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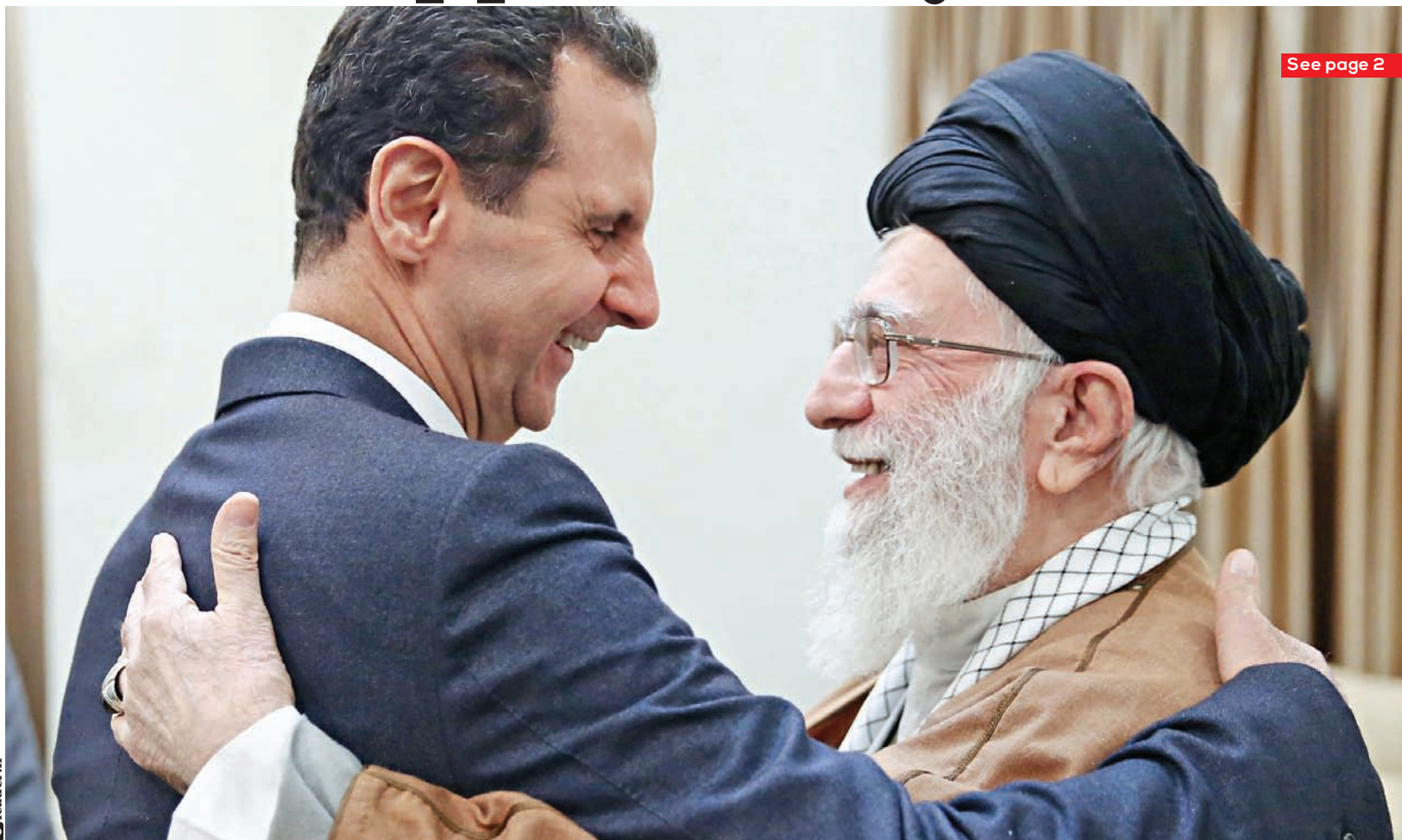
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PM Abdul-Mahdi: Iraq ready to create joint economic zone with Iran

TEHRAN — Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi said on Monday that his country is ready to create a joint economic zone with Iran.

During a meeting with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi in Baghdad, Abdul-Mahdi said that the joint region can be like the industrial region Iraq has with Jordan.

He noted that expansion of relations

is beneficial for both countries.

For his part, Araqchi expressed hope that the two countries would expand ties. He also told reporters that Iranian President Hassan Rouhani plans to visit Iraq in the near future.

He noted that Rouhani's visit will be a turning point in bilateral relations.

Good agreements will be signed during Rouhani's visit, he added.

Iran to launch three satellites by March 2020

TEHRAN — Information and Communications Technology Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi announced on Monday that three satellites will be ready to be launched in the next Iranian calendar year which start March 21, 2019.

Nahid 1, Pars 1 and Zafar satellites will be ready to be sent into space next year, he told reporters.

The minister also said that Iran plans

to purchase a satellite to put it into the geostationary orbit.

In a speech during National Day of Space Technology on February 3, he said that Iran's satellite launches have never been meant for military purposes or linked to the country's missile program.

Azari Jahromi said some Western states lie by claiming that Iran aims to develop its missile program through launching satellites.

After Putin's warning, Russian TV lists nuclear targets in U.S.

Russian state television has listed U.S. military facilities that Moscow would target in the event of a nuclear strike, and said that a hypersonic missile Russia is developing would be able to hit them in less than five minutes.

The targets included the Pentagon and

the presidential retreat in Camp David, Maryland.

The report, unusual even by the sometimes bellicose standards of Russian state TV, was broadcast on Sunday evening, days after President said Moscow was militarily ready for a "Cuban Missile"-style crisis if the United States wanted one. **→13**



ARTICLE

Ebrahim Fallahi
Tehran Times journalist

Offering oil at IRENEX, challenges and merits

Since the U.S.'s withdrew from Iran's nuclear pact in May 2018, vowing to drive Iran's oil exports down to zero, the Islamic Republic has been taking various measures to counter U.S. actions and to keep its oil exports levels as high as possible.

One of the main strategies that Iran chose to execute to help its oil exports afloat has been trying new ways to diversify the mechanism of oil sales, one of which is offering oil at the country's stock market.

Since the first offering of crude oil at Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), it has not been very successful in attracting traders and during its total five offerings not more than 1.2 million barrels were sold. This has made some energy experts to believe that this whole strategy is doomed to fail since the necessary planning and infrastructure has not been provided.

In this article I will consider some of the pros and cons of the issue and will explore some of the reasons for IRENEX's poor performance and also shed some light on the challenges that the Islamic Republic is facing in executing this new approach. This way we will hopefully be able to create a clearer picture of this controversial subject.

***The background

The issue of offering oil at the stock exchange is considered a relatively new affair in the Iranian oil industry. Currently (by the time of writing this article), National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has only offered crude oil at Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX) for five consecutive times.

However, oil offering in the stock market of Iran is not quite a new subject. The issue dates back to the Iranian calendar year of 1379 (March 2000-March 2001) since which it has surfaced several times but was never materialized until 2011.

Oil was first offered at the stock market in summer and fall of 2011, during which seven crude cargos with different volumes were offered but only one deal was made at the time, in other words, only nine percent of the total offered barrels were sold.

Following this not-so-desirable kick off, after a short while, crude offerings at the stock exchange were stopped and the reason was announced to be "lack of demand". **→4**

The splendorous birth of Hazrat Fatimah (SA)

Fatimah is a part of me, and the light of my eyes, the fruit of my heart, and my soul... and she is Huri with Human qualities.

In that year, which was the fifth year of his mission, the Prophet of Islam (S) was in the worst situation and isolated under the most difficult conditions.

Islam was isolated and the first few Muslims were severely under pressure.

The environment of Mecca was dark and dim as a result of idol worship, polytheism, ignorance superstitions, Arab tribal wars, the sovereignty of power, and the poverty of the masses.

The Prophet (S) was looking forward to the future, a bright future behind these black oppressing clouds, a future that, with regard to the

ordinary, external means (at hand), was too far and probably impossible to reach.

In this same year, an important event occurred in the prophet's life. By the command of God, he was taken on his Ascension to observe the Kingdom of the Heavens. And accordingly he was shown the magnificent signs of God in the area of the exalted heavens; so his great soul became greater and well - prepared for acceptance of a greater mission with greater hope.

From a narrative emphasized by both Sunni and Shi'a, we read; the Prophet (S) on the night of his ascension was passing through heaven, Gabriel gave his lordship some of the fruit of the "Tooba" tree, and when the Holy Prophet (S) returned to earth, the seed of Fatimah Zahra was coagulated

from that heavenly fruit (she was conceived).

It is reported that the Prophet (S) kissed Fatimah (SA) frequently; one day his wife, Aisha criticized this and said: "Why do you kiss your daughter so much?"

The Prophet (S) said in reply: "Whenever I kiss Fatimah, I smell the scent of the Highest Heaven in her."

It was thus that this great child, from the pure extract of Heavenly fruit and a father such as the Holy Prophet (S) mother such as "Khadijah"; on the twentieth day of Jamadi al-thani, came into the world, and the taunts and reproaches of the prophet's opposers, that he was as they thought without a "succeeding generation", were all made in vain. **→12**

German artist couple astonish visitors with perforated layers of glass

By Manijeh Rezapoor

TEHRAN — Perforated layers of glass all set one after the other in window sets seem quite fascinating for the visitors, adding more to their fantasy is when one finds out the objects are made by handmade computers and machines.

Body figures plus busts of Beethoven and Goethe on one side and the growing stalagmites on the other add more taste to the exhibition of the German artist couple Ingrid and Knut Reinhardt who have displayed their works at the Art Center in Tehran.

Knut as a technician and Ingrid as an architect have tried to connect science with art in their



German artist Knut Reinhardt young art, which they call "robart".

"The starting point was the admiration for the

artistic work of the Australian Aborigines, which is composed of point and line structures. We saw the art of the Aborigines on a trip we made to Australia 15 years ago to visit our relatives," Ingrid told the Tehran Times in an interview done at the Art Center just before the opening of their exhibit on Friday.

"The Aborigines made art with points. Everything appears as if it is seen from above. They show something they have experienced, and for us, it was a kind of modern art, although it is a very old art. I also think it has a kind of connection to calligraphy because they have special signs to tell stories," she added. **→16**

'Chabahar Port result of healthy cooperation between India, Iran, Afghanistan'

By Syed Zafar Mehdi

TEHRAN — In a significant development, the landlocked Afghanistan began exports to neighboring India through the strategic port of Chabahar on Sunday.

At the inauguration ceremony of the new export route in Nimruz that would allow the war-ravaged country have access to markets overseas, President Ashraf Ghani said Afghanistan was slowly improving its exports in a bid to reduce its trade deficit.

"Chabahar port is the result of healthy cooperation between India, Iran and Afghanistan this will ensure economic growth," said the beaming Afghan president whose term ends in two months.

During his meeting with provincial council

members in Nimruz, President Ghani said an elite unit from country's national directorate of security (NDS) would be deployed to protect the route that leads to Chabahar from Nimruz.

He further said that the government has launched many trade routes and now it was upto the private investors to fulfill its potential.

Earlier, his office in a statement said other countries in the region "should also utilize the economic potential of regional projects and enhance state-to-state cooperation".

At least 23 trucks carrying 57 tonnes of dried fruits, textiles, carpets and mineral products were dispatched from western Afghan city of Zaranj to Chabahar port in Iran's southeastern

Sistan-Baluchistan province.

The consignment will be shipped to India's commercial hub Mumbai, according to officials.

It is the first time that Afghanistan is exporting goods through the strategic port and comes less than a fortnight before a deadly attack close to the port that killed at least 27 members of IRGC.

A terrorist group based in Pakistan's border region claimed responsibility for the attack, following which Iran warned Pakistan to act against the terror sanctuaries.

Chabahar Port, inaugurated in 2017, has been built largely by India and will provide a key supply route for Afghanistan while allowing it to bypass Pakistan to trade with Central Asia. **→6**



ARTICLE

By Sanjay Kapoor
Journalist from New Delhi

India and Pakistan on the warpath again

On February 14, a suicide bomber rammed his explosives-laden vehicle into a convoy of para-military police force returning to trouble-torn Kashmir valley.

When the haze cleared after the earth-shaking blast, the survivors of the large convoy carrying 2500 soldiers found only the mangled remains of what was a bus carrying 41 of their colleagues.

The suicide bomber, a Kashmiri national, in a recorded video claimed to be a member of Jaish-e-Muhammad, a Pakistan based militant organization responsible for many attacks at Indian installations.

Angry protesters baying for Pakistan's blood have spilled over to many cities of the country. Social media too is on fire. The general view was not whether there would be war between the two nuclear-armed neighbors or not, but when.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has denied India's allegations of his country's involvement in the terror attack and promised to retaliate if India decides to attack his country. Khan promised to probe the attack from his side if any evidence was shared with his government by Delhi. He has accused Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi of using the terror attack to win parliamentary elections a month from now.

Modi has handed over the responsibility of taking a decision on the time, place and scale of the response to the terrorist violence to the Indian Defense Forces. The big question is: Can the armed forces really take a decision on attacking Pakistan, which would have serious geo-political and domestic implications at a time the country is going for elections? Indian elections take place in April/May.

Tensions between India and Pakistan have escalated in recent years - aggravated after each militant attack in the violence-racked states of Kashmir and Punjab.

Evidently, terror attacks are milestones of this blood-spattered journey of the ties between the two neighbors that couldn't really reconcile to their post-partition identities.

Pakistan decided to be an Islamic Republic, and India chose to go secular - now being challenged by the Hindu right wing that is in power. **→6**

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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Rouhani
felicitates
Kuwait on
national day

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani has sent a message to the Kuwaiti Emir to felicitate him and the people of the Arab country on their national day, the Foreign Ministry website reported on Monday. “I would like to offer my sincerest congratulations to Your Majesty and the people of your country on National Day of Kuwait,” Rouhani’s message read. “I hope that relations between the two Muslim and brotherly countries further develop in all areas based on mutual interests, empathy, cooperation and collaboration,” he said, adding, “I wish Your Majesty health and success, and the people of Kuwait prosperity and felicity.”



CODEPINK
members
meet Zarif
in Tehran

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A group of pro-peace and anti-war activists, known as CODEPINK, met with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Tehran on Sunday.

During the meeting, Zarif elaborated on the concepts of “independence” as a clear principle of Iran’s foreign policy and the country’s “endogenous security” which is based on its people, Iran Front Page reported.

He outlined the Islamic Republic’s stance on the most important regional and international issues, including the issue of human rights and that of Palestine.

Zarif also responded to the questions raised by the participants.



‘Iran hacked U.S.
drone command
center in response
to U.S. impudence’

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A senior IRGC commander said on Sunday that Iran’s aerospace force has successfully hacked the U.S. drone command and control system as a response to Washington’s impudence in claiming that it has sabotaged Iran’s missiles, Press TV reported.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a ceremony in Tehran, Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the IRGC Aerospace Division, said, “We did this to tell them that you not only failed to achieve your goals, but we infiltrated into your systems,” and this was a response to the United States’ insolence.

On February 12, the New York Times said that the Trump administration had reportedly revived a secret plan to sabotage Iran’s ballistic missiles as part of its broader plan to weaken Iran’s military might and harm its economy.



New Indian
ambassador
submits
credentials to Zarif

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — In a meeting on Monday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif received a copy of the credentials of the new Indian Ambassador to Tehran Gaddam Dharmendra.

Iran and India share historical and cultural ties. Iran has been the main supplier of crude oil to India, even at the peak of Western sanctions between 2012 and 2016. Although the volume of business was affected by the sanctions, the partnership did not weaken.

In the face of new anti-Iran sanctions, India recently got an exemption from the U.S., under which Indian companies are allowed to import a maximum of 300,000 barrels a day of crude oil from Iran.



Iran frees
French citizen
detained for
illegal entry

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Sunday Iran has released a French national who had been detained for unauthorized entry into the country.

Qassemi said the French citizen has been released after legal proceedings were completed and other charges were dropped, Tasnim reported.

On Wednesday, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told French lawmakers that Paris was in touch with Iran to improve the conditions of the woman arrested in October on Iran’s Persian Gulf island of Kish for allegedly signing an illegal mining contract.



Lavrov
censures U.S.
for JCPOA exit

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has pointed to continuation of U.S. unilateralism and American officials’ disregard for UN Security Council decisions, criticizing the U.S. for walking away from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Lavrov, who has visited Vietnam to attend the International Cooperation in a Troubled World, said the U.S. wants to solve some problems in its own fashion instead of following international standards, IRNA reported.

He added that rarely one can hear any statements in support of international norms by the U.S. government nowadays and instead Americans defend the order which is based on their own principles.

Water jet propulsion system unveiled

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran unveiled on Monday a new water jet propulsion system, which has been completely designed and produced by domestic experts with the cooperation of Iranian universities.

The propulsion system, dubbed National Water Jet, was unveiled in a ceremony in Tehran, attended by Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami, IRNA reported.

Addressing the ceremony which was held in Sharif University of Technology, Hatami said the system will be used for propulsion of various types of vessels.

He said Iran is a maritime country with lots of opportunities which should be tapped into through power. “If we are not powerful, the opportunities would turn into threats,” he stressed.

“Propulsion devices are one of the most important needs of the maritime industry,” he pointed out.

Hatami said earlier last year Iran unveiled



a 1300hp diesel engine which has many applications in the maritime and rail sectors.

“And today, the new water jet propulsion system, which is one of the essential needs

of the military, commercial and recreational vessels in the country, was unveiled,” the defense chief remarked.

In recent years, Iranian military experts and technicians have made great headways in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient in the arms sphere.

Officials in Iran have repeatedly underscored that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities which are entirely meant for defense, and that Iran’s defense capabilities will be never subject to negotiations.

Back in February 2018, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called for efforts to maintain and boost Iran’s defense capabilities.

“Without a moment of hesitation, the country must move to acquire whatever is necessary for defense, even if the whole world is opposed to it,” the Leader said at the time.

Leader: Iran proud of support for Syria

Ayatollah Khamenei calls Assad a “hero in Arab world”

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — In a high-profile meeting with Syrian President Bashar al Assad in Tehran on Monday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Iran considers backing for Syria in the face of the grand coalition of the U.S., Europe and their regional allies as support for the resistance movement and is proud of it.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran considers support for the Syrian government and people as support for the resistance movement and is proud of it from the bottom its heart,” Ayatollah Khamenei remarked.

The Leader said the mystery behind the victory of Syria over the U.S. and its regional mercenaries was the resistance of its president and its people.

Ayatollah Khamenei said Iran will stand beside the Syrian people like the past.

Pointing to Iran’s backing for Syria since the war began in the country in 2011, the Leader said, “Syria, through resistance and cooperation of people, withstood against the great coalition of the U.S., Europe and their allies in the region and emerge victorious” in this battle.

The victory of the resistance movement has made the U.S. “angry” and that is why Washington is orchestrating new plots against the country, the Leader warned.

“The issue of buffer zone which Americans are seeking to create in Syria is among these dangerous plots which must be decisively rejected and resisted,” the Leader asserted.

Ayatollah Khamenei said one of the U.S. plans is to be actively present in Syria-Iraq border.

He added Iran and Syria are “strategic depths” of each other and the identity and the power of the resistance movement is dependent on this strategic connection and that is why that the enemies will not be able to implement their plots in the region.

Ayatollah Khamenei went on to say that the enemies made a wrong assumption about the Syrian war. “The enemies’ error was that they mistook Syria with some other Arab countries. In those countries the people’s struggle was in line with resistance movement, and in fact uprising against the U.S. and its puppets”.

The Leader praised President Assad for his strong resistance against the enemies who tried hard to topple

his government.

“Through the toughness that you showed, you have been turned into a hero in the Arab world, and the resistance movement found more power and reputation by you.”

For his part, President Assad, who visited Iran for the first time since the war began in his country eight years ago, thanked Iran for its unquestioned support for Syria in years of struggle against terrorists and their backers, saying, “The Syrian war was like the imposed eight-year war against Iran.”

Assad was referring to Saddam Hussein’s war against Iran in the 1980s.

The Syrian president said, “The Islamic Republic of Iran stood on our side in a sacrificing way and it is imperative to congratulate this victory to Your Excellency and all Iranians and thank them.”

Assad also said many countries were submissive to the United States and had the imagination that it is the U.S. which determines the destiny of the world but this thinking is vanishing through the resilience of “resistant nations”.

IRGC Navy chief: Hormuz Strait to remain open as long as Iran sells oil

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, the IRGC Navy chief, has said that the Strait of Hormuz will remain open as long as Iran sells its oil.

“As we have said before, we will not close the Strait of Hormuz as long as our oil is passing this strait and there is no prevention for our ships to navigate,” Tangsiri said in an interview with the Al-Alam news network, ISNA reported on Monday.

The commander echoed remarks by other Iranian officials who say the West is “milking” regional Arab states by selling hundreds of billions of dollars of arms to them.

“Foreigners seek to milk this region and will definitely abandon the region when they take all its oil. This region belongs to us and our neighbors. I mean us and the Persian Gulf littoral states and the Muslim countries in the region. We can establish security in the region through unity.”

Iran has threatened to shut down the Strait of Hormuz if it cannot export its crude oil as the Trump administration, which withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018, is seeking oil embargo against Iran.

The Strait of Hormuz is a highly important strategic waterway for international trade. The U.S. Energy Information Administration estimates a record 18.5 million barrels per day of sea-borne oil passed through it in 2016.

In an interview with Tasnim published

on Saturday, Ali Shamkhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, said Iran has multiple methods at its disposal for blocking the region’s oil exports but “we hope we wouldn’t be pressed into using them.”

“Cutting off oil exports does not necessarily amount to blocking the Strait of Hormuz. In fact there are multiple methods to make that happen,” he added.

In comments in January, Rouhani said there are several methods available for Iran to sell its oil despite U.S. sanctions.

Trump to bring about downfall of the West: general

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — In remarks on Monday, the IRGC second in-command predicted that people like U.S. President Donald Trump would bring about the downfall of the Western society.

“Today, some people like Trump have taken the lead of the Western civilization and they will lead the Western society to its downfall because whenever there is no correct political philosophy, societies will move toward their downfall,” Hossein Salami said.

The brigadier general also said despite decades-long attempts by the enemies to undermine Iran’s establishment, the Islamic Republic has managed to become “a true model of Islamic civilization”, Tasnim reported.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran’s establishment is a practical and true model of Islamic civilization,” the general remarked.

“Our 40-year-old struggle with the enemies is on this very issue that if this model succeeds, it will cross geographical boundaries,” the commander added.

“In the meantime, all that you have experienced during the past forty years by the enemy plots, ranging from military invasion to embargos and economic pressure, psychological operations and security interference, is the story of a failure in defeating the Islamic Revolution,” he stated.

It has been proven that no world power is able to defeat the Islamic Revolution, the commander asserted.

Termination of nuclear deal not a right path: Sherman

By staff and agency

Wendy Sherman, the former senior U.S. nuclear negotiator with Iran, has said that termination of the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, is not the right path as long as Iran adheres to it.

