Party” at Greek festival

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Iranian director Loqman Khaledi’s “Goodbye Party” will go on screen at the 21st Thessaloniki Documentary Festival, which will be held in the Greek city from March 1 to 10.

The film is about a 60-year-old house and art center in Tehran, which has been sold to a builder due to the owner’s financial and personal problems.

The building is going to be demolished to make way for a tower, therefore the family and art students gather together to hold a goodbye party.

NEWS IN BRIEF



“Elephant’s Shadow” to compete in Canadian festival

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Iranian director Arman Khan-sarian’s drama “Elephant’s Shadow” will be competing in the 23rd REGARD — Saguenay International Short Film Festival in Canada, the organizers have announced.

The film tells the story of Leila whose father has only a few days left to live according to his doctors. His only concern is for his daughter’s welfare as he knows how difficult life can be for a divorcee in Tehran. Leila decides to plan a scenario for her dad so that he can die peacefully.

Produced at the Iranian Youth Cinema Society, the film is being distributed by Mirana Pictures.

REGARD will be taking place in the Canadian city of Saguenay from March 13 to 17.

Yazd picked as Iran’s 2019 Book Capital

C U L T U R E d e s k TEHRAN — Yazd, the central Iranian city that is home to many magnificent historical mosques and ancient Zoroastrian fire temples, has been named as Iran’s 2019 Book Capital.

The choice was announced at the National Library and Archives of Iran during the Festival of Book Loving Villages and Nomads, which was attended by Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi, Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri and a number of cultural officials from Yazd.

Ten villages, including Jaidasht and Kersihki in Fars Province, Arkan in North Khorasan Province, Hesar Zir Khan in Khorasan Razavi Province, and Esfandiar in South Khorasan Province, were selected as Book Loving Villages of the Year.

Launched in 2015, the festival is organized every year to promote reading among villagers and nomads, and also to announce Iran’s Book Capital of the year.

The Book Capital is selected by a team of literati and scholars assigned by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

By selecting a city as book capital, officials are assigned to develop the infrastructures for public libraries in the city and develop long-range plans to raise the reading rate.

Ahvaz for 2015, Neyshabur for 2016, Bushehr for 2017, and Kashan for 2018 were Iran’s previous book capitals.



Yazd Office of Culture and Islamic Guidance director Majid Javadianzadeh (R) receives Yazd’s Book Capital plate from Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri during the Festival of Book Loving Villages and Nomads at the National Library and Archives of Iran on February 23, 2019. Culture Minister Abbas Salehi is also seen in the photo. (Mehr/Majid Haqdoost)

Iranian photographer wins award at Pictures of the Year



A photo from Iranian photographer Jalal Shamsazaran’s series “The Wind Will Take Us Away”.

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Iranian photographer Jalal Shamsazaran has won the Environmental Vision Award at the 76th Pictures of the Year International Competition (ROY) in the U.S.

Shamsazaran received the award for his collection “The Wind Will Take Us Away”, which covers the ongoing drought and mismanagement of the crisis in Iran’s

southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, the organizers announced last week.

As world’s oldest and most prestigious photojournalism program and contest, ROY is organized annually by the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri.

Judging photos and selecting winners and photographers of the year in different categories will continue until March 1.

“Golnesa” honored at Tanzanian filmfest



A scene from “Golnesa” by Sattar Chamanigol.

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Iranian director Sattar Chamanigol’s drama “Golnesa” won the award for best screenplay at the 2nd Sinema Zetu International Film Festival in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the organizers announced on Saturday.

Written by Vida Salehi, the film was competing in the World Cinema category with films from different

countries.

The film recounts the hard life of Golmammad and Golnesa, two illegal Afghan immigrants who are working in a traditional brick making kiln in Iran.

The 2nd edition of the festival started on January 1 and ran for 53 days. The winners were announced on February 23.

Absorbing Vincent: Van Gogh goes immersive in Paris exhibition

PARIS (Reuters) — A Paris gallery is offering visitors the chance to immerse themselves in the colourscapes of Vincent Van Gogh like never before.