She made the remarks in an interview with Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen.

U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled Washington out of the JCPOA in May 2018 and ordered re-imposition of sanctions against Iran.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference on Feb. 16, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence urged European powers Germany, France, and Britain

to follow Washington in withdrawing from the deal and to “stop undermining U.S. sanctions.”

On January 31, France, Germany and Britain announced the creation of INSTEX, a special purpose vehicle aimed at facilitating legitimate trade between European economic operators and Iran.

The European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas and British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt has said INSTEX will support legitimate European trade with Iran.

Russia and China have also remained publicly committed to the existing accord.

Defense minister: Iran considers itself responsible for regional security

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Monday that Iran considers itself responsible for establishing security in the West Asia region.

“Army’s Navy has powerful presence in international waters and has provided security in one of the most im-

portant waterways in the world along with the IRGC’s Navy,” he said during a speech at a conference at Sharif University of Technology.

The defense minister was indirectly referring to provision of securing in the Strait of Hormuz which is the only sea passage from the Persian Gulf to open seas and is one

of the world’s most strategically important choke points.

He also said that recent naval drills in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman showed “maturity of the country’s naval industry”.

On Friday, Iranian naval forces started a three-day drill in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

Nuri al-Maliki says Warsaw meeting was an open failure for Arabs

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Former Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki called the Warsaw conference an “open failure” for Arabs, saying the meeting was primarily intended to deflect attention from the Israeli aggressions in the region to a focus on Iran, ISNA reported on Monday.

Speaking on Alahad TV, Maliki warned about the aims of the conference and its danger for the entire region.

The Warsaw meeting, co-hosted by the U.S. and Poland on Feb. 13-14, was intended to isolate Iran but it ended in failure as major European countries sent low level officials to the meeting and criticized the U.S. for trying to demonize Iran.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who initially announced that the conference was intended to highlight what he called Iran’s “destabilizing behavior” in the region, was forced

to change the agenda of the conference when he faced pressure from Europe and others.

Noting that such moves threaten Iraq and all other regional states, Maliki said the Warsaw conference revealed the “secret relationship” between certain Arab states with the Zionist regime which has been existing since some years ago.

The former prime minister praised the Iraqi government’s position on the conference

and its refusal to participate in it.

Citing a story, Maliki said when he was prime minister a foreign minister from an Arab country proposed establishment of “the Middle East economic system” in which Israel would be a member.

“I told the Arab minister that Iraq will not be party to any organization which Israel would be a member,” explained Maliki who is now leader of the Dawa Party.

Ayatollah Khamenei advises officials to avoid impatience, hopelessness

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Talking to his theology students on Sunday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, citing a hadith from Imam Sadeq (AS), called on officials to avoid impatience and hopelessness and notified them that the Islamic Revolution will continue progressing.

“My recommendation to all those who have managerial posts, have responsibility either in the executive or judiciary...

is that they should avoid despair and impatience and know that the issues are proceeding forward and the revolution will continue its path,” Ayatollah Khamenei stated.

Citing an example of delight in the society, the Leader pointed to the huge turnout in the rallies marking the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution on Feb. 11, saying “you noticed that with the grace of God on Bahman 22 what a great event happened in the country.”

He added the Islamic Revolution is moving on and 40 years have passed since the great movement of the people and Imam Khomeini against the Pahlavi regime and everything should have been forgotten “but they pour into the streets in a way as if the revolution happened yesterday.”

Ayatollah Khamenei also said the other important issue is that the officials should think carefully about the effects of their decisions.

Bahrain court upholds jail sentence against relatives of prominent activist

The top court in Western-allied Bahrain upheld three-year jail terms against three relatives of a prominent political activist, a rights group said Monday, in a case the UN describes as an unlawful act of reprisal over family connections.

Home to the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet and a British Naval Support Facility, the island state has prosecuted hundreds of protesters in mass trials and banned main opposition groups in recent years. Most of the leading opposition figures and human rights activists are imprisoned or have fled abroad.

Bahrain's Court of Cassation rejected the appeal of three family members of exiled activist Sayed Ahmad Alwadaei, the London-based human rights group Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) said in a statement.

A family lawyer confirmed the ruling, which is the final appeal. Bahraini authorities did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Alwadaei, BIRD's head of advocacy, said his relatives were convicted based on confessions gained by torture and that they were being "persecuted" for his activism.

Human Rights Watch, Amnesty Interna-



tional and other rights groups had on Sunday urged Bahraini authorities to drop the charges.

Alwadaei's brother-in-law, Sayed Nazar

Alwadaei, his cousin, Mahmood Marzooq Mansoor, and his mother-in-law, Hajjar Mansoor Hassan, were sentenced in Oc-

tober 2017 on security-related charges. An appeal court upheld the sentence in December 2017.

Bahrain's criminal investigation department said last month the three were sentenced for "terrorist crimes," rejecting criticism by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention that the three were held due to their kinship with Alwadaei.

The activist's in-laws were each sentenced to three years for planting "fake bombs" while his cousin is serving a 10 year sentence under separate cases involving arson and explosives. Bahrain has clamped down on dissent after pro-democracy protests in 2011.

Alwadaei, based in Britain, said authorities moved against his relatives after he took part in a London demonstration last year to protest against the attendance of Bahrain's king at a royal horse show in Britain.

"I will not rest until my family is free. Their continued imprisonment is a shameful reminder of the UK's weak position when dealing with human rights abuses committed by an ally country," Alwadaeisaid in the statement.

(Source: Reuters)

Iraq's president in Paris; will discuss French Daesh detainees

Iraqi President Barham Saleh is on a two-day visit to France with a focus on the country's security and the fight against Daesh (ISIL) in the region.

Saleh had a working lunch Monday with French President Emmanuel Macron, followed by a joint news conference. They discuss the case of French citizens who traveled to fight with Daesh in Iraq and Syria and are now being detained by the U.S.-led coalition's forces.

The U.S. has called for countries to take back and try their own nationals. France's official position states that French "terrorist" militants "must be tried wherever they committed their crimes," according to the French foreign affairs ministry. France considers the Iraqi legal authorities are in charge of handling the cases of Daesh members on their territory.

The issue of captured foreign militants in Syria poses a major conundrum for countries whose nationals have been imprisoned in the country. The U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces is holding more than 900 foreign militants in prisons it runs in the country's north, many of them Iraqis and Europeans.

Last week, the SDF handed over more than 150 Iraqi members of the Daesh group to Iraq, an Iraqi security official said.

Also last week, a French diplomatic official and a SDF official said they were trying to verify reports that Fabien Clain, a Frenchman who is one of Europe's most-wanted members of Daesh, was killed in an airstrike in Syria.

The French presidency said France intends to reaffirm its full support to Iraq to face challenges regarding security, stability, inclusive governance and the country's reconstruction.



Both countries also are seeking to strengthen their economic cooperation.

France remains militarily involved in Iraq through training and logistical support of Iraqi forces and intelligence missions.

■ **Iraq received 14 French Daesh militants from Syria Kurds**

Fourteen French nationals accused of fighting for Daesh (ISIL) were transferred to Iraq by U.S.-backed forces squeezing the militants' final Syrian bastion, an Iraqi government source said Monday.

The Syrian Democratic Forces have taken hundreds of foreign Daesh militants into custody as they bear down on the militants' shrinking pocket of territory in eastern Syria.

Since Thursday, they have transferred 280 Iraqi nationals accused of fighting alongside Daesh to Iraqi authorities.

An Iraqi government source told AFP Monday that Iraq had also received 14 French nationals from the SDF.

The source could not specify when the transfer took place or whether the suspects would be tried in Iraq or extradited to France, and the French embassy in Baghdad was not immediately available for comment.

Hisham al-Hashemi, an Iraqi expert with intimate knowledge of the issue, said the transfer had taken place in coordination with the U.S.-led coalition fighting Daesh. "Those transferred do not include top Islamic State commanders, but they have a trove of information on Daesh's structure in Europe, French jihadist networks, and recruitment cells," Hashemi told AFP.

He said the militants had also battled government troops in Iraq, which could pave the way for their trial in Baghdad instead of their extradition to France.

Iraq has tried hundreds of foreign Daesh militants, including some caught in Syria and transferred across the border.

In August, it sentenced a French man and German woman to life in prison and has also handed down death sentences to around 100 foreigners convicted of Daesh membership.

French sources have told AFP that an estimated 50 adults and 80 children could be brought back to France from Syria, but authorities have not confirmed any planned transfer.

Earlier this month, Human Rights Watch warned against any secret reparations.

"There's been a total lack of transparency, and bad things happen in the dark," HRW's head of counter-terrorism Nadim Houry told AFP.

(Source: AP/AFP)

Senior Taliban leaders in Qatar for talks with U.S. envoy

Senior Taliban leaders, including one of the group's founders, were to hold another round of talks Monday in Qatar with Washington's special peace envoy as U.S. efforts intensify to find a negotiated solution to Afghanistan's 17-year war, America's longest.

The Taliban, some of whom arrived in Doha, Qatar's capital, from Pakistan the previous night, raised expectations ahead of talks with U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad.

"Yes, there is a possibility we will reach some results," Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid told The Associated Press.

Leading the Taliban delegation in Doha was Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, a co-founder of the movement who was released last year from a Pakistani jail where he had languished since his arrest in a joint Pakistani-CIA operation in 2010.

Past rounds have focused on U.S. withdrawal of troops, which has been a standing Taliban demand, and guarantees that Afghanistan will not be used again as a staging area for terror attacks on the United States.

Khalilzad is expected to pressure the Taliban to hold direct talks with the government in Kabul, something the insurgents have so far refused to do.

The Taliban, who had harbored Al-Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden, ruled Afghanistan before U.S. forces invaded in October 2001 following the 9/11 terrorist attack. The Taliban today have resurged,



carrying out deadly near-daily attacks on Afghan army and police forces and holding sway over almost half the country. They view the U.S.-backed government in Kabul as a dysfunctional Western puppet and have refused repeated offers to negotiate with it.

However, former Afghan President Hamid Karzai recently told the AP that the Taliban would talk with Afghan government officials on condition they are part of a larger group

of prominent Afghan figures meeting with the Taliban — similar to the gathering held earlier this month in Moscow.

Karzai attended the meeting in Russia, as did Afghan opposition figures, but no one from the Kabul government was there.

Baradar's presence in Doha and his lead role in the talks with Khalilzad is considered significant because of his stature within the Taliban movement. The Taliban maintain a

political office in Doha.

Following his release, Baradar had circulated a Pashtu-language audio tape promising Taliban fighters he would have a greater presence within the movement.

Since his appointment as Washington's peace envoy, Khalilzad has crisscrossed the region, meeting the Taliban on several occasions, as well as differing powerbrokers in Kabul, including Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

He has also been to Pakistan, India, Russia and China and held meetings with NATO and EU officials. Last week, he was in Turkey for talks with government officials as well as Zamir Kabulov, Russia's envoy to Afghanistan.

Ghani has also called a Loya Jirga, a traditional gathering of political and tribal leaders, for next month to draw up the government's negotiating position for talks with the Taliban, though he has yet to put together a negotiating team that would have wide support of Afghan political and tribal leaders.

Khalilzad previously said he envisions an agreement reached by the warring sides as a "roadmap" to the country's future. Washington's talks with the Taliban are more about safeguarding America's national interests and security and Khalilzad has said that Afghan negotiators have to fight for their vision of a future Afghanistan at the negotiating table with the Taliban.

(Source: AP)

Islamic Jihad says new missiles capable of reaching deep inside Israel

Palestinian resistance movement Islamic Jihad says it has developed missiles that could strike Israeli-occupied Jerusalem al-Quds, Tel Aviv, Netanya and even farther targets inside the occupied territories.

A senior member of the military wing of the Islamic Jihad movement, al-Quds Brigades, made the comment in a document, which was broadcast on Iran's Arabic-language al-Alam news channel.

The official stressed that Islamic Jihad is now in possession of more precise missiles.

The documentary also filmed the military drills of al-Quds Brigades conducted to stimulate how the resistance group would storm an Israeli military base and completely purge it, using heavy weapons.

According to the documentary, the attack would be a part of the group's reaction to any aggression on the besieged strip.

Israel has launched several wars on the Palestinian coastal sliver of land, the last of which began in early July 2014. The military aggression, which ended on August 26, 2014,

killed nearly 2,200 Palestinians. Over 11,100 others were also wounded in the invasion.

The Gaza Strip has been under an Israeli siege since June 2007. The blockade has caused a decline in the standards of living as well as unprecedented levels of unemployment and unrelenting poverty.

The Israeli regime denies about 1.8 million people in Gaza their basic rights, such as freedom of movement, jobs with proper wages as well as adequate healthcare and education.

(Source: Press TV)

Hezbollah: U.S. main cause of persisting crisis in Syria

A high-ranking member of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement says the United States is the main cause of the persisting crisis in Syria.

In remarks published by Hezbollah's Media Relations Office on Sunday, Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem said the U.S. had prolonged the presence of foreign-backed militants in the Middle Eastern country.

"The long war in Syria is because of the U.S., which is now hindering the settlement there," he said, adding that Washington was also using evil schemes in an attempt to destabilize the Arab country.

However, the U.S. "is moving from one defeat to another, but it doesn't want to acknowledge that," Qassem further said.

"Through resistance, we forced Israel out of Lebanon. Through resistance, we managed to impose the equation of deterrence. Through resistance, Lebanon and Palestine managed to confront Israel. Through resistance, we wiped out Takfiri terrorism in the region. Through resistance, we dealt blows to the U.S. and prevented Washington from achieving its goals in our region," Qassem added.

He also cautioned those who count on the U.S. to resolve the persisting issue of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, saying they were making a losing bet.

Qassem also described the U.S. stance toward the region's issues as an oppressive one and against the people's interests. He also lashed out at some Arab countries for destabilizing the region, noting that they were being supported by the White House.

More than one million Syrian refugees are registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lebanon. The Beirut government estimates that the true number of Syrians in Lebanon stands at 1.5 million.

Tens of thousands of Lebanon-based Syrian refugees have so far returned to their homeland. However, Hezbollah says that the U.S. is spearheading a global scheme aimed at preventing the return of the rest of the Syrian refugees under the pretext that the situation in Syria is still unstable.

An armed conflict began in Syria in 2011. The Syrian military, backed by the Russian air force and Iranian military advisers, has taken back control of most of the areas in Syria that had been held by militant and terrorist groups.

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

(Source: Press TV)

Israel burying nuclear waste in Syria's Golan: UN



UN chief Antonio Guterres will unveil Monday a report which accuses Israel of burying radioactive nuclear waste in the Golan Heights, a Syrian territory under occupation for over five decades.

Guterres will submit the report - which is based on Syria's charges against Israel - to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) at the panel's 40th session, set to open in Geneva Monday and run through March 22.

"The Syrian Arab Republic noted that Israel continued to bury nuclear waste with radioactive content in 20 different areas populated by Syrian citizens of the occupied Syrian Golan, particularly in the vicinity of al-Sheikh Mountain," the report says.

"The practice has put the lives and health of Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan in jeopardy, and constituted a serious violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention," it added.

Israel is the only possessor of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, but its policy is to neither confirm nor deny having atomic bombs. The regime is estimated to have 200 to 400 nuclear warheads in its arsenal.

Israel is not a member of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), whose aim is to prevent the spread of nuclear arms and weapons technology. Tel Aviv seized the Golan Heights from Syria during the 1967 Six-Day War and has continued to occupy two-thirds of the strategically-important territory ever since.

Over the past decades, Israel has built dozens of settlements in the Golan Heights in defiance of international calls on the regime to stop its illegal construction activities.

The UN report further accuses Israel of "providing logistical support to terrorist groups," such as the Nusrah Front which is affiliated to al-Qaeda.

Israel, the report says, is providing terrorist groups with weapons, ammunition, money and medical care to frighten the local population and to maintain a no-go zone along the Syrian border.

The report also censures Israel's decision "to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan" as "null and void and without international legal effect," calling on the regime to "rescind forthwith its decision".

The Syrian army has repeatedly seized huge quantities of Israeli-made weapons and advanced military equipment from militant groups. Tel Aviv has frequently attacked military targets inside Syria in an attempt to prop up terrorist groups that have been suffering defeats at the hands of Syrian government forces.

■ **Israel's angry response**

The UN report drew an angry reaction from Israel, with its foreign ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon dismissing it at "another false report from the UNHRC which specializes in attacking Israel."

The UNHRC had initially said that at this four-week session, it would publish for the first time its data base on companies doing business with illegal Israeli settlements. Israel has reportedly worked behind the scenes to prevent the publication of the database. The UN body is also expected to debate Israeli actions against Palestinians along the fence between the besieged Gaza Strip and the occupied territories.

(Source: Press TV)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	166793.6
IFX	2071.53

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,634 rials
GBP	54,888 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$65.84/b
WTI	\$55.97/b
OPEC Basket	\$66.50/b
Gold	\$1,330.05/oz
Silver	\$15.97/oz
Platinum	\$858.20 oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Industrial sector in need of 400km railway annually

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — “According to the Sixth Development Plan (2016-2021), domestic industrial and mining sector requires 400 kilometers of railway to be added to domestic network per year,” the head of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) told IRNA on Monday.

The industrial sector also needs 1.5 times more of water than its available level and 1.67 times more of electricity than its present amount, Khodadad Gharibpour told the news agency.



Security, exchange market competing rivals

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — In an interview with Mehr news agency on Monday, Iran’s Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) Head Shapour Mohammadi named hoarding goods besides trading gold and foreign currency as the main rivals of domestic security and exchange market.

SEO is planning programs to reduce financing rate at exchange market in a bid to match the country’s monetary system, he informed.

“We believe that financing must occur simultaneously among domestic exchange market, insurance system and banking system,” Mohammadi underlined.

He also underscored the significance of transparency and privatization in this regard.

Trump delays tariff hike on Chinese goods, citing trade talk progress

President Donald Trump said on Sunday he would delay an increase in U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods thanks to “productive” trade talks and that he and Chinese President Xi Jinping would meet to seal a deal if progress continued.

The announcement was the clearest sign yet that China and the United States are closing in on a deal to end a months-long trade war that has slowed global growth and disrupted markets.

Trump had planned to raise tariffs to 25 percent from 10 percent on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports into the United States if an agreement between the world’s two largest economies were not reached by Friday.

After a week of talks that extended into the weekend, Trump said those tariffs would not go up for now. In a tweet, he said progress had been made in divisive areas including intellectual property protection, technology transfers, agriculture, services and currency.

As a result, he said: “I will be delaying the U.S. increase in tariffs now scheduled for March 1. Assuming both sides make additional progress, we will be planning a Summit for President Xi and myself, at Mar-a-Lago, to conclude an agreement. A very good weekend for U.S. & China!”

Mar-a-Lago is the president’s property in Florida, where the two men have met before.

The president did not set a new deadline for the talks to conclude, but he told U.S. state governors gathered at the White House that there could be “very big news over the next week or two” if all went well in the negotiations.

The White House did not provide specific details on the kind of progress that had been made.

The Chinese government’s top diplomat, State Councillor Wang Yi, told a forum in Beijing on Monday that the talks had made “substantive progress”, providing positive expectations for the stability of bilateral ties and global economic development, China’s Foreign Ministry said.

China’s official Xinhua news agency said in a commentary that the goal of an agreement was getting “closer and closer”, but also warned that negotiations would get more difficult as they approached the final stages.

“The emergence of new uncertainty cannot be ruled out, and the long-term nature, complexity, and difficulty of China-U.S. trade frictions must be clearly recognized,” Xinhua said.

Trump and Xi called a 90-day truce last year to give their advisers time to negotiate a deal. The threat of tariff increases represented significant leverage for the Trump team as Beijing is trying to stabilize China’s cooling economy.

(Source: Reuters)

Offering oil at IRENEX, challenges and merits

1 → However according to the Majlis Research Center, the main reason for the failure of the crude sales at the stock market was in fact the provider’s reluctance to sell not lack of demand. The very strict criteria which the buyers had to meet created a barrier that led to the project to fail in a very short time span. Lack of necessary infrastructure in the stock exchange was also mentioned as a contributor to this issue.

The subject once again went hibernate up until May 2018 when the U.S.’s withdrew from Iran’s nuclear deal and re-imposed sanctions against Iranian economy. The issue came again into the spotlight as an approach to counter the new round of sanctions.

NIOC offered crude oil at IRENEX first on October 28, just few days before new U.S. sanctions on Iran’s petroleum sector took effect (November 4). In the first round, NIOC could sell some 280,000 barrels of crude oil at \$74.85 per barrel. With the daily supply amount of one million barrels, the market wrapped up by selling eight 35,000-barrel-cargos of oil on the day.

The second round was on November 11 for offering 700,000 barrels of light crude oil at the price of \$76.29 per barrel. NIOC offered one million barrels of light crude oil at IRENEX for the third time on January 21.

The third round witnessed some advantages compared to the first and second rounds to facilitate purchase process for the applicants. The fourth round of offering took place on February 4, when one million barrels of light crude oil was offered at the base price of \$56.24 per barrel and the least amount of sale was 35,000 barrels. This round ended with no deals. Then on February 18, NIOC sold 35,000 barrels of light crude oil at IRENEX at the base price of \$52.25 per barrel for the fifth time.

The advantages

Beside the fact that offering oil in the stock market will lift some of the burden that Iran’s oil industry is facing due to the U.S. sanctions, and let the country’s strong and capable private sector to have a part in the battle against the embargo, it has its



own economical merits for the involving parties as well.

One of the main advantages of the stock exchange is that it provides a transparent and low-risk environment for the buyers and in return, countering U.S. sanctions, NIOC could keep its oil exports afloat and increase Iranian oil customers both domestically and internationally.

The private sector enjoys a more diverse market and is more clientele-oriented than the public sector so it is more capable in circumventing the oil-related sanctions. This means that small private companies can sell oil through foreign intermediaries in a wide range of industries and areas.

Also it should not be forgotten that the stock exchange provides a more competitive atmosphere for customers which consequently leads to the oil price to increases to its highest possible level regardless of the global prices.

The challenges and some solutions

Since establishment of IRENEX, which is considered as a turning point in Iran’s strategic oil industry and capital market, it has been facing a great deal of challenges. With all said about the advantages, the implementation of this new approach has not been without problems.

The first and the most important challenge

that Iran is faced in executing its new strategic move is the impact of U.S. sanctions on the country’s banking system and its shipping lines, since there will be foreign customers at IRENEX and since the purchased oil has to ultimately be transported from the agreed oil terminals via oil tankers to different destination across the world.

Even though part of the payment in the deals are made in rials, in case of big cargos the money transfer could be a big problem. According to Amirhossein Tabanian who is an energy expert and NIOC’s representative at IRENEX, “sometimes the time needed for money transfers exceeds the time limit set by the brokers and that is a big problem.”

Another issue which is hindering the success of this project is the restrict criteria and payment conditions that NIOC needs the buyers to meet in order to participate in the oil trades.

Oil prices at IRENEX are set by NIOC each month instead of being controlled by international conditions and demand and this could be a significant threat for the trader’s investment. For instance, on the first day of IRENEX, the base price (\$79.15 per barrel) was set higher than Brent prices at the time. And despite some discounts which were applied to modify this high price, the

Oil exploration projects to be handed over to private companies

By Mahnaz Abdi

Based on a memorandum of understanding signed on Sunday evening, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) handed over an oil exploration project to a private company for the first time.

As reported by Shana, the MOU was signed between Saleh Hendi, the exploration director of NIOC, and Omid Asakereh, the managing director of TENCO Company, one of the 17 qualified exploration and production (E&P) companies, on conducting exploration operation at a block in southern Fars Province.

Exploration Department of NIOC had previously announced that it was planning to transfer some exploration projects to the private companies and the Sunday MOU is the first signed in this due.

In a press conference in December, Hendi said: “Plans are underway to award exploration projects to domestic companies now that the U.S. is putting pressure on foreign companies to operate in Iran”.

Also, speaking in the 3rd Iran International Exploration and Production Congress and Exhibition (Iran E&P 2019) held in Tehran on February 23, Hendi noted that like the mining sector in which mines are being developed by the private sector, NIOC should also award oil and gas fields development projects to capable private companies.

“Iran has huge resources of shale oil, shale gas and gas hydrates which have not yet been developed; exploration and development of these resources should be awarded to the private sector,” the official said.

«The private sector can well handle a significant part of the government’s responsibilities in the oil industry,» he said, adding that this could be initiated with small projects and small fields, and then move to bigger projects.

The budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1398, which starts on March 21, 2019, indicates that the budget allocated to the development projects is not expected to

see a noticeable rise in the next year, and it is while there are over 80,000 semi-finished development projects in the country; so the government has invited the private sector to contribute to finishing them.

In this due, oil and gas sector as the main source of income for the country welcomes private sector’s presence in its projects, both in exploration and in development.

In development sector, as there are many exploration blocks waiting for implementation of projects, NIOC is seriously following up the plans to lay the ground for the private sector’s contribution.

As Hendi has recently announced, some 250 oil fields have been discovered throughout the country, while 120 fields have been developed, and there are 130 discovered gas fields, of them 100 fields have been developed.

In the MOU signing ceremony on Sunday, the official emphasized the government’s policy of transferring the most part of tasks to the private sector, saying: “We have wit-

nessed some fruitful measures in recent years in terms of taking the most advantage of private sector’s presence in oil upstream sector that one of them has been evaluation of the E&P companies for transferring of projects to them.”

According to NIOC, the payment mechanism in IRENEX Bidders have to initially pay 10 percent of the value of the contract in cash and in case their bidding is accepted they must pay another 10 percent also in cash before loading the purchased cargos. They pay the rest in allowed hard currencies including dollar, yuan, dirham and euro, after loading the cargos.

Considering the fact that IRNEX has been primarily created to foil U.S. sanctions’ impact on Iran’s oil exports, NIOC should ease some of these payment conditions and to make some amendments in cargos’ transportation and insurance costs, as well to encourage the domestic traders for participation.

Finally, IRENEX currently does not have a clear mechanism for cushioning the risk impacts for the involved parties and it merely carries out the task of clearing funds and monitoring brokers. Therefore, the IRENEX’s role as a powerful mediator instead of a sole supervisor could play a significant role in assuring the customers and increasing the level of trust in this newly implemented capital market.

With all that said, we should not forget that IRENEX is a relatively new experience for Iran’s oil industry. An industry which has followed its traditional ways for many years. Despite all its recent unsuccessful attempts, the increase in the number of bidders in the recent offerings is an indicator that IRENEX could reach its expected goals in time.

What is important is to be consistent and sustainable and to create an atmosphere of trust for both Iranian and foreign customers in which they dare to test these new waters. A path which is clearly taken by NIOC as Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh told Islamic Consultative Assembly News Agency (ICANA) last week that [despite all its ups and downs] National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) will continue offering crude oil at IRENEX every week.



Iran-EU non-oil trade at \$8.57b in 10 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The value of non-oil trade between Iran and European Union countries stood at \$8.57 billion in the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018 – January 20, 2019), Eghtesad online news website reported.

As reported, Iran’s weight of non-oil trade with EU members reached 6.73 million tons in the mentioned time span.

The weight of non-oil trade between Iran and EU members jumped 15.5 percent while the value of trade fell 18.7 percent.



Iran exported 1.05 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$900 million to EU while imported 5.68 million tons of goods valued at \$7.67 billion during the mentioned period of time.

1,300 industrial units back online in a year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian deputy industry minister announced on Monday that during the past year, about 1,300 industrial units have come back online to production cycle via injection of financial resource, IRNA reported.

“There are around 43,000 production units in Iran’s industrial parks, which contribute to 45 percent of domestic employment,” Mohsen Salehnia said.

“Some 95 percent of businesses are run by small and medium-sized

industries and 50 percent of exports are done by this sector,” he said, “and 70 percent of job creation is also done by them, as well.”

According to Salehnia, in the upcoming Iranian calendar year 1398 (starting March 21, 2019), the government plans to provide facilities under the framework of subsidies for projects with more than 60 percent of physical development, to supply working capital of firms, to renovate production units and etc.

‘Iran among world’s top four gas suppliers by 2040’

the world will increase by about 50 percent (by 1,718 billion cubic meters) and will reach 5,427 billion cubic meters”, he said.

As one of the most important events in the field of energy and the largest event of Iranian upstream industry, Iran Drilling Congress attracts more than 1200 local and foreign participants from more than 100 companies, government officials, national and international companies (NOCs & IOCs), oil and gas industry managers and decision makers of private companies, every year.

The 6th edition of the event included 30 specialist panels, five workshops and over 100 presentations and lectures on the dimensions and requirements of the



industry for enhancing and maintaining oil production from technical, financial, legal, contractual, insurance and risk management viewpoints.

According to the BP Statistical Review of

World Energy, Iran ranks first in the world in terms of natural gas reserves and the country holds around 18 percent of total proven natural gas reserves globally.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), natural gas currently supplies 22 percent of the world’s energy needs, and accounts for nearly a quarter of electricity generation worldwide, it is used and transported in various forms including Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) as well as through pipelines.

In recent years the demand for gas as a clearer fuel has increased drastically and natural gas market has become more globalized.

Oil up toward 2019 highs on supply, trade talks optimism

Oil prices edged up on Monday toward a 2019 high achieved last week as sanctions and political uncertainty tightened supply in several producer countries and U.S.-China talks appeared headed toward success.

But record U.S. exports and continued anxiety over poor economic data worldwide this year may curb gains.

International Brent crude oil futures were at \$67.28 a barrel at 0950 GMT, up 16 cents, or 0.24 percent, from their last close. On Friday, they briefly touched their highest levels since Nov. 16 at \$67.73 a barrel.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$57.39 per barrel, up 13 cents, or 0.23 percent, from their last settlement. WTI futures marked their highest since Nov. 16 at \$57.81 a barrel.

"Risk appetite across global markets should improve as President Trump extends the deadline of trade talks with China," Harry Tchilinguirian, global oil strategist at BNP Paribas in London, told the Reuters Global Oil Forum.

"Supply risk is ever present with Venezuelan tensions brewing a notch



higher ... the National Oil Corporation in Libya refusing to start production at the El Sharara field," he added, while

also citing uncertainty over elections in top African oil exporter Nigeria. U.S. sanctions on Iranian and

Venezuelan crude plus involuntary curbs in Nigeria and Libya are lending support to efforts to balance the market and support prices, efforts led by member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and non-OPEC producers such as Russia.

Further brightening the global economic picture, U.S. President Donald Trump on Sunday signaled a potentially bruising trade war with China could be averted.

Trump tweeted he would postpone a March 1 deadline for higher tariffs on Chinese goods and looked forward to a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping when a Sino-American deal was sealed.

Goldman Sachs analysts said on Monday that "the near-term outlook for oil is modestly bullish over the next two to three months", but added that the outlook for later in 2019 was weaker due to a surge in U.S. exports and an "an increasingly uncertain economic, policy and geopolitical backdrop".

U.S. exports hit a record 3.6 million bpd this month.

(Source: Reuters)

South Africa committed to more renewable power, Radebe says

South Africa plans to expand use of renewable power as the coal-dependent nation expects traditional, centralized generation plants to "disappear," Energy Minister Jeff Radebe said.

Renewable power from independent producers currently accounts for 3,776 megawatts, less than 5 percent of the energy sold to consumers, but the country's expansion into cleaner power generation has already had a "significant" economic impact, Radebe told reporters in Pretoria. He said the most industrialized African nation has made various commitments to reducing climate change.

Under President Cyril Ramaphosa, who is leading a drive to attract \$100 billion of investment, Radebe revived the national renewable-energy program that was once the world's fastest growing, but had since stagnated. The minister signed agreements with 27 independent power producers, or IPPs, in April after more than two years of delays.

"Big centralized power generation plants will disappear and be replaced by distributed generation, mini-grids and batteries," Radebe said. Ramaphosa announced plans to split financially strapped state-owned utility Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd. into generation, distribution and transmission businesses under a state holding company in his Feb. 7 State of the Nation address.

Unions have resisted the IPPs because the labor groups anticipate job losses at Eskom as the independent producers are added to the grid. South Africa is dependent on the mining and burning of coal for more than three-quarters of its electricity generation. Job losses in the coal sector have no link to the expansion of renewable power, Radebe said.

Through a transition to cleaner power, South Africa should concentrate on finding ways to mitigate the consequences faced by coal miners and communities where the mines are located, he said.

Earlier rounds of the renewable IPP program were



"relatively higher in pricing," though the government has "no intention" to renegotiate the contracts and costs have come down in subsequent rounds, he said. The refinancing of some projects will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Libya oil boss: biggest field won't restart until militia leaves

Libya's state-run National Oil Corp. refused to restart the country's biggest field after militants seized and declared it secure earlier this month.

The standoff over Sharara, which can pump about 300,000 barrels of crude a day, is entering its third month. NOC won't resume production while armed groups are there, the company's chairman Mustafa Sanalla said on Sunday. The Libyan National Army, loyal to eastern leader Khalifa Haftar, controls the field and said it's ready to restart.

"The circumstances that made us declare force majeure still exist now and therefore we can't lift the ban," Sanalla said, referring to a legal clause protecting a party from liability if it can't fulfill a contract for reasons beyond its control. The "reality is the field is still not safe."

Libya, one of the most volatile and politically fragmented members of OPEC, has been suffering from major oil disruptions, with multiple battles and blockades hindering efforts to revive output. The country pumped about 1.1 million barrels a day last year, the highest since 2012, which was still just about two-thirds of its production before the 2011 civil war.

Haftar and the United Nations-backed government of Fayez al-Sarraj in the western city of Tripoli are competing for control of Libya. Haftar's self-styled national army, the country's most powerful militia, controls a coastal area containing the major exporting terminals, and said its recent operations in the southern part of the country, including the capture of Sharara and the nearby El-Feel fields, is intended to expel militants and secure energy facilities.

Sharara is a joint venture between Libya's NOC, Repsol SA, Total SA, OMV AG and Equinor ASA. It has been shut since December when state guards and armed residents seized it for financial demands, the latest in several such closures over the past few years.

Despite the assurance that Sharara is secure and ready to restart, Sanalla said the NOC's safety concerns haven't been addressed. The security forces currently protecting the field are the same guards who have "committed violent and terrorizing acts against workers," he said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Angola's oil output fell in 2018 due to ageing fields: Sonangol

Angola's oil production fell to 1.478 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2018, from 1.632 million bpd the year before, due mainly to ageing oil fields, figures from state oil company Sonangol showed on Monday.

Africa's second-largest crude producer said late last year it was negotiating contracts for new exploration blocks to curb the steep decline in output that has seen its economy stagnate and the currency lose more than 40 percent of its value.

(Source: Reuters)

Remarks of Dr. Abolfazl Kiani Bakhtiari, Managing Director of Industrial Management Institute (IMI) in Inaugural Ceremony of Professional Post-Doctoral Program in Global SME Management

The Inaugural Ceremony of the Professional Post-Doctoral Program in Global Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME) Management in Joint Cooperation with German FHM University

In the beginning, Dr. Abolfazl Kiani Bakhtiari Managing Director of Industrial Management Institute (IMI) said, "with over 50 years of effective presence in socioeconomic arena of the country, Industrial Management Institute (IMI) plays an important role in improving the capacity of organizations management, attaining socioeconomic development objectives as well as developing theoretical knowledge and skills required by leaders and managers of the organizations for an active presence in the country's current economic conditions [the U.S. sanctions]."

"Since its establishment, IMI has implemented proper educational programs and also helped boosting efficiency and improvement of management systems and methods in public and private organizations in the best form possible," he reiterated.

In this regard, IMI has thus far implemented consulting and management training projects in cooperation with its international peers including Ferguson Consulting Company, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), APO (Asian Productivity Organization), JCCME (Japan Corporation Center for the Middle East), FNEGE Bordeaux, and universities of Nice, Lyon, Lulea & Uppsala."

As a training, professional and applied university, German FHM University

is currently considered as the best alternative for setting up a linking bridge between academic graduates and universities using German management methods in various sectors such as industry, he emphasized.

"Successful statistics which indicates to more than 97 percent of graduates from this university launching Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) as well as finding proper jobs during 2012 to 2017 is a solid evidence for these claims," Dr. Kiani stressed.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the development of efficacies and competencies of SME's and also helping entrepreneurs in developing management skills, as the main aim behind launching the course.

He pointed out the mission of Industrial Management Institute (IMI) as follows: to help develop management capacity in Iran, to promote change and improvement in companies and to correct and publicize management knowledge and solutions.

The following international organizations including UNIDO, UNDP, Islamic Development Bank (IDB), FROST & SULLIVAN, ROLAND BERGER, ARTUR LITTLE, FNEGE (NICE, BORDEAUX, LYON and GRENOBLE UNI), CANADIAN PETREL BUSINESS SCHOOL, FHM, etc. are cooperating with the Industrial Management Institute in line with materializing most of its objectives in relevant field, Dr. Kiani opined.

"We are pioneer of running short-term courses, executive and corporate programs, Master of Business Administration (MBA), post-MBA, DBA, post-DBA and professional post-doctoral programs in Iran, he maintained.

"We are also following a world class manager training programs with the cooperation of FNEGE, HECS, IAES,



etc." he added.

The official further pointed to SME's roles in industrial development process as follows: creating new job opportunities, localizing technology, training entrepreneurs and managers, producing regional and sectoral balances in the economy, building a competitive environment in the economy and increasing efficiency, fast decision-making power and high flexibility in management, networking with large companies and creating industrial clusters.

In conclusion, Dr. Kiani pointed to the main goals of SME's Empowerment Plan as follows: increasing production (products and services), increasing the quality of goods and services, increasing competitiveness, increasing sustainable employment, increasing specialized and technical knowledge and increasing

managerial capability and knowledge.

Fachhochschule des Mittelstands

Founded in 2000, Fachhochschule des Mittelstands (University of Applied Sciences for Medium-Sized Companies) is a private higher education institution located in the small city of Bielefeld (population range of 250,000-499,999 inhabitants), North Rhine-Westphalia. officially accredited and/or recognized by the Ministerium für Innovation, Wissenschaft und Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (Ministry of Innovation, Science and Research of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia), Fachhochschule des Mittelstands (FHM) is a very small coeducational higher education institution. Fachhochschule des Mittelstands (FHM) offers courses and programs leading to officially recognized higher education degrees such as bachelor degrees in several areas of study.



NEWS IN BRIEF

**Pakistan PM says he is in 'favor of peace'**

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Amidst the shrill rhetoric of war and retaliation, Pakistani prime minister has again extended an olive branch to India, saying he is in favor of peace in the region.

Imran Khan on Sunday said he advocates regional peace and stands by his words that if India provides Pakistan with 'actionable evidence' regarding the terror attack in Kashmir, he will act. According to a statement released by his office, PM Khan said that Pakistan wants stability in the region and that PM Narendra Modi should give peace a chance.

The remark came a day after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked Khan to keep his word "as a son of Pathan" and fight poverty and illiteracy together with India instead of fighting each other.

"Sadly, now peace remains elusive due to elections in India," he added. In a televised statement last week, Khan had promised to conduct an investigation if India provides 'actionable evidence', adding that Pakistan would retaliate if case of an attack. Responding to Khan's offer, India's foreign ministry termed it a "lame excuse", and asked him to "stop misleading the international community".

**Pakistan experts urge govt 'to be prepared' for war**

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — As tensions escalate between India and Pakistan, three of Pakistan's former foreign secretaries have urged their government to be prepared to deter any "aggressive action" by India.

The former diplomats, however, urged the government to pursue "robust diplomacy" to end the crisis peacefully between the two estranged neighbors.

In a joint article in Pakistan's Dawn newspaper, former foreign secretaries Riaz Hussain Khokhar, Riaz Mohammad Khan and Inamul Haq urged the media, political leadership, intelligentsia and public opinion makers in the two countries to show "responsibility to exercise restraint and take measures to bring some equanimity to the troubled environment".

"This fraught situation can spark a conflict with incalculable consequences for both Pakistan and India. Can they pull back from the brink?" they wrote, adding that Pakistan faces the challenge to avert a catastrophe that Indian actions may precipitate in South Asia.

Asking India for serious response to Prime Minister Imran Khan's offer to investigate any actionable information, they said, "simultaneously, Pakistan is engaged in and must continue robust diplomacy at every level internationally, bilaterally and at the United Nations".

**Japan to proceed with U.S. base relocation despite Okinawa result**

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe says Tokyo will proceed with a controversial plan to relocate a U.S. air base in Okinawa, turning a deaf ear to the outcome of a referendum on the island, in which locals resoundingly voiced their opposition to the construction of a new American base there.

In the non-binding local referendum, which was held on Sunday, over 70 percent of voters in Okinawa said 'No' to the central government's plan to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps Futenma Air Station — currently located in the densely-populated part of the island — to the remote coastal region of Henoko.

An air base was being built on a landfill in coastal Henoko. Support for the plan totaled only 19 percent.

The prime minister said on Monday that he was taking the results seriously and would work to obtain the understanding of Okinawa's residents, but that the plans to move the base could not be deferred.

The plan has so far been stalled by local politicians, who argue that moving the base to another part of Japan is not a solution, since it would still pose an environmental threat.

The island hosts more than half of the nearly 47,000 American military service members stationed in Japan.

Anti-U.S. sentiments have been on the rise after a U.S. serviceman was found guilty in December 2017 of rape and murder of a 20-year-old Okinawa woman.

(Source: Press TV)

**Iran's envoy to Pakistan calls for 'joint fight against terror'**

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — With pressure building on Pakistan from many ends to crack down on terror outfits operating on its soil, Iranian envoy to Islamabad has called for joint fight against terrorism.

Mehdi Honardoost said Pakistan and Iran are two neighboring Islamic states, and they will have to face the issue of terrorism jointly.

A deadly suicide bombing in Iran's southeastern Sistan-Baluchistan province two weeks ago claimed the lives of 27 members of elite IRGC.

The responsibility for the attack was claimed by Jaish e Adl, a little-known terrorist outfit based in Pakistan's Baluchistan province. The attack was carried out by a Pakistani national.

Following the attack, Iran summoned Pakistan's envoy to Tehran and registered a strong protest, urging Islamabad to take prompt and strong action against the perpetrators of the attack.

Pakistan offered cooperation to Tehran but denied involvement in the attack, which coincided with Saudi crown prince's visit to Pakistan.

Before Gen. Soleimani, military aide to the Iranian Leader Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi also lashed out at ISI's sponsorship of terrorists, telling Islamabad that Saudi Arabia was not a reliable partner.

‘Indian media playing into U.S. hands by stirring tensions between India, China’

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The heightened tensions between India and Pakistan in the wake of recent terror attack in Indian-controlled Kashmir are increasingly becoming a threat to regional peace and stability.

Many regional countries have urged the two South Asian nuclear powers to scale down the war rhetoric and resolve the contentious issues through dialogue and talks.

China, which shares border with both the countries, has also joined the growing chorus, warning about the consequences of any military adventure on part of the two warring countries.

Although Beijing is seen close to Islamabad due to the massive China-Pakistan economic project currently underway, it has urged both New Delhi and Islamabad to avoid any military confrontation. The deadly attack in southern Kashmir less than two weeks ago, which killed 44 members of India's paramilitary police force, was claimed by Jaish e Mohammad (JeM), which is allegedly based in Pakistan.

Following the attack, India vowed a 'befitting reply' and said it will take all possible measures to 'diplomatically isolate Pakistan'.

Over the past one week, Indian media has been replete with reports about preparations for a small-scale war. The situation in the disputed Kashmir region, which is sandwiched between the two South Asian giants, continues to be tense.

It has also reported about China's tilt towards Pakistan because of its own scores to settle with India.

Azhar is based in Pakistan and Islamabad has refused India's demands to extradite



him. China, reports in Indian media said, has blocked India's moves to have him designated a 'global terrorist' at the United Nations Security Council. A report in Global Times, which reflects views of the Chinese government, alleged that the Indian media was "playing into the hands of the U.S. and creating tensions between India and China" in the aftermath of Kashmir attack even as the Indian government maintained strategic autonomy in its foreign policy.

The report blasted the Western media, which it alleged used the Kashmir attack to affect China's relations with India and shift the focus from the attack itself to China.

"The United Nations has a strict set of procedures for listing terrorist organizations and individuals. India's requirements can be

understood, but India cannot be arbitrary," the report said.

"In fact, the 'East Turkistan Islamic Movement' (ETIM) in China's Xinjiang has also been listed on the UN 1267 Committee's list of terrorist groups. China has also asked for some specific people to be listed but it cannot happen according to one's own wishes," said the report, translated into English.

Commenting on the escalating situation, China's state-run daily Sina International, which also reflects the views of the government in Beijing, said the Kashmir attack "pushed lukewarm India-Pakistan ties to a new low", leading to "tensions in South Asia" after the Wuhan Summit between PM Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping had "helped stabilise the situation".

‘Chabahar Port result of healthy cooperation between India, Iran, Afghanistan’

1 → Earlier, Afghanistan, a landlocked country, was overwhelmingly dependent on Pakistani ports to do business with India and other countries.

Afghan officials often accused Pakistan of exploiting Afghan traders and of using the transit route to exert political and diplomatic pressure on Afghanistan.

Pertinently, the relations between Kabul and Islamabad have traditionally been marked by acrimony and hostility while relations between Kabul and New Delhi have constantly blossomed.

Since 2001, when the international community launched its offensive and invaded the country, New Delhi has invested \$2 billion into development and reconstruction works in the war-torn country.

India, which has played a key role in making Chabahar Port a successful maritime hub, has sent 1.1 million tonnes of wheat and 2,000 tonnes of lentils to Afghanistan through the port. In May 2016, India, Iran and Afghanistan agreed to establish a 'Transit and Transport Corridor' among the three countries using the port as a regional hub for sea transportation.