L’Atelier des Lumieres is projecting digitized, multilayered versions of some of the

artist’s most famous works, including “Starry Night Over the Rhone” and “Churchyard in the Rain”, onto its floor and walls

Conveying at different stages the illusion of water rippling in the light and raindrops falling, the show is accompanied by a rich

soundtrack.

“Obviously, we have “The Starry Night,” we have the sunflowers, we have the irises,” gallery director Michael Couzigou told Reuters TV.

“The idea here is to propose something that’s different from classic museums. It’s

to allow the visitors to really get inside the paintings.”

“Van Gogh, La Nuit Etoilée”, which opens on Friday and runs until Dec 31, is the gallery’s second immersive art project, following a Gustav Klimt show in 2018.

Donald Trump, “Holmes & Watson” win Razzie worst film awards

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — U.S. President Donald Trump and a comedic movie take on Sherlock Holmes on Saturday topped the annual Razzie awards for the worst performances and films of 2018.

“Holmes & Watson,” starring Will Ferrell and John. C. Reilly, was the biggest “winner,” taking four trophies including worst film and “worst rip-off.” Reilly also was named worst supporting actor in what Razzie founder John Wilson called the “clueless parody” of the classic British detective tale.

The tongue-in-cheek Razzies, created in 1980, serve as an antidote to Hollywood’s Oscars. Winners were announced a day before Sunday’s Academy Awards ceremony - the highest honors in the movie industry.

Trump won two worst actor Razzies for appearing as himself in the 2018 documentaries “Death of a Nation,” from conservative film maker Dinesh D’Souza, and liberal Michael Moore’s “Fahrenheit 11/9.”

White House aide Kellyanne Conway was voted worst supporting actress for her archival footage in “Fahrenheit 11/9.”

In an unusual twist, Melissa McCarthy



Actor Will Ferrell at the premiere for “Daddy’s Home 2” in London, Britain, November 16, 2017. (Reuters/Eddie Keogh)

was deemed worst actress, for her puppet comedy “The Happytime Murders,” as well as getting the Razzie Redeemer Award for her Oscar-nominated role in literary drama “Can You Ever Forgive Me?”

Nominees and winners of the Razzies are voted for online by around 1,000 Razzie members from 24 countries, who sign up online and pay a \$40 membership fee.

Glenn Close, “Beale Street” win indie film honors ahead of Oscars

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Actress Glenn Close and racial injustice movie “If Beale Street Could Talk” were the big winners on Saturday at the Independent Spirit Awards, a day ahead of the Oscars ceremony.

Mexican family drama “Roma”, which is seen as a strong contender for best picture at the Academy Awards on Sunday, won the Spirit award for best international film.

The Spirit Awards are the annual honors given to Hollywood’s low-budget movies made for under \$20 million.

Close, 71, won the best actress award for playing a submissive spouse who finally finds her voice in “The Wife.” She has also emerged as the favorite to win the Oscar on Sunday for her role in the movie.

“It’s a lovely thing to do before the Oscars,” Close said on the red carpet on a sunny day in the beach city of Santa Monica.

“If Beale Street Could Talk” — based on late writer James Baldwin’s tender 1974 novel about a young New York couple whose lives are wrecked when the man is imprisoned for a rape he did not commit — came away as the biggest winner.

The film took the Spirit Award for best feature film, best supporting actress for Regina King, and best director for Barry Jenkins, whose last film, “Moonlight”, won the best



Glenn Close accepts her award for Best Female Lead for the film “The Wife” at the 2019 Film Independent Spirit Awards in Santa Monica, California, U.S., February 23, 2019. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

picture Oscar two years ago.

Winners often go onto success at the Academy Awards the following day. King’s performance as a mother seeking justice for her son-in-law is seen as a strong contender in the supporting actress Oscar category, although “If Beale Street Could Talk” failed to get a best picture Oscar nomination.

On Saturday, Richard E. Grant was named best supporting actor for his role in literary drama “Can You Ever Forgive Me?”, boosting his profile for the Oscars where he is also nominated.