In 2017, Afghanistan and Iran established an air corridor. In February 2018, Iran announced its decision to lease operational control of the port to New Delhi for 18 months.

In December 2018, India's state-owned India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) formally took over operations at the port.



In the same month, Cyprus-registered vessel arrived with over 72,000 mega tonnes of corn.

An Iranian official was quoted by IRNA as saying that IPGL had been granted the lease for a temporary period of 18 months and a ten-year period afterwards. "IPGL's management, he said, would include "loading and unloading, supplying equipment and marketing."

India is also developing a 500-km-long Chabahar-Zahedan railway link that will connect Afghanistan's Zaranj-Delaram road and bring Iran and Afghanistan close to each other.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony on Sunday, India's

India and Pakistan on the warpath again

1 → India and Pakistan have fought three big wars and hundreds of border skirmishes since the two countries were partitioned on August 15, 1947.

When they are not fighting, the two sides have played cricket, and Pakistani artists have sang together with Indians. Many times in the 70 years post-partition history, there have been periods of peace and bonhomie. As Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, General V K Singh candidly pointed out that there was peace in the Kashmir valley when the UPA was in power until 2013.

When the BJP won the elections in 2014, there was initially a lot of hope in the valley, but thereafter the situation began to rapidly slide. The nub of the problem is in the way the administration had been configured by the central government in Kashmir. The BJP followed a two-track approach, on the one hand, they formed a coalition government with a regional party considered to be close to those who want freedom or azadi from India.

On the other hand, they used the army and security forces to come down heavily on the restive youth. Pellet guns were used against the protesters that maimed hundreds of youth and caused international outrage. The reaction that followed saw a rise in homegrown terrorists with a leader of a militant outfit, Burhan Wani, getting killed in an encounter.

Wani's death is considered to be the turning point when it comes to the rise in homegrown



militancy in recent years. Since then, more and more young people have joined terror outfits with their bases in Pakistan.

In 2016, four armed militants attacked the Indian army's cantonment at Uri in Kashmir, and 19 Indian soldiers died in it. Similar to the public protests that are sweeping the country now, at that time the BJP's supporters demanded firm action against Pakistan for sending these terrorists to India.

A few months after the incident, the Indian army launched a surgical strike hitting at alleged terrorist bases across the border. Pakistan again denied that the Indian Special Forces had attacked any installations on their soil.

The terror attack was followed by a

"surgical strike" which was converted into a Bollywood film that did very well at the box office, with many of the BJP ministers joyfully mouthing the film's dialogue like "how's the josh" (enthusiasm).

The success of the film "Uri" also reflected the nationalist fervour that the BJP and its front organisations had been able to create in the country.

Quite expectedly, when the Pulwama attack took place, there was a bewildering mobilization of those who wanted Pakistan to be punished for the incident.

The Congress party, which is putting up a spirited challenge to the BJP in the last few months, was the target of the attack. Photoshopped images of Congress Presi-

"In response to this attack India wants to expand its influence. The Indian government said it had irrefutable evidence that Pakistan was involved in the attack. This can be serious. It accuses a country of participating in such an attack," said the report.

The report said the upcoming general elections in India had forced the Modi government to adopt a tough stance on the attack. "Modi is trying every way to get re-elected. In this case, he is likely to choose a radical approach," it said.

Any action against Jaish e Mohammad, the report stressed, will be very difficult in the absence of mutual trust between India and Pakistan. "However, Western countries such as the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Australia all stood by the Indian side. Obviously, the West wants to pick up the India-Pakistan conflict and create something around China," it noted.

"In response to this situation, if India makes a big fuss and launch a large-scale military operation in Kashmir, then the military conflict between India and Pakistan will reach its peak. How the situation evolves depends on the attitude of India and the political goals the Modi government wants to achieve," the report further added.

However, the report said it will not have much bearing on India-China relations and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) if the situation subsides after the initial tensions.

"China will continue to pay attention to the tension in South Asia caused by this attack. China hopes that India can make wise choices," it said.

envoy to Kabul Vinay Kumar highlighted the importance of Chabahar Port for "regional integration and strengthening of the Afghan economy".

Social media has been abuzz with Afghans terming it a historic day. "Afghanistan taking another step to decrease dependence on Pakistan," journalist and activist Bashir Ahmad Gwakh tweeted.

His words were seconded by Javid Faisal, former spokesperson of Afghanistan's chief executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. "We no longer rely on Pakistan, a country that has never been a trustworthy friend. Neither for peace, nor for trade," he tweeted. "The second greatest milestone for Afghan re-connectivity after @RouteLapisL is being achieved this year," tweeted Wahidullah Waissi, Afghan envoy to New Zealand.

"Afghanistan is taking baby but important and strong steps towards becoming a regional roundabout," wrote a Twitter user Ahmadullah Archiwal.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday, a much-awaited business event will be held in Chabahar which will see participation of high-level delegations of all three countries — India, Iran and Afghanistan.

The event will showcase business potential of the port and a proposed economic zone, according to reports. India seeks to use the opportunity to woo international shipping liners into the port.

dent Rahul Gandhi in the company of the Pulwama bomber, and his sister Priyanka in the company of Pakistan Army Chief General Bajwa, began to circulate on Facebook and Whatsapp. These images were challenged by fact-checking websites.

In the coming weeks, India's Election Commission will announce the date of the elections. The ruling BJP will try to ensure that its supporters continue to have "josh" (enthusiasm) on issues of nationalism, and are not swayed by the opposition demanding answers on alleged corruption in the purchase of the Rafale jet fighter from France, or "jobless growth."

Modi was seen to be in a corner until the recent terror attack provided him and his party with an opportunity to shut the opposition up, and harp on the issue of the threat of terrorism from Pakistan. Harping on Islamic terrorism is the BJP's comfort zone, as it also brings about majority consolidation and dis-empowers the Muslim minority of 19% in the country, which traditionally supports the Congress party.

The BJP, which was on the threshold of losing the Parliamentary elections, may have gotten a new lease on life after the Pulwama terror attack. If India indeed goes to war during this electoral period, then opposition parties would be hard put to weave a narrative that gets them back into the reckoning.

(Source: Press TV)

Pakistani court seeks expenditure details of MbS's visit

A Pakistani high court has demanded the details of government expenses for the two-day visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and his 40-member delegation to Islamabad.

The Lahore High Court was hearing a petition over the details of expenses incurred by Islamabad for the royal visit, Express News reported Monday.

Citing media reports, the petition said the government spent about 200 million rupees during the visit to cash-strapped Pakistan.

Escorted by Pakistan's fighter jets, the fleet of bin Salman

— known as MbS — and his 1,000-strong entourage touched down in Islamabad on February 18 for a two-day visit.

The petition said that the government booked 300 luxury cars while the crown prince's plane was escorted by JF-17 fighter jets as it entered Pakistani airspace.

It said that using the national exchequer to pay for a foreign dignitary's state visit ran counter to Islamic laws and traditions. They have criticized the sycophantic welcome in Islamabad as Saudi Arabia threw Pakistan an economic lifeline, warning that the aid could turn Islamabad into a

client state of the kingdom.

The last time a Saudi royal paid a visit to Pakistan was in 2006, when then King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz traveled to the nuclear-armed nation.

Bin Salman's visit came at the time of increasing pressure against the kingdom over the humanitarian crisis, which is caused by its four-year war on Yemen and the killing of dissident Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul, Turkey last year.

EU confusion in the face of the immigration crisis

By Hanif Ghaffari

TEHRAN — We are currently in 2019! One of the crises that the EU faces since 2015 is the immigration crisis. The European Parliamentary Elections will be held in about four months. The nationalist groups and groups in Europe who are trying to conquer the European Parliament have focused on the crisis of immigration. But the issue does not end there! European officials have a lot of disagreements over the crisis of immigration. It seems that these differences will intensify in the future among European actors.

The differences between the two countries of Germany and Austria over the immigration crisis have entered a new phase. This difference was evident during the recent visit of the Chancellor of Germany, "Angela Merkel" and the Austrian Chancellor "Sebastian Kurz". Although the Chancellors of Germany and Austria emphasized the need for the expansion of cooperation between the two countries, the attention of the media and analysts was related to the fundamental differences between Berlin and Vienna on the resolution



of the immigrant crisis.

The crisis of immigration has now become a wide-spread crisis in the United Europe, an issue that shows itself even in the internal policies of Germany. Obviously one of the main reasons for the extremist party of "Alternative for Germany" enter-

ing the country's parliament has been the dissatisfaction among German citizens as a result of Angela Merkel and Christian Democrats' open policies regarding the issue of immigration. In the 2017 Austrian election campaign, the far-right Freedom Party has been able to attract many propo-

nents through a massive maneuvering on the immigration crisis and maneuvering on nationalist doctrines in the Austrian political and social atmosphere.

Right now, the right-wing extremists in Austria (the Freedom Party), along with the People's Party (led by Kurz), have formed a coalition government. Obviously, in the near future, we'll witness more tensions between Vienna and Berlin over the crisis of immigrants. Of course, Austria doesn't intend to retreat from its policies in contradiction to the United Europe's plans regarding immigrants. Austria, along with countries like Hungary, doesn't intend to participate in the joint European project (on resolving the crisis of asylum seekers and refugees). This will exacerbate the conflicts between the European countries over the crisis of asylum seekers.

However, the positions of European politicians over the past four years showed that they have fundamental differences regarding the immigrants' crisis and the role of the European Union in resolving it. It seems that these differences will not be resolved in the near future by European cast men.

U.S.-Taliban talks in Qatar to focus on US' Afghanistan exit: Taliban spox



TEHRAN (MNA) — Taliban spokesman Zabihollah Mojahed said in an exclusive interview with Mehr that today's US-Taliban talks in Qatar will focus on the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan and safety of other countries from terrorist attacks from Afghan territory.

Speaking to Mehr News correspondent ahead of US-Taliban peace talks in Doha on Monday, Taliban spokesman Zabihollah Mojahed said the talks would focus on the details of a framework deal that the two sides reached in principle last month. Under that framework, all foreign troops, particularly the American ones, would withdraw from Afghanistan in return for a guarantee that Afghan territory would never be used by terrorists against any other countries.

According to him, the Taliban delegation will be represented by Taliban's political chief Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai.

This is while other news outlets have reported that the Taliban would be represented by the group's deputy leader, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar.

Mojahed maintained that it was too early to predict the results of today's talks in Qatari capital, promising to announce the results at the earliest opportunity.

JCPOA to stand, intervention in Venezuela to fail as U.S. Empire on its last leg: author

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Dean Henderson, author and geopolitical analyst from Missouri, said the US empire is nearing its end, predicting that the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers will stand despite US pressures and Washington's intervention in Venezuela will fail.

"Yes, I think it (the JCPOA) will (stand). Common sense will prevail over the neo-cons and neo-liberals running US, UK and French foreign policies on behalf of their Crown masters. The US intervention in Venezuela will also fail. The Empire is on its last leg," Henderson told Tasnim.

Dean Henderson earned a BLS (Bachelor of Liberal Studies) from the University of South Dakota and an MS in Environmental Studies from the University of Montana. He founded/published/edited one of America's first political "zines", The Missoula Paper, in 1990 in Missoula where he was also a regular columnist for the Montana Kaimin. Henderson has traveled to some 50 countries and has written articles for the Global Research, In These Times, Paranoia, Veterans Today, and Rense.com.

He has authored five books. His first book, "Big Oil and Their Bankers in the Persian Gulf: Four Horsemen, Eight Families and Their Global Intelligence, Narcotics and Terror Network" has become a global cult classic among conspiracy researchers. His second book, "The Grateful Unrich: Revolution in 50 Countries" chronicles insights gained from a lifetime of overseas travel. His third book, "Das Kartell der Federal Reserve: Acht Familien beherrschen die Welt", is published in German language by Kopp Verlag. His fourth book, "Stickin' it to the Matrix", is a practical guide to dropping out of the evil Illuminati system and kicking it in the nuts! His most recent book "The Federal Reserve Cartel", reveals the owners of the world's private central banks and offers a solution to end their global hegemony over the planet and its people.

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ After months of foot-dragging, Britain, France and Germany in early Feb. issued a joint statement on the creation



of a new trading system called the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) that will allow trade between the EU and Iran without relying on direct financial transactions. What do you think about this mechanism?

A: For INSTEX to work, it must find a way around the International Clearing System (ICS), run by the London Clearing House Ltd. (LCH). LCH is a subsidiary of the London Stock Exchange Group, which was founded in 1698 and whose biggest shareholders include Blackrock, The Capital Group & QIA. It is ultimately controlled by the Bank of International Settlements in Basel, Switzerland. In the US, the Federal Reserve serves as the intermediary for the Clearing System in this country and is part of ICS. SWIFT codes, IBAN bank numbers & National IDs are part of this rigged system, which is controlled by the global banking oligarchy. If INSTEX can find a way around this cabal then it could prove a revolutionary breakthrough which brings down the US dollar Bretton Woods system.

The Crown-controlled Western nations cannot tolerate any national system which excludes access to its corporate and banking tentacles. Thus, socialism is the real enemy

of the Crown. It will not hesitate to deploy its various "aid groups", NGOs, intelligence agencies and mercenary armies to attack any nation which dares to create an alternative to this international plantation model. Iran & Venezuela are two countries which have done just this. Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Sudan were others. All were or are currently under siege from the Crown's forces, many of whom reside in those nations. There are Crown agents everywhere who have sold their souls and their patriotism for the right price.

■ As you know, EU officials have repeatedly expressed the bloc's determination to preserve the JCPOA. Recently, US Vice President Mike Pence said, "(This is) an ill-advised step that will only strengthen Iran, weaken the EU and create still more distance between Europe and the US". Do you believe that the EU will finally stand up to the US or it is just a bluff game?

A: History tells us that the US plays the Crown's bad cop and the Europeans play its good cop. But in the end, their policies always align perfectly. So, at first glance, a betting man would say it is a bluff. But one wonders if the election of Trump could be a game-changer. He has alienated so many EU leaders. Germany seems especially ripe right now to take a long look East towards Russia and wonder if they are not better off allying with them. The relentless pressure from the US over Germany's embrace of the Nord Stream II pipeline could push them further in that direction. If INSTEX can be deployed and the Europeans can see benefit materially from imported Iranian oil and exports to Iran, this could produce more daylight between the US & EU.

■ Will the JCPOA stand?

A: Yes I think it will. Common sense will prevail over the neo-cons and neo-liberals running US, UK and French foreign policies on behalf of their Crown masters. The US intervention in Venezuela will also fail. The Empire is on its last leg.

55th MSC: How bigger concerns and foresight united world leaders against Washington

TEHRAN (FNA) — The annual Munich Security Conference (MSC), where the United States and Western allies have long forged united fronts, erupted instead into a full-scale assault on the Trump administration's foreign policy.

European leaders, would-be Democratic challengers and even Trump's Republican backers took the floor to rebuke his go-it-alone approach. German Chancellor Angela Merkel led the charge, though, unleashing a stinging, point-by-point takedown of the US administration's foreign policy and tendency to treat its allies as adversaries. And she lamented that the global order "has collapsed into many tiny parts."

It was a rare display, because the 55th MSC was all about deepening divisions between Washington and the world community, even with traditional allies over questions such as Iran and Venezuela. No wonder it offered little hope in how to deal with threats ranging from nuclear arms to climate change, as well as misgivings about Washington's role in the world.

Here, many world leaders saw US unilateralism as a threat and did not like the "America First" message by Vice President Mike Pence or questioning the usefulness of multilateral institutions including the European Union by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, a view also shared by many Europeans, as stated in a report before the Munich foreign policy gathering by the Washington-based Pew Research Center.

True, there was no concerted response to it, except for Chancellor Merkel and a handful of others, including delegates from Iran,



China and Russia. But it was a start. After all, what is wrong with urging the isolated Trump administration to uphold the rules-based international order and global cooperation, and let go of short-termism?

Where does the US government think its foreign policy of threatening Iran, containing China, antagonizing Russia, withdrawing American troops and requiring European powers to fall into line in Syria would take the region and the world? And what is it with the calling for the European Union to recognize Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido as president over Nicolas Maduro, all while going against the Venezuelan constitution?

Of course, such counterproductive

pressures and threats only made world leaders and decision makers do the opposite, which is good news, but never enough. Even a divided America was on display where Pence and Democrats including his predecessor Joe Biden, offered competing visions of the trans-Atlantic relationship that could shape the world for years to come. Which says multilateralism rather than unilateralism, dialogue rather than confrontation are what the MSC should always be about and what the world urgently needs nowadays.

The world community is sick and tired of endless wars and crises. Worse still, new crises are emerging at an unprecedented rate while the traditional wisdom of diplomacy is being

challenged by the US and its handful of allies. Never have so many issues of fundamental importance to the multilateral system been challenged by Washington like this year. Top issues like the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty, ending the wars in Syria and Yemen, the Iran nuclear deal, and trade disputes were all mentioned or challenged in speeches.

There is a more fundamental problem too: US unilateralism, confrontation, and closure, has been revealed to the world and played more frequently than any period since the start of this century. Thanks to the Trump administration's go-it-alone approach, the value of multilateralism, international cooperation is no longer cherished and has been put in peril.

Then again, it's never too late to make the Munich Security Conference for what it is: a reaffirmation of rules-based international order and ties. The foreign policy gathering should never be about preferring checkbook diplomacy to hard power, or demanding that Europe sides with Washington in its disputes with Russia, China and Iran. This should be the opportunity for the EU to stake out its own vision for European security, "strategic autonomy". If the EU claims to be a global actor, then it needs to show it in action.

The same is true for the rest of international civil society. It is about time the world community came up with a clear vision of global priorities and the capabilities to back the rules-based international order rhetoric. There is no other way to face down Trump and his go-it-alone approach.

UN must end Saudi war and brutality in Yemen



TEHRAN (FNA) — America's controversial relationship with Saudi Arabia was thrust into the spotlight once again in the wake of reports that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, "have used the US-manufactured weapons as a form of currency to buy the loyalties of militias or tribes," in Yemen, many of which are affiliated with Al-Qaeda.

American media found that US-made weapons have become widely available through the growing black-market arms trade and that American arms have even fallen into the hands of terrorists. This means Saudi Arabia and the UAE have violated the terms of their arms agreements with the United States, which prohibits the transfer of US weapons to terrorists within Yemen. This has also violated the fundamental norms of the UN arms treaty.

This plus the ongoing airstrikes and incidents targeting civilians are an example of the "brutality" of the conflict. The Saudis and allies parties to the conflict continue to show a disregard for the protection of civilians and the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants in the conduct of hostilities.

The same brutality is happening in Syria, where the United States and its allies target civilians in their indiscriminate airstrikes. The Syrian government has complained many times to the UN Security Council about the US airstrikes, saying they are excessively targeting civilians and basic infrastructure, but to no avail.

Tragically, the only thing the UN has done thus far is condemning these repeated killings — even though the world body is fully in the know that the unprovoked aggression against Yemen is for all the wrong reasons. The unprovoked conflict is in fact a smokescreen. The alliance among Saudi, American and Israeli interests gives the false story about the alleged Iranian takeover of Yemen additional legs, passed on to "fakestream" media from Tel Aviv. Fanning a bogus Shiite-Sunni conflict seems to be a great idea for Riyadh, enthusiastically seconded by its protector and close ally, Israel.

With these in mind, the blitz boys of so many Arab and Western states have attacked and destroyed Yemen's lifelines for all the criminal reasons. This unqualified alliance stems from motives for regional domination and more. They want to split Yemen, with no intention to comply with International Humanitarian Law, let alone take feasible measures to minimize harm to civilians.

Little wonder the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross say they condemn these atrocities and they are extremely worried about the severe damage caused by the Saudi-led attacks on civilian infrastructure. The destruction of key logistic infrastructure, including airports, seaports, bridges and roads is having alarming consequences on the civilian population. The humanitarian situation has now become catastrophic because of the siege and famine too.

The current conflict has already caused extreme hardship for the population across the country. The destruction of logistic infrastructure means countless lives are now more at risk, and the UN can no longer afford to stand and watch as people suffer and die of preventable causes. The world body has a duty to demand that robust and unobstructed channels for the provision of humanitarian assistance are opened and respected by the war-mongers in this increasingly desperate situation.

The UN should also realize that condemnation per se is not enough. There is an urgent need to a halt in the war. The UN should call for an end to the criminal Saudi strikes against civilians. It's the only way to ensure no more lives are lost in the blockaded country.

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The Tehran Times new pocket-sized glossary is now available on the market. The reader-friendly is a rich source of the most common journalistic terminology collected by the daily's retired staff.

It can benefit a wide range of tastes from students to professional journalists. Persian equivalents have been given for all entries, including idioms and expressions. The glossary also includes example sentences for entries the authors thought it would be a bit difficult to learn.

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‘National document on dementia to set the scene for prevention’

HEALTH TEHRAN — Adopting the national document on dementia would pave the way for prevention of the diseases associated with memory loss, a senior advisor at cognitive sciences and technologies council affiliated to science and technology vice-presidency has said.

Dementia is not a specific disease. It's an overall term that describes a group of symptoms associated with a decline in memory or other thinking skills severe enough to reduce a person's ability to perform everyday activities. Alzheimer's disease accounts for 60 to 80 percent of cases.

Currently the national document on dementia is being drawn up, ISNA news agency quoted Mohammad Taqi Joghataei as saying on Monday.

There are exact figures regarding the number of people affected by dementia, however, it is projected that some 500,000 will develop the disease in the future, Joghataei warned.

The possibility of developing dementia increases with aging as the symptoms usually appear at the age of 60, he said, adding that the second phase of the diseases associated with dementia usually develop between the ages 60 to 70 and the diseases will worsen at the age of 80.

The best way to decrease dementia cases is to prevent it which means those who are at risk of developing the diseases should be screened, he highlighted.

Therefore, based on the national document on dementia Ministry of Health, in collaboration with other responsible organization, will run screening programs based on standardized tests, he noted.

Joghataei went on to say that those who are susceptible to develop dementia in the future will be referred to healthcare centers and in case the disease is confirmed they will receive treatment.

Normally the treatments at this stage are non-drug including speech therapy, occupational therapy, as well as psychological interventions, he explained.

With implementing the plan the prevalence of dementia will decrease, he suggested.

As the population in the country is aging



There are exact figures regarding the number of people affected by dementia, however, it is projected that some 500,000 will develop the disease in the future.

dementia is on the rise in the country, he concluded.

Census reports of 2016 indicate that the number of persons, aged 60 years or older, has increased by 1.5-fold over the past decade (2006-2016) in Iran. In 2006, some 5.1 million people were 60 or older, but the number rose to 6.1 million in 2011 and to 7.4 million in 2016. Currently, the country's total population stands at about 80 million, of which some 9.3 percent is 60 or older.

■ Dementia figures

Worldwide, World Health Organization reports, around 50 million people have dementia, and there are nearly 10 million new cases every year. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia and may contribute to 60–70% of cases.

In September 2017, head of Iran Alzheimer's Association Masoumeh Salehi said that some 700,000 people have Alzheimer's disease in Iran.

Dementia is one of the major causes of disability and dependency among older people worldwide. Dementia has a physical, psychological, social, and economic impact, not only on people with dementia, but also on their carers, families and society at large.

Although age is the strongest known risk factor for dementia, it is not an inevitable consequence of ageing. Further, dementia does not exclusively affect older people – young onset dementia (defined as the onset of symptoms before the age of 65 years) accounts for up to 9% of cases.

Some research has shown a relationship between the development of cognitive im-

pairment and life-style related risk factors that are shared with other noncommunicable diseases. These risk factors include physical inactivity, obesity, unhealthy diets, tobacco use and harmful use of alcohol, diabetes, and midlife hypertension. Additional potentially modifiable risk factors include depression, low educational attainment, social isolation, and cognitive inactivity.

■ Stages of dementia

At the early stage of dementia is often overlooked, because the onset is gradual. Common symptoms include: forgetfulness, losing track of the time, and becoming lost in familiar places.

At middle stages as dementia progresses to the middle stage, the signs and symptoms become clearer and more restricting. These include: becoming forgetful of recent events and people's names, becoming lost at home, having increasing difficulty with communication, needing help with personal care, experiencing behavior changes, including wandering and repeated questioning.

Late stage: the late stage of dementia is one of near total dependence and inactivity. Memory disturbances are serious and the physical signs and symptoms become more obvious. Symptoms include: becoming unaware of the time and place, having difficulty recognizing relatives and friends, having an increasing need for assisted self-care, having difficulty walking, experiencing behavior changes that may escalate and include aggression.

There is no treatment currently available to cure dementia or to alter its progressive course. Numerous new treatments are being investigated in various stages of clinical trials.

However, much can be offered to support and improve the lives of people with dementia and their carers and families. The principal goals for dementia care are: early diagnosis in order to promote early and optimal management, optimizing physical health, cognition, activity and well-being, identifying and treating accompanying physical illness, detecting and treating challenging behavioral and psychological symptoms, and providing information and long-term support to carers.

One in three regularly forget to brush their teeth, survey claims

One in three people regularly forget to brush their teeth with mouth health low on the list of most people's priorities, a new survey has claimed.

Researchers who polled 2,000 adults found that many have an inconsistent approach to dental hygiene and are not doing enough to keep their teeth and mouths healthy.



One in 10 said they had used chewing gum instead of toothpaste to keep their teeth clean and 80 per cent said they are currently suffering with or have suffered with oral health problems - including sensitivity (33 per cent), cavities (32 per cent) and bleeding gums (31 per cent).

Mouth health was low on the list of respondents priorities when it comes to maintaining a healthy lifestyle – behind diet, weight and mental health.

Just nine per cent of those polled said they considered it to be important – despite oral health problems being among the most common chronic diseases across the globe.

Six in 10 said they did not take sufficient care of their mouths and should make it more of a priority than they do.

The research, commissioned by Colgate Total, also found that 43 per cent of respondents did not know how to maintain a healthy mouth.

Experts said the majority of oral health problems can be prevented or reduced through daily oral care.

"When most people think about oral health they just think about their teeth," Dr Milad Shadrooh said. "The tongue, cheeks and gums harbor bacteria, needing a similar level of protection as teeth to help achieve whole mouth health."

"As a dentist, I actively work with my patients to help them appreciate the importance of whole mouth health. Through education, we can show how easily people can prevent problems before they start by equipping them with the right information and products to look after their mouth health at home."

(Source: The Independent)

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Ancient people in the high-latitude Arctic had well-developed trade

Russian scientists have studied the Zhokhov site of an ancient population, which is located in the high-latitude Arctic. They have described in detail the way of life of the ancient people who lived there. Despite the area’s sparse population, the ancient people communicated with representatives of other territories and even exchanged goods with them through trade fairs.



The ancient people in the high-latitude Arctic had well-developed trade. Skull of a dog found on Zhokhov site.

The Arctic is mostly unpopulated by humans, although in some countries, including Russia, the United States and Norway, there are now industrial zones. These zones increase the average population density to 0.35 people / km2 but basically it does not exceed 0.03-0.04 people / km2.

Zhokhov Island, located at 76° N in the New Siberian Islands, 440 kilometers north of the modern coast of the East Siberian Sea, belongs to the High Arctic. Researchers discovered the remains of an ancient people here, the Zhokhov site, considered the earliest evidence for human habitation in the High Arctic. Researchers believe 25 to 50 people permanently resided in the area around 9300 to 8600 years ago.

In the remote past, Zhokhov island was a part of the vast plain formed due to drastic sea level drop during the last glacial maximum. Because of the post-glacial sea-level rise, this plain was flooded and eroded.

At present, the Zhokhov site is located in the southwestern part of the modern Zhokhov island, near the foot of a 120 meter hill, which shields it from the severe northwest wind. This place was very convenient for the ancient people. The hill served as an observation point, and because of the proximity to the coast, they always had a supply of driftwood carried in by the tide.

The scientists conducted excavations in permafrost and have already investigated a significant part of the monument—about 571 square meters. Many tools were found made of stone, bones, horns, tusks and wood.

These are hunting weapons, parts of sleds and home utensils. Among the lithic artifacts, there are many micropismatic blades, which were used as side-blades for composite tools that served as spears, darts, arrow points and knives.

Most of them were produced of silicious rocks of local origin, while some of them were made of exotic raw materials unusual for this part of the world, including obsidian and volcanic glass. The researchers found 79 such items.

The ancient people appreciated this material for its splitting ability and valued its extremely thin and sharp cutting edges. This material has high research value because each deposit of obsidian carries its own unique geochemical signature, which can identify the source of the material. Thus, researchers can learn more about contacts with people from other regions.

(Source: phys.org)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Aachen Cathedral

Aachen Cathedral, traditionally known in English as the Cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle, is a Roman Catholic church in Aachen, western Germany.

Construction of this palatine chapel, with its octagonal basilica and cupola, began c. 790–800 under the Emperor Charlemagne. Originally inspired by the churches of the Eastern part of the Holy Roman Empire, it was splendidly enlarged in the Middle Ages.



Charlemagne made the Frankish royal estate of Aachen, which had been serving a spa ever since the first century, his favorite abode. The main buildings of the Imperial Palace area were the Coronation Hall and the Palace Chapel – now Aachen Cathedral.

The Palatine Chapel is based on an octagonal ground plan, which is surrounded by an aisle and by tribunes above, and roofed with a dome. Facing the altar, the Emperor sat on the gallery; the Carolingian stone throne was the coronation seat of the kings of the Holy Roman Empire of German Nation from the Middle Ages until 1531.

The chapel itself is easily recognizable from later additions by its distinctive structure. An atrium on the western side and a portico led to the imperial apartments. The Gothic choir and a series of chapels that were added throughout the Middle Ages created the composite array of features that characterized the cathedral.

The interior of the chapel is embellished by antique columns that Charlemagne probably ordered to be brought from Rome and Ravenna.

(Source: UNESCO)

HERITAGE & TOURISM

FEBRUARY 26, 2019

Ambassador hails tourism for stronger Tehran-Tokyo ties

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Ambassador to Japan Morteza Rahmani-Movahed has welcomed development of tourism as a way to boost ties between Tehran and Tokyo.

“I think that tourism activity and (the) tourism relationship are very important for every kind of relationship between the two countries,” the Japan Times quoted Rahmani-Movahed as saying on Monday.

Not only are connections between individuals important, but they can help establish other areas of diplomacy such as economics and culture, the envoy said addressing a conference.

From a professional standpoint, Rahmani-Movahed hopes to continue improving bilateral relations overall, which encompass the political, cul-

tural and economic partnerships, the report said.

“I’m looking to improve my knowledge about the people of Japan.”

The Iranian embassy is also in the process of establishing several “fan tours” that will fly media and those working in the tourism industry from Tokyo to various destinations in the ancient county.

These tours are being organized with Japanese travel agencies as the ambassador deems they will help spread a more nuanced understanding of Iranian culture.

Rahmani-Movahed said in mid-September that Iran has its special attractions for all the tastes of Japanese tourists.

Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, Iran is expecting to increase its foreign arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million.



A Japanese couple pose for a selfie with ruins of Persepolis in the background while visiting the ancient city in southern Iran.

Envoys, cultural figures to mark Noruz in Tehran



HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Tehran’s Milad Tower will host an international ceremony in honor of Persian New Year or Noruz on February 28.

Ambassadors, diplomats and cultural figures of various countries have been invited for the event, Mehr reported on Monday.

Noruz, which usually falls on March 21st every year, marks the beginning of spring across a vast geographical area including Iran, Azerbaijan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Iraq. It is

registered on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO.

The event will stage programs by artists, performance troupes, and craftspeople from regional states. It will also present lectures on Noruz rituals and its history in the region.

Traditions that are practiced in Noruz vary from place to place, ranging from leaping over fires and streams in Iran to tightrope walking, lighting candles at house doors, traditional games such as horse racing or the traditional wrestling practiced in Kyrgyzstan.

Austrian nationals on tour of Iran’s Sistan-Baluchestan

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — A group of Austrian travelers has commenced an eight-day tour of Iran’s southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province, which was once shunned by potential foreign travelers.

“A group of 20 Austrian travelers arrived in the province on Saturday in order to visit historical and cultural attractions of the region,” a local tourism official said, IRNA reported.

Their destinations range from Hamoun [wetlands and surroundings] to Makran, a semi-desert coastal strip along the coast of the Gulf of Oman, Mojtaba Mirhosseini said, adding Lut desert and Taftan touristic area are on their itineraries.

Getting acquainted with regional rituals, everyday life of the locals, nomads, citizens and villagers, as well as their music and arts, are other objectives the group has set, he explained.

Talking on tourism market of the region, the official said



Did these epic Iranian sand dunes bury an entire civilization?

By Marco Ferrarese

On the outskirts of a lesser-known central Iranian town, a natural marvel hides an ancient, mythological secret. Marco Ferrarese goes digging for clues.

Breathing heavily, I set one foot in front of the other, dunking my heels into soft, cold sand. Above me, like a powerful light bulb hanging from the sky, the early spring sun reflects over 360 degrees of silent dunes.

The going is solitary and tough, but the sand breaks under my steps and supports me like a ladder, giving me the balance I need to keep climbing. I am resolute, and curious to see if this really is the marvel that buried an ancient civilization.

When I finally reach the top of the dune, pearls of cold sweat run down my spine and my vision blurs. I need to sit down and rest. Slowly, my eyes readjust to a new world of shimmering, undulating ochre sand, beautifully arranged before me as far as I can see.

“Legend says that once upon a time, there was an ancient town where you see the sand dunes today,” my host Sina tells me. He sits

before me, cross-legged, and holding a cup of aromatic tea in his right hand. His glasses fog each time he takes a sip.

This young man, whom I’m sat next to on a compressed-cotton mattress, is the shaggy-haired owner of Negar guest house. A dry, star-shaped fountain stands before us, marking the center of this traditional Iranian courtyard. The pallid sun sends some feeble early spring warmth our way. I’d met Sina serendipitously on Couchsurfing.com, after I posted an open request for hospitality in the well-known central Iranian city of Isfahan.

“You should come to my village instead,” Sina wrote back, extending an invitation to say in Varzaneh. I had never heard of this tiny dot on the map before. Only 105 kilometers southwest of Esfahan, Varzaneh is on the way to the barren expanses of the Dasht-e-Lut, Iran’s great southeastern desert. “You can stay in my guesthouse free of charge. We have giant sand dunes you can explore. It’s like the Sahara, but without the tourists and the hassle,” continued Sina. Even though we’d never met, he knew what I was looking for.

His offer sounded authentic. And as I sense, when I meet this artsy young man in keffiyeh (traditional headscarf) and glasses for the first time, he has a genuine desire to make his village known to the outside world. “We even made it into the Bradt Guide to Iran,” he says proudly, just minutes after my arrival.

Varzaneh is indeed the perfect place to get off Iran’s already not-so-well-beaten track. With frequent and cheap bus connections from Isfahan’s Jey bus terminal, it has a cluster of simple guesthouses, friendly locals, and a wide range of attractions for a tiny desert town. Most captivating of all is the quirky legend behind Varzaneh’s mysterious sand dunes—and Sina wastes no time in telling me all about it.

Like the barren distance between here and Isfahan, Varzaneh is surrounded by rocky land strewn with dry bushes, an environment that seems unlikely to ripple into mountains of sand. “Archaeologists have even found ancient pots and earthenware while digging around the dunes,” Sina says in support of his supernatural hypothesis.

I start believing the legend more and more

that many international and domestic travelers visited Sistan-Baluchestan over the past couple of years.

He, however, didn’t mention a specific number in relation for the inbound passengers.

In March 2017, provincial tourism authorities announced putting a new face to Sistan-Baluchestan was on their agenda in a bid to turn it into a tourist destination.

The province was long shunned by potential foreign travelers though it is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites, namely Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut desert, shared between it and Kerman province.

For mainstream Iranians, the name of Sistan-Baluchestan conjures up stories of drought, desiccated wetlands and dust storms. In the international scale foreigners may consider it a reminiscent of the big red blot on the Iran safety map.

As I discover the Gavkhooni wetland. This preserved ecosystem, about 25 kilometers from the dunes, hosts hundreds of migratory birds and a salt lake under the watchful eye of magma-born Black Mountain. I am confused: Sand dunes fallen from the sky, or a natural oasis cast in the middle of a rocky desert?

Regardless of whether or not the tales of the immortal community who may have once lived here are actually true, modern-day Varzaneh couldn’t be less immortal if it tried. At the heart of this quiet gem of maze-like alleys is a simple, central mosque. And it may be because I’m in town on a Friday, but the place is swarming with faithful residents, going in and out for their prayers.

Continuing along the riverside, I stumble upon a cylindrical construction that soars like a memory of Varzaneh’s old world. It’s a pigeon tower. Back in the 16th and 17th centuries, locals used them to breed thousands of birds and collect their guano (poop), once a prized fertilizer. The tower now lays abandoned, yet haunting. Like Varzaneh’s legend, I can’t shake it off my mind.

(Source: adventure.com)

X-rays might be a better way to communicate in space, team suggests

In the coming years, thousands of satellites, several next-generation space telescopes and even a few space habitats are expected to be launched into orbit. Beyond Earth, multiple missions are planned to be sent to the lunar surface, to Mars, and beyond. As humanity's presence in space increases, the volume of data that is regularly being back sent to Earth is reaching the limits of what radio communications can handle.

For this reason, NASA and other space agencies are looking for new methods for sending information back and forth across space. Already, optical communications (which rely on lasers to encode and transmit information) are being developed, but other more radical concepts are also being investigating. These include X-ray communications, which NASA is gearing up to test in space using their XCOM technology demonstrator.

Since its inception in 1958, NASA has relied solely on radio communications to stay in contact with all of its missions beyond Earth. Much of this has been handled by NASA's Deep Space Network (DSN), a worldwide network of giant radio antennas that has supported all of NASA's interplanetary missions and some missions to Low-Earth Orbit (LEO).

■ Crewed missions to Mars

But with renewed missions to the moon, crewed missions to Mars, and an expanding array of miniature satellites coming in the near-future, NASA will need a more efficient and robust communications system than ever before. So far, the use of lasers to encode and transmit data has shown promise, capable



of operating 10 to 100 times more efficiently than radio systems.

However, NASA is looking beyond these parts of the spectrum to accommodate the flow of information. This is where the concept of X-ray communications (XCOM) come into play, which offer even more in the way of advantages than lasers. For one, X-rays have much shorter wavelengths than both

radio waves and lasers and can broadcast in tighter beams.

This means that more information could be sent with the same amount of transmission power, and less energy would be needed over long distances -- at least in theory. In addition, X-rays also have the benefit of being able to penetrate the hot plasma that builds up as spacecraft re-enter Earth's atmosphere at

hypersonic speeds.

These plasma sheaths cause a communications blackout with spacecraft for several seconds, which prevents mission controllers from knowing if the crews are safe until they land. To test if such a system will work, technicians at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center have created the Modulated X-ray Source (MXS), which will be tested onboard the International Space Station (ISS) in the coming years.

■ Computing and navigation technology

To conduct this test, the MXS will be controlled using the NavCube -- a computing and navigation technology aboard the ISS -- to send encoded data via x-ray pulses from one end of the station to the other. These pulses (which will be fired at a rate of several times a second) will be received by the Neutron-star Interior Composition Explorer (NICER).

This first test will involve the transmission of GPS-signals, but the development team hopes to send something more complicated as well. As Jason Mitchell, an engineer at NASA's Goddard Spaceflight Center who helped develop the technology demonstration, explained in a NASA press release.

"We've waited a long time to demonstrate this capability. For some missions, XCOM may be an enabling technology due to the extreme distances where they must operate ... our goal for the immediate future is finding interested partners to help further develop this technology."

(Source: universetoday.com)

How a certain bacterium communicates and makes us sick

Researchers at Binghamton University, State University of New York have uncovered the unique way in which a type of Gram-negative bacterium delivers the toxins that make us sick. Understanding this mechanism may help design better ways to block and eventually control those toxins.

Assistant Professor Xin Yong and graduate student Ao Li from the Department of Mechanical Engineering, along with Associate Professor Jeffrey W. Schertz from the Department of Biological Sciences, published their findings in the Journal of Biological Chemistry.

The study looked at how bacteria communicate via the transportation of small molecules. Yong and Schertz explained that communication molecules stimulate the production of outer membrane vesicles. These small packages then bud off from the surface of the bacterium and contain highly concentrated toxins.

Originally, it was hypothesized that the communication molecule induced vesicle production by controlling gene expression, but that's not what's going on.

■ Communication molecules

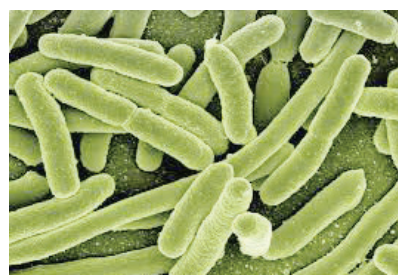
Yong and Schertz decided to work together on a model to understand more about how the communication molecule inserts itself into the membrane of bacteria in order to physically stimulate the production of these toxin delivery vehicles.

"It's hard to see the molecular detail at that level," explained Schertz. "But with Dr. Yong's expertise, we were able to build a computational model that helped us understand what actually goes on between individual molecules."

Yong's model allowed them to look at the details of the molecule and understand more about how it interacted with the membrane on a very short timescale.

"Our most important finding is that the communication molecule needs to enter the membrane in a very specific way," said Schertz. "It folds itself like a book, then will expand once it has entered the membrane."

Schertz and Yong explained that the communication molecule has both a head



and a tail that are known to be flexible, but they did not expect this type of change. In the future, they hope to test what would change in the interaction when the tail is removed or the head is modified.

While the study may sound fairly specific, it has some wider implications for all Gram-negative bacteria.

■ Gram-negative bacteria

"Gram-negative bacteria likely all have similar types of communication molecules. We focused on the PQS (Pseudomonas Quinolone Signal) molecule of Pseudomonas aeruginosa because it was the first discovered and is the best studied," said Yong. "Other Gram-negative species, such as E. coli, may be transferring their own communication molecules in a similar way."

Learning more about how Gram-negative bacteria communicate with each other can help researchers build a stronger understanding of multispecies interactions and how to eventually control these types of high-risk infections.

"This study was a testament to how beneficial interdisciplinary work can be," said Schertz. "We had reached a limit with what could be done experimentally and needed Dr. Yong's model to develop a rationale for how the molecule was interacting with the membrane. Most importantly, this work has generated a wealth of new questions that we are now continuing to investigate."

The study, "Molecular conformation affects the interaction of the Pseudomonas quinolone signal with the bacterial outer membrane," was published in the Journal of Biological Chemistry.

(Source: phys.org)

Microwaved grapes spit plasma, and scientists finally know why

If you were to drop a cut grape into the microwave and heat it, something incredible would happen: The little fruit would spit out tiny glowing jets that happen to be a weird state of matter called plasma.

And now, scientists have unraveled the mystery of why grapes ignite in this way: The microwaves create "hotspots" of electromagnetism, a new study revealed.

Viral internet videos have shown this kitchen light show, which occurs when a halved grape (with the halves still connected by skin) gets blasted with radiation in a microwave. Tiny fountains of brilliant plasma -- gas charged with ions -- crackle from the spot where the grape halves connect. It's an astonishing sight, but even though videos showing this phenomenon have existed for more than two decades, scientists didn't know why such grape pyrotechnics happened.

To get to the bottom of the mechanics, Pablo Bianucci, an associate professor in the Department of Physics at Concordia University in Montreal, and colleagues recently filmed a variety of grapes, hydrogel beads and water-filled quail eggs using high-speed cameras shooting 1,000 frames per second. The researchers used household microwaves with disabled turntables, operating at 2.4 gigahertz; the researchers also modified a microwave so they could capture thermal imaging, using a special door that was mostly transparent to the wavelengths seen by a thermal camera.

■ Fruit's ability

Results showed that a microwaved grape's size and composition -- particularly the amount of water it contains -- determine the fruit's ability to light up, Bianucci told Live Science in an email.

Here's why: Size and water content affect how grapes -- or other small spheres, such as beads, berries, grape tomatoes or olives -- interact with microwave radiation, Bianucci explained.

"There is a lucky coincidence in the fact that the grapes have both the right composition (mostly water) and size" so that a single wavelength of microwave



radiation fits almost entirely into the grape, meaning the grape can "trap" microwaves, he said.

When two connected halves of a grape are bombarded with radiation, microwaves that become trapped in the tissues of each half can use the connecting skin as a bridge, "hopping" from one grape hemisphere to the other, according to Bianucci.

■ Electromagnetic field

"This results in a 'hotspot' with a much stronger electromagnetic field in between the grapes," he said. "It is this strongly amplified field that results in the generation of the plasma."

Prior to the researchers' experiments, it was widely thought that microwaved grapes produced plasma through surface conductivity, with the ion-rich flap of skin connecting the grape halves transmitting an electrical current that generated the plasma.

While this was a plausible explanation, it had never been verified in a peer-reviewed study, and that prompted study co-author Aaron Slepko, an associate professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at Trent University in Ontario, Canada, to put grapes into microwaves for science.

The team discovered that irradiated objects produced plasma even when the objects were whole and there was no skin "bridge," as long as there was physical contact between the two halves. Even whole grapes would produce plasma about 60 percent of the time -- if they were touching another grape.

(Source: livescience.com)

New biochemical pathway that may develop more resilient crop varieties

By manipulating the chloroplast-associated protein degradation (CHLORAD) pathway, scientists can modify how plants respond to their environment. For example, the plant's ability to tolerate stresses such as high salinity can be improved.

The researchers hope that their results, published in Science, will open the way to new crop improvement strategies, which will be vital as we face the prospect of delivering food security for a population that is projected to reach nearly 10 billion by 2050.

The CHLORAD pathway helps to regulate structures inside plant cells called chloroplasts. Chloroplasts are the organelles that define plants. Along with many other metabolic, developmental and signalling functions, chloroplasts are responsible for photosynthesis -- the process whereby sunlight energy is harnessed to power the cellular activities of life.

Consequently, chloroplasts are essential, not only for plants but also for the myriad ecosystems that depend on plants, and for agriculture.

Chloroplasts are composed of thousands of different proteins, most of which are made elsewhere in the cell and imported by the organelle. These proteins must all be very carefully regulated to ensure that the organelle keeps functioning properly. The CHLORAD pathway works by removing and disposing of unnecessary or damaged chloroplast proteins; hence the name CHLORAD, which stands for "chloroplast-associated protein degradation."

Professor Paul Jarvis, lead researcher, said: "Two decades on from the identification of the chloroplast protein import machinery -- which delivers new proteins to chloroplasts -- our discovery of the CHLORAD pathway reveals for the first time how individual, unwanted proteins are removed from chloroplasts."

Researcher, Dr. Qihua Ling, said: "Our previous studies showed that proteins in the chloroplast membranes are digested by a protein degradation system outside of chloroplasts. So, the key question was: How are chloroplast proteins extracted from the membrane to enable this to happen? Our discovery of the CHLORAD system answers this question, and we identified two novel proteins that act in the process."

Co-researcher, Dr. William Broad, added: "Chloroplasts are eukaryotic organelles that originated more than a billion years ago from photosynthetic bacteria, by a process called endosymbiosis."

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

Curiosity rover operating normally after sudden boot-up issue, NASA says

NASA's Curiosity rover is now up and running after a reboot issue caused some concerns. It is once again on the mission to discover new things about Mars.

Curiosity rover experienced a problem recently when an issue during boot-up halted all the rover's planned activities for the day and triggered the rover's protective safe mode.

Incidentally, this happened just days after NASA said goodbye to its sister rover, Opportunity. Fortunately, the rover was taken out of safe mode by Feb. 19, and it is currently operating normally. In fact, it has since been successfully booted up more than 30 times without any issues.

According to NASA scientists, the rover experienced a one-time computer reset, although they are still unsure as to why the issue happened. As such, they are gathering relevant data for analysis, and science operations are placed on hold until they better understand what really happened.

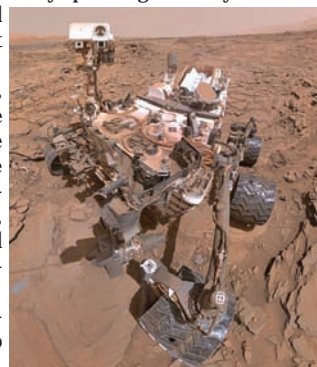
"In the short term, we are limiting commands to the vehicle to minimize changes to its memory.

We don't want to destroy any evidence of what might have caused the computer reset," said Curiosity's deputy project manager Steven Lee.

Curiosity rover is just one of two NASA spacecrafts currently studying the Martian surface, the other being InSight, which is a stationary lander that arrived on the planet just last Nov. 26. As mentioned, there was another rover on the planet, Opportunity, which was on mission for over 14 years.

Curiosity was designed to explore and study ancient environments that may have once supported life. For now, Curiosity is exploring a region on Mount Sharp called Glen Torridon, which is said to be rich in clay minerals.

(Source: techtimes.com)



Astronomers just detected the most distant Solar System object ever seen

At a staggering distance from the sun, astronomers have just found what they think might be the most distant object ever identified in the Solar System.

They've yet to characterize or define it, but it orbits the sun at a massive distance of 140 astronomical units (AU), which puts it 3.5 times farther out than Pluto.

Its predecessor, a dwarf planet discovered late last year orbiting at 120 AU, was nicknamed FarOut. So, naturally, the new object is FarFarOut.

The discovery was made by Scott Sheppard of the Carnegie Institution for Science, who is leading the search for the mysterious Planet X. He and his colleagues haven't found the hypothesized giant yet -- but they're finding a lot of other things.

There was FarOut. Also last year, they announced the discovery of another dwarf planet, The Goblin, at 65 AU at its perihelion; and 12 previously unseen moons orbiting Jupiter.

Sheppard was scheduled to give a talk about the search on February 20 in Washington DC, but it was postponed due to a snow storm. Rather than sit around twiddling his thumbs, as Science Magazine reported, he got to analyzing data.

Then, he spotted something -- a tiny object over 20 billion kilometers (12 billion miles) from the sun. He announced the discovery in his rescheduled talk (you can skip to 39:30 for the relevant part, but the whole talk is great).

As we already saw with The Goblin, since the orbits of these faraway objects can be influenced by the hypothetical planet, they could serve as a signpost to figuring out where it might be.

"These distant objects are like breadcrumbs leading us to Planet X," Sheppard said last year.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Early life stress alters helping behavior of meerkat offspring, new study finds

Parents make sacrifices to allow their children to have better lives than they did, but this isn't the case for Kalahari meerkat mothers, according to a new University of Michigan study.

When these mothers feel stressed, it can alter the growth and behavior in their daughters in such a way that benefits the mothers at their child's expense, said U-M researcher Ben Dantzer.

Daughters from stressed meerkat mothers -- but not sons -- grow more slowly early in life, thus reducing their future chances of reproducing on their own. Daughters from stressed mothers instead redirect their energy to helping to rear the future offspring of their mother, which should directly benefit their mothers.

"Because early life growth or body mass in daughters is a major determinant of their future reproductive potential, our results highlight that early life stress should reduce the future reproductive success of daughters," said Dantzer, assistant professor of psychology and ecology and evolutionary biology, and the study's lead author.

■ Profound influence

Maternal characteristics can have a profound influence on offspring, which are referred to as maternal effects. Dantzer and colleagues conducted experiments to test how stress



hormones (glucocorticoids) of pregnant females affected the growth and cooperative behavior of offspring.

Seven meerkat groups that produced 26 litters were observed across three years. Some pregnant mothers were given cortisol, which didn't affect the pups' survival rates, for the study. When the pups' weight and behavior were tracked, the daughters whose mothers were treated with cortisol grew slowly, but were more willing to help raise other pups produced by their mother in the future, the study showed.

Fathers can't nurse the pups, but they do "babysit" and feed offspring. These males did not have any role in the effects observed by the researchers who only treated the mothers,

Dantzer said.

Most studies of maternal effects in nonhuman animals focus on how mothers can positively impact their offspring, such as increasing their survival or improving their chances at reproducing on their own, Dantzer said.

■ Affecting offspring

The results from this study instead highlight that stressed mothers could affect offspring in such a way that primarily benefits the mothers by increasing the likelihood that the offspring stick around to help care for their future siblings.

Many studies involving humans show that early life adversity -- such as abuse or maternal stress -- has long-term consequences on offspring. Does it influence their likelihood to help their parents in the future or help take care of their younger siblings?

Dantzer didn't know the answer, but he said it is an interesting possibility given that the social group structure of humans (where older siblings may babysit and feed their younger siblings) is similar as in meerkats.

In addition to Dantzer, the study's other researchers are affiliated with universities and projects in the United Kingdom, South Africa, Switzerland and Germany.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Baluch women to be trained in workshops equipped by Japan

W O M E N d e s k **TEHRAN** – Women of the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan are to be trained in several workshops equipped by Japan.

The workshops aim at better training of women living in the deprived areas of the province, IRNA reported.

An amount of 75,000 euros has been allocated by Japanese Embassy in Iran to supply equipment used in the workshops.

Women receiving the facilities are either taking care of their families or have been forced to take a leading role in their families because their husband or father are not alive or can't work.

The money is part of a deal between Japanese Ambassador to Iran Mitsugu Saito and Iran's Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO).

“TVTO has provided good bilateral cooperation opportunity with Japan in a bid to eliminate poverty and better use unexploited potentials in Sistan-Baluchestan,” said Khodadad Owliai, director of the provincial TVTO.

The allocated budget will help improve the lives of people in impoverished areas, he said.

The funds will be used to equip Sistan-Baluchestan technical and vocational training centers, especially in Chabahar, Zabol and Zahedan.

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Broccoli cheddar soup

“My husband loves broccoli cheddar soup. There are tons of variations and options to make this soup your own. You can add extra veggies, different cheeses, garlic to your onions, a little nutmeg to the finished soup, green onions, sour cream, etc. The list goes on and on. Make it your own! Serve topped with cheese!”

■ Ingredients:

1 tablespoon butter
1/2 onion, chopped
1/4 cup melted butter
1/4 cup flour
2 cups milk
2 cups chicken stock
1 1/2 cups coarsely chopped broccoli florets
1 cup matchstick-cut carrots
1 stalk celery, thinly sliced
2 1/2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
Salt and ground black pepper to taste



■ Directions:

Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a skillet over medium-high heat. Saute onion in hot butter until translucent, about 5 minutes. Set aside.

Whisk 1/4 cup melted butter and flour together in a large saucepan over medium-low heat; cook until flour loses its granular texture, adding 1 to 2 tablespoons of milk if necessary to keep the flour from burning, 3 to 4 minutes.

Gradually pour milk into flour mixture while whisking constantly. Stir chicken stock into milk mixture. Bring to a simmer; cook until flour taste is gone and mixture is thickened, about 20 minutes. Add broccoli, carrots, sauteed onion, and celery; simmer until vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes.

Stir Cheddar cheese into vegetable mixture until cheese melts. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

LEARN ENGLISH

Weather Report

A: Those are today's top stories. Now let's go to John for the weather. John, what does the **forecast** look like for our weekend travelers?

B: **I'm afraid we're in for a rough** weekend, Mark. There is a storm system moving through the East Coast. It will be **drizzling** all day today, and there's a 60 percent **chance of thunderstorms** this evening. It will be warm and humid all weekend. In the Midwest, expect strong winds and a low of around 40 degrees.

A: That's pretty **chilly** for the summer! Will it rain on Saturday?
B: Unfortunately, yes. It will be clear early Saturday morning but there is a high chance of **shower** and thunderstorms later in the day. There is a severe thunderstorm warning for some parts of the Southeast. Folks in those areas might see some **hail** and flooding, especially in areas that have been experiencing record high rainfalls.

A: That certainly sounds like a **dreary** Saturday.

B: It gets better on Sunday, though. The storm systems move east and the skies will clear up at night. It will still be rather cool, with highs in the low 50s. The West Coast will be experiencing some unusually chilly weather, but at least the sun will come out. I advise weekend travelers to be careful, especially while driving. Back to you, Mark.

A: Thanks John, and there you have it! Looks like it's a weekend to stay at home!

■ Key vocabulary

forecast: a description of what is likely to happen in the future, based on the information that you have now

I'm afraid: used to politely tell someone something that may annoy, upset, or disappoint them

be in for something: if someone is in for something unpleasant, it is going to happen to them

rough: with strong wind or storms

drizzle: a light fall of rain

thunderstorm: fall of rain accompanied by lightning and thunder

chance: probability

chilly: chilly weather or places are cold enough to make you feel uncomfortable

shower: a short period of rain or snow

hail: rain that is frozen into chunks of ice

dreary: dull and making you feel sad or bored

■ Supplementary vocabulary

tornado: a violent, rotating column of air

hurricane: a powerful, spiraling storm that brings heavy winds and rain

blizzard: a severe storm condition characterized by low temperatures, strong winds, and heavy snow

blackout: Loss of lighting or communication; power outage

heatwave: a prolonged period of excessively hot weather, which may be accompanied by high humidity

(Source: irlanguage.com)

The splendorous birth of Hazrat Fatimah (SA)

1 → And by the contents of the Quranic chapter Kawthar, Fatimah Zahra (SA) was made the gushing spring for the continuation of the prophet's lineage and the guiding Imams, and great blessings through the centuries and ages until Doom's Day.

This heavenly lady had nine names each being more meaningful than the other; Fatimah, Siddiqah, Tahirah, Mubarakah, Zakiyah, Radhiyah, Mardhiyah, Muhaddithah, Zahra of which each is a statement of the qualities and blessings of her blessed being.

It is enough to say that her famous name “Fatimah” contains the greatest of good tidings for the followers of her school, this being because it is from the root word - “Fatm”, meaning, being separated or taken off from Milk. According to one hadith narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) he asked the commander of the faithful Ali (AS):

“Do you know why my daughter was named Fatimah?” Ali replied:

“Please say so.”

He said:

“Because she and the Shi'a, the followers of her school, are separated from the fires of Hell.”

From among her names the name “Zahra” also has a special luminosity and brightness; It was asked of Imam Sadiq (AS):

Why do they call Fatimah “Zahra”?

He replied; Because “Zahra” means shining, and Fatimah was such that when she stood in the “Mihrab” of prayer her light was a radiance for the inhabitants of the skies (heavens), just as the light of the stars is for the inhabitants of earth (is radiant). Therefore she was given the name “Zahra”.

When “Khadijah”, who was a lady of status famous for her greatness, married the Prophet of Islam (S), the women of Mecca broke off their relations with her, saying; she married a poor, orphaned young man and has lowered her personal status!

This situation continued until Khadijah became pregnant and the fetus was none other than Fatimah Zahra (SA).

When it came time for the birth she sent for the women of Quraish and asked them to



come to her aid in this sensitive hour full of pain and suffering, and not leave her alone. But she was confronted with this cold, painful answer:

“You did not listen to our advice, you married the orphan of Abu Talib who has no wealth, and we will not come to your aid!”

The faithful Khadijah was greatly saddened by this ugly, meaningless message but deep in her heart the light of hope shone, that her God would not leave her alone at a time like this.

The difficult, critical moments of giving birth began; she was alone in her home, and not a woman who could aid her was there. Her heart grew heavier, and the roaring waves of the people's unkindness tormented her pure soul.

Suddenly there shone a flash in the horizon of her soul, she opened her eyes and saw four women near her, and she became greatly worried.

One of the four women called:

“Be not afraid, nor sad. Your kind God has sent us to your aid, we are your sisters.”

I am Sarah! And this is Asiah the wife of the pharaoh, who will be one of your friends in heaven. The other is Maryam, daughter of Omran; and this fourth that you see is the sister of Musa ibn Omran; Kolthoom!

We have come so that at this hour we may

be of aid to you.

And they remained with her until Fatimah (SA) the Lady of Islam Opened her eyes to the world.

Yes, as evidence to this:

“(As for) Those who say, Our Lord is Allah, Then continue in the right way, the angels descend upon them, saying: Fear not, nor be grieved.” Here in addition to Angels, women of high worldly status rushed to the aid of the faithful persevering Khadijah.

The birth of this auspicious child so pleased the Prophet (S) that he began speaking in the praise and eulogy of God, and the tongues of the ill-wishes who called him “Abtar” were forever silenced.

God gave tidings of this blessed child to the Prophet in the Quranic kawthar, saying: Surely We have given you the Kawthar

Therefore pray to your Lord and make a sacrifice; surely your enemy is the one who shall be without posterity.

■ **The extraordinary love of the Prophet (S) for Hazrat Zahra (SA)**

“Whenever I long for paradise, I kiss the throat of Fatimah.”

All of the historians and masters of the hadith have written that the Prophet (S) had an astonishing attachment to his daughter, Fatimah (SA).

It is certain that the Prophet's affection

was not only because of their relationship as father and child, even though this sentiment swelled the prophet's being. The phrases and words the Prophet (S) spoke when he expressed his affection for his daughter Fatimah (SA) showed that there are other standards being propounded.

This affection is one of a kind. Love of the beloved of God is love of God.

From the many narratives that have come to us on this subject it is enough to just mention the following ones from the famous books of shi'a and sunni;

“There is no man more loved by the Prophet (S) than “the commander of the Faithful” Ali (AS) and no women more loved than Fatimah (SA).”

It is interesting that a large group of these hadiths were reported by Aisha.

When this honorable verse was revealed. “Make not the calling of the messenger among you as your calling of one another.”

The Muslims did not address the prophet as “O' Muhammad” anymore, instead they said: “O' Messenger of God.”

Fatimah (SA) says:

After this verse was revealed I didn't dare call my father as (father dear!), and when I went to him I would say, “O' Messenger of God”.

One or two times I repeated this address.

I saw that the prophet (S) became upset and turned face away from me. The third time he turned to me and said:

“O' Fatimah this verse was not revealed for you, and not for your family, and descendants. You are of me and I am of you. This was revealed in relation to the oppressors and bad-disposition, ill-mannered of Quraish.”

Then he added this surprising spirit-nurturing sentence:

“Say (father dear), for this word is more life giving for the heart and more pleasing for God”

Yes, the soothing music of Fatimah's “father dear” did the same thing to the prophet's soul as a spring breeze would to the tree's delicate blossoms.

(Source: al-islam.org)

Women managing 400 knowledge-based companies in Iran

W O M E N d e s k **TEHRAN** – Out of the total number of 4,070 knowledge-based companies working in Iran, about 400 companies are established and being managed by women, Zeinab Hamidzadeh presidential advisor for science and technology said here on Sunday.

Iran enjoys a brilliant performance for women's presence in developing knowledge-based economy, IRNA quoted Hamidzadeh as saying.

According to the latest report released



by World Economic Forum on gender gaps, Iranian women enjoy equal level of high education in different levels with men, the official added.

The annual income of knowledge-based companies in Iran is 4 trillion rials (nearly \$95 million) and about 136,000 people are active in these companies, she explained.

Iran also enjoys a satisfactory situation in innovation index, noted Hamidzadeh adding, Iran's rank in this area has reached to 60th from 120 and it has the highest rate of

innovation.

Referring to formation of different successful start-up in Iran, Hamidzadeh noted that many start-ups are running by women and the role of women in managing start-ups is essential.

The program of returning non-resident elites has also been considered as one of the successful programs of the scientific deputy, stated the official adding during the last four years, 1,109 Iranian specialists have returned to the country including 220 female elites.

Half of Iranian women, over 45, suffer osteoporosis: expert

W O M E N d e s k **TEHRAN** – Fifty percent of Iranian women over the age of 45, and 90 percent over the age of 75, suffer osteoporosis, IRNA quoted Mina Kermani, rheumatologist, as saying on Sunday.

Osteoporosis is referred to as the silent epidemic disease of the century, she noted.

Currently, 7 million Iranian people suffer osteoporosis, stated Kermani, adding that osteoporosis not only imposes high treatment costs both on the government and families of affected people, but causes a lot of deaths or disabilities.

Women are more exposed to osteoporosis than men, she said elaborating that averagely, all over the world, one in every three woman suffer osteoporosis while this number stands at one in every 12 men.

At the age of 30, the bones of a healthy person reaches their hardest. If the physical activity is low or the diet is not healthy and contains a small amount of calcium, gradually, bone calcium is reduced, it become fragile, and osteoporosis is caused, the physician explained.

In postmenopausal women, the prevalence of osteoporosis is increased due to the stopping of female hormones secretion and the important role these hormones play in bone strength, Kermani stated.

Osteoporosis is preventable and women can stop osteoporosis with proper diet and exercise, she added.

Osteoporosis is a condition that weakens bones, making them fragile and more likely to break. It develops slowly over several years and is often only diagnosed when a minor fall or sudden impact causes a bone fracture.



The most common injuries in people with osteoporosis are: wrist fractures and hip fractures.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ب

Some 4,000 out-of-school children go to school

Some 3,843 out-of-school children living on the outskirts of cities nationwide went to school within the past two months and a half, deputy for scientific, cultural and social matters at Budget and Planning Organization has said.

Out-of-school children are more vulnerable to social harms and going back to school would safeguard them from such harms, IRNA news agency quoted Saeed Namaki as saying on Thursday.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

«by-, bye-»

■ **Meaning:** near, secondary, past

■ **For example:** Several innocent **bystanders** were killed by the blast.

PHRASAL VERB

Wash something away

■ **Meaning:** to get rid of unhappy feelings, thoughts, or memories

■ **For example:** My anxiety was washed away.

IDIOM

Have a sweet tooth

■ **Explanation:** to have a propensity and preference for eating sugary foods

■ **For example:** if you're looking for a snack, go talk to Jenny—she has a real sweet tooth, so she probably keeps candy bars in her desk.

۳هزار و ۸۴۳ دانش آموز بازمانده از تحصیل به کلاس درس رفتند

معاون امور علمی، فرهنگی و اجتماعی سازمان برنامه و بودجه گفت: سه هزار و

۸۴۳ دانش آموز بازمانده از تحصیل مناطق حاشیه نشین کشور در مدت ۲ ماه و

نیم به کلاس درس بازگردانده شدند.

به گزارش خبرگزاری ایرنا سعید نمکی عصر پنجشنبه افزود: هر کدام از بازماندگان

تحصیل در معرض آسیب های اجتماعی هستند که بازگشت آنها به تحصیل باعث

مصونیت از آسیب ها می شود.

After Putin's warning, Russian TV lists nuclear targets in U.S.

➔ With tensions rising over Russian fears that the United States might deploy intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe as a Cold War-era arms-control treaty unravels, Putin has said Russia would be forced to respond by placing hypersonic nuclear missiles on submarines near U.S. waters.

The United States says it has no immediate plans to deploy such missiles in Europe and has dismissed Putin's warnings as disingenuous propaganda. It does not currently have ground-based intermediate-range nuclear missiles that it could place in Europe.

However, its decision to quit the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty over an alleged Russian violation, something Moscow denies, has freed it to start developing and deploying such missiles.

Putin has said Russia does not want a new arms race, but has also dialed up his military rhetoric.

Some analysts have seen his approach as a tactic to try to re-engage the United States in talks about the strategic balance between



the two powers, something Moscow has long pushed for, with mixed results.

In the Sunday evening broadcast, Dmitry Kiselyov, presenter of Russia's main weekly TV news show 'Vesti Nedeli', showed a map

of the United States and identified several targets he said Moscow would want to hit in the event of a nuclear war.

The targets, which Kiselyov described as U.S. presidential or military command

centres, also included Fort Ritchie, a military training center in Maryland closed in 1998, McClellan, a U.S. Air Force base in California closed in 2001, and Jim Creek, a naval communications base in Washington state.

Kiselyov, who is close to the Kremlin, said the "Tsirkon" ('Zircon') hypersonic missile that Russia is developing could hit the targets in less than five minutes if launched from Russian submarines.

Hypersonic flight is generally taken to mean travelling through the atmosphere at more than five times the speed of sound.

"For now, we're not threatening anyone, but if such a deployment takes place, our response will be instant," he said.

Kiselyov is one of the main conduits of state television's strongly anti-American tone, once saying Moscow could turn the United States into radioactive ash.

Asked to comment on Kiselyov's report, the Kremlin said on Monday it did not interfere in state TV's editorial policy.

(Source: Reuters)

Trump due in Vietnam on Tuesday evening ahead of Kim summit

U.S. President Donald Trump will arrive in Vietnam Tuesday evening, Vietnam's foreign ministry said Monday, ahead of his second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Trump will meet Vietnam's president, who is also general secretary of the ruling Communist Party, Nguyen Phu Trong, on Wednesday morning, the ministry said.

Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong Un hold a second summit this week with no real expectation of a final deal on ridding the North of nuclear weapons but hope raised on Monday for an official peace on the peninsula at long last.

The two leaders are due to meet in the Vietnamese capital, 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.

There they pledged to work toward the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, but their vague agreement has produced few results. U.S. Democratic senators and security officials have warned Trump against cutting a deal that would do little to curb North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

Trump, speaking in Washington on the eve of his departure for Vietnam, said he believed he saw eye to eye with Kim and that they had developed "a very, very good relationship".

But he appeared to play down any hope of a major breakthrough, saying he would be happy as long as North Korea maintained its pause on weapons testing.

"I'm not in a rush. I don't want to rush anybody," Trump said. "I just don't want testing. As long as there's no testing, we're happy."

North Korea conducted its last nuclear test, its sixth, in September 2017. It last tested an intercontinental ballistic missile in November 2017.

Before the freeze, the North conducted a series of tests

that it says has given it powerful nuclear bombs and missiles capable of delivering them to the U.S. mainland.

The United States has for years demanded North Korea's complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, before any concessions will be granted. North Korea denounced that stance as unilateral and "gangster like".

But in recent days, Trump has signaled a possible softening, saying he would love to be able to remove tough sanctions if there was meaningful progress on denuclearization.

Trump said he and Kim expected to make progress at the summit and again held out the promise that denuclearization would help North Korea develop its economy.

He scoffed at critics of his handling of North Korea, and added that Chinese President Xi Jinping has been supportive of U.S. efforts.

■ Limited deal?

Speculation the Trump administration is open to a limited deal at the summit has raised expectations the two sides might declare an end to a technical state of hostilities that has existed on the Korean peninsula since the 1950-1953 Korean War ended with an armistice, not a truce.

A South Korean presidential spokesman told reporters in Seoul the two sides might agree to a formal end of the war, which the North has long called for as a major step towards normalizing ties.

"The possibility is there," the spokesman, Kim Eui-kyeom told a briefing in Seoul when asked if an end-of-war declaration was on the agenda.

In return, North Korea could allow international inspectors to observe the dismantlement of its nuclear reactor at Yongbyon, analysts say.

The United States could also agree to the opening U.S.-North Korea liaison offices and to allow some inter-Korean projects, provided the North takes steps towards denu-



clearization.

South Korea's President Moon Jae-in, who supports opening up to old rival North Korea, praised both Trump and Kim in comments in Seoul, and said those opposed to better ties on the peninsula, and between North Korea and the United States, should "discard such biased perspectives".

Trump will arrive in Vietnam on Tuesday evening, Vietnam's foreign ministry said. He will meet Vietnam President Nguyen Phu Trong, who is also general secretary of the ruling Communist Party, on Wednesday morning, the ministry said.

Vietnam has released few details about arrangements for the summit including its specific venue or timing.

Kim is making his way to Vietnam by train and passed through the Chinese city of Hengyang at about 3.30 p.m. (0730 GMT), South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported.

That means he would be due to arrive in Vietnam early on Tuesday. No official details of his travel have been released.

(Source: agencies)

UK to impose full ban on Lebanon's Hezbollah

The British government is to impose a full ban on activities of the Lebanese Resistance Movement Hezbollah as London becomes increasingly irritated by the group's political and military success in the Middle East.

UK Home Secretary (interior minister) Sajid Javid said on Monday that the government will designate the entire Hezbollah organization as a terrorist entity as of Friday subject to the approval of the parliament.

Javid, an extreme right-wing politician of the Pakistani origin, said the UK government

was no longer able to maintain a distinction between Hezbollah's political and military activities and thus will include the group's political unit in its blacklist.

"Hezbollah is continuing in its attempts to destabilize the fragile situation in the Middle East – and we are no longer able to distinguish between their already banned military wing and the political party," said Javid, adding, "Because of this, I have taken the decision to proscribe the group in its entirety," he added in a statement.

Britain has become increasingly angered by Hezbollah's role in an anti-militancy cam-

paign in Syria, where London has for the past eight years supported terrorist groups opposed to the government of President Bashar al-Assad.

Hezbollah has played a major role in helping Assad purge the Syrian territory from terrorist groups. The intervention, once criticized inside Lebanon, has helped the resistance movement increase its political clout as the group now controls three ministries, a first on the history of the Lebanese government.

The Israeli regime swiftly welcomed Javid's announcement with Israeli Security

Minister Gilad Erdan saying in a tweet that the European Union, which unlike the United States has opposed designation of Hezbollah as terrorist entity, should follow suit.

There was no official reaction from Hezbollah although lawmakers representing the group in the Lebanese parliament said UK decision was a "violation of sovereignty".

UK's move to outlaw Hezbollah in its entirety would mean that anyone expressing support for the religiously-oriented organization could end up in UK jail for up to 10 years.

(Source: agencies)

Global arms control architecture 'collapsing': UN

The international arms control system is facing collapse, the United Nations chief said Monday, as he urged Russia and the U.S. to stop the imminent demise of a crucial nuclear treaty.



Secretary General Antonio Guterres used an address to the U.N.'s Conference on Disarmament to warn that one of the cornerstones of diplomatic achievement over the last half century – arms control – was in "grave danger."

"I will be blunt. Key components of the international arms control architecture are collapsing," Guterres said.

The United States has already begun the process of withdrawing from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, in response to Moscow's deployment of the 9M729 missile, prompting Russia to announce its own withdrawal.

"We simply cannot afford to return to the unrestrained nuclear competition of the darkest days of the Cold War," Guterres said.

"I call on the parties to the INF Treaty to use the time remaining to engage in sincere dialogue on the various issues that have been raised," he added. "It is very important that this treaty be preserved."

The collapse of the 1987 treaty, which banned ground-launched missiles with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometers, has sparked fears of a new arms race in Europe.

The U.S. withdrawal is not set to take effect until August, giving a six-month window to save the treaty, but few expect this to happen and NATO has warned the world should ready itself for the pact's scrapping.

Guterres recalled that despite a mutual lack of trust, the U.S., the former Soviet Union and later Russia agreed to a series of arms control agreements through a commitment to strict verification, which became "one of the hallmarks of international security."

He voiced hope that nations would recommit to the principles of verification and compliance to forge urgently needed deals covering nuclear weapons and new technologies like "hypersonic weapons that could be used to launch attacks at unprecedented speed."

U.N.-backed negotiations are under way to govern the use of so-called killer robots, or weapons that can deploy lethal force without a human making the final decision to launch a strike.

But those talks have moved at a glacial pace, with activists accusing major powers of dragging their feet.

Guterres warned that new technologies are changing the arms control landscape "in ways we do not yet understand and cannot even imagine."

"We need a new vision for arms control in the complex international security environment of today," he added.

(Source: AFP)

Incumbent Macky Sall wins Senegal presidential election

President Macky Sall has won Sunday's presidential election in Senegal, the country's prime minister said.

Mahammed Dionne, citing a provincial tally, said Sall garnered at least 57 percent of the votes cast in Sunday's poll.

"We must congratulate President Macky Sall for his first-round election victory," Dionne said early on Monday at a news conference in Dakar, the capital.

"Our gathered results show that our candidate has largely won the election in the 13 out of 14 regions in the country. We can expect a minimum of 57 percent. From tomorrow, our candidate restarts his work putting this country on the path toward development," Dionne added.

More than 6.5 million people registered to take part in the vote. The electoral commission has not made any announcement. Official results are expected no later than Friday.

President Sall is seeking a second and final term in office.

A candidate must win more than 50 percent of the votes to avoid a runoff.

If no candidate has won the required votes, the two candidates with the most votes go to a second round to be held on March 24.

Meanwhile, opposition candidates said there was no winner in Sunday's poll.

"There is no question, a second round is unavoidable even if some media try to announce a victory in the first round," Idrissa Seck, one of the main candidates in the poll, said.

"I ask them to respect the Senegalese people's choice, a choice for change," Seck added.

A youth movement that propelled Sall into office in 2012 has condemned the announcement by the prime minister.

"It seems as if the government doesn't want peace in the country. They are ready to confiscate power. Senegalese will not accept this; to give results while the commission is counting votes," Fadel Barro, coordinator of Y'en Marre (Fed Up in the local Wolof language) movement, said.

"I ask people to stand up. We will not accept anyone to destroy the stability of our country," he added.

Three other candidates also competed in the election, the first since a 2016 referendum cut short the presidential mandate from seven to five years.

A president can now only serve two five-year terms in office. On Monday morning, life was back to normal on the streets of the Dakar, with people going on about their daily lives.

The city is home to more than 20 percent of the country's registered voters.

Senegal has one of the fastest growing economies on the continent and is considered to be one of the most stable democracies on the continent.

Since independence from France in 1960, the West African country has had three peaceful transfers of power.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

'U.S. source of all plots against Venezuela'

The Venezuelan deputy foreign minister has described the United States as the source of all plots against his country, urging the international community to denounce Washington's meddlesome measures.

In an exclusive interview with Press TV on Sunday night, Ruben Dario Molina said that the US has taken some unilateral measures against Venezuela and it has been urging others to do so as well.

Molina slammed Washington for taking over the oil industry in the region and freezing millions of dollars of Venezuelan money.

He also called for international solidarity with his country and asked the international community to denounce the American aggression against Venezuela.

■ Pressure mounts on Maduro as U.S. plans 'concrete steps'

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro is facing growing international pressure after his troops repelled foreign aid convoys at the country's borders, with the United States threatening new sanctions and Brazil urging allies to join a "liberation effort".

Juan Guaido, Venezuela's self-declared interim president, urged the international community on Sunday to consider "all measures" to overthrow Maduro after clashes at border crossings left at least three protesters dead and 300 others wounded near the Brazilian border.

The opposition leader's call came in the face of a meeting of the regional Lima Group of nations in Bogota on Monday that will be attended by U.S. Vice President Mike Pence.

Pence is set to announce "concrete steps" and "clear actions" at the meeting to address the crisis, a senior U.S. administration official said on Sunday, declining to provide details.



The U.S. last month imposed crippling sanctions on the OPEC nation's oil industry, squeezing its top source of foreign revenue.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he was confident that "Maduro's days are numbered," blaming the border violence on armed supporters known as "colectivos".

"We're aimed at a singular mission - ensuring the Venezuelan people get the democracy they so richly deserve," he said on CNN's State of the Union programme on Sunday.

■ 'Liberation effort'

President Donald Trump has in the past said military intervention in Venezuela was "an option", and following the Venezuelan opposition's failure to penetrate government blockades, some in Washington stepped up the belligerent rhetoric.

U.S. Senator Marco Rubio, an influential voice on Venezuela policy in Washington, said the violence on Saturday had "opened the door to various potential multilateral actions

not on the table just 24 hours ago".

Later, he tweeted out pictures of anti-American politicians including Panama's Manuel Noriega, Libya's Muammar Gaddafi and Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu at the height of their power and then brutal downfall, in a not-so-subtle suggestion being that Maduro himself could suffer a similar fate.

Meanwhile, Brazil, a diplomatic heavyweight in Latin America which has the region's largest economy, called on "the international community, especially those countries that have not yet recognised Juan Guaido as interim president, to join in the liberation effort of Venezuela."

Colombia's President Ivan Duque in a tweet denounced Saturday's "barbarity", saying Monday's summit would discuss "how to tighten the diplomatic siege of the dictatorship in Venezuela".

Maduro, who retains the backing of China and Russia, which both have major energy sector investments in Venezuela, says the opposition's aid efforts are part of a U.S.-orchestrated coup.

His information minister, Jorge Rodriguez, during a news conference on Sunday gloated about the opposition's failure to bring in aid and called Guaido "a puppet and a used condom".

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel said on Sunday that Venezuela, the Caribbean island's top ally, was the victim of U.S. imperialist attempts to restore neoliberalism in Latin America.

Foreign aid, much of it from the US, has become the centerpiece of the standoff between Maduro and Guaido.

(Source: agencies)

Trial of former Barca boss Rosell kicks off



Former Barcelona president Sandro Rosell went on trial Monday in Madrid for money laundering, Spain's National Court said.

Rosell, his wife and four others are accused of "large-scale money laundering" of at least 19.9 million euros (\$23 million) since 2006 relating to television rights and sponsorship in Brazil.

The 54-year-old was due to take the stand on Monday or Tuesday.

By early afternoon on Monday, he had still not spoken as the court examined procedural issues.

Prosecutors at the Madrid-based National Court have called for the ex-Barca boss to be jailed for 11 years and fined 59 million euros.

The Rosells are accused of hiding money illegally obtained by Ricardo Teixeira, the former head of the Brazilian Football Confederation.

Rosell, who has been in pre-trial custody since May 2017, had previously lived and worked in Brazil, where he forged business links.

The case centres on a deal signed by Teixeira in 2006 with a company based in the Cayman Islands for the television rights to 24 Brazil friendly matches.

Altogether, Rosell and his wife allegedly received close to 15 million euros in their accounts as part of the deal.

They pocketed 6.6 million euros with 8.4 million destined for Teixeira, prosecutors say.

Teixeira has been indicted by US Justice Department prosecutors investigating the FIFA corruption scandal.

Rosell is also suspected of having received some five million euros illicitly as part of Nike's sponsorship deal with the Brazilian team.

He is also accused of setting up a "criminal organisation" along with his wife and the four others.

He resigned as Barcelona president in 2014 over the murky transfer dealings that brought Brazilian striker Neymar to the club from Santos.

He was later cleared of all charges in connection with an alleged tax fraud case over the transfer following an agreement with prosecutors.

(Source: AFP)

Bulgarian police detain 44 after violence at Sofia derby

Bulgarian police detained 44 people for public order offences after violence broke out between fans of rival soccer teams in Sofia on Sunday, authorities said.

The skirmishes broke out before the match between Levski Sofia and CSKA, which the home team won 1-0, as supporters threw fireworks, missiles and other objects at each other and police.

"Before, during and after the derby, a total of 44 people were detained for disturbing public order, carrying prohibited objects, pyrotechnics and narcotics," the interior ministry said on Monday.

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(Source: Reuters)

Man United face ‘mutiny’ if Solskjaer isn’t named permanent boss - Neville

Gary Neville has warned there will be "mutiny" among the Manchester United supporters if the club hierarchy do not appoint Ole Gunnar Solskjaer as the permanent manager at Old Trafford.

Solskjaer's impact on a United side that was labouring under Jose Mourinho until last December has surpassed expectations, with the team unbeaten in 10 Premier League games and have also secured a place in the FA Cup quarter-finals.

"I don't think you can give it to someone else, otherwise there would be mutiny," former United defender Neville, who was Solskjaer's team mate from 1996 to 2007, told Sky Sports.

"The fans were singing for him. I think it's very close now — I can't see the club going away from it."

Injuries forced the Norwegian to make all three substitutions before half-time in Sunday's 0-0 league draw with Liverpool but Old Trafford was in full voice throughout the 90 minutes, singing the name of their manager.

"Three months ago they were singing 'attack, attack, attack' and today they were singing Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's name for all of the second half," Neville added.

"The mood has completely transformed - the atmosphere was one of the best I've seen at Old Trafford for years and it was 0-0! If Manchester United had scored it would have been incredible."

(Source: Mirror)

Can Sarri recover authority at Chelsea after Kepa incident?

Kepa Arrizabalaga's extraordinary refusal to be substituted by Maurizio Sarri in Sunday's League Cup final heaps the pressure on the beleaguered Chelsea boss as he desperately seeks consistency.

The Spaniard twice required treatment late in extra-time against Manchester City at Wembley, with the match heading for penalties, so the Italian boss planned for his substitution.

Willy Caballero, who saved three penalties for City in their 2016 League Cup final win, was readied to go on, but Kepa declined to leave the pitch -- sparking confusion and angering Sarri.

Even after the bizarre incident, the world's most expensive goalkeeper had the chance to be a hero.

He saved Leroy Sane's penalty in the shootout, but could have done better with Sergio Agüero's effort that slipped under his body as Pep Guardiola's side retained the trophy with a 4-3 shootout win after a goalless draw.

Victory at Wembley might have bought Sarri time, particularly coming so soon after a 6-0 humbling by the same opponents in the Premier League.

But instead the 60-year-old Italian, who is yet to win a trophy in his managerial career, must prepare his players to host high-flying Tottenham in the Premier League on Wednesday, knowing he cannot afford to slip further behind the top four.

Sarri, Kepa and David Luiz, the closest player to Kepa throughout the incident, were



"on message" after the match at Wembley, all insisting it was a misunderstanding, not insubordination.

"The coach has the power over the group. He has our respect," Luiz said. "For me, there is not a problem here for that. We all believe in his philosophy, we all believe in the way he wants us to play."

But former Chelsea skipper John Terry said the former Napoli coach was in a difficult situation, with the incident coming after weeks of speculation over his future and concerns

over his style of play, dubbed "Sarri-ball".

"It leaves Sarri in a tough place," he told Sky Sports. "I'm surprised he didn't force him to come off."

Ex-Chelsea striker Chris Sutton described the scenes as "mutiny at Chelsea".

"Kepa should be sacked, not Sarri," he told BBC radio. "He's been undermined -- it's the worst thing that can happen to a manager."

Player power

Under International Football Association Board rules "if a player who is to be replaced

refuses to leave, play continues" and it is not the first time it has happened.

In the Premier League in April 2017, while at Swansea, Lukasz Fabianski was injured in the 81st minute, declined a change in the 86th minute and conceded three goals afterwards as a 1-0 lead turned into a 3-1 loss to Tottenham.

Chelsea's history suggests players hold significant influence at Stamford Bridge. The hire-and-fire policy of owner Roman Abramovich means managers have a limited shelf life and players have previously exploited the policy.

This is not the same group as the one that defied Andre Villas-Boas or masterminded a Champions League win under Roberto Di Matteo, when the senior players were said to be more influential than the interim manager.

But the incident suggested there could be a leadership vacuum at Stamford Bridge.

Sarri replaced Antonio Conte in July and got off to a flying start, with Chelsea unbeaten for the first 18 competitive games.

But recent results have included the 6-0 mauling at City, a 4-0 loss at Bournemouth and a 2-0 defeat by Manchester United in the FA Cup at Stamford Bridge.

After the Spurs game, Chelsea have a run of what appear to be winnable fixtures before away matches against Liverpool and Manchester United in April.

But the question is whether Sarri still has authority in the dressing room and whether he will be given the time to turn things around.

(Source: AFP)

Ferrari, Mercedes did F1 disservice with documentary snub - Netflix



The makers of the upcoming Netflix documentary about Formula One have accused Mercedes and Ferrari of doing a disservice to the championship.

The 10-part series Drive to Survive will be released on March 8, a week before the opening race of 2019 in Melbourne, the Australian Grand Prix.

The Netflix crew followed the sport throughout the 2018 campaign after being granted fly-on-the-wall access, with eight of the ten teams originally agreeing to take part.

It meant the series will not focus on the sport's two front-running teams, who fought for both championships and won 17 of the 21 races across the year. Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton, the most marketable driver on the grid, won his fifth world title during the season. The absence of the two teams has been criticised by the show's executive producer.

"Mercedes and Ferrari wanted to operate under different terms to the rest of the teams, and we didn't feel comfortable with that," Paul Martin told the Telegraph. "My view is that they did a slight disservice to the fans and the sport by not taking part."

Ferrari eventually reversed its original decision ahead of its home race, September's Italian Grand Prix at Monza, although its participation was still minimal. Mercedes said it did not allow Netflix access due to its focus on beating Ferrari across the season.

"We were delighted to see that last season's compelling, year-long battle for the championship between Ferrari and Mercedes helped drive 10 percent growth in unique viewership for F1 worldwide and made the sport the fastest growing in the world on social media," a Mercedes spokesperson said.

"Competing for the world championship is an all-consuming business that demands every ounce of focus from the entire team; we are driven first and foremost by performance in every decision we make."

Despite the reluctance of the championship's main protagonists to take part, Netflix cameras were present at the 2019 car launches and during the opening week of pre-season testing in anticipation of a second series focused on the upcoming championship season.

(Source: ESPN)

Laslo Djere wins first ATP Tour title, dedicates victory to his late parents



Laslo Djere entered the Rio Open as an unheralded 23-year-old from Serbia. He left with his first ATP Tour title -- and his victory speech likely had many looking for tissues.

"I want to dedicate this trophy to my parents," Djere said in front of the Rio crowd after defeating 18-year-old Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada 6-3, 7-5 in the final. "I lost my mom seven years ago, so I want to dedicate this one to her."

Djere received rousing applause, but he wasn't done with his touching tribute.

"And also to my dad," Djere continued. "I lost him two months ago. My parents had the biggest impact of me, and because of them I am who I am today. ... I hope they're watching me now."

"I'm really thankful for my younger sister," Djere added. "She's back home in Serbia. She's been a big support for me, and I'm really thankful that I have her, and also to my girlfriend. She's been with me in my toughest moments, so I can't be thankful enough for them."

Djere's win caps a crazy week in Rio, with seven out of eight seeds losing in the first round in the ATP 500 event.

One of those upsets was top seed and 2017 champion Dominic Thiem of Austria, whom Djere defeated 6-3, 6-3. It was Djere's first win against someone ranked in the top 10.

Djere then went on to defeat Japan's Taro Daniel and Casper Ruud of Norway. He was set to face Slovenia's Aljaz Bedene in the semifinals but advanced to the final on a walkover.

That left him fresh for his match against Auger-Aliassime. It was the first final for both players, and Djere broke the Canadian six times en route to victory.

Djere, who was ranked 90th in the ATP rankings at the start of the tournament, rose to a career-best No. 37 on Monday following the win. He receives 500 ATP Rankings points and \$369,000 in prize money.

"I don't know many tennis players who went through these things," Djere said, according to the ATP website.

(Source: CNN)

Will Guardiola beat Ferguson's record?



the success that the Manchester United coach did.

In addition, he has also been able to match Jose Mourinho's 25 titles in a shorter span of time.

Ferguson's coaching career began in 1974 when took over at East Stirlingshire and a year later, moved to St Mirren, where he lifted the first of his 49 titles in 1977.

Since then, he couldn't stop winning and lifted a dozen

titles during his time in charge at Aberdeen.

They won three Scottish league titles, four Scottish Cups and a League Cup as well as overcoming Real Madrid to win the 1983 European Cup Winners' Cup and Super Cup.

That success led him to Manchester United in 1986, a club where he became a legend thanks to picking up 38 winners' medals in 26 seasons.

Ferguson retired in 2013 at the age of 71 after 39 years of winning and winning. The average titles picked up per season by the Scot was 1.25, half of Guardiola's current average.

In fact, if Pep keeps that average up and is active for 39 years as Ferguson was then he could end up with 97 titles!

To do that, the Catalan would have to continue coaching at the age of 77, although if he did decide to pack it in at the same age as Ferguson, he would still end up with 82 trophies.

That is unimaginable data that sounds truly crazy.

Another way of looking at Guardiola's incessant march towards success is that, according to the calculations, he could reach 49 titles within just nine more seasons as in just 10, he has already achieved half of the United icon.

By 2028/29, Guardiola could have matched Ferguson's trophy count, and do so at the age of just 58.

(Source: Marca)

Iran basketball coach Shahintab speaks out on FIBA World Cup qualifying

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran national basketball team did a great job, advancing to the 2019 FIBA World Cup with defeating Australia in Tehran. Team Melli coach Mehran Shahintab says they will have to do more if they want to book a place in the 2020 Olympic Games.

On Sunday, Team Melli beat the Boomers, who had already secured their place at the World Cup, in Tehran's Azadi Hall. The top Asian team will qualify for the Olympics making it hard for the Persians if not impossible.

The 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup will be held in China from Aug. 31 to Sept. 15.

"It was tough but we did it. We've earned eight wins over the past 15 months, and honestly we did a great job. In the World Cup qualifying tournaments, you cannot

expect more. We were calm playing against Australia yet failed to do the same with Japan," Shahintab said.

"If you want to be a strong team, you'll have to take your league and grassroots into consideration. You cannot be a winner just with two weeks training. Unfortunately, the domestic league has been very weak in the past years. You cannot expect more if you don't strength your league," he added.

Team Melli lost to Japan 97-89 while Hamed Haddadi and Samad Nikkhab Bahrami were absent following their troubles with the basketball authorities. The duo also missed the match against Australia.

"I am not talking about special persons, but sometimes players need a spark. Of course, the coaches can make mistakes,"



Shahintab went on to say.

"We will participate in a warm up tournament in South Korea as part of preparation for the 2019 FIBA World Cup. We will

also try to hold a four-team tournament in Tehran. The team is in need of a better management to get prepared for the World Cup," Shahintab declared.

Sir Elton John gives Watford recommendations for 'good players' - chairman



Sir Elton John is involved in Watford's recruitment process on a "daily basis" and often gives recommendations about which players they should buy, chairman Scott Duxbury has said.

The multi-platinum selling singer is Watford's honorary life president and was chairman during their rise from the old Fourth Division to the top flight during the 1970s and early 80s.

Sir Elton's involvement with the day-to-day running of Watford effectively ended when he ceased to be owner and chairman in 2002, but that has not stopped the 71-year-old from being involved in their transfer business.

"He is in constant communication, both with opinions of how the team has played and opinions on players, who we should be signing," Duxbury told talkSPORT.

"He watches everything and he has a real knowledge of players and an

absolute passion for the football club -- it's not superficial. I will probably hear from him on a daily basis on one matter or another.

"He recommends players that I have not heard of and I say I will pass it to my scouting department. They come back and say: 'Yeah, yeah, really good player, let's look at this.' He absolutely has an encyclopedic knowledge of the lower-division players, it is incredible."

Since his return as honorary life president, Watford have opened a Sir Elton John Stand at their Vicarage Road stadium.

Watford are seventh in the Premier League and enjoying an impressive season under manager Javi Gracia.

They thrashed Cardiff 5-1 on Friday in a win that featured a hat trick for Gerard Deulofeu, who signed on a permanent transfer from Barcelona in the summer.

(Source: ESPN)

Brazier runs fastest ever 600m, teen Mu sets U.S. women's record



Donavan Brazier romped to the fastest 600 meters ever run and teenager Athing Mu came close to the women's record at the U.S. indoor championships in New York on Sunday.

Former collegiate champion Brazier collected his win in one minute, 13.77 seconds as he wiped more than a second off Kenyan Michael Saruni's 2018 mark of 1:14.79.

Minutes earlier, the 16-year-old Mu came within 0.13 seconds of Russian Olga Kotlyarova's world best of 1:23.44 over the same distance.

Her time of 1:23.57 was a national record and the fastest in 2019.

The 600m is not recognized in world records because it is run infrequently worldwide.

"I was still hungry," said the 21-year-old Brazier, who two weeks ago set a national record in the indoor 800m. "So I went out a little fast and I was able to hang on."

(Source: Reuters)

Mu's triumph was perhaps more stunning given her age and the way she won. The long-striding 2018 Youth Olympic Games silver medalist turned back six-time collegiate champion Raevyn Rogers' challenge and sprinted home.

"I am just blown away," said the teenager. "I don't know what I can do anymore."

Sharika Nelvis came from behind to win the women's 60m hurdles in 7.85 seconds, the year's fastest time, and Olympian Devon Allen claimed the men's race in 7.60 seconds.

The 60m sprints went to Demek Kemp (6.55) and Shania Collins (7.16).

Shelby Houlihan, beaten in the mile on Saturday, added another 2019 best when she won the two mile in 9:31.38.

Olympian Clayton Murphy prevailed in the men's 1,000m in 2:20.36, Katie Nageotte cleared 4.81m to defend her women's pole vault title and Keturah Orji took the triple jump with a best of 14.55m.

(Source: Reuters)

Yoon not expecting surprises in Korea Republic squad

Barring the unexpected, head coach Yoon Duk-yeo expects to name a familiar-looking Korea Republic squad for the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup France.

The tactician named a 26-strong squad for the Cup of Nations, which kicks off in Australia on Thursday, and expects to select his France 2019 roster from this group of players.

Yoon, however, has not ruled out including players not in the squad who impress for the FIFA Women's World Cup challenge where Korea Republic are in Group A with hosts France, Norway and Nigeria.

The Taeguk Ladies will face France in the tournament opener on June 7 with the final scheduled for July 7.

Korea Republic's immediate task though is the Cup of Nations in Australia and the selected players will be striving to confirm their places in the FIFA Women's World Cup squad which is expected to be named in May.

"The players have to fight till the end to earn their spots in the final squad. I believe competition for places will make the squad better," said Yoon to the media.

Korea Republic will open their Cup of Nations campaign against Argentina on Thursday. They then play Australia



on March 3 and New Zealand three days later.

All three will also be in France for the FIFA Women's World Cup and Yoon said the matches will help improve Korea Republic's competitiveness.

"We are to face big teams, like France and Norway, at the World Cup, and I think Australia and New Zealand are

the council said in a statement.

The newspaper said the cartoon was intended as a lampoon of the tennis star's angry exchanges with chair umpire Carlos Ramos at the U.S. Women's Singles final in New York.

Williams clashed with Ramos over penalties she thought she did not deserve and ultimately lost to Naomi Osaka.

The U.S.-based National Association of Black Journalists said at the time the cartoon was "repugnant on many levels" and "not only exudes racist, sexist caricatures of both women, but

Williams' depiction is unnecessarily sambo-like."

"Sambo," a derogatory term for a black person, is the name of a folkloric figure usually depicted with an exaggerated mouth and an ape-like stance.

The Council acknowledged that some readers found the cartoon offensive.

"However ... there was a sufficient public interest in commenting on behavior and sportsmanship during a significant dispute between a tennis player with a globally high profile and an umpire at the U.S. Open final," it said.

Iran Greco-Roman wrestling team runners-up at Hungary event

TASNIM — Iran Greco-Roman wrestling team finished in second place at the Hungarian Grand Prix Imre Polyak Memorial. The Iranian team came second with one silver and two bronze medals.

Reza Khedri claimed a silver medal in the 55kg, while Meysam Dalkhani and Shirzad Beheshti Tala won two bronze medals in the 63kg and 60kg, respectively.

Hosts Hungary won the title with 91 points, five points ahead of Iran.

Ukraine finished in third place with 83 points.

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.

Iranian woman wins silver of Uganda badminton doubles

IRNA — An Iranian female badminton player won the silver medal of the doubles in Uganda International Championship.

Samin Abed-Khojasteh and her Jordanian teammate were defeated 2-1 by their rivals from Egypt.

Abed-Khojasteh also came third in the singles of the championship and won the bronze.

The \$10,000-championship was held on February 21-24.

Abed-Khojasteh has already won a bronze medal in the competition's single.

Leader honors young chess player

IRNA — The Supreme Leader of Islamic Revolution on Sunday met with chess player Aryan Gholami, who refused to play against a Zionist.

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, met with the young chess player and his family and praised him for his sacrifice.

The Iranian teenage chess player Aryan Gholami had refused to play against the Israeli player in Sweden.

Malaysia to host AIRMARINE 2019 Cup

The Harimau Malaya will host the inaugural AIRMARINE 2019 Cup following its launch in the Malaysian capital on Monday.

Tan Cheng Hoe's charges, who were edged 3-2 on aggregate by Vietnam in the 2018 AFF Cup final in December, will have Singapore, Solomon Islands and Oman, who reached the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 Round of 16, for company in the four-nation International championship.

A draw will be held next week to determine the seedings. The semi-finals will be held on March 20, while the final and third-place play-off on March 23 at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil.

The three Asian teams will use the tournament to prepare for 2022 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers later this year.

(Source: the-afc)

Luis Sierra replaces Bilic at Al Ittihad

Chilean Jose Luis Sierra will replace Slaven Bilic as the new Al Ittihad manager, the Saudi Pro League club said on Monday.

"The club board decided after reviewing the team's recent results, which were not up to our hopes, to end the coach's contract and appoint Jose Luis Sierra as the new coach," the club announced on their social media channels.

Al Ittihad, who agreed a three-year-deal with Bilic in September last year, have struggled to find form in the domestic league under the Croatian and are second from bottom in the standings.

Luis Sierra, who managed Al Ittihad for two seasons from 2016-2018, will be tasked to guide the eight-time Saudi Pro League champions out of the relegation zone with nine matches left as well as navigate through the group stages of the 2019 AFC Champions League. The Tigers are in Group B of the Continental competition and will face Al Rayyan of Qatar in their opening match on March 4.

(Source: AFP)

Asia's best learn group stage opponents

Asia's best learnt their FIFA U-20 World Cup Poland 2019 contenders following the official draw at the Gdynia Arena in Poland on Sunday.

Saudi Arabia, the 2018 AFC U-19 Championship winners, were drawn in Group E with France, Mali and Panama.

Japan, defeated 2-1 by Saudi Arabia in the 2018 AFC U-19 Championship final, will play in Group B with the 1999 runners-up having Mexico, Italy and Ecuador for company.

Korea Republic were drawn in Group F with six-time champions Argentina, twice winners Portugal and South Africa, while 1981 runners-up Qatar, will play in Group D with Nigeria, Ukraine and USA.

The draw saw the 24 teams divided into four pots of six teams based on a ranking built on past sporting performance.

Host Poland were placed in Pot 1 along with Portugal, Uruguay, France, USA and Mexico while Pot 2 had Mali, Nigeria, New Zealand, Colombia, Korea Republic and Italy.

Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Argentina, Ecuador, Ukraine and Honduras were in Pot 3 while Japan, South Africa, Panama, Norway, Qatar and Tahiti were in Pot 4.

The FIFA U-20 World Cup Poland 2019 will be played across six venues on May 23 to June 15. England, champions in 2017, and five-time winners Brazil both did not qualify.

(Source: the-afc)

Cartoon of tennis star Serena Williams not racist: Australia watchdog

SYDNEY (Reuters) — A cartoon published in an Australian newspaper that depicted tennis star Serena Williams having a temper tantrum at the U.S. Open last year was not racist, Australia's media watchdog said on Monday.

The caricature of an angry Williams - with exaggerated lips and tongue and a wild plume of curly hair rising above her head as she stomped on her tennis racket - was condemned as racist by civil rights leaders, celebrities and fans.

Melbourne's Herald Sun newspaper and cartoonist Mark Knight denied the

image was racist.

The Australian Press Council said on Monday the cartoon did not breach its standards of practice.

"The Council considers that the cartoon uses exaggeration and absurdity to make its point, but accepts the publisher's claim that it does not depict Ms. Williams as an ape, rather showing her as 'spitting the dummy'," the council said, using an Australian phrase for a child having a temper tantrum.

The image was "a non-racist caricature familiar to most Australian readers,"

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■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari
■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450
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Zip Code: 1599814713



The welfare of countries depends on the judgment and management of governments. If governments are honest and wise in judgment, good fortune follows; if not, it will turn away and go.

Imam Ali (AS)

Intl. 100-Second Film Festival aims at discovering new talent: organizer

By Samaneh Abutalebi

TEHRAN – The director of the 12th International 100-Second Film Festival, Ali Qorbani, has said that the festival is seeking to discover new film talent and help promising young filmmakers.

“The main objective of the festival is to discover new talent and help them produce their films,” he said in a press conference on Monday.



The director of the 12th International 100-Second Film Festival, Ali Qorbani, attends a press conference at the Art Bureau in Tehran on February 25, 2019 to brief the media about the festival's schedule. (Sourehonar/Komeil Hassan Beiki)

“We asked Iranian VODs to cooperate with the festival and it hopefully helps the filmmakers to earn money from their productions,” he added.

A lineup of 33 movies from 19 countries, including Australia, Italy, Japan, England, the U.S., Spain, Turkey, Sweden, Portugal, Singapore and India, will be competing in this year's edition of the festival.

Several workshops will be organized on the sidelines of the festival.

The organizers also plan to screen other submissions failed to be selected for the official lineup in a special section.

The Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization is the organizer of the festival, which will take place at the Azadi Cineplex from February 27 to 29.

The winners will be announced during the closing ceremony of the festival, which will be held at Tehran's Andisheh Hall on March 1.

“Life Hanging” wins Iran’s Judiciary special award

CULTURE

TEHRAN – “Life Hanging”, co-directed by Hossein Amiri Dumari and Pedram Puramiri, won the special jury award at the Judiciary Screen Awards on Sunday.

The award was presented to the debut film for “giving a proper image of the uncontrolled anger that results in social harm,” the jury said in their statement.

The awards have been established by the Judiciary to honor a number of Iranian films that increase public awareness of law and criminal behavior and activities.



Director and writer Moshen Tanabandeh accepts the award for best screenplay for his debut movie “Swear” during the Judiciary Screen Awards at the Iranian Academy of Arts on February 24, 2019. (ILNA/Alireza Khazrai)

The awards ceremony was held at the Iranian Academy of Arts. Moshen Tanabandeh's directorial debut “Swear” received the best screenplay award for “its compelling story and profound effects.” The film, which has also been written by Tanabandeh, received an award for “giving a deep insight into a social issue.”

“6.5 for One Meter” by Saied Rustai received an award for “its creative efforts to depict the horrible image of narcotics.”

German artist couple astonish visitors with perforated layers of glass

➔ She said that the experience was the main starting point of their art. “I have studied architecture and have made sculptures but colors dripping on surfaces was the source of inspiration for robart,” she explained.

“My husband is a technician. He said we can do this [art of Aborigines] by means of a computer. He started to develop a special machine that could do this dripping. And we developed our own type of artworks with only acrylic colors to make our stalagmites,” she added.

The gracious lady Ingrid further explained, “I make sculptures with clay first, then we give it to the computer. The clay model is scanned to be further processed in a computer program. The programming is done by my husband who prepares the technical process for the robot. Then our personal machine named ‘Robart’ makes the motions visible on the monitor and coordinates the process. Then each layer is prepared for perforation.”

“The holes are made by the machines. And we use very special glass that has higher refraction. Of course it has to be done underneath water, otherwise the glass would break,” she remarked.

“My husband invented this machine to do that. The invention was his but we discuss the main ideas together and develop objects together,” she added.

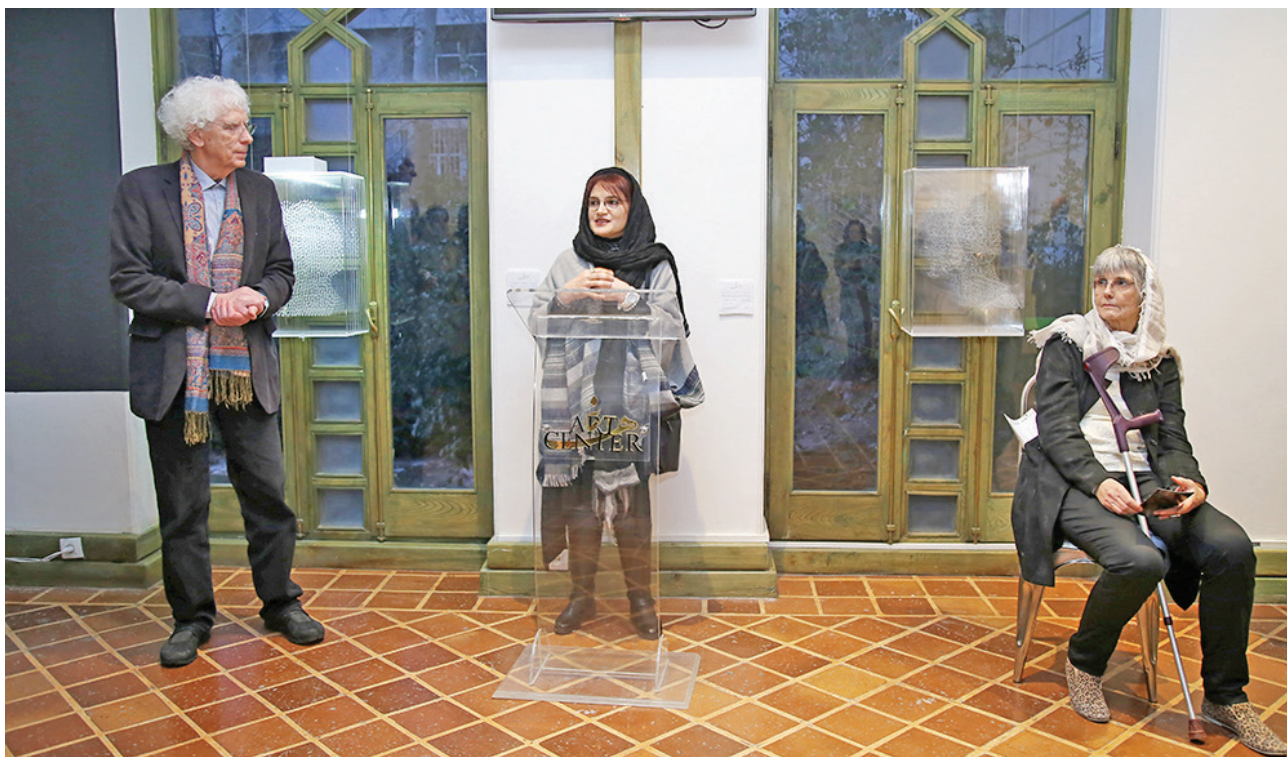
The couple has already displayed their works in France and Belgium, and this is their third exhibit in Tehran, however, the couple visited Tehran previously.

An artwork featuring a bust of Beethoven is a highlight of the collection showcased at the exhibit.

“The Beethoven bust here on display has been implemented by several Iranian craftsmen. The holes look like music notes on layers of plexiglass. We gave the craftsmen the program and they produced the work. They had laser machines that we don't have, so they used our program, perforated the layers of plexiglass and made the bust,” she said with a surprise in her voice.

She also said that the visitors are extremely fascinated when they examine the works closely, because it is very difficult to take photos of the objects.

“They do not really appear as what they really are on the catalogue. So we can explain it more easily when the visitors come and



German artist couple Knut (L) and Ingrid (R) attend the opening ceremony of their exhibition at Tehran's Art Center on February 22, 2019 as an unidentified person is seen speaking in the photo.

see in person,” she added.

The collection also boasts an artwork titled “Homa”, which has been created based on a stone statue of the Persian mythical bird Homa located in the ruins of the ancient city of Persepolis in Fars Province.

Other highlights include a ball made with colorful shiny drops, impressions of insect wings and their personal perception of Semiramis, the queen regent of the Assyrian Empire.

The stalagmite artworks also appear to be a very different type of art. “Ren” depicting people running in different directions is a highlight of the stalagmite collection.

“We worked in China for few years as teachers. I was never able to learn Chinese. I learned a little bit of the language but there are some very expressive characters of the Chinese calligraphy and one was Ren. We wanted to have something to show immigra-

tion, so we thought we would use the Chinese character ‘Ren’, which resembles a person. And it was easy to do it with the machine. That is why we used it. The original Chinese symbols are really like pictures, and we were actually inspired by Chinese calligraphy,” she asserted.

On their intention to work on Persian calligraphy, Ingrid said that they need to first find interesting symbols in Persian calligraphy that are decorative and then develop the idea, which, of course, takes some time.

She next gave some details about their artworks created by dripping acrylic colors on huge surfaces, and how the huge machines do the drippings.

“First, comes the idea, then programs are made for the computer, then the huge machines begin the dripping process. The machines make the drops, and the drops continue until the idea we have planned

appears on the surface,” she stated.

Asked if the dripping of colors can be done on the surface without the help of the machine, she replied, “This type of art can be done by ourselves too, but it can take a year, and the colors would not be applied perfectly. But with the machine it takes only three or four weeks.”

On her plan whether to teach or train any other students, Ingrid said that there have been people who are interested in their robart because the modern way to do art is by computer.

“I have been a teacher of art. I am 70, my husband is 75. We don't have time to teach. We have a homepage and make exhibitions. People can come and watch what we do in our studios,” she concluded.

The exhibit will be running until March 5 at the Art Center located at North Salimi St., Andarzgu Blvd.

University of Oxford honors vocalist Shahram Nazeri

ART **TEHRAN** – Veteran Iranian vocalist Shahram Nazeri was honored at the University of Oxford in the UK last week with a plaque for his 40 years of activities on promoting Persian music and poetry.

Nazeri received the honor after a concert with the Mana Ensemble, which performed part of the great international cultural project “The Language of Love” at the Holywell Music Room of Wadham College last Tuesday, the college announced.



Professor Edmund Herzig welcomes Shahram Nazeri and the Mana Ensemble at the Holywell Music Room of Wadham College at the University of Oxford on February 19, 2019. (Wadham College)

“The Language of Love” aims to promote the high position of Persian poetry and literature by introducing Persian luminaries and their roles in preserving Persian culture.”

Wadham College fellows Edmund Herzig and Dominic Brookshaw introduced Nazeri to the audience before their performance.

Herzig is a professorial fellow in Iranian studies and Brookshaw is a Senior Research Fellow in Persian at Wadham.

“This concert was put on by the Mana Naqsh Organization, which has been working with people in Persian studies in Oxford for more than two years regarding the “Language of Love” project, which aims to bring together scholarship and performance to encourage the enjoyment of Persian poetry and music across boundaries”, said Herzig at the ceremony.

“I first got to know and enjoy classical Persian music and song many years ago through listening to cassettes of Shahram Nazeri. His vocal style is natural, warm and energetic and he often performs songs with strong rhythm and melody and plenty of repetition; that makes his music more accessible and enjoyable for novices and in part accounts for his popularity far outside the borders of Iran” he added.

Wadham College and the Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities are also collaborating with Mana.

Nazeri and Tajik musician Davlatmand Kholov together gave a concert at the Barbican Hall in London on February 24, officially launching the project “The Language of Love”.

Nazeri is enormously popular in his homeland of Iran, and Kholov is an expert on the folk music of Central Asia, particularly his native country Tajikistan.

